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Ethnic Nationalism and the State in Pakistan

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the degree of**

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

by

Adeel Khan

Sociology Program, Faculty of Arts

February 2001

Declaration

I, Adeel Khan, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Sociology Program of Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Adeel Khan

26 February 2001

Aknowledgements

I would like to thank the Sociology Program and the School of Critical Enquiry at the University of Wollongong for helping me to travel to Pakistan twice to do my fieldwork. In Pakistan there are too many people who have helped me in many different ways. I am grateful to all those academics, journalists, politicians, lawyers and activists who spared their time to speak to me. I would like to especially thank Mazhar Abbas who not only provided me with very useful information and contacts but also arranged meetings with the MQM leaders. I am indebted to Ahmed Shah and Ayub Shiekh for organising one of the most entertaining as well as productive trips to Hyderabad where they arranged meetings with Ibrahim Joyo and Rasul Bux Palejo and other Sindhi nationalists. In Lahore I had the pleasure of Khawar Malik and Imtiaz Alam's company in one of the most dramatic months in Pakistan's history when the chief justice and the prime minister were caught in a bizarre battle of ego that had created a serious political crisis. In Quetta, Abdul Sami Kakar, a former Pukhtun Student Federation activist, who was introduced to me by Tahir Mohammad Khan, was a wonderful company and great help in organising interviews with Baloch and Pukhtun nationalists. In Islamabad I shall always miss late Eqbal Ahmed with whom I had some of the most stimulating discussions.

My supervisor, Stephen Castles, has been an unrelenting source of encouragement and inspiration. He not only encouraged me to think as deeply and as critically as possible but also, at times, forced me to explore different aspects of the argument whenever he felt I could do better. I have particularly benefited from Stephen's knowledge of European history. What impressed me the most about Stephen, however, is that he is one of those people who are so comfortable with themselves that they hardly care what others think of them, and therefore they are unassuming and full of humility. I wish I could learn that from him, too.

My wife, Rafat, deserves more than a few words of gratitude for she is the one who had to put up with my anxiety, self-doubt, writer's block, mood swings, and all the other 'hazards' that come with a person who agrees with Adorno that "(o)nly those thoughts are true which fail to understand themselves." I stand obliged to her for bearing with me.

As is customary, and in legal terms, too, I must admit that only I am responsible for the mistakes and weaknesses in my work, but as I have made it obvious that I would not have been able to produce this work without the help of all those mentioned above, and therefore, morally at least, they cannot escape the responsibility. The only consolation I can offer to them is that I apologise for the mistakes and weaknesses and promise to try harder, next time, to fail better.

Abstract

Nationalism is a way of dealing with a world where 'everything melts into thin air'. It is a form of self-love in which individuals celebrate their collective identity. And like all forms of self-love it gets its strength more from the hatred of others than its love for the self. Here lies the secret behind some of the most intractable conflicts in the world.

Nationalism is, probably, the only form of self-love that gets its life-blood from an institution, the modern state. Had the state not been behind the self-love of the Germans, they would not have been able to torture and murder so many Jews in such a short period of time. Likewise, had the west not helped the Jews to establish their own state in Palestine, the Jews would never have been able to displace and kill so many Palestinians.

Nationalism is not the 'pathology' of the modern world, but is, as a sentiment and as a doctrine, only a pathetic way to deal with a pathetic world. But nationalism as a game of power, as a politics, is lethal and destructive. As a sentiment and as a doctrine nationalism may be the child of an unstable and fast changing world but as a politics it is the child of the nation state.

This thesis explores the relationship between the nation-state and the nationalisms of four ethnic groups, namely, Pukhtun, Sindhi, Baloch and Mohajir, who have, at various points in time, contested the legitimacy of the administrative structure of the Pakistani state. It starts with identifying the issue of ethnic conflicts, goes on to review the available literature and then outlines a framework for studying ethnic

nationalism. As the emphasis here is on the role of the modern state in provoking ethnic discontent and resistance the second chapter discusses the interventionist role of the state and tries to highlight its relationship with nationalism. The second section of the chapter looks at various approaches to nationalism and explains as to which approach is more suitable and why for dealing with ethnic nationalism.

The third chapter endeavours to explicate the difference between pre-colonial and colonial state in India as well as the way the colonial state despite being modern was different from the modern state system in the west. The fourth chapter discusses the state system in Pakistan and argues that the postcolonial state is a replica of the colonial state. The next four chapters examine the emergence of four ethnic movements and their varying strategies for dealing with the centralising and homogenising policies of the state. Throughout, the focus remains on the ethnic groups' distance from and proximity to the state system as the major factor in determining their relationships.

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The whole is the false

Adorno¹

¹ Inversion of Hegel's famous dictum, the whole is the true (1978:50)

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*Source: 1998 Census (Statistical Pocket Book
of Pakistan, 2000)*

PAKISTAN

Chapter-1

Introduction

All the problems of politics, of social organization, and of education have been falsified through and through because one mistook the most harmful men for great men – because one learned to despise “little” things, which means the basic concerns of life itself.

Nietzsche¹

One of the serious challenges that the state of Pakistan has been confronted with since its creation in 1947 is the self-assertion of various ethnic groups. Out of the initial five ethnic groups, namely, Bengalis, Punjabis, Pukhtun, Sindhis and Baloch, four have actively contested the legitimacy of the administrative structure of the state, with one, Bengalis, succeeding in breaking away and creating their own state, Bangladesh.

Even before the partition of British India, Pukhtun and Baloch nationalists had opposed the accession of their regions to Pakistan. After partition they continued to foster a desire to establish their own independent states. Just before partition Bengali leaders from both the Muslim League (with the acceptance of Jinnah) and the Indian National Congress had made an unsuccessful last minute bid in May 1947 to secure a united independent Bengal (Alavi, 1989: 224). Sindhis had supported the idea of Pakistan, but only in the hope that it would be a decentralised confederation of the Muslim majority provinces. After the establishment of Pakistan, however, they got disenchanted with the centralising policies of the state, and those like G.M. Sayed,

¹ Nietzsche (1989: 256).

who had been enthusiastic supporters of the Muslim League and its demand for a separate Muslim state, termed the partition of the subcontinent on the basis of so-called two-nation theory “unnatural, inhuman and unrealistic” (Sayed, 1995: 122).

After partition yet another ethnic group was added to the five indigenous ones in the shape of the Indian Muslim migrants, Mohajirs, who had not only been at the forefront of the movement for Pakistan, but after its creation were the most ardent supporters of the centralising policies of the state. But after three decades of Pakistan’s existence, they, too, began to express their disillusionment with the administrative structure of the state and in the early 1980s formed their own ethnic political group, Mohajir Quami (national) Movement (MQM). By mid-1980s the MQM emerged as the most organised ethnic group, with a widespread popular support among Mohajirs. Soon the MQM transformed into the most violent political group confronting other ethnic groups as well as the state establishment.

The only ethnic group, which seems to have been content with the Pakistani state structure, is Punjabis. The reason is simple: from the very beginning they have been over-represented in the state apparatuses, like military and civil bureaucracy, as well as in the public sectors like industry, business and commerce. And after the separation of East Bengal (Bangladesh) in 1971, they have become the overwhelming majority of Pakistan, further consolidating their control over the state structure.

It is amazing that despite the all-pervasive ethnic discontent in Pakistan, there is little analytical work available on the national predicament of that country. The dominant

trend in the literature on Pakistan is that of narrating the trials and tribulations of the country's political life in a descriptive manner mainly focussing on individuals. Even if, at times, there is some analysis of the events it is more in the style of untheorised interpretations rather than rigorous theoretical examination. "The danger of untheorized history" as John Breuilly (1996: 146) has pointed out, "is that it either smuggles in unacknowledged definitions and concepts or substitutes ill-focused narrative for clear analytical description and explanation."

Most of the literature on the politics of Pakistan is by those whom Foucault (1991b: 125) has called the "users of history" rather than analysers: those who conduct their research on the basis of facts and figures alone. But facts do not speak for themselves. They need to be analysed. And analysis demands, what Brecht (cited in Arendt, 1973: 21) has called "crude thinking", which means a referral of theory to practice, to facts. Unless such crude thinking is adopted history itself has little significance than a fabrication, a fable that signifies major events and the heroic or villainous role of individual actors whose actions triggered them. Such an historiography certainly makes interesting reading but does not help to understand the importance of social and economic struggles and the changes that these struggles effect, the power relations that they produce and the various methods of control and coercion that they engender. As a result, history is reduced to the achievements and failings of a few individuals -- their 'good' intentions and 'evil' deeds. In the process, history becomes a story and historian a storyteller.

This is not the case with Pakistan alone. Most of the scholarship everywhere in the world suffers from this malaise. What is special about Pakistan, however, is that analytical work has a significant paucity. The dearth of theoretical analysis becomes all the more striking when one notices that across the border, in India, there is a considerable amount of remarkably high quality analyses. For instance, even if one has to consider only the members of Subaltern Studies Group the list is a long one. The Group has, in fact, set a new trend of history writing by questioning the conventional wisdom, by demystifying the 'grand narratives', by confronting the repression of 'specific rationalities', and by exposing the lies and mischief behind the 'truths' of the nationalist ideology and its most powerful upholder, the nation-state.²

In recent years, another trend has emerged under the influence of an approach that has become a standard in western academic institutions: a description of the theoretical literature is given, almost always uncritically, at the beginning of the study. Bibliographical details in the field are provided; some disagreements among various authors highlighted; and then in the next section the same story telling with the prominent heroes and villains is resorted to. Hardly any synthesis of the theory and practice is provided. This, too, is a global trend and not restricted to Pakistan only. The problem with such writings is that they have a tendency to over-simplify, stereotype, and moralise.

² This terminology is from Foucault (1982: 210), who thought that, "the word rationalization is dangerous. What we have to do is to analyze specific rationalities rather than always invoking the progress of rationalization in general".

Let me make it clear at this point that my objection is not to the mention of individuals, but to the overestimation of individuals and their contributions. What I am trying to say is that unless individual actors are seen in the context of the socio-economic and cultural backgrounds history is reduced to their achievements and failings; it is turned into fiction. In other words, my objection is to presenting history in a manner, which turns individuals into larger than life figures, where they seem not to be the products of certain socio-economic trends but are rather creators of those trends. Of course, the modern history of India cannot be narrated without the mention of Gandhi, and the creation of Pakistan cannot be easily understood without Jinnah. However, if it is assumed that without Gandhi, India would not have achieved independence, and without Jinnah Pakistan would not have come into existence, the mechanism of power, which signified certain cultural, economic and political trends at that point in Indian history, is reduced to irrelevance.

What I am suggesting is that powerful individuals need to be seen and presented in the background of the technologies of power at certain point in history and not vice versa. As I shall try to demonstrate in the following pages, powerful individuals are nothing but the most skilful operators of the technologies of power. And their failings and achievements have as much to do with their own calculations as they do with the requirements of the technologies of power. I hope my disagreement with the writers mentioned below will be seen in the light of these two points that I made about the pitfalls of untheorised history and an overemphasis on the role of individual actors, and not as an intention on my part to downgrade anyone. After all, I have chosen for my critique some of those writers from whose work I benefited the most.

It is neither possible nor relevant here to give a detailed critique of the general trends in the literature on Pakistan. That would perhaps require a separate study to include the writings of all those who have wittingly or unwittingly accepted the official line and those whose work is influenced by their own nationalist preferences. Just to provide a taste of the main currents in the literature, here I have chosen, rather arbitrarily of course, those portions of the work of some of the independent writers, which deal with the issue of ethnic conflict in Pakistan.

There is a tendency among the so-called liberals in Pakistan to say that Pakistan is not a nation-state but a state-nation.³ So much so that even a scholar like Hamza Alavi (1989: 1527), while citing Benedict Anderson that an imagined community is “conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship”, declares that the “peoples of Pakistan have not yet fused into a single community.” Then Alavi goes on to say that whereas in Europe, nations were constituted into states, in post-colonial societies the problem is inverted. The first point is that conceiving is part of imagining, and not of the reality of the nation. And therefore it is not correct to say that Pakistani nation, as an imagined community is not “conceived as a deep horizontal community”.

The depth of Pakistani community’s conceived nation-ness should be judged by its hatred of others, especially India, and not in its love for itself. That there is very little to love oneself for being a Pakistani, unless one thinks of one’s ethnic identity,

³ During my fieldwork I heard this from many.

and still there is such strong hatred of India is one of the most pernicious effects of state nationalism.

The second point is that “(n)ations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round” (Hobsbawm, 1992: 11) and those who believe that they ever do tend to take nations as a given, as an eternal reality. In this they fall prey to the rhetoric of nationalism itself. Otherwise:

Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality, for better or worse, and in general an inescapable one (Gellner, 1983: 48-49).

The tendency to overestimate the role of individual actors, without analysing the mechanism of power relations is best illustrated in one of the most interesting books on the early political history of Pakistan, *The State of Martial Rule* (1991) by Ayesha Jalal. Jalal’s sinewy prose and assiduous research have earned her well-deserved accolades from various quarters.

Jalal repeatedly warns against the pitfalls of simple and one-dimensional explanations of Pakistan’s complex situation. She rightly says that “the unseemly doings of politicians may be less controversial, even entertaining, but hopelessly inadequate...as the sole basis for an analysis” (ibid. 270), and that weaknesses in the party system as explanations for the frequency of military rule “have done more to

obfuscate than to lay bare the complex dynamics which have served to make military rule the norm rather than the exception in Pakistan (ibid. 295).

But despite such awareness that individual actors or a group of them, or one-to-one clash of institutions on the basis of their strength and weaknesses are fragile tools for analysis, Jalal resorts to the same methods though with more vigour and eloquence than many others in the field. In Jalal's work, there is an excessive emphasis on individual actors, an abundance of stereotyping, and an uncanny tendency to explain institutional interests in isolation from their power relations with social and economic interests. Let us take a few examples.

Treating the American embassy's dispatch as an authoritative comment on the aftermath of the assassination of Pakistan's first prime minister, Jalal says: "Anyone could see that after Liaquat's assassination and the 'evident weakening of central authority', the 'provincialists...[were] entering a period of increasing strength and influence'. The 'centrifugal' trend of provincialism...[was] becom[ing] stronger'; people almost 'instinctively' thought of themselves 'as Bengalis, Punjabis, Sindhis, or citizens of other provinces rather than as Pakistanis'" (ibid. 144).

Thus, the issues of centre-provinces relations, the oppressively centralising policies of the Pakistani state, the absence of representative rule and provincial autonomy, ethnic and regional discontent and the existence of multiple identities all are reduced to a single individual's disappearance from the scene. Jalal has a propensity to stereotype a people, a region with majestic ease. For example, she says: "True to

South Asian political traditions, the groupings revolved around key personalities, not principles or programmes...anything is possible in South Asian politics” (ibid.155, 190). It is difficult to discern this statement from that of a reckless journalist’s stereotyping South Asian politics as something unique.

The point is that politics is about power, not morals, principles and programmes. The problem with seeing politics in terms of good and bad is that it blurs one’s perspective on politics itself and does not allow one to deal with political intrigues as part of politics as a power game but rather forces one to see it as an aberration from the ‘normal’ course of politics. Hence, politics itself is made sacrosanct whereas the actors are turned into heroes and villains.⁴ When politics is viewed in such moral terms, social and economic structures, power relations and class antagonism and struggles become secondary to individual intentions and deeds and therefore history becomes the story of the rise and fall of powerful individuals.

In Jalal’s account the serious issue of ethnic conflict in the first decade of Pakistan’s history that cost the state its eastern wing, Bangladesh, emerges as a mere conflict of interests between the bureaucrats and politicians. She claims that, “it was not provincial but institutional interests that demanded unitary instead of a federal form of government” (ibid. 175). The demand for a unitary form of government was not that of the bureaucrats and generals alone and Jalal has herself recognised that by

⁴ No wonder when politics is seen in such moral terms, an extremely conservative former US president Ronald Reagan reaches a conclusion that is the exact opposite of our liberal scholar. Reagan (Metcalf, 1993: 168) once said: “Politics is supposed to be the second oldest profession. I have come to realize that it bears a very close resemblance to the first”.

noting that, “the Punjabis were worried that Bengali-Pathan alliance would result in their being denied ‘a fair share of control of the country’” (ibid. 174-75).

Without explaining what she means by “institutional interests”, Jalal adds that the “refusal by senior bureaucrats and military officers to accept the implications of a Bengali majority had placed state-building on a collision course with the political process” (ibid. 175). Clearly, it is a contradiction of a sort to suggest that the Punjabi-Mohajir dominated central establishment’s interests were institutional rather than provincial/ethnic and then add up that the same establishment was not willing to accept a Bengali majority.

The One Unit scheme of 1955 was one of the black spots in the history of Pakistan. It was an effort by the Punjabi-Mohajir establishment to lump together the smaller provinces with Punjab to neutralise Bengali majority. But Jalal insists that, “the proposal was not acceptable to *all* Punjabi politicians” (emphasis added), which “suggests yet again that the centre’s interests were not always those of the Punjab’s or that the bureaucratic-military alliance was necessarily working from a provincial perspective” (ibid. 191).

There are two points in the above statement, which beg explanation. Despite being a researcher with an eye for meticulous details, Jalal has given neither the number of those Punjabi politicians who were opposed to the scheme nor has named any one of them. She perhaps had in mind the sole left-oriented Mian Iftikharuddin, who was an exception to the norm. Otherwise, available information indicates that all those

Punjabi politicians who were in the thick of the power games, like Daultana, were so chauvinistic that they not only were opposed to the idea of parity for east Bengal but also refused to accept the possibility of representation on the basis of population (Noman, 1990: 10).

Jalal's other assertion that the centre's interests were not always those of the Punjab's or that the bureaucratic-military alliance was not necessarily working from a provincial perspective is, indeed, beyond belief. The history of Pakistan is the history of Punjabi domination. Throughout Pakistan's history the interests of the centre and Punjab have been one and the same. It is so because Pakistan's state structure has been dominated and controlled by bureaucracy and military, the two institutions that since the creation of Pakistan have been dominated by the Punjabis. And therefore to separate the interests of the Punjabi-dominated central establishment from the provincial interests of Punjab in Pakistan, which is generally called 'the Punjabi empire', is ingenuity irrelevant to the reality of Pakistan politics.

As a 'user of history', Jalal is a storyteller at her best. In her expert hands the political history of Pakistan has become an interesting tale of intrigues. It is an historiography full of sound and fury signifying heroes and villains. The exploration of the struggles and resistances of various classes, the technologies of power, and the mechanism of power relations become of minor significance. It is a historiography exploring the evil designs that thwarted the pious march forward of history.

Another writer, Shahid Javed Burki, has developed a thesis of power struggles in Pakistan on the basis of a typical modernist binary opposition between the modern and the traditional, between the bourgeoisie and the feudal. Like all modernists, Burki (1980: 15) sees tradition as oppressive and undemocratic and modernity as participatory and democratic. Under the all too clear influence of the American modernisation theory, Burki deduces that the early years of Pakistan's history were traumatic because there was a clash between two systems, the "older (traditional) indigenous system" of hierarchical rigidity and the "broadly participatory" (modern) one imported by migrants. Whereas in the former, according to Burki, the principal actors were individuals (landlords), in the latter they were not individuals but social and economic groups like merchants, industrialists, lawyers, teachers, etc. "The indigenous system was stable but archaic...the migrants' system was unstable but modern...(t)he older system espoused political and economic paternalism; the newer system had embraced *laissez-faire* economics and liberal political institutions" (ibid.) The dubiousness of his formulation can be explained on two counts:

1) The migrants may have been more literate and more exposed to modernity but they were by no means more democratic and more prone to participatory and liberal political institutions. On the contrary, it was the indigenous people who were more inclined towards secular (modern?) politics and therefore had kept away from the religion-based nationalism of the Muslim League and were only drawn in just before partition. Also, the most important Mohajir leaders like Liaquat Ali Khan, Chaudhri Khaliquzzaman, I.I. Chundrigar, etc. were aristocrats (landlords) from Muslim minority provinces and not the modernised entrepreneurs. As far as the mass of

Mohajirs was concerned they were trained in the modernist-conservative tradition of Aligarh Muslim University, which had indoctrinated them as the loyal subjects of the Crown, rather than democracy-loving, open-minded anti-colonialists. They were not even what Macaulay wanted them to be, i.e., “a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect” (cited in Anderson, 1991: 91). They were a class of conformists, who had learned to rationalise their ‘inferiority’ to the colonial masters as much as they would later rationalise their ‘superiority’ to the indigenous people of Pakistan.

2) The second point, which is even more objectionable than the first, is that in the insider-outsider dichotomy Burki has completely ignored the Bengali majority and its effects on Pakistan’s early politics. Pakistan’s politics till the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 was marred not by a clash between insiders and outsiders but between the minority Punjabi-Mohajir nexus’ control over the state system and the Bengali majority’s exclusion from the same. Whether it was the Punjabi-Mohajir politicians, bureaucrats or generals all were unwilling to hand over power to the Bengalis. In their efforts to block the Bengalis’ way to power while politicians, bureaucrats and generals were preoccupied, in unison, with palace intrigues, the militarisation of the bureaucratised state in Pakistan, as we shall see in chapter 4, soon placed the military at the helm of affairs.

Marxist writer Feroz Ahmed was particularly interested in the ethnic conflicts of Pakistan. In 1975 he edited a small book, *Focus on Baluchistan and Pushtoon Question*, and in 1997, published another book, *Ethnicity and Politics in Pakistan*,

which includes some of the earlier essays with some changes. His serialised articles in daily *Dawn* of Karachi in 2000 also focussed on the question of ethnicity and have some important insights. But on the whole his work suffers from excessive Marxist jargon, clichés, and moralistic recommendations. The over two decades of gap between the two books does not seem to have broadened his perspective on nationalism. Even in his last essays, published well after his death in 1997, he continued to deploy the ideas of pre-world war Marxist writers, like Lenin, Stalin and Kautsky, on nationalism, but none of the post-world war writers figured in his writings. Hence, he could never recover from the Marxist line, which saw nationalism in terms of progressive and reactionary, i.e., good and bad nationalisms (1997: 186). On that basis he accepted some nationalisms, like Bengali and Sindhi, as modern nationalisms, while rejecting others, like Pukhtun nationalism, as medieval particularism and Mohajir nationalism as fascism. Like Emile Zola's novels, in Ahmed's work the working class is composed of angels whereas the ruling class that of pure and simple rogues.

Because the intelligentsia in Pakistan is fed on these untheorised theories, there is pervasive confusion about the issue of ethnic conflict. During my field work in 1997 and 1998, I met numerous politicians, academics, lawyers, journalists, writers and activists in Pakistan but except for some academics who have developed their own theories, and some journalists who have first-hand information about ethnic groups, which I have duly cited, in most of my interviews and informal conversations I heard variations on the same theories. Therefore, after days of transcribing interviews, when I got down to writing my thesis, I decided to use the published work from

which these theories emanated than to attribute them to the interviewees. Likewise, I had to devise my own means to deal with ethnicity and nationalism, by theorising and reinterpreting the whole issue afresh on the basis of available information.

Dealing with Nationalism

Partha Chatterjee (1993: 5) has complained that the claims of nationalism to be a political movement have been taken too literally and too seriously. He has come to this conclusion by observing that the standard nationalist history in India takes the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 as the point of departure and tends to underplay the preceding years as the 'period of preparation' or 'social reform'. My objection to Chatterjee's argument is this: first, the standard nationalist history always, everywhere, claims to be what it is not. The other point is that I am not convinced that nationalism claims to be a *political* movement. Nationalism always tends to underplay its 'politics' in favour of its 'mission' to preserve the cultural and historic identity of the 'nation'. And this is one of the most hazardous lies of nationalism because it is for this reason that many are willing to kill and die for the 'nation'.

Therefore, if the nationalists emphasise a certain date as the starting point of nationalism they want to highlight the beginning of their 'struggle', the 'reawakening' of the 'nation' at that point rather than claiming that nationalism is a political movement. In other words, the nationalists pretend that the identity of the 'nation' had come under so much stress that they had no option but to turn nationalism into politics, implying that nationalism is something more than politics

and the pursuit of material interests. That is why I feel that the politics of nationalism to play down its politics needs to be taken seriously.

Unfortunately, this is exactly what has not happened. On the contrary, nationalism as a doctrine, as an ideology, has been taken too literally and too seriously to allow a thorough investigation of its political agenda, its material interests. Chatterjee has taken the ideology and doctrine of nationalism so seriously that the better part of his book *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* is replete with lengthy quotes from nationalist leaders, which he critiques in a remarkably creative manner, though. What we learn from Chatterjee's work is the inner working of the nationalist mind, its janus-facedness, its deceit and cunning, and of course its rhetorical vigour and philosophical poverty. Doubtless, it is a significant contribution to the literature on nationalism.

But by excessively focusing on doctrine and nationalist ideologues one tends to exaggerate their role and "to see the expansion of nationalism in terms of the conversion of people by the ideologues" (Breuilly, 1993:13). By doing so one also tends to underestimate another aspect of nationalism -- its political power despite its philosophical poverty. That power, whether we like it or not, needs to be taken seriously for it is no less lethal.

Anderson (1991: 5) has a point when he says that it would "make things easier if one treated it (nationalism) as if it belonged with 'kinship' and 'religion', rather than with 'liberalism' or fascism". For instance, Chatterjee's (1986: 7) statement that

nationalism is “one of Europe’s most pernicious exports, for it is not a child of reason or liberty, but of their opposite: of fervent romanticism, of political messianism whose inevitable consequence is the annihilation of freedom” is not very helpful for a better understanding of nationalism. We have heard that one before. Tom Nairn (Anderson, *ibid.*) termed nationalism as “the pathology of modern developmental history”. But that has not helped us to deal with nationalism more effectively.

The problem with treating nationalism, as an idea is that one gets caught in the labyrinthine of its ‘pathology’. One tends to forget that behind the idea of nationalism there is an institution, the modern state, that is a more pernicious and more enduring European export because it is not only the most powerful upholder of the idea of nationalism but also the most potent reason for provoking various kinds of nationalism. Chatterjee, of course, has not overlooked the role the modern state has played in the nationalist narrative and whenever he deals with that aspect he has loads of insights. But all the same his preference remains to be the doctrine rather than the politics of nationalism. My disagreement on the emphasis, however, has not reduced for me the immense importance of Chatterjee’s work and therefore I feel inclined to say that such an inspired work is a must for all those who have been taken on a fantastic trip of exploring the ‘mysteries’ of nationalism by Anthony Smith and the likes.

In a recent piece Smith (1999: 39) has claimed that nationalism's:

materialism is often quite misleading. Nationalism can emerge in all kinds of socio-economic milieux – in rich Quebec and poor Eritrea, in areas of decline as well as improvement, in pre-industrial as well as industrial conditions. Nor is it easy to explain the content and intensity of particular nationalisms through the workings of global capitalism or the dynamics of relative deprivation.

If the materialism of nationalism is misleading, then how should one approach it? Through its spiritualism? Through its sentimentalism? Smith has, in fact, mystified the whole issue of nationalism. The materialism of nationalism is never misleading if one sees it in real life situations rather than merely philosophising it. It is true that nationalism can emerge in all kinds of socio-economic milieux. But there is one condition in which nationalism cannot emerge: a stateless society. But then in today's world of nation-states that milieu does not exist. And this is the point to note: whether it is the relatively prosperous or relatively deprived groups the degree and the intensity of their nationalist sentiment can easily be judged by their proximity to and distance from the state. But for that one needs to study national movements in operation. It is for this reason that despite the encyclopaedic importance of Smith's innumerable volumes, when it comes to a better understanding of nationalism Mirosław Hroch's single book is far more rewarding.

Hroch, whose path-breaking book, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, (1985) has, as Hobsbawm (1992: 4) has rightly said, "opened the new era in the analysis of the composition of national liberation movements" and made Gellner (Hall, 1998: 6) concede that it has "made it difficult for him to open his mouth for

fear of making some mistake". Hroch (1998: 95) argues that one should not just analyse nationalism but rather study national movements because "the term 'national movement' has a significant advantage over 'nationalism' in that it refers to empirically observable activity by concrete individuals", and therefore "their goals and demands, their forms of organization, their numbers and their social composition" can be analysed.

Hroch is right that by regarding 'nationalism' as the prime mover, "we merely shift the explanation from the level of empirically grasped social activity to that of a 'state of mind', which is not susceptible to historical investigation." This is a sound advice to those who treat nationalism as a defining factor in the narrative of national movements. Studying national movements is a more appropriate tool for scholarly analysis because in concrete situations one can better understand the ideology, the discourse, the rhetoric and the myth making techniques and processes of nationalism. This is exactly what this study is trying to achieve in the following pages.

My main concern is to analyse ethnic conflict in Pakistan as a political issue, and politics for me is not about morals and principles but about power. For that I have used Foucault's schema. According to Foucault (1980: 91-92) there are two major systems of approach to the analysis of power: the contract-oppression approach and the domination-repression approach. In the contract-oppression approach power is "an original right that is given up in the establishment of sovereignty" as a social contrast. In this approach whenever power over-extends itself it becomes oppression. On the other hand, in the domination-repression approach there is no contract, and

therefore no question of abuse of power. Here repression is not power over-extended “but is, on the contrary, the mere effect and continuation of a relation of domination.” In the domination-repression schema “the pertinent opposition is not between legitimate and illegitimate, as in the first schema, but between struggle and submission.”

The story of ethnic conflict in Pakistan is neither a question of the legitimacy of the state nationalism, nor is it a question of the illegitimacy of ethnic nationalism. The question of legitimacy and illegitimacy itself is a creation of the state. It is a struggle for power between the dominant and non-dominant groups. And I am clearly on the side of the non-dominant. My ethnic background as a Pukhtun and the ease that I feel in speaking my mother tongue, Pashto, have little to do with my preferences. If I have no sympathy for Pukhtun politics the reason is simple: for me it is not my ethnicity or nationality that gives me a sense of identity but my sense of justice. Given the choice between my mother and justice I will side with justice.⁵ Not with some abstract concept of justice but my own sense of justice, which I have developed through my learning and unlearning, and which has become part of me -- my choice and my identity.

I see Punjabis as the dominant group and Mohajirs and Pukhtuns as comparatively more privileged groups and therefore the allies of Punjabis at different points in their history. I have no illusions that Bengalis, or Sindhis or Baloch would have behaved differently had they been in the place of Punjabis. Such idealism is not one of my

major failings. For "... I see what is – human, alas, all-too-human!" (Nietzsche, 1989: 283)

I agree with Benedict Anderson (1991: 161) that "(t)he difference between the inventions of 'official nationalism' and those of other types is usually that between lies and myths." The official lies of the Pakistani state present the country as one united nation with a common history, common culture, common language and common religion. But various ethnic groups refuse to accept those lies and challenge them with the myths of their own distinct history, culture and language, despite a common religion. In the end, however, I am more sympathetic towards ethnic nationalism because at least it "faces up to the negativity of the existing world" (Fine, 1999: 152). But at the same time, I am mindful that the moment ethnic nationalism achieves its goal, the state, it inexorably becomes part of the same negativity.

Role of the State

For an understanding of the ethnic conflict in Pakistan I start off with the examination of the role the modern state has come to play in the lives of individuals. The state as an institution of political power may be as old as organised human societies but the bureaucratic state that we have today is a modern phenomenon. It is a rather recent development. The modern state is an extremely interventionist institution which tries to penetrate almost every aspect of human life. And it is this aspect of the state that has acquired vital importance. As a result, some remarkable work on the changed nature of the state has come out in the recent years. While

⁵ Inversion of Albert Camus' famous statement in which he said that given the choice between my

making use of this work, my intention here is to show not what the state is but what it does to individuals. But as the main concern of this study is nationalism rather than the state, it does not attempt a systematic examination of the historical evolution of the state, and theories of the state.

My purpose is to highlight those aspects of the state, which will help us to identify its relationship with nationalism. Another point is that whatever shape the modern state takes, whether liberal democratic, socialist, communist, fascist or military authoritarian, its interventionist nature does not change. This does not mean that there is no difference between these state systems. What it means is that the basic structure of the modern state is the same in all these instances, and the difference is in the methods adopted under each of these systems. For instance, ideological engineering is an important part of every modern state structure but to achieve that goal various states adopt different methods ranging from suggestions to coercion, persecution and outright repression. And it is these methods, which differentiate “various forms of state of the same type of state”, otherwise “these modifications do not affect the very matrix of relations, ...they constitute differentiated forms of these relations” (Poulantzas, 1973: 147-48).

The modern state was introduced to Indian society in the form of colonial state. It was an altogether different form of power than what India had before colonialism. To highlight the difference between the two systems and the significance of the impact of the new system on Indian society, the second chapter looks at the pre-

colonial state system in India and then examines the colonial state system and the changes that it effected till the partition and independence of India. The third chapter assesses the state system in Pakistan and endeavours to explain the role that it has played in causing ethnic discontent. In the next four chapters four ethnic movements, namely, Pukhtun, Baloch, Sindhi and Mohajir, are separately studied. Despite my aversion to putting too much emphasis on personality, I had to repeatedly mention Ghaffar Khan and his family in the chapter on Pukhtun nationalism because the two are synonymous. Pukhtun nationalism has all along been personality-oriented rather than issue-oriented. The majority ethnic group, Punjabi, is not separately studied because that is the most privileged group in control of state power and therefore the only one, which has never had an ethnic movement confronting the state.

Chapter-2

Nationalism and the State

Madness is something rare in individuals - but in groups, parties, peoples, ages it is the rule.

Nietzsche¹

Ethnic and nationalist violence is one of the great group madness of modern times.² Millions of people have died in the twentieth century as a result of this madness and hundreds continue to die every day.³ If judged by the number of societies that are inflicted by it, it is more widespread in Asia and Africa. But its intensity and destructiveness is by no means less menacing in Europe where on the one hand Nazi Germany and Yugoslavia alone have caused the genocide of largest number of people in the shortest periods of time and on the other hand, Irish and Spanish nationalist groups' at random terrorist activities have claimed the lives of hundreds of innocent victims in British and Spanish cities.

As far as Asia and Africa are concerned, it was nationalism, which led to their independence from colonial rule. But that was not the end of the nationalist journey, only a beginning. The real project of nationalism was to manifest itself only after the

¹ (1973: 85).

² Ethnic and national movements are not always the same. For every ethnic movement is a nationalist movement, but every nationalist movement is not necessarily ethnic. For instance, the movement for Pakistan was a nationalist one which brought together various Muslim ethnic groups, but the movement for Bangladesh, which dismembered Pakistan, was purely ethnic nationalist movement based on a single ethnic group, Bengalis.

³ Horowitz (1985: xi) quoted the figure 10 millions killed since the World War II, from a source published in 1975, but that figure needs to be updated to include the millions more murdered in Europe, Africa and Asia since.

establishment of the nation-state. By all standards, it has been a bloody and destructive project. Many of these new nations have spent more resources and energies on fighting inter-state and intra-state battles than on facing the challenges of a complex, inter-dependent and asymmetrical world economic system.

It is a general observation that whenever there is ethnic violence it is regarded as something 'primitive' and 'uncivilised'. All available evidence, however, demonstrates that ethnicity and ethnic conflict may be as old as human societies, its intensity that has recently touched monstrous proportions, is something new, something modern, that is directly related to modernity, and its most powerful manifestation, the modern state. All ethnic and national struggles are about the state. In fact, the state itself has caused some of the most brutal ethnic violence, as was the case in Nazi Germany and recently Yugoslavia. In other parts of the world, too, the state-sponsored violence has led to the death of thousands of people.

Ethnic and nationalist violence generally appears in two forms: either by the state or for the state. The state sees any voice of dissent and demand for autonomy or self-determination as 'provincial', 'tribal' and disruptive. On the other hand, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups feel alienated and see the state as not their own and therefore struggle to either make it more responsive to their demands or, if not possible, to create their own state. Emphasising a direct link between the state and nationalism does not mean that all other factors such as industrialism, communication, and market economy, are less important. Far from that, what it means is that the interventionist nature of the modern state and its penetration of

almost every aspect of individual life makes it a focal point of all struggles. These struggles might not be just political but economic, cultural, regional, ethnic and religious. But in every case, because of the pivotal role of the state, it is looked up to for reparation.

It would be wrong to suggest that every national movement is about creating a state of its own. But there should be no doubt that every national movement demands that the state ought to behave as if it's their own. In the world of nation-states, it would be naïve to believe that ethnic, linguistic and religious struggles are simply about the preservation of a group identity. Nationalist movements arise in many different guises, in many different forms and in many different circumstances. It is also not correct to suggest that it is only the deprived groups among whom the nationalist sentiment is the strongest. For instance, Basques and Catalans in Spain, and Sikhs in India are relatively more prosperous than the rest of the ethnic groups in their countries. But that does not prove that most of the national movements are not launched by those who perceive themselves to be deprived: if not economically, then culturally or linguistically. Once again, whether it is the privileged or the deprived ones the state is the issue. Neither Basques, nor Sikhs nor Quebecois in Canada see the state as their own.

Nationalism as a modern form of politics is as intricate a phenomenon as modernity itself. It is relevant here to mention that modernity is not something that emerges out of traditional – “as one constant – the ‘modern’ – growing at the expense of another constant – the ‘traditional’”, but rather a phenomenon that transforms everything

(Breuilly, 1996: 158). Modernity is a rupture, a discontinuation, and a decisive break with the tradition. Modernity is a combination of political and economic institutions, like the modern state and industrial capitalism, social and political concepts, like class and citizenship, and technological developments, like communication and transportation. Since about the seventeenth century these modes of social life or organization emerged in Europe and gradually became global in their influence (Giddens, 1990: 1).

The most important role in the global spread of modernity has been played by the state, as an instrument of capitalist expansion. First, it was the European colonial state, which introduced the colonies to a centralised bureaucratic state system and later when the colonies gained independence the nation-state took it upon itself to launch modernisation. Unlike Europe, in most of the Asian and African countries, modernity did not come about via predominantly market means, but through politico-military means (Mouzelis, 1998: 160), through the state. This may partly explain why most of the Asian and African states are militaristic and authoritarian.

What has happened in these societies is that the state has not developed as a result of a change in social and economic relations as was the case in Europe, but has been placed on top of society without the consolidation of new power relations and without the strengthening of new economic forces. In Europe the absolutist state was transformed into a liberal state by the struggles of new classes and status groups. It took long periods of time for these groups to consolidate their position and make the state responsive to their requirements. The great revolution of 1789-1848 was the

triumph of the middle class or 'bourgeoisie' and its concept of a liberal society (Hobsbawm, 1962: 13).

In the colonised world, however, the liberal state of the empires played an absolutist and authoritarian role. It replaced the segmentalised authority of local communities with the centralised bureaucratic system. Likewise, nationalism, too, has not emerged as a concept that, due to social and economic changes, replaces the old concept of local community and localised authority with an anonymous relatedness to the nation and a centralised authority of the state. In the colonised world nationalism had more to do with the bureaucratisation of the state than anything else. It developed in a social set up that was disturbed by the intervention of the state but not yet transformed by the social and economic forces of the market economy, industrialism and infrastructural developments. The inroads that the market economy and capitalism made were selective and limited, compared to the inroads of the state itself. Hence, nationalism made its appearance at a time when old economic relations were intact, and nascent classes and status groups were taking shape under state patronage.

Understandably, anti-colonial nationalism was unambiguously anti-state. It united the colonised people against a common enemy, the colonial state. But after independence nationalism in postcolonial societies became unabashedly statist. The major preoccupation of the postcolonial elite has been the formation of the state and building of a nation through the state machinery. This is in a sharp contrast with the nationalism in the west, which identified itself with the state from the start. Unlike

the native elite of the colonies, the European elite did not have to fight for capturing the state: it simply had to struggle for making the state less absolutist, and more responsive to their requirements. In Europe the national bourgeoisie and its nationalism transformed the absolutist state into a 'liberal', racist and imperialist institution. In the colonies nationalism led to independence from foreign rule and the imposition of a highly centralised state system, which in most instances turned into militaristic, authoritarian regimes that imposed a kind of 'native' colonialism on the non-dominant groups.

The following section looks at the emergence of the modern state in the west and its interventionist role and assesses the relationship it has with nationalism.

The Modern State

It is difficult to find a better description of the role that the modern state has come to play in the lives of individuals than what Woody Allen (1973) has said in one of his movies. He asks Diane Keaton: "Do you believe in god?" Keaton replies: "I believe there's someone out there who watches over us all the time." Allen quips: "Unfortunately it's the government (state)." Doubtless, the state has assumed the role that god is presumed to play: watchful all the time, seeing through every individual and keeping tab on their activities. There is hardly any aspect of human activity, whether social, cultural, economic or even private, which is, in one way or another, not monitored by the watchful eyes of the state through its elaborate system of record keeping, policing and surveillance. Also like god, the state claims to be neutral, impartial and impersonal.

The state is the most ubiquitous, massive, powerful and violent container of political power. Because of its omnipresence it seems as if the state has always been there, at least, since the beginning of human societies. But it has not been so. “Most of human history has not been graced by the presence of the states” (Hall & Ikenberry, 1989: 16). And even when the state emerged, most of the people remained outside its orbit. It is only during the last two centuries that the state has spread its tentacles to encompass almost the whole of planet earth. In feudal societies, for many, the state was an option. And before that in the hunting-gathering stage it did not even exist. As Gellner (1983: 5) put it, “once none had the state, then some had it, and finally all have it”.

Today every human being is a citizen of one state or another: not only a citizen but also a national because every state is a nation-state. In the nation-state system everyone has an officially certified identity, whether one likes it or not. In most cases this identity is internalised and adored. But in many other cases, it is resented and rejected. Hence, many of the most intractable conflicts in the world are either ethno-national conflicts or possess a strong nationalist component (Smith, 1999: 37), and whatever the actual reasons behind them might be, they are predicated on the issues of identity: cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious, regional, national, etc. The state as a manifestation of political power is the arena of all ‘identitarian thought’, to use Adorno’s very useful neologism, and all ‘identitarian’ struggles (Said, 1993: 182). All ethnic and nationalist struggles are either against the state, for the state or by the state.

To explain the role of the state, it would not be out of place here to briefly define the forms of social power. There are three main forms of social power: economic, ideological and political: in other words, the powers of production, persuasion and persecution. Bobbio (cited in Poggi, 1990: 4) has defined these three forms thus: economic power is about the possession of certain rare or held to be rare goods, which empower a person or a group to make those who do not possess them to adopt a certain conduct, to perform a certain kind of labour. Ideological power belongs to those who have a certain cultural, economic or political authority to formulate the rules of social conduct. Political power rests with those who possess the means with which physical violence can be exerted. The state being the most massive container of political power that “claims monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Weber, 1991: 78); its significance, its paramountcy, its ultimacy and its functional priority over other bases of power in today’s societies cannot be overemphasised.

The modern state is not only a container of political power but also, as a manager of economy, health, education and social welfare, has a control over other forms of social power. The overarching managerial nature of the modern state, its salvation oriented role, is a feature that makes it distinctively different from the pre-modern state. And it is this distinction that needs to be understood.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries some very significant changes occurred in Europe, which led to the emergence of a different kind of society with its different

set of requirements. The kind of economic, social and political upheaval that was arising from the capitalist mode of production gave birth to a new form of power relations. Thus came forth a modern form of political power in the shape of the absolutist state. This was quite a unique institution: almost unrecognisably different from the erstwhile state systems. The emergence of the absolutist state was “a decisive rupture with the pyramidal, parcellized sovereignty of the medieval social formations, with their estates and liege systems” (Anderson, 1983: 137).

Coinciding with the disappearance of serfdom⁴, a core institution of the original feudal mode of production in Europe, and the development of capitalism, the main characteristics of the absolutist states were standing armies, a permanent bureaucracy, national taxation, a codified law, and the beginnings of a unified market (ibid.). The state now was not only an active player in the political, economic and ideological power games but had also become a dominant partner. In the eighteenth century, with the spectacular development of infrastructure and bureaucratic penetration of society, the administrative state was transformed into a nation-state and ‘subject’ into ‘citizen’ (Mouzelis, 1998: 159).

Foucault (1991a: 104) has outlined three great forms and economies of political power in the West: 1) the state of justice, a political dispensation in the feudal type of territorial regime based on laws – either customs or written laws – with “a whole

⁴ “The absolutist states in Eastern Europe – in Prussia, Austria and Russia – were ‘device(s) for the consolidation of serfdom’. In the more backward social conditions of Eastern Europe, the aristocracy did not have to contend with a rising urban bourgeoisie, and Eastern absolutism was more militarised than in the West. For example, ‘The Prussian Bureaucracy...was born as an offshoot of the army’”. Note 1, Held et al. (1983: 149).

reciprocal play of obligations and litigations”; 2) the administrative state, a regime of regulations and discipline that was “born in the territoriality of national boundaries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries”; and 3) the governmental state, the state that we live in, where the emphasis shifts from its territoriality to the mass of its population, its volume and density, though territory continues to figure as one of its component elements. The governmental state, while referring to and making use of the instrumentation of economic savoir, rules the population by apparatuses of security. This is a state of policing and surveillance and the police being “the most solid basis of civilisation” (cited in Pasquino, 1991: 108), this is the most civilised and the most dangerous state.

The important points in Foucault’s schema, which explain the role of the state, are these: the concerns of the state for justice were quite limited in their scope. The sole function of the state was that of administering justice on the basis of “reciprocal play of obligation and litigation”, with the tools of customs or written laws. The state “functioned essentially through signs and levies. Signs of loyalty to the feudal lord, rituals, ceremonies and so forth, and levies in the form of taxes, pillage, hunting, war, etc.” (Foucault, 1980: 125).

With the emergence of the administrative state, which is generally known as the absolutist state, however, the functions of the state increased and their significance intensified. National boundaries came into prominence. Regulation and discipline acquired eminence. For the protection of national boundaries standing armies were established. For regulation and discipline permanent bureaucracies with codified

laws were created. And for the maintenance of armies and bureaucracies public taxation was imposed. A whole regime of duties and obligations was erected. Prior to these changes capitalist economy had already emerged. The new state helped to develop a unified market. Since then the state and its powers have been continuously developing (Foucault, 1982: 213).

It has developed into a governmental state, which exercises its power through social production and social service: a system that obtains productive service from individuals in their concrete lives. Such a system demanded a real and effective 'incorporation' of power so that access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday life could be gained. Hence, schools were established to discipline and prisons to punish. A new science of the state, statistics, came into being for managing population, for accumulating individuals.⁵ From thereon the problems of demography, public health, hygiene, housing conditions, longevity, fertility and sex became the concerns of the state (Foucault, 1980: 125; 1991a: 96).

With the change in the role of the state its relationship with the individual has changed as well. In the pre-modern states there was no direct relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Whatever relationship they had was symbolic and indirect rather than factual and concrete. But the individuals' relationship with their labour, their produce, and their community was direct, real and personal. In the new regime

⁵ "the economic system that promotes the accumulation of capital and the system of power that ordains the accumulation of men are, from the seventeenth century on, correlated and inseparable phenomena" (Foucault, 1980: 125).

of capital the individuals lose their direct and concrete relationship with their labour, their produce and their community, and are required to replace it with a direct but impersonal link with the state and an abstract and anonymous bond with the nation.

Industrial capitalism and the modern state have also transformed the pre-modern concepts of class and status groups. Class, which has, under capitalism, acquired new meanings, and a new form, is a major defining point of the modern state. The state is essentially an institution for managing and mediating class relations to maintain the dominance of some over the rest. But it is not an organization for managing the collective affairs of the bourgeoisie only, as Marx believed; it does far more than that (Mann, 1996: 303). It manages the affairs of every individual, group and class, and depending on its development as many of those affairs as possible.

The state has monopolised the means of violence and coercion. No other institution or individual can lay claims over these means. This has led to the immense centralisation of political power. In pre-modern states, especially in the European states, the ruler did not have a monopoly over the means of violence. The church and estates were strong contenders for political power. Therefore, violence was shared, “representative, scenic, signifying, public and collective”, unlike the violence of the modern state, which is “coercive, corporal, solitary, and secret” (Foucault, 1977: 131).

Pre-modern states can be regarded as “composed of numerous societies” (Giddens, 1985: 53) and numerous cultures. This was not a choice of the state but its

limitation. Due to restricted means of transportation and communication, a single central authority could not be established. The absence of a central authority facilitated the existence of autonomous societies and local sources of authority. The segmentation of the state authority and the autonomy of the locality meant the existence of fragmented, varied and diversified cultures. Local communities, not the state, were the source of identification. And communities were integrated not on the basis of abstract laws and regulations but traditions, customs and values. These traditions, customs and values, being part of the culture and belief systems, were internalised.

This was quite different from the regime of rules and regulations, which is indoctrinated through rigorous schooling and ideological engineering and maintained through constant and regular policing. This feature of policing and surveillance, which has been continuously becoming enormously sophisticated, did not even figure then. In the face of a segmentalised authority it was quite impossible for a state to have well-defined borders. Thus, instead of borders there were only frontiers, which required neither passport nor immigration. The question of national identity did not arise.

But the modern state, which is also a nation-state, is a rigidly centralised regime that thrives on the concepts of similarity and difference, unity and differentiation, and inclusiveness and exclusivity. Internally, it prefers to have one language, one culture and one nation and every citizen is inclusive for the attainment of homogeneity and unity of the nation. At the same time, it imposes the concept of difference that is

manifested in the categories of 'good', law-abiding and productive citizens, and 'bad', anti-social and parasitic ones. The crucial point behind these categories, these classifications, is the very basic and concrete question of one's willingness to submit or a tendency to resist. Resistance is an anti-state activity and therefore against the interests of the nation (remember the committee against activities un-American?).

Externally, the modern state excludes everyone beyond its borders as the 'other', 'foreign', 'alien', to highlight the internal unity and individuality of the nation. Adorno and Horkheimer (1986: 7) said of the Enlightenment that it "recognizes as being and occurrence only what can be apprehended in unity: its ideal is the system from which all and everything follows." One can say exactly the same about the modern state, which recognises nothing but the unity and one-ness of a single phenomenon, the nation. The nation-state sits on top of a society that "...is ruled by equivalence. It makes the dissimilar comparable by reducing it to abstract quantities" (ibid.).

The question of reducing dissimilar to abstract quantities is of paramount importance for understanding the relationship between the modern state, ethnicity and nationalism.

Ethnicity and the State

The question here is: how should one examine nationalism and nation-ness? There can be two approaches to the explanation of nationalism and nation-ness: subjective and objective. The subjective approach is the one adopted by the nationalists, for

whom nation-ness is an eternal reality and nationalism is an awareness of that reality. The objective approach is the one taken by students of nationalism who believe that nation-ness is a modern phenomenon created by nationalism (Hobsbawm, 1992: 5-8; Anderson, 1991: 5). The former approach requires faith, whereas the latter demands the negation of that faith. For nationalists it is a simple issue: the fact that they feel and think that they are a nation is enough. But the historians insist on more solid a basis than the nationalists' feeling and thinking. In the end it is the historians who are faced with the paradoxes and complexities, and therefore, within the objective approach there are many different approaches to nationalism like modernist, primordialist, Marxist, functionalist, etc.

As Anderson (1991: 5) has aptly pointed out, the historians' irritably begins the moment they start brooding over the objective modernity of nations and their subjective antiquity, the formal universality of nationalism and the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations, and of course the political power of nationalisms and their philosophical poverty. As a result, it is not surprising that every serious theorist of nationalism has shied away from defining the nation. What they define is nationalism. For some nationalism is a doctrine, for others it is a sentiment, and for still others it is politics (Breuilly, 1996: 146-148). As a doctrine nationalism suffers from its own philosophical poverty, as a sentiment it may be very strong but too subjective to judge. As politics, however, its power is undeniable and its presence too real to ignore. Therefore, a more suitable way to deal with nationalism, probably, is to treat it as a form of politics. Such an approach also

provides an opportunity to deal with the doctrinal and sentimental side of nationalism as a manifestation of political power.

Gellner's (1983: 1) definition of nationalism as "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" is a useful one to begin with. What is important about this definition is that it explains both official nationalism as well as national movements, which are launched against the encroachment of the state. For, as Gellner adds, "(n)ationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment." Thus, a group or groups who have a control over the state and its resources develop a feeling of satisfaction, because they believe that their national unit, i.e., ethnic, regional or religious group identity, or culture, and the political unit, the state, are congruent.

At the same time those groups, which perceive themselves to be marginalised in the state structure, develop a feeling of anger because they do not see the political and national units to be congruent. As a result, nationalism becomes a struggle between two opposing sentiments, two different kinds of nationalism. The satisfaction of the dominant groups leads to the creation of an overarching nationalist ideology that demands homogeneity and oneness. On the other hand, the anger of the non-dominant groups engenders nationalist movements, which reject the official ideology of the oneness of the nation and demand recognition for their particular identities.

The difference between state nationalism and ethnic nationalism is that the former belongs exclusively to the political sphere, whereas the latter is essentially founded in the sociological sphere, and only in the process of its struggle takes a political shape. State nationalism is programmatic from start to finish and is imposed from the top through ideological engineering. Ethnic nationalism arises from below, essentially from a non-programmatic base, and through the process may or may not espouse a program and become political (Hobsbawm, 1996: 257). As long as it does not demand political autonomy within the state or does not struggle for a separate state, it continues to be non-programmatic and apolitical. But the moment it charts out a program for itself, its confrontation with the state nationalism becomes inevitable.

The most important difference between state nationalism and ethnic nationalism is that the former has a state, whereas the latter strives to have a share in the state power or, if that is not possible, to have a state of its own. In most cases, state nationalism, before the establishment of the state is but ethnic nationalism. After acquiring the state, however, the character and the ideology of ethnic nationalism become unrecognisably different. Indeed, it adopts the methods, the ideology, and the policies against which it once struggled. Renan (Gellner, 1994: 192) was right when he said that the basis of national identity is not memory but amnesia. But he was most certainly thinking of a national identity that comes with a state. The same cannot be said about ethnic identity. The basis of ethnic identity is memory not amnesia. It is a refusal to forget what the state nationalism insists must be forgotten that politicises ethnicity.

Social Bases of Nationalism

It is always the modernised and mobile sections of society, which first become conscious of their ethnic and national identity. An economic and material issue is couched in ethnic and cultural terms and the 'nation-ness' of the group is presented as an historic reality with a distinct past and history. The perceived threat to economic and material privileges is translated into a threat to the very identity of the group, whether regional, religious or ethnic. This does not, however, mean that ethnic and nationalist politics is merely elite politics. That used to be the Marxist argument against national movements, which termed nationalism as a bourgeois ideology aimed at empowering the national bourgeoisie. But that argument failed to explain the role of those devout supporters of ethnic and national movements who come from as varied groups as peasants, factory workers, professionals, office workers and state officials like civil and military personnel.

Nationalism obviously is a form of politics that aims at the acquisition of power through control over the state (Breuilly, 1993: 1). But nationalism speaks the language of culture and identity to achieve power. That makes nationalism a populist rather than elitist form of politics. Populism is the mobilisation of the people as individuals rather than members of a particular socio-economic group (Marshall, 1994: 404). Nationalist populism requires mobilisation of individuals as members of a particular ethnic, regional or religious group regardless of their socio-economic background. That is why nationalist movements are culture-based rather than class-based. They appeal to people belonging to all classes in the name of ethnic and

national identity and rights. The underlying assumption is that identity can be preserved, and rights achieved only through control over the state.

As noted above, class and status groups as we define them today are a modern phenomenon that owes its existence to the modern state and industrial capitalism. The defining feature of class and status groups is their mobility. Unlike pre-modern societies where class and status were hereditary and therefore fixed, class and status in industrial capitalist societies are acquired, fluid, unfixed and unstable. This means that everyone can aspire to be anyone. It also means that everyone is in competition with everyone else. Whereas the modern state as a major employer for its large standing armies and permanent bureaucracies was the first institution that gave rise to large and differentiated status groups, industrial capitalism gave rise to classes.

Theoretically industrial capitalism encourages equal rights and opportunities, but in practice it introduces uneven development and unequal access to resources. Especially in its early stages industrial capitalism causes social, cultural and economic upheaval triggered by rapid urbanisation, labour migration, population growth, low wages and scarcity of housing. When waged employment becomes the norm, labour turns into commodity and individuals are dragged into an endless competition. With uneven development being a basic feature of industrial capitalism, a regional competition involving regional communities is encouraged. As a consequence competition-based 'identitarian' struggles at individual as well as collective level ensue.

Under these circumstances two kinds of individuals and two kinds of collectivities are affected by the same kind of processes in two diametrically different directions: 1) those who benefit from the modern state and industrial capitalism; and 2) those who are adversely affected by the state intervention and an uneven development. It must be pointed out, however, that the simultaneous emergence of the modern state and industrial capitalism that Europe witnessed did not occur in many parts of the world. And it is here that Gellner's (1983: 40) emphasis on nationalism as an effect of industrial social organization becomes problematic. In some regions of Europe, like the Balkans, and in the colonised regions of Asia and Africa the modern state came long before industrialism. And nationalism in these societies had more to do with the interventionist nature of the modern state than with industrial social organization. As we shall see in the following pages some of the most radical national movements like that of Pukhtun's and Baloch's in Pakistan arose in those regions which were not touched even by the indirect effects of industrial social organisation.

The state as a major source of political power and as the largest employer in pre-industrial societies offers a more plausible explanation for the rise of ethnic and regional movements. For before industrialism turns societies into homogeneous social and political units with its requirement for common language and culture, the modern state had already started the process. Industrialism only makes that process faster and more effective.

To see that process in a specific situation we need to move on to the next chapter in which the colonial state in India as a form of the modern state will be examined. A more detailed account of the classes and status groups created by the modern (colonial) state will be given as it was these groups who first became conscious of their ethnic, religious and national identities and then launched anti-colonial nationalist movements.

Chapter-3

Colonisation of the State in India

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole face of the globe.

Marx¹

One of the most momentous contributions of colonialism to the colonies was the introduction of the modern state system that was discussed briefly in the previous chapter. It was through the state administration that some of the most significant structural changes in the colonies were materialised. It was through conscious and deliberate efforts of the colonial state that cultural changes were effected, new classes and status groups created, new relations of power established and new methods of control and coercion adopted. So effective and far reaching was the colonial state's intervention that after independence the postcolonial elite not only continued with it but in most cases rather 'improvised' on it, and expanded it.

The impact of the modern state system on Indian society cannot be fully understood unless the nature of the pre-colonial state structure in India is examined. The idea is not to compare the two systems and to prove which system was better or worse as that would be preposterous, but to identify the structural demands of these two altogether different forms of power. After discussing the nature of the pre-colonial state, I go on to examine the ideological underpinnings of the colonial state, the methods it adopted, and the changes it effected. The purpose here is to examine the

manner in which the centralised bureaucratic state was placed on Indian society by the colonialists, as an instrument of control and coercion, and then see in the next chapter how the postcolonial elite in Pakistan adopted it as the only authentic tool for managing society.

The Pre-colonial State in India

There is a kind of infectious trend among the historians of India to see pre-colonial Indian society in terms of division and unity. This trend is common in both colonialist and nationalist discourse. The colonial point of view was that “...the first and most essential thing to learn about India—[is] that there is not, and never was an India, or even any country of India, possessing *according to European ideas*, any sort of unity” (emphasis added) (cited in Seal, 1973: 2). The nationalists claimed: “there is no country marked out by the sea and the mountains so clearly to be a single whole as India”. They romanticised the geographical wholeness of India by emphasising its “urge to political unification in defiance of vast distances and immense difficulties of transport and communication” (cited in Pandey, 1990: 247-48).

Both colonialists and nationalists have used the argument to legitimise their respective claims to rule India. The colonialists’ insistence on the divisiveness of Indian society legitimised their rule and their claim that they had united India for the first time in its history. The nationalists asserted the unity of India to counter

¹ Cited in Anderson (1991: 139).

any regional and ethnic claims and to prepare the ground for the nation-state of a united India.

The very instrumentalism of the argument has precluded a serious inquiry into the nature of Indian society. Therefore, such a discourse continues to prevail among those historians who are inclined to depend on simple and rhetorical categorisation. For instance, one such historian, Francis Robinson (1974: 1), starts his book with this statement: "The British united the peoples of India under one government but left them under two." The rhetoric of the statement not only betrays a lack of understanding of the nature of Indian society, but also ominously obscures the very fact that the British colonised the peoples of India, not united them. Judging Robinson by his work one has no doubt that his statement is a sign of naivety rather than malice. While taking the claim of the colonial state at its face value, he seems to believe that the imposition of the centralised colonial state on top of Indian society was an act of unification. He simply has not been able to recognise that the basic difference between the pre-colonial and colonial India was not that of division and unity; it was a difference between the forms of power.

Anyone looking at Indian society through the prism of the modern concept of political unity and division introduced by the modern state is doomed to regard pre-colonial India as a divided society. But seen through the difference in the mechanism of power one realises that pre-colonial Indian society was neither divided nor did the British unite the peoples of India. There is a difference between a divided and a fragmented society: a divided society presupposes a unifying centre

and a centralised authority, whereas a fragmented society does not have a unifying centre and a centralised authority. There also is a difference between a centralised authority imposed from the top, which the colonial state did, and the unity of the people, which did not have much relevance in pre-colonial India. In the fragmented society of pre-colonial India the concept of political unity did not figure because authority there was segmentalised rather than centralised. Therefore, the whole exercise of applying the modern concept of political unity and division to pre-colonial India is superfluous.

There was a basic and profound difference in the state system of the Mughal empire and the one that the British imposed on India. And that difference cannot be understood unless a transformation in the nature of power is comprehended. Notwithstanding the fact that the Mughal empire had succeeded in imposing “a centralised administration, a uniform revenue policy, (and) a network of inland trade”, it was far from being “a firmly unified modern nation state” and except for the most commercialised regions “subsistence agriculture sustained a hard core of economic isolation” (Raychaudhuri, 1983: 3).

Like any pre-modern state, the Mughal state’s authority was constrained by the limits of communication and transportation. The emperor was the king of the plains and open roads only and those who lived in or beyond mountains knew nothing of the king (Heesterman, 1978: 44). It was a decentralised state system that did not interfere with the affairs of the regional elite as long as order was maintained and troops and tributes were supplied to the emperor. There were,

however, some aspects of the Mughal state which made it different from the pre-modern state in Europe. As noted in the previous chapter, in Europe the church and estates were powerful contenders for political power. No such institutions existed in India.

Neither Islam nor Hinduism has the institution of the church. On the other hand, there was no concept of private ownership of land either. The emperor, i.e., the state, was the supreme landlord. Even though the Muslim elite had large landholdings, they did not own the land. For all practical purposes, the land belonged to the emperor, who would assign specific areas to the members of a small ruling class “through a system of temporary alienations of the claim” (Habib, 1982: 241). In the absence of private ownership, the Zamindars (landholders) expressed their control of land not in terms of ownership but through their command over its occupants and produce (Fuller, 1989: 29). Revenue played as important a role as rent in a feudal system, but it was not really rent or a land tax, rather a tax on crops (Habib, 1982: 235).

The system of control and coercion was based on force rather than the law: as long as the Zamindar managed to command authority over the occupants, collect a share of the produce and provide the emperor with troops and tribute, he was the lord of the estate and enjoyed a degree of political autonomy within the empire (Fuller, 1989: 30). It was a system in which the empire ensured the independence of the Zamindar from the top-end of the power hierarchy but could not guarantee his protection from the bottom-end. Therefore, the Zamindar was left to devise his

own methods of authority and control for the maintenance of his status. In other words, the autonomous status of the Zamindar implied a considerable degree of perpetual insecurity. In a system where no individual could lay claim to permanent legal ownership of land, no uniform system of landholding, like feudalism, could emerge. Thus, the management of land depended mostly on the ability of individual Zamindars and their specific circumstances.

The absence of the church and private ownership did not necessarily mean more powers for the state. Indeed, the insecurity of the local lords was reflected in their mistrust of the state. The fact that outside the state administration there existed no other institution can be interpreted as the weakness of the state rather than its strength. For unlike feudal states of Europe where the church, estate and the state as permanent institutions were in alliance to dominate society, Indian society lacked the mechanism of permanent dominance.²

The concept of rulership in India was not based on the idea of contract but of incorporation "in which rulers not only outranked everyone but could also encompass those they ruled" (Cohn, 1983: 73). Local lords maintained a social order based on cosmological concepts and through ritual action (ibid.). Although the king sat at the apex of a vertical military hierarchy, he had to establish personal relationships in a horizontal field with the high-ranking officials and notables because of a lack of hierarchical command structure (Heesterman, 1978: 36).

The system of incorporation and horizontal linkages implied that although the state did not interfere in local affairs, it was always actively involved with local disputes because social order and harmony were a prerequisite for the continuous supply of troops and tributes. There was one area, however, which called for state intervention. The Mughal state was dependent on a hydraulic economy. It is a limitation of a hydraulic economy that it cannot be managed without state intervention. Therefore, the state interfered in the economy through what Wittfogel (Ayubi, 1995: 43) has called a “bureaucratic landlordism”.³

The Colonial State

Foucault (1980: 17) has outlined three methods of distancing which came to be applied by the colonising powers of Europe for the maintenance of their capitalist economies. Those methods were the army, colonisation and prisons. Soldiers were recruited predominantly from amongst the peasants. That had two objectives: one, to drain off significant numbers of over-numerous peasants who could not find jobs; and two, to use them against workers in case of unrest. Colonisation, too, was used for draining off these elements and to eliminate the possibility of an alliance of the proletariat. Those sent to the colonies were separated from both ends; whereas their links with the working class in the home country were clipped by distance, their distance from the colonised was maintained through the racial ideology and policies

² The logic of the argument that the caste system in India became more oppressive during colonial rule is understandable in the light of the introduction of private ownership.

³ Max Weber believed that India, like China and Egypt, was one of “the countries with the earliest development of bureaucracy” based on irrigation (Ayubi, 1995: 42). Interestingly it is this feature of the Mughal state, which has led many an historian to believe that it had a well-established bureaucratic administration. But it must be pointed out that the function of the bureaucracy of irrigation was very

of the colonial administration. The third method of distancing was erected around the prison system based on an ideology about crime, criminals, mob, degenerates, and 'animals', partly linked with racialism.

Foucault made the above observation in an interview. Like most of his interview statements, which are notorious for being inadequate as far as elaboration is concerned, Foucault has only touched upon the crux of the matter and has left the rest to the reader's imagination. But all the same, it provides a good starting point because what it highlights is that the objective of these 'dividing practices' was to preclude the possibility of any threat to modern capitalism and its most important instrument of power, i.e., the modern state.

The emergence of the modern state was a necessary condition for the rise of capitalism, and colonialism was a requirement for the expansion of capitalism. It is part of the story of the rise of modern capitalism that it created national boundaries and then crossed those boundaries to reach various corners of the world. This rather contradictory role of capital becomes understandable when one realises that capitalism is the most protectionist and the most expansionist of all modes of production. The protectionist nature of capital led to the creation of regional boundaries and the formation of local markets, which in turn gave rise to the establishment of the nation-state (Mandel, 1983: 526). On the other hand, capitalist expansionism required it to cross the boundaries that it had itself erected. The janus-face of capital introduced the concept of national sovereignty and then

limited in its scope: it was unlike the bureaucracy of the modern state that interferes in every aspect of

violated it by colonising various lands and people. It is important to remember that protectionism is a limitation of capitalism whereas expansionism is its true nature. “Capital by its very nature tolerates no geographical limits to its expansion” (ibid. 526). As Wallerstein has said:

Capitalism was from the beginning an affair of the world economy and not of nation states...capital has never allowed its aspirations to be determined by national boundaries in a capitalist world economy, and the creation of “national” barriers – generally, mercantilism – has historically been a defensive mechanism of capitalists located in states which are one level below the high point of strength in the system (cited in Giddens, 1985: 165).

Theories of colonialism are generally about colonialism in general and the colonial state is only treated as an instrument of colonialism. Thus, the nature of the colonial state and the policies that it adopted are all part of the story of colonialism in general.⁴ And that story, despite great variations between colonial policies in various parts of the world, had some significant points in common (Seton-Watson, 1977: 329). One of the major common points was the introduction of the centralised bureaucratic state system. In the previous chapter we discussed the modern state because by now it has become a universal phenomenon. And it was through colonialism that the modern state system has achieved its universal spread. Here we look at the link between the modern and the colonial states.

Structurally the colonial state was a replica of the modern state. Bureaucratic hierarchy, large standing army, market economy, regional boundaries, rules and

social life.

⁴ Among the theorists of colonialism, Wallerstein places particular emphasis on the role of the state for he considers it as a “creation of the capitalist world economic order” that has its roots in colonialism (King, 1986: 215, 216).

regulations, discipline, control and coercion, were all common features of both. Also, capitalist expansion remained at the core of both the modern and colonial state's concerns (King, 1986: 209). But despite its structural similarities with the modern state the colonial state's methods to achieve its mission were different in very significant ways.

The ideological underpinnings of the modern state are to play down the difference between the rulers and the ruled, to attain cultural homogeneity, and to inculcate individual and collective conformity in the name of the nation. In contrast to that, the ideological underpinnings of the colonial state were to play up the difference between the rulers and the ruled, to highlight the cultural difference between the two, and to depreciate the culture of the colonised. The basis of the modern state was the rule of national uniformity. The basis of colonial state was, what Chatterjee (1993: 10) has called, the "rule of colonial difference, namely, the preservation of the alienness of the ruling group", and therefore it "was not just the agency that brought the modular forms of the modern state to the colonies; it was also an agency that was destined never to fulfil the normalizing mission of the modern state."

But the question arises: what was the need for emphasising colonial difference when the colour, language, culture and military superiority of the colonialists set them far apart from the colonised? Ironically, it was not some kind of innate racism that forced the colonialists to emphasise the difference but a very basic requirement of the modern form of power: the modern state does not claim authority on the basis of the hereditary rank of a monarchical lineage; the basis of its authority is the nature of

relationship between the rulers and the ruled (King, 1986: 54). The modern state requires, what Habermas (1996: 285) has called, a “legally mediated solidarity among citizens”, in other words it needs secular legitimation. Another basic tenet of the modern state is the concept of sovereignty: a concept that privileges the geographic/national boundaries of the states.

By conquering foreign lands colonial powers violated the principle of sovereignty and by imposing colonial states on colonies they violated the principle of legitimacy. The problem arose when the colonialists’ modern, rational and ‘civilised’ self-image that had found its full expression in the shape of the modern state’s rationality and emphasis on the ‘rule of law’ was confronted by their disregard for the rules of the game while conquering and occupying foreign lands. There was no other way for the colonial state to establish legitimacy but on the basis of racial superiority. And there was no other method to rationalise the violation of another country’s sovereignty but to claim that in the conquered land there existed neither the state nor sovereignty.

The anomaly of the colonial state entailed the production of an elaborate ideology of colonial justification. Thus came into being what Edward Said (1979: 15, 6) calls “a kind of willed human work”, Orientalism, “a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment.” Orientalism as a discourse of power, domination and hegemony built an intricate system of relationship between the coloniser and the colonised that validated colonial rule on the basis of racial and civilisational difference. It was assumed that various races in the world were at different stages of evolution and then the West and East

were compared to prove the advance stage of the West compared to the elementary stage of the East. The more 'enlightened' and liberal ones amongst the Orientalists, however, decreed that East may not be inferior racially but it certainly was so civilisationally, as did John Stuart Mill (ibid.14).

Therefore, there was no question of placing the modern state system on a society that was only at an early stage of its march towards 'civilisation'. A distinctively different colonial state was the answer to the colonial conundrum. The modern state had come into being as a result of the growing influence of bourgeoisie that was struggling to break the traditional feudal hold on various aspects of social and economic life. Naturally, the modern state was more responsive to the requirements of capital, which included supremacy of the rule of law and individual rights. The colonial state, however, was an altogether different story; it was an instrument for an established bourgeoisie in its mission of capitalist expansion.

For instance, India was penetrated by colonial capital long before the establishment of the colonial state in 1857 following the Great Revolt. Till that time India was ruled by the merchants of East India Company, not by a state. The need for establishing colonial state arose when the European merchants felt threatened by the intensity of the Revolt. Hence the emergence of the colonial state in India was purely a matter of the interests of colonial capital. Under the circumstances, the colonial state could not be expected to carry out the role the modern state played in the mother country. Therefore the modern state was stripped of its liberalism that allowed individual rights while keeping its modernity, which made it a centralised

bureaucratic regime, intact. As far as the rule of law was concerned that was not a problem as long as it could be interpreted according the specific circumstances of colonial rule.

The Colonial State at Work

By placing the modern state system on Indian society the British introduced an altogether new form of political power. But the modernity of its methods of control and coercion was more in line with its absolutist phase than its later liberal phase in which Britain had already entered. It was a rule-bound state that was imposed on India by breaking the basic rule of national sovereignty. It was a rational state based on the irrationality of racialism. The methods of distancing demanded that the colonialists placed themselves at the top of the colonial state apparatus without any direct involvement with society at large. But the modern regime of power entailed the penetration of society because, as noted earlier, this particular form of the state obtains productive service from individuals in their concrete lives and for that it demands a real and effective 'incorporation' of power so that access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday life could be gained for managing population and accumulating individuals through the new science of the state, statistics.

From surveys of land and crop output to prospecting for minerals, from measuring Indian brains (on behalf of the false science of phrenology) to measuring Indian bodies, diets and life-span (laying the foundations of physical anthropology) and modern medicine in India, the British had the length and breadth of India, her history, culture and society mapped, classified and quantified in detail that was nothing but precise even when it was wrong-headed (Chakrabarty, 1994: 147).

For an effective control of a society whose main source of income was land revenue it was imperative to devise an elaborate system of revenue collection. But to employ British citizens would have cost the government dearly. Therefore a system of local collaborators was devised in which the willing collaboration of certain Indians was used to carry out the tasks that the British administrators were not able to perform (Seal, 1973: 8).

Unlike the horizontal involvement of the Mughals, a system of vertical and hierarchical involvement was set in motion. For dealing with society without personal involvement the colonial administration turned individuals and collectivities into abstract social and legal categories (Heesterman, 1978: 53). Categories like ruling classes, martial races and noble blood were constructed. By introducing private ownership a class of landowners was created. As Daniel Thorner (cited in Sarkar, 1989: 35) has pointed out, “(i)n no other period of Indian history, can we find so large, so well-established, and so secure a group of wealthy landholders as that which grew up and flourished between the 1790s and 1940s”.

The concept of ownership was to achieve two objectives: 1) to impose land revenue, and 2) to separate the state from society. Initially, when the colonial officials began to impose land revenue they looked for the owners of the land, “but there were no owners in the sense in which they understood the word” (Fuller, 1989: 33). Long before the establishment of the colonial state the colonial administration of the merchants of the East India Company had already introduced the Permanent

Settlement Act of 1793 in Bengal, which gave the Zamindars propriety rights over the land. The Act was a significant rupture with the past. Under the Mughals the state as the supreme landlord was directly involved with society. By handing over the ownership rights to the landlords the colonialists reserved power and the use of force while refusing to get involved in local affairs (Heesterman, 1978: 51).

With the expansion of colonial rule the system was extended to other parts of India. The introduction of the new system had far-reaching consequences for Indian society: it ushered in a feudal system based on legal ownership of the land; it imposed a land revenue that was a tax on land rather than on crops, as was the case during the Mughals; it provided state protection to the Zamindars and gave permanency to their status on a legal basis; in legal and social terms, it delineated the status of the landowners and the landless.

It was this aspect of the new system which led nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru (1981: 304) to view the change in the nature of landholdings in terms of communal empowerment and disempowerment, for they believed that individual ownership had deprived the village community of all control over land. The nationalists were led to such romanticism by the fact that in the pre-colonial system there was a degree of mobility, which facilitated a local “circulation of elites”, and “Zamindars often if not always, originated as peasants” (Fuller, 1989: 29); under colonialism, when private ownership was legally sanctified, and the status of the landlord and landless peasants became permanent feudalism was introduced.

But the romanticised nationalist discourse fails to appreciate a more important aspect of the development: the change in the nature of the state system was, in fact, a change in the methods of control and violence: the decentralised state system of the Mughals was not concerned with the means of violence that the Zamindars used for maintaining their authority. The colonial administration, however, by bestowing legal sanctity on private ownership replaced the private control of the means of violence with the legality of state violence. With such 'nationalisation' of the means of violence, the Zamindars' dependence on the willingness of the community, which they would win through manipulation, coercion and the use of force, lost its importance in comparison with their dependence on the legal coercion of the state. Therefore, the issue needs to be seen in the light of a change in the nature of power rather than in terms of communal empowerment and disempowerment.

Another significant development under colonialism was the introduction of state employment. Building an elaborate administrative structure required a large number of trained personnel. Therefore, modern school system was introduced to train Indians as clerks for helping in the smooth running of the administration. On the other hand, a large standing army comprising Indian soldiers was erected for the regional defence of the empire.⁵ As a consequence, the state became the largest employer, giving rise to a large group of salaried individuals who were solely dependent on the state for their livelihood. At the same time, the development of modern means of communication and transportation made the administrative penetration of society less cumbersome and more effective.

Initially, due to its structural limitations the colonial administration allowed political autonomy to the newly established landed elite for the maintenance of order in their respective regions. The local elite's power and prestige was further boosted by the extension of official patronage and honours. This made landlords' indebtedness to colonial rule two-pronged: they owed the legal establishment of their propriety rights as well as the maintenance of their power and prestige to the state administration. As the state's penetration of society widened so did its dependence on the local collaborators. New methods of control and coercion came under the guise of systems of nomination and representation, which made the local elite vie for state patronage to maintain and enhance their power and prestige. Nationalist sentiment may have already been there, but its politicisation had much to do with the new developments.

Anti-colonial Nationalism

The above-mentioned two developments - the introduction of landownership and the state's assumption of the role of the largest employer - changed power relations in Indian society and divided it from within. For the first time in Indian history one institution – the state – became the centre of all attention for various interest groups and individuals. As an employer, and a manager of the economy, the state became an arena of competition. And the status and prestige of the individuals and groups became dependent on their proximity to and distance from the state. Anti-colonial

⁵ The colonial regime's military expenditure accounted for 41.4% of the budget in 1881-82, 45.4% ten years later and by 1904-05 it had gone up to 51.9% (Sarkar, 1989: 16).

nationalism emerged as an effort to attain proximity to the state, and later became a contender for the state itself.

In the previous chapter, I cited Gellner's (1983: 1) definition of nationalism as "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent". The two units could not be more incongruent than they were under colonialism. British colonialists controlled the political unit, the state, whereas Indians inhabited the national unit, society. There was nothing in common between the two; only a relationship of domination and exploitation tied them together. With the passage of time, however, when the power relations within society itself had undergone a sea change with the emergence of landowners, state employees, and an indigenous middle class, the relationship of Indian society with the colonial state was no longer just that of domination and exploitation. It had turned into a complex web of networks in which the state and society both found themselves asserting against each other.

No longer a fragmented society with a segmentalised authority that it was before colonialism, colonial India was an interdependent society with a highly centralised authority. The colonial state sat uncomfortably on top of an unhappy society for whose agrarian economy the colonial structure constituted a "built-in depressor" (cited in Sarkar, 1989: 36). The last decades of nineteenth century were a depressing time of "increased landless labour, subdivision of holdings, heavier indebtedness of

the peasant and a disastrous series of famines” (Seal, 1968: 32-33).⁶ Moreover, the introduction of capitalist mode of production replaced the isolated uneven development of the pre-colonial India with a state-sponsored and planned uneven development. While the material side of Indian life was becoming more and more difficult, the cultural and spiritual side of life was hit hard by the blatant racism of colonialists that had permeated the state and society.

But anti-colonial nationalism was not just a response to that relationship, though it presented itself to be exactly that. Anti-colonial nationalism was an effort by the new classes and categories to find their own niche in the new state system. Here it should be borne in mind that we are not dealing with nationalism as a sentiment but as a form of politics and therefore are looking at nationalist strategies only. We are not looking at nationalism as a doctrine of self-awareness of a people. We see it as a political principle, as a form of power, and as a method of control and domination. Therefore, there is no question of thinking in terms of good nationalism and bad nationalism. Nor is there any question of seeing it as something that plays a positive role in one situation and a negative one in another.

There is no assumption here that because anti-colonial nationalism led the colonised to independence therefore it was a positive form of nationalism. Just like the great revolution of 1789-1848 in Europe was not the triumph of liberty and equality in

⁶ Anil Seal has also included increase in population in the list but Sarkar (1989: 36) has denied that population growth was one of the causes of Indian poverty and has given the following figures which prove there was relatively little increase in population at the turn of the century: 282 million in 1891, 285 million in 1901, 303 million in 1911, and 306 million in 1921.

general but of certain classes and groups (Hobsbawm, 1962: 13), the triumph of anti-colonial nationalism led the native elite to replace the alien rulers but by no means empowered the people in general. An end to colonial racism was, no doubt, an achievement but even in that case it was not a clean break with the colonial ideology because the nationalist elite, under the influence of modernity and enlightenment, had developed their own racism as far as the non-dominant groups were concerned, as we shall see in the case of Pakistan.

The point being emphasised here is that the modern state cannot claim an effective authority over a population without being interventionist and ideological. Colonialists introduced a highly centralised bureaucratic state structure, which tried to reach out to every nook and corner of society – not for interacting with society but for dominating it. Anti-colonial nationalism started off as a movement of the native elite for a share in the state power, went on to become a popular mass movement, and then culminated in the replacement of colonial rulers by the native elite.

Colonial rule was legitimised by the ideology of racial difference between the rulers and the ruled. Postcolonial rule is legitimised by the ideology of state nationalism, which, while legally eliminating racial difference, went on to the other extreme of refusing to accept local and ethnic identities in the name of nationhood. In both cases the objective was the same: to control and dominate. “The nationalist project was in principle a hegemonic project” (Chatterjee, 1993: 36). It was a project launched by

It is noteworthy that almost at the same time, the viceroy, the main representative of those who claimed to have introduced India to “good governance” and the rule of law, was enjoying the services of 700 servants and a salary double that of the prime minister’s back home (Sarkar, 1989: 7).

the categories constructed and created by the colonial state. It was a project for capturing the state and for replacing colonial violence with nationalist violence.⁷ And in that the nationalist leadership did not show much ingenuity.

By the beginning of twentieth century the colonial administration was under increasing pressure from various sections of Indian society demanding representation in the government and autonomy in the provinces. The tightly centralised government, exclusively ruled by the colonial personnel, had degraded provinces into agents of the centre. Whatever the rights and duties of the provinces in running their affairs the central government reserved an unquestioned right of entry (Seal, 1973: 11). In 1919, in the face of changing administrative requirements and growing political pressures, reforms were introduced but they were only cosmetic for they may have changed the working arrangement but did not affect the centre's control of the provinces.

Although a substantial elected element at the provincial levels was introduced, as far as the question of provincial autonomy was concerned the situation remained unchanged. The reforms did not mean concessions "but an attempt to extend and improve the existing system of control by a new method" (Page, 1987: 12). It was a

⁷ Anyone who has problems with this statement need only remember the words of the architect of modern India, Jawaharlal Nehru. In his autobiography he says that it is not violence itself that is bad but the motives behind it as he believes "there can be violence for a good object as well as for an evil object" (1980: 551). Therefore, for nationalist Nehru: "State violence is preferable to private violence in many ways, for one major violence is far better than numerous petty private violences. State violence is also likely to be a more or less ordered violence and thus preferable to the disorderly violence of private groups and individuals, for even in violence order is better than disorder... But when a state goes off the rails completely and begins to indulge in disorderly violence, then indeed it is terrible thing" (quoted in Chatterjee, 1986: 166, fn. no. 118).

strategy to put power in the hands of those who co-operated with the administration, rather than to empower those who demanded the reforms (ibid. 13).

Though the 1935 Government of India Act increased the number of electorate from six-and-a-half to thirty million, the discretionary powers of the governors in the provinces remained intact. As far as ministers were concerned they could give advice “but their views could be rejected on matters like minority rights, privileges of civil servants, and prevention of discrimination against British business interests”. Under the notorious Section 93 the governor could indefinitely run the administration of a province (Sarkar, 1989: 337).

Because the Act was aimed at prolonging British rule, it was devoid of any clause to empower elected representatives. Understandably, almost all sections of Indian society criticised the Act. But after independence and partition both India and Pakistan adopted it as the interim constitution. The next chapter looks at the nationalisation of the colonial state in Pakistan.

Chapter-4

Nationalisation of the Colonial State in Pakistan¹

Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself, may be described as a failure of the dreaming mind. Perhaps the pigments used were the wrong ones, impermanent, like Leonardo's; or perhaps the place was just *insufficiently imagined*, a picture full of irreconcilable elements, midriff-baring immigrant saris versus demure, indigenous Sindhi Shalwar-kurtas, Urdu versus Punjabi, now versus then: a miracle that went wrong.

Salman Rushdie²

Here lies the root of our postcolonial misery: not in our inability to think out new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state.

Partha Chatterjee³

A constitutional historian said of postcolonial India that it "inherited the British system of government and administration in its original form. The framers of the new Constitution *could not think* of an altogether new system" (cited in Chatterjee, 1993: 15). The case in Pakistan was even worse: originality was as much in short supply in Pakistan as in India, but at least in the latter case a new constitution was framed. Pakistan had difficulty doing even that much. The Pakistan movement was the Muslim elite's project to capture state power and replace colonial control and coercion with the nationalist one. And therefore, instead of doing away with the

¹ An earlier and shorter version of this chapter was presented at the Asian Studies Association of Australia's (ASAA) conference at La Trobe University Melbourne in July 1996 and later published in *South Asia*, Special Issue, vol. 22, 1999, under the title "Ethnicity, Islam and National Identity in Pakistan".

² (1995:87).

³ (1993:11).

coercive methods of the colonial state apparatus and its racist and discriminatory ideology, the postcolonial leadership indigenised them to build a nation-state.

For instance, one of the contentious issues which became a reason for the creation of Pakistan was that the founder of the state, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, was opposed to the centralised state system based on the Government of India Act 1935. While terming it as a “dangerous scheme” that would impose a highly centralised federal government with no room for regional autonomy, if made the basis of the constitution, he insisted that it “must go once for all” (Jinnah, 1991: 3, 6). But after the creation of Pakistan, he not only adopted it as an interim arrangement, but also made it more centralised and more authoritarian with more arbitrary powers for himself.

The Indian Independence Act and emergency powers of the governor general were to expire seven-and-a-half months after the partition, but Jinnah extended them by another year. As if the colonial Act was not coercive enough, he inserted into it Section 92A on July 16, 1948 which gave the governor general more arbitrary powers of directing a provincial governor to suspend the normal constitutional machinery on the plea of a grave emergency.⁴ It took Pakistan nine years to work out a constitution and that, too, was abrogated before becoming operative. In its first twenty-six years Pakistan had three constitutions. The source of inspiration for all of them was the same colonial Act.

⁴ Khalid B. Sayeed, 1968a, *op. cit.* p. 258.

During over a year that he lived after partition, Jinnah had made it clear by his words and deeds that Pakistan would have a highly centralised political system. By becoming the all-powerful first governor general of Pakistan, Jinnah founded a unitary political system that retarded the growth of parliamentary system, which was more suitable for the multiethnic society of Pakistan. By holding three most important positions of governor general, president of the constituent assembly and president of the Muslim League at the same time to himself, Jinnah laid a tradition in which a powerful individual came to be more important than the institutionalised distribution of state power. “No constitutional ruler and few autocrats have possessed such a plenitude of power” (Callard, 1957: 20).

By amending the colonial Government of India Act 1935, Jinnah made it more unitary and less federal. On the one hand, the powers of the governor general were increased, and on the other, the powers of the provincial governments were decreased. In a bid to further centralise the system sales tax was removed from the provincial list and put on the central government list. Within two weeks after partition, he dismissed the elected government of Pukhtun nationalist, Dr Khan Saheb, in the North West Frontier Province, replacing it with his own party man. Later, he dismissed another elected government, that of M.A. Khuhro in Sindh.

One of the most disastrous contributions of Jinnah to the future of Pakistan, perhaps, was “a demotion of the political leadership in favour of the bureaucracy” (Alavi, 1983: 78). He created the post of secretary general for one of his lieutenants, Chaudhri Mohammad Ali, to run the government single-handedly through the central

and provincial bureaucracy.⁵ As a consequence, the British-trained civil servants assumed prominence in the state system at the expense of political leadership. On the other hand, Pakistan's insecure leadership, which, in the face of Indian speculations that the new state was not to survive very long, was not sure about the viability of the Pakistani state, diverted national resources to the build-up of a strong military force. This set the Pakistani state on a path that was soon to lead to a military-bureaucratic authoritarianism, which continues to plague Pakistan's political system till today.

The predominance of the bureaucracy and military not only retarded the political process but also adversely affected the ethnic composition of the state managers. For, whereas the civilian state administrators were predominantly Mohajirs and Punjabis the army was overwhelmingly from one province, Punjab. Therefore, Pakistan came to be ruled by minority ethnic groups, Mohajirs and Punjabis, with almost total exclusion of the Bengali majority from the civil bureaucracy and military. In 1948, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), which had 54 per cent of Pakistan's total population, had only 11.1 per cent share in the civil service and the rest of the personnel, 88.9 per cent, were from West Pakistan (Jahan, 1972: 26).⁶

⁵ Talking about his job, Chaudhri Mohammad Ali (1973: 357, 360) says, "On my recommendations ... the central government decided to amalgamate the various provincial cadres into a single cadre that would meet the needs of the provinces and of the nation as a whole. It was my responsibility as Secretary-General to keep every front supplied as well as I could and to maintain its morale".

⁶ Although the new recruitment policy was geared towards increasing Bengali share and by 1958 it came up to 41.7 per cent, the key positions were still controlled by senior bureaucrats from West Pakistan. In 1955, of the 19 secretaries in the federal government, none was a Bengali. Of the total 41 joint secretaries only three were from East Pakistan. Likewise, out of 133 deputy secretaries and 548 undersecretaries only 10 and 38, respectively, were from the east wing. In the military elite, out of 894

Punjabi-Mohajir Domination

It is ironic that the state created by the Muslim minority fearing the Hindu majority rule came to be dominated and ruled by two minority ethnic groups, Punjabis and Mohajirs, with a remarkable exclusion of the majority ethnic group, Bengalis, from the decision-making process. It was one of the peculiarities of Pakistani situation that it inherited some of the least developed regions as far as industrialisation was concerned, but two of its provinces, Punjab and the North West Frontier Province, were major suppliers for the British Indian army services as Punjabis and Pukhtuns were the so-called martial races.

On the other hand, Mohajirs, especially those from the United Provinces of India, were one of those people whose share in the colonial administration far exceeded their share in population. It was a situation where a state came into being, on the one hand, with some of the least developed regions, and on the other, with some of the people who had the largest share in the colonial state apparatus.

The two dominant groups, Mohajirs and Punjabis, had been the most favourably placed communities under colonial rule. The reason for that was the colonial administration's dependence on the loyalty of the big landlords for the maintenance of its control system. The United Provinces (UP) of India, from where majority of the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs had migrated, was the traditional power base of the Muslim landed gentry and they continued with their privileges even after the colonial

army officers, 593 navy officers and 640 air force officers only 14, 7, and 60, respectively, were from East Pakistan (Jahan 1972: 26, 25).

takeover. For instance, in 1913 Muslims were only 14 per cent of the UP population but they occupied 35 per cent of the most important jobs (Page, 1987: 8).

And it was the Muslim elite of UP who first started thinking in terms of communal politics and launched the Muslim League, with the support of British government, to counter the Indian National Congress' increasing influence. First, the Muslim elite had felt that the Congress' demands for representation in colonial government would adversely affect their privileges and later they demanded the creation of Pakistan for they feared that in an independent and 'democratic' India the Hindu majority would rule. The political party, the Muslim League, that succeeded in partitioning India was not only founded by the Muslims of minority provinces but also was dominated by them, before as well as after the partition.⁷

On the other hand, although not the traditional elite, like UPites, Punjabis endeared themselves to the British authorities by helping them in putting down the armed resistance movement of 1857. The British showered their favours on Punjab through the irrigation schemes that led to the reclamation of large areas of West Punjab (ibid. 9). Thus came into being a large class of Punjabi landowners who played an important role in strengthening the colonial system of control by providing men for army service. Punjab had the highest share in the British Indian army. Over 50 per cent of the British Indian army personnel were from Punjab, especially those parts of the province, which were to become Pakistan. During the First World War, the

⁷ In 1946-47 out of 23 members of the Muslim League Working Committee only 10 were from the future Pakistan areas. After partition, in December 1947, at the Muslim League council meeting, out of 300 members 160 were immigrants (Waseem, 1989: 106-7).

number of Punjabis in the army was as large as over 75% of the total Indian Muslims recruited (Cohen, 1984: 42).

This led to the militarisation of the bureaucratic structure of the province, “as nearly all aspects of its activities were geared towards the provision of men and material for the war effort” (Yong, 1998: 202). Initially, Punjabis had little support for the Muslim League and its demand for Pakistan, but later when the appeal for Pakistan caught up the imagination of the people the “Muslim landed elite chose to use the League as its vehicle for carrying over its authority into the post-colonial period” (Ali, 1991: 47).

Militarisation of the State

The new state was an El Dorado for the British-trained civil bureaucrats who cherished their dominance of the state system. But that arrangement had soon to change in favour of the militarisation of the state. The paranoid ruling elite, continuing with the colonial tradition, set aside a large portion of the central budget for the build up of a strong military at the expense of the social sector. The United States’ strategic interest in Pakistan as a satellite state against the Soviet Union made the rulers’ task easy when the former offered generous military aid. First, it was the bureaucratisation of the state system by demoting political leadership, and then came the militarisation of the state by devoting a lion’s share of the state resources to military build-up.

Even before entering into defence treaties with the US, by 1949 Pakistan was spending nearly two-thirds of the central revenue on defence (Noman, 1990: 19). The two institutions that had sustained colonial rule also became the paramount pillars of the nation-state of Pakistan. But that was an extremely shaky foundation for a nation-state. Because the process of ethnic imbalance that had started with the increasing powers of the civil bureaucracy in the state system was further accentuated with the privileging of the military institution that was predominantly Punjabi. Understandably, it was not only that the state structure that emerged in Pakistan was a replica of the colonial state apparatus, but also that the non-dominant ethnic groups saw it as such.

That, of course, had serious consequences for the state structure of Pakistan. After running the state for almost a decade without a constitution, when a constitution was worked out, it was abrogated before becoming operative. One commentator has aptly summed up the political instability of the period saying: "During 1950-58, Pakistan had seven prime ministers and one commander-in-chief, whereas India had one prime minister and several commanders-in-chief" (Sayeed, 1980: 32). For the next 13 years, from 1958 to 1971, the country had no prime minister at all: just two military dictators. During all this period Mohajirs played an important role as a ruling partner in the state system dominated by Punjabis.

The Punjabi-Mohajirs ruling elite had two main concerns: the perceived Indian threat to the survival of the state, and the Bengali majority's challenge to their control of the state power. The external threat required a strong military and the internal challenge

necessitated that electoral politics and representative government should be avoided. The Bengali threat, however, was more tangible and therefore demanded better planning and manoeuvring. Bengalis were 54 per cent of the total population. Any representative arrangement would automatically have led to their rule. To avoid such an eventuality, the Punjabi-Mohajir axis devised various political and administrative schemes.

In 1955, a scheme of One-Unit was devised for the western part of the country to arbitrarily amalgamate the four provinces and turn them into one administrative unit, West Pakistan, for the mere purpose of neutralising the Bengali majority. When the first elections were due to be held under the 1956 constitution, martial law was imposed and elections indefinitely postponed. During the first two decades of Pakistan, the central government's bias against the eastern wing turned the comparatively more educated Bengalis into less educated and then their lower representation in the civil services was rationalised on that basis (Ahmed, 1998: 26, 27).

When ethnic discontent was growing the state establishment, instead of addressing regional grievances, resorted to methods of cultural imperialism with its centralising and homogenising strategies. Not only the language of 3.7% of the population, Urdu, was imposed as a national language but Bengali legislators were warned that if they used their own language they would be tried for treason. Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore's songs on Radio Pakistan were banned. In Sindh, Sindhi language was replaced by Urdu as the medium of instruction. Though these discriminatory policies

triggered ethnic and regional protest, in a state being run without any representative channels the voices of disaffection carried little weight.

After more than two decades of partition, when elections were held in 1970, the results were not honoured for that would have meant the transfer of power from the Punjabi-Mohajir oligarchy to the Bengali majority. A civil war ensued that resulted in the dismemberment of Pakistan and the creation of an independent state, Bangladesh.

In the truncated Pakistan Punjabis became the majority ethnic group. Although Pakistan had the first elected government in 1972, the political system continued to be intolerant and authoritarian. The first elected Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had little patience for opposition and when the Balochistan government asserted its authority, Bhutto unceremoniously dismissed it. The NWFP government, in protest against the arbitrary decision, resigned. The central government's repression of the nationalist groups in Balochistan led to underground activities that soon culminated in a guerilla war with the armed forces that claimed thousands of lives.⁸ In less than half a decade the Pakistan army was fighting its second war against an ethnic group.

Just when Pakistan had its second general elections in 1977, and it was hoped that the days of military dictatorship had become a history, the opposition parties' refusal to accept the elections results that they thought were rigged by the ruling party, led to a mass agitation against the government. After days of unrest, right at the time when

⁸ For a detailed account see Chapter on Balochistan.

the government and opposition had agreed on another elections, the generals struck for the third time, deposing an elected government, and imposing martial law. Within two years after a dubious trial Bhutto was hanged.⁹

By that time it had become obvious that the real rulers of Pakistan were the uniformed personnel. Not surprisingly, with the militarisation of the state, Mohajirs, whose majority belonged to the civil administration, had already begun to lose out. And it was in the order of things that the other 'martial race', Pukhtuns, who after Punjabis had the largest share in the military, emerged as the second most powerful ethnic group in the state structure. Today, for all practical purposes, Punjabis and Pukhtuns are the rulers of Pakistan and therefore they are the most ardent supporters of the official nationalism of Pakistan. Mohajirs' share in the civil bureaucracy continues to be the second largest after Punjabis, but their decline in the state hierarchy dominated by the military in which they have little share, has been so sharp that they cannot foresee a very happy future.

It is the irony of power politics that Mohajirs being the harbingers of the Muslim nationalism were till a few decades ago the most spirited supporters of the official nationalism of Pakistan, and the most intolerant opponents of ethnic and cultural diversity and dissent. On the other hand, Pukhtuns had opposed the creation of Pakistan and, for a long time, were regarded as the most potent internal threat to the

⁹ One of the judges on Bhutto trial case, Justice Qaiser Khan, who had resigned from the bench, in an interview with me in 1998, said: "The whole trial was a sham and legally untenable, for Bhutto was not presented as a murderer but the one who connived in the murder and therefore there was no legal justification for Bhutto to be tried as a principal accused". I asked the Public Prosecutor in Bhutto's case, Ijaz Batalvi, 1997, if he really thought that Bhutto was given a fair trial, he said: "I am convinced

state. But today, the roles have changed: Mohajirs talk about secession (see chapter on MQM), and Pukhtuns have increasingly integrated into the system.

The execution of Bhutto, who was a Sindhi, created deep feelings of anger among the Sindhis. In 1983, when the opposition alliance, Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), launched a mass movement against the military government it looked as if Sindhis were waiting for the moment. The movement got out of the leadership's control and turned into street battles with the armed forces resulting in the death and imprisonment of thousands of Sindhis.¹⁰

In 1984, yet another ethnic movement was launched. This time it was the creators, and for a long time virtual rulers, of Pakistan, Mohajirs, who felt that they had lost their privileges to the Punjabi majority. In 1986, the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) had violent clashes with Pukhtun settlers in Karachi, which marked the beginning of a protracted ethnic strife in Sindh province that continues till this day.

Islam and the Ideology of Pakistan

Ideological engineering is one of the main concerns of the nation-state because it has to justify its individuality, its separateness and its nation-ness. For Pakistan it has been a daunting task for many reasons. And the rulers' ineptitude has been as pronounced as it has been in the area of state formation. A country that was created in the name of religion has not even after over 50 years of its existence been able to

that Bhutto was involved in the murder. But then I am also convinced that that was not the only murder he was responsible for".

determine what role religion should have in the affairs of the state.¹¹ Also contentious is the very definition of the Pakistani culture that has sparked debates on whether Pakistani culture is different from Indian culture and if so what makes it different. Before discussing the ideological and cultural confusion of Pakistan, however, it is in order to point out some important features of the demand for the creation of Pakistan because they have had serious repercussions on the ideological engineering of the state.

1) One of the most significant features of the demand for Pakistan was that it “was not based upon the grievances of the past, (or for that matter of the present) but upon those of the future” (Hayes, 1986: 55). Before colonial rule Muslims had ruled India for centuries, and therefore it was not possible for them to base their demands on the grievances of the past. Instead, they erected their nationalism on the basis of a fear of an independent Hindu majority India.

2) Pakistan did not come into being as a result of a popular mass struggle¹² but through, what the official Pakistani version calls, “constitutional means” (Malik, 1997: 158).¹³ The party that created Pakistan, the All-India Muslim League, was an elitist group of the aristocratic Muslim families predominantly from the Muslim

¹⁰ See Chapter on Sindhi nationalism.

¹¹ On August 28, 1998 the Nawaz Sharif government announced that changes would be made to the constitution to make it truly Islamic. Why would a constitution that says Islam is the religion of the state and that no law repugnant to Quran and *Sunnah* shall be passed need further Islamisation? For a detailed report and comments see *Newsline*, September 1998.

¹² In an interview with this writer in 1997, Sindhi historian, Ibrahim Joyo, said: “Masses had nothing to do with Pakistan movement, nowhere in India and at no stage of the movement. It was purely and exclusively a movement of the elite”.

minority provinces of India with a very few members from the future Pakistan areas.¹⁴ As late as 1937, the Muslim League's support in the future Pakistan areas was so meagre that the only province where it could win a respectable number of provincial assembly seats was Bengal, otherwise it had won only one seat in Punjab and none in Sindh and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) (Talbot, 1988: 61). Even in the 1946 elections, one year before the creation of Pakistan, when the Muslim League emerged as a major force in most of the Muslim majority provinces, only 13 per cent of the people had the right to vote.¹⁵ Still, at the time of partition none of the Muslim majority provinces, which were to form the state of Pakistan, had a pro-Pakistan provincial government (Callard, 1957: 14).

3) The demand for Pakistan was a secular nationalist demand of a section of Muslims who felt threatened, not religiously but economically, by the Hindu majority. Had the threat been religious, Muslim religious groups would have been the first to demand a separate homeland. But "the Pakistan movement was not a movement of Islam but of Muslims" (Alavi, 1986: 22). The Lahore Resolution of 1940, which was to become the basis for Pakistan, "can be explained *without reference to Islam* (emphasis original), though not without reference to Muslims" (Binder cited in Noman, 1990: 4). Understandably, almost every Muslim religious group was opposed to the Muslim League, its leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and its demand for

¹³ During the turbulent years of independence movement, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan and the president of the Muslim League party, was the only top-ranking Indian leader who was never imprisoned by the British government.

¹⁴ At the Simla deputation of 1905, which led to the formation of the All-India Muslim League in 1906, out of 35 members only 11 were not titled and only 8 out of 35 members nominated by the Muslim League were from the future Pakistan areas (Waseem, 1989: 64).

¹⁵ Ibrahim Joyo, interview with the author, 1997.

Pakistan (Alavi, 1986: 21). But there is no denying that the rhetoric and slogans for the demand were couched in religious symbolism.

4) The Muslim League was fighting for a better deal for Muslims within the federation of India and a separate state was not its goal. In 1946, the Muslim League accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan for a confederal India with a greater autonomy for the provinces (Noman, 1990: 5).¹⁶ But it did not work out and the Muslim League demanded the partition of India and the creation of an independent state.¹⁷

The above factors had created great confusion about the idea of Pakistan well before its creation, whereas afterwards they contributed to the ideological quagmire of the new state. Jinnah's contribution to the future confusion on the ideological basis of the Pakistani state has been as remarkable as to the lack of clarity on the nature of the political system of the state itself. By making contradictory statements, which emphasised democracy and secularism at one time and the role of Islam at another, he left the field open for the adventurist rulers who followed him to play with these concepts according to their own political requirements.

As Gellner (1983: 57) has pointed out, nationalism "eliminates the alien high culture, but does not then replace it by the old local low culture; it revives, or invents, a local

¹⁶ "Some of Jinnah's followers were bewildered by his acceptance of a plan which explicitly rejected Pakistan in its preamble" (Noman, 1990: 23, n.18).

¹⁷ For a detailed account of this view, see Ayesha Jalal 1992. During general Zia ul Haq's military rule (1977-88), with a greater emphasis on Islam and Pakistan ideology, this book was banned and therefore when reprinted after the general's death, it certified that: "Permission to reprint this title in Pakistan under the Publications of Books (Reprint) Ordinance 1969 was obtained from the Department of Public Relations, Ministry of Information, Government of Punjab, Lahore."

high (literate, specialist-transmitted) culture of its own, though admittedly one which will have some links with the earlier local folk styles and dialects". In Pakistan, that 'high culture' was the culture of the north Indian Muslims who had proximity to the Mughal court in Delhi. The local representatives of that culture were the north Indian Muslim migrants, Mohajirs, whose mother tongue was Urdu. With their control over the civil bureaucracy, which had come to rule the new state, these people were favourably placed to impose their culture on Pakistani society.

Urdu was made the national language of Pakistan despite resistance from the indigenous ethnic groups. When Bengalis, as the majority ethnic group, expressed their unwillingness to accept Urdu as the national language of Pakistan, Jinnah, in an authoritarian manner, declared that Urdu alone would be the national language. He claimed that Urdu embodied the best in Islamic culture and Muslim tradition (Ali, 1973: 366) thus denigrating Bengali and other regional languages as something less than Islamic.

The imposition of an alien culture and language has confronted Pakistan with a clash between the cultural reality of the state and its ideology. The reality of Pakistani state is that it is a composite of various regional and ethnic cultures, which cannot be defined as Islamic or un-Islamic. Islam is a very important part but not the basis of these cultures. The ideology of the state, however, is based on rationalist, modernist Islam and Urdu language, both imported from elsewhere. The role of Islam in all regional cultures of Pakistan cannot be overemphasised. In fact, it is difficult to imagine these cultures without Islam. But that is an Islam, which the people live and

breathe: it is a belief system that has become part of the everyday life. It is an Islam based on the syncretic Sufi traditions whereas the Islam that is projected by the state is an ideology, an instrument to deny diversity and difference. It is a tactical Islam strategically deployed by the rulers to legitimise their misconduct and to cover their failings.

As far as Urdu is concerned, by now an established lingua franca though, it has not been able to become as natural a part of ethnic psyche as is Islam. It has been imposed from the top to serve the nation-state's need for a national language. Therefore, the idea of a nation based on ideological Islam and Urdu language is more of a fiction than reality.¹⁸

The tactical use of Islam and the confusion about its role in the affairs of the state, too, owes much to the founder of Pakistan. Evidence suggests that Jinnah's use of Islam as a rallying force was a political tactic, not a conviction and that is why his "appeal to religion was always ambiguous" (Jalal, 1992: 5). Jinnah based his demand for Pakistan on the premise that Hindus and Muslims were two different people who could never become one nation. In 1940, he said that Islam and Hinduism "are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders and it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality..." (Jinnah, 1991: 18).

¹⁸ I.A. Rehman, interview with author.

In his famous presidential address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11 1947, however, he claimed exactly the opposite of his words above. He said:

You may belong to any religion or caste or creed — that has nothing to do with the business of the state...you will find that in (the) course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State (ibid. 36-37).¹⁹

No wonder, even today those who want to prove Jinnah's religious credentials quote the former statement and those who try to present him as a secularist quote the latter.

After Jinnah, although some of the early rulers categorically denied links between religion and politics, almost all used Islam to justify their coercive and authoritarian methods in dealing with ethnic, regional and economic discontent. The leadership's inability to provide a coherent ideological basis for the new state, confronted with not just diverse but conflicting ethnic and regional interests, obliged it to present Islam as a symbol of unity. The hypocritical use of Islam plunged the country in an ideological wilderness that further widened the divisions and ruptures in the polity of an already confused nation.

¹⁹ Interestingly, this speech, according to M.A. Zuberi, editor, *The Business Recorder*, was held back by the early managers of Pakistan without the knowledge of Jinnah and was released to the media only after midnight for fear of Jinnah's wrath. I owe this information to A.R. Siddiqi. It should also be noted that general Zia ul Haq's military regime (1977-88), which had an added emphasis on Islam and the ideology of Pakistan, removed this portion of the speech from the textbooks.

Commenting on this statement, Shahid Javed Burki (1986: 42) asks: "How could Muslims cease to be Muslims and Hindus cease to be Hindus in the political sense when the religions to which they belong were, in Jinnah's passionately held belief, so utterly different from one another? Was Jinnah giving up the two-nation theory, the ideological foundation of the state of Pakistan, once the new state had come into existence? Was the speech a clear signal to the people of Pakistan that the new state, though founded to preserve Islam in South Asia, was to be run on secular grounds? Was Jinnah providing a

Despite Jinnah's secular leanings, his exhortation that the foundations of Pakistan's democracy must be laid on the basis of Islamic ideals and principles tilted the political discourse in Pakistan towards the vague, confusing and contradictory interpretations of Islam. Moreover, in March 1949, the first prime minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, moved the Objectives Resolution in the assembly, which said that "sovereignty belonged to God, and that the authority He had delegated to the state of Pakistan, "through its people", would be exercised "within the limits prescribed by Him"; that the state would fully observe the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance, and social justice as enunciated by Islam; and that it would enable Muslims to order their individual and collective lives according to the teachings and requirements of Islam as set forth in the *Quran* and *Sunnah*" (Syed, 1984: 80).

Significantly, Liaquat did not stop there and went on to declare that as Pakistan was created for the Muslims to live by Islamic teachings and traditions, '(t)he state would therefore *do more than merely leave them free* (emphasis added) to profess and practice their faith' (ibid. 80). This was an obvious declaration of the government's intention to interfere with the lives of individuals on the pretext of Islamic teachings. To pacify the liberals and Hindus, however, Liaquat concluded by saying that the goal before Pakistan was "to build up a truly liberal Government where the greatest amount of freedom ... (would) be given to all its members" (Jalal, 1991: 285). With such self-contradictory claims of intending to do more than merely leaving the

confirmation of the view shared by many of his opponents that he had cynically exploited the issue of

citizens free to profess and practice their faith and at the same time claiming to build up a “truly liberal government” with the “greatest amount of freedom” was obviously to set in motion an unending debate on the actual role of Islam in the affairs of the state and society.

To further obscure the already blurred picture, the governor general, Ghulam Muhammad, declared that, “Pakistan is a secular, democratic and not a theocratic state” (Noman, 1990: 8). His interior minister, Iskander Mirza, who would later become the first president of Pakistan, went so far as to warn that “religion and politics should be kept apart otherwise there will be chaos” (ibid.). Ironically, one of the prime ministers, H.S. Suhrawardy, in 1956, even declared that the two-nation theory, on the basis of which Pakistan was created, had “ceased to be valid as soon as Pakistan was established”, thus calling “the oft-repeated Islamic bond between East and West Pakistan fatuous” (Sayeed, 1987: 171, 170). Despite these occasional references to secularism and democracy, however, the Objectives Resolution proved to be a preamble to the three constitutions that Pakistan would see in making and breaking during the next three decades.

The first constitution of Pakistan, which is known as the 1956 constitution, declared the state to be an Islamic republic where no law repugnant to Quran and *Sunnah* could be enacted. But interestingly, Islam was not declared the official religion of the ‘Islamic Republic’ of Pakistan. Another amusing feature of the constitution was that the head of state was to be a Muslim, but the speaker of the assembly need not be a

Muslim, though he was to assume the office of the head of state under certain circumstances.

According to the constitution, the president was to appoint a commission, which would recommend measures to bring the existing laws in conformity with the Islamic injunctions. But the president, major-general Iskander Mirza, who had once said that the mixing of religion and politics would create chaos, understandably, never appointed that commission. Anyway, in the chaotic political culture of Pakistan the constitution was not going to last long. In October 1958, Mirza imposed martial law and abrogated the constitution to ensure that there were no elections, which according to the constitution were to be held in February 1959.

In 1962, the military regime of general Ayub Khan promulgated another constitution. Although the new constitution was not much different from the previous one, the role of Islam was significantly diminished in the first draft. The preamble started with the same “sovereignty of the entire universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone and the authority exercisable by the people is a sacred trust”, but it was circumscribed of the words “within the limits prescribed by God” (Choudhury, 1969: 179-180), an obvious indication that the regime did not intend to limit its powers by such ambiguous words.

Unlike the previous constitution, Pakistan was not declared an Islamic republic, but just ‘Republic of Pakistan’, and there was no provision to suggest that the laws of the country would be brought in conformity with the principles of Islam. The words “in

accordance with the Holy *Quran* and *Sunnah*” were substituted with “in accordance with the fundamental principles and basic concepts of Islam” (ibid. 181).

The orthodox sections took great exception to the diminished role of Islam, and the regime easily gave in. The first amendment to the constitution added the dropped word Islamic to the republic of Pakistan, and stated that “all existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the Holy *Quran* and *Sunnah*” (ibid. 184). Islam was still not declared the official religion of the state. In 1969, Ayub violated his own constitution by inviting general Yahya Khan to take over and thus came to an end the second constitution of the country.

In 1973, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave the third constitution to the remaining Pakistan (after the creation of Bangladesh). It was, in fact, the first unanimous constitution of Pakistan, signed by the elected representatives, including the religious ones. The 1973 Constitution may not have been different from the previous two constitutions in many respects but as far as Islamic symbols were concerned, it was overflowing with them. For the first time, Islam was declared as the official religion of the state. Freedom of speech and the press were made subject to, among other things, considerations of national security and the “glory of Islam” (Syed, 1984: 145, 146). The head of state as well as the head of government were required to have “a belief in the unity of God, the finality of Muhammad’s prophethood, the Quran as the last of the holy books, and the day of judgment’ and to ‘strive to preserve the Islamic ideology which is the basis for the creation of Pakistan” (ibid. 146). It was made incumbent upon the government to Islamise the laws within nine years.

During Bhutto's rule, for the first time in Pakistan's history, the post of the minister for religious affairs was created in the central cabinet. High-class hotels were instructed to have a copy of the Quran placed in every room. Among the most regressive actions of Bhutto, however, were the ones in which, under the pressure of religious lobby, he declared the Ahmedi sect of Islam non-Muslim, shut down nightclubs and banned gambling and liquor for Muslims and made Friday (Muslim prayers' day), instead of Sunday, the weekly holiday (ibid. 149-150).

Ironically, the man who was by all standards one of the most westernised of Pakistani rulers and the first elected prime minister of the country, used Islam the most. But still, none of his actions endeared Bhutto to the religious lobby. In fact, never before in the history of Pakistan, the conservative sections of society, whether religious or otherwise, hated and dreaded anyone as much as they did Bhutto. Though Bhutto talked about change more than anyone else, his desire to keep the existing system intact was no less than anyone else's. He was feared not because he did, or intended to, bring a change, but as the one who had the ability to do so if he desired.

Bhutto's unintentional contribution to the politics of Pakistan was to alert the forces of reaction against a change that he had no intention to bring about. His intentional contribution was to alienate those who really wanted a change. By the end of his first term in office, whether it were religionists, secularists or democrats, all were united by their fear and hatred of Bhutto under the banner of Pakistan National Alliance

(PNA), which launched a campaign of Islamic fervour with the slogan of 'Nizam-i-Mustafa' (the system of the prophet).

In the dark of the night, on the 4th of July 1977, the army stepped in, deposed Bhutto, and two years later executed him. During his trial in the court, Bhutto once said: "I appointed a Chief of Staff (general Ziaul Haq) belonging to the Jamaat-i-Islami (a fundamentalist Islamic group) and the result is before all of us" (Nasr, 1994: 172). Unfortunately, it was not only Bhutto who had to pay with his life for his misdeeds, but the whole country had to experience the worst crimes of political coercion, social repression, widespread corruption and religious bigotry during the more than a decade long dictatorial rule of Zia.

Zia's period (1977-88) might have been the darkest in the otherwise not so bright history of Pakistan: marred by public hanging, widespread flogging, sexism and the worst kind of religious bigotry and intolerance, all in the name of Islam. Zia did not abrogate the constitution. Instead, he suspended it and then brought in such drastic changes, which facilitated a justification for his rule and a constitutional role for the army, all for the 'glory of Islam'. He declared: "Pakistan was achieved in the name of Islam, and Islam alone could provide the basis to run the government of the country and sustain its integrity ... The present government would provide opportunity to others to serve the country after it *achieved its objective* (emphasis added) ... (but) no un-Islamic government would be allowed to succeed the present regime" (Ahmad, 1988: 232). The brutal 'Islamic' rule of Zia continues to haunt Pakistan in the shape of ethnic and sectarian violence and endemic corruption.

Zia's military dictatorship, imbued with Islamic fundamentalism, brutalised the society and "increased the divisions, ruptures and bitterness within an insecure nation" (Noman, 1990: 214). Consequently, Pakistan, today, is a less tolerant and more aggressive society. Its biggest city and industrial centre, Karachi, has, for the last one-and-a-half decades, been one of the most dangerous cities in Asia due to ethnic violence and other crime. Its biggest province, Punjab, has for over a decade been under the spell of sectarian violence. And the country on the whole is plagued with lawlessness, corruption and drug and arms trade.

What emerges from the politics of Pakistan is that every ruler, whether military or civilian, has used Islam to justify and legitimise their repression and coercion. As far as national integration is concerned, Islam has been projected to obscure the ethnic and regional divisions in society. In the absence of a coherent national ideology Islam has been cynically used to suppress the voices of regional and ethnic discontent. That is why at different stages in Pakistan's history there have been many different kinds of Islam that have been projected according to the demands of the times. For instance, the early rulers' Islam was a 'liberal-modernist Islam', Ayub Khan's 'developmental Islam', Yahya Khan's 'nationalist Islam', Bhutto's 'socialist-populist Islam', and Zia's 'revivalist-fundamentalist Islam' (Ahmad, 1988: 231).

These were different faces of political Islam. The cultural Islam, however, has no resemblance with this. That Islam is a belief, a way of life, and a source of identity for the people. That Islam thrives on the spiritual and emotional insecurities of the

people. Political Islam plays upon those insecurities and exploits them. This has caused a rather ambiguous and confusing interaction between the political and cultural Islam. As a result of this confusion, the Pakistani intelligentsia has yet to agree on a broadly acceptable definition of Pakistani culture.

As it is, there are at least three main interpretations. One school of thought believes that Pakistani culture came into existence with the creation of the state. Another claims that it began with the Arab invasion of Sindh and flourished during the more than a thousand years of Muslim rule in India. The third view holds that Pakistani culture is as old as 5000 years and that the ruins of ancient civilisations that have been excavated in various parts of Pakistan should be owned as a national heritage.

The first two views emphasise Muslim nationhood and Islam as the basis of culture at the expense of regional and ethnic cultures, whereas the third view assigns greater importance to geographical and historical factors and regards religion as an important but secondary part of the culture.²⁰ Understandably, the first two views are more acceptable to the state whose ideological engineering requires it, on the one hand, to disown the subcontinental identity, and on the other, to discourage indigenous identities.²¹

Whereas the subcontinental identity tends to be more universalistic in that it encompasses various regional, ethnic, racial and religious identities in one whole and therefore undermines the religious basis of Pakistani identity, indigenous identities

²⁰ For discussions on Pakistani culture, see Faiz, 1988, Babree, 1997 and Jalibi, 1984.

become problematic when they assert their local and ethnic characters, demand regional autonomy and resist the homogenising project of the territorially demarcated and officially constructed and imposed national identity of the state based on Urdu-Islam ideology.

It is instructive, here, to take a look at the findings of a survey conducted by the *Herald* magazine (January, 1997) on the 50th anniversary of Pakistan. According to the survey, if given the choice 82% of Pakistanis would prefer to leave for another country. Only 56% believed that Muslims of the subcontinent are better off now than before partition. 47% of Pakistanis held politicians and the army responsible for the break-up of Pakistan in 1971. On the issue whether Pakistan was intended to be a religious state or a modern democracy, Pakistanis seem to be as confused as the state managers, thus 52% thought that their country was meant to be a religious state whereas 47% believed it to be a modern democracy. As far as mixing of religion with politics is concerned 72% thought that religious parties have done more harm than good, and even a bigger number of 81% favoured that the Imams (priests) of the mosque must not politicise their sermons. The gap between the perceptions of the Pakistani state and society; between the official ideology and the lived reality of the people is self-explanatory.

The Captive State

One of the problems that one faces while working on Pakistan, as mentioned in the introduction, is that there is a remarkable paucity of theoretical analysis. So far,

²¹ I owe this insight to Zulfiqar Gilani of Peshawar University.

Hamza Alavi has been the only writer, who has produced a worthwhile theoretical analysis of the structure of the state and classes in Pakistan. Alavi's work, however, is not only limited in its scope but has also long become dated. The scarcity of theoretical analysis in Pakistan has allowed neither a critique of Alavi's work nor any improvisation on it. What has happened is a rather uncritical and unimaginative use of his analysis to explain the state system in Pakistan to-date.²² Without denying the value of Alavi's contribution one has to say that his explanation of Pakistan's predicament as a conflict between the 'overdeveloped' state and 'underdeveloped' society, is grossly misleading.

Alavi's (1983: 42) thesis of an 'overdeveloped' state is based on the assumption that because the state has excessively enlarged its powers of control and regulations, therefore, it is overdeveloped. He seems to have taken the overdevelopment of the military and civil bureaucracy for the overdevelopment of the state itself.

Alavi's one-to-one linkage between the 'overdeveloped' state and 'underdeveloped' society fails to explicate the intricacies of a society where the interactions and contradictions of various classes are not well defined. Another important point is that a state that depends solely on coercion and violence betrays weakness rather than strength or development. Resort to frequent violence indicates a lack of legitimacy on the part of the state, whereas the lack of legitimacy points to the ideological frailty of the state.

²² Feroz Ahmed (2000), who had consistently tried to analyse ethnic conflicts in Pakistan till his untimely death in 1997, had even in his 1996 work referred to Alavi's analysis of the state as the final word.

For instance, if developed states do not resort to frequent and explicit violence the reason lies in the development of sophisticated networks of surveillance coupled with a high level of ideological production, distribution and engineering. But in a state like Pakistan, which suffers from the inability to expand its writ, violence is the norm. Such a state might be called 'fierce' rather than strong because the expression of interests here is direct, not mediated, as Alavi believes, and relations between the state and society are contradictory rather than complementary (Ayubi, 1995: 399-400).

Military and bureaucracy, no doubt, are the most powerful institutions of the modern state, but they are not the state. And wherever these two institutions presume that they themselves are the state, like in Pakistan, other institutions of the state like political parties, legislative assemblies and judiciary become redundant; they lose their power and relevance. But the irony is that no state can claim effective control over society through military and bureaucracy alone, because the effectiveness and strength of a state depends on its capacity to penetrate and organise society. And for that the state needs many more actors than just military and bureaucracy. The state needs a well-developed infrastructure and an institutionalised system through which it can expand its authority.

By that standard the state in Pakistan can only be called fragile: a state that can make laws but lacks the ability to implement them. As a result as the saying goes: "There are thousands of laws...but there is no law". It is the frailty of the state, and not its

strength, which makes it so vulnerable to military intervention. Frequent resort to military rule is an indication that the state structure is unable to provide efficient governance. The weakness of civil institutions in a state like Pakistan makes the military a paramount force with an unparalleled power.

As a result the modern state, which claims its legitimacy by representing the people suffers from a legitimacy crisis. The lack of legitimacy creates an atmosphere of illegality where individuals lose their faith in the rule of law. Therefore, the state is, for all practical purposes, stripped of its most basic objective and rationale, the Weberian “monopoly of legitimate violence”. What makes it all the more raucous is the interventionist nature of the modern state.

It is a state that does not restrict itself to organising only the public life of its citizens; it tries to penetrate every aspect of their life. It is a state that insists, “not to play the part of a neutral observer”.²³ It is a state, which, as the Article 35 of the 1973 constitution of Pakistan states, claims to “protect the marriage, the family, the mother and the child”. It is a state that “discourage(s) parochial, racial, tribal, sectarian and provincial prejudices among the citizens”²⁴ to impose, in the name of national unity, the prejudices of the dominant ethnic groups.

Notwithstanding all these claims, however, when it comes to the state’s obligations to the citizens it fails even to provide them with basic amenities like clean drinking

²³ These are the words from the speech of the first prime minister of Pakistan in the constituent assembly (Mujahid, 1976: 4).

²⁴ Article 33 of the 1973 constitution.

water, proper sewerage system and housing facilities, let alone healthcare, education, and social security.

In a 'fierce' state like Pakistan, any voice of disaffection from the ethnic groups is treated by the ruling elite as a challenge to the stability and sovereignty of the state from which their privileges emanate. This siege mentality of the power elite forces them to concentrate on strengthening the state's security agencies at the expense of social and economic sectors. There are only five countries in the world, which spend less than Pakistan on health. Pakistan's spending on education is well below the average for less developed countries (ibid. 177-78). According to a recent UNESCO report, of the nine countries surveyed, Pakistan is the only one where military expenditure exceeds spending on education.²⁵

One of the salient features of a state system with weak institutions is that it tends to depend on a network of patronage and personal loyalty. In an institutionalised state system decision-making at various administrative levels becomes less personal and more rule-bound. Rules and regulations take precedence over personalised social relations. The rule of law attains a certain amount of autonomy and independence from the customary familial and social interests. Individuals find themselves restrained by the rules of the system. The interests of the institutions acquire a certain degree of sanctity and therefore any violation is translated as a threat to the community. This sanctity of institutions and rules and regulations, in general,

²⁵ The other eight countries are: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, and Nigeria (*Dawn*, Sept. 29, 1998). According to *The Economist*, 22 May 1999, Pakistan defence budget is US\$3.2 billion; and the latest UNDP estimates show Pakistan's military expenditure as 5.7% of GDP and education and health expenditure as 2.7%, 0.8% of GDP respectively (UNDP, 2000: 216).

subordinates the powers and privileges of the individuals to the system. An institutionalised political system is a modern form of power in which institutions are geared towards serving the interests of the dominant classes rather than powerful individuals.

In a state like Pakistan, however, the weakness of institutions gives excessive powers to individual power-holders and they are for all practical purposes above the law. Loyalty to individuals rather than institutions is the norm. And to maintain that loyalty these individuals abuse the powers that are available to them for patronising their followers and supporters. What emerges from a situation like this is a captive state held together through corruption, cronyism and ultimately the barrel of the gun.

Chapter-5

Pukhtun Ethnic Nationalism: From Separatism to Integrationism¹

It would be poor psychology to assume that exclusion arouses only hate and resentment; it arouses too a possessive, intolerant kind of love, and those whom repressive culture has held at a distance can easily enough become its most diehard defenders.

Adorno²

When Pukhtun ethnic movement, Khudai Khidmatgar (servants of god), emerged in 1929, it had many interesting points to attract attention. It was an uncompromisingly anti-colonial ethnic movement that was opposed to the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan. It was a secular movement that originated in one of the most religious regions of India. It was a non-violent movement of a people who are one of the most violent in the world. After the partition of India the managers of the new state of Pakistan treated it as the most potent internal threat to the state. But despite that, Pukhtuns, who were one of the least educated people of India, within three decades became the third most powerful partner in the Punjabi-Mohajir dominated civil and military bureaucracy of Pakistan.

All these factors have led many to believe that Pukhtuns had a “more developed political and ethnic consciousness” compared to other ethnic groups of Pakistan.³

¹ An earlier and shorter version of this chapter was presented at the New Zealand Asia International conference, University of Otago, Dunedin in December 1999.

² (1978: 52-53).

³ Khalid B. Sayeed (1980: 17, 16) says: “... there was no ethnic group in Pakistan in 1947 that was more conscious of its separate linguistic and cultural identity than the Pukhtuns.” Citing the fact that in

But available evidence indicates that this is an overblown and overestimated view of a people whose ethnic ego had already been over-fed by the myths created about them by the orientalists. This chapter critically examines and reassesses Pukhtun nationalism by looking at the myths about the people and the actuality of their changing socio-economic situation.

Socio-economic and historical Background

Pukhtuns⁴ are the people living in the southern parts of Afghanistan and northern parts of Pakistan divided by the British imposed Durand Line of 1893. Whereas in Afghanistan they make an ethnic majority, in Pakistan they are only about 14 per cent of the total population. This chapter is about the nationalism of the Pukhtuns of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, where their share in the provincial population is between 70 to 80 per cent.⁵

Whatever is known of Pukhtun history indicates that the structure of Pukhtun society has been tribal. Most of the Pukhtun land comprises dry mountainous regions close to Hindukush and even the plains in the region, except for the fertile Peshawar valley, are mostly dry. Thus, the agricultural land has not been able to sustain the populace,

Punjab the Muslim League was pitted against the government backed party whereas in the North West Frontier Province it enjoyed the government support as a proof that NWFP was "a world of more developed political and ethnic consciousness." For other such unsubstantiated statements see Mushahid Hussain (1990: 79).

⁴ The word Pukhtun is a northern variant used by the Pukhtuns of Peshawar Valley and northern parts of the NWFP. The Pukhtuns of the south and of Afghanistan, whose accent is a softer version of Pushto language, pronounce it as Pushtun. However, we should stick to the former because the members of the NWFP assembly while demanding a change of name for the province used the word Pukhtunkhwa (land of Pukhtuns) rather than Pushtunkhwa.

⁵ As there is no mention of linguistic groups in the 1998 census, these figures are based on the 1981 census, according to which Pukhtuns were 68.3 per cent of the total population of the NWFP,

and therefore, their survival had always been precariously dependent on warfare and adventures. The Mughal king, Babur, described the Pukhtuns as a people given to plundering and it is believed that their political influence grew with a sudden increase in their numbers as well as their role as mercenaries in the Persian and Mughal armies.⁶

Although the strategic importance of the NWFP as a gateway to India, attracted invaders from the north, due to the inhospitability of the land, they would only pass by without establishing their rule. Cut from the outside world, Pukhtun society remained dependent on non-productive economic means of war and plundering, forcing Pukhtuns to be conscious of their survival and security on a daily basis, whereas social and cultural isolation made them inward looking.

The Sikhs, coming from the south, had captured the southern part of Afghanistan, and made it part of the Punjabi empire, but their rule was cut short by the British. Unlike the invaders from the north, the British not only conquered the land but also penetrated it with their military and administrative structure and turned it into a buffer zone between British India and Russia. But even the British did not establish direct rule in the region, and preferred to control it from Delhi through the local khans (landlords), pirs (spiritual leaders) and mullahs (priests). There were two reasons for such a special treatment. First, the region had only strategic importance

excluding some predominantly Pukhtun regions of the federally administered tribal areas (FATA) of the province (Ahmed, 1998: 190).

⁶ Olivier Roy (1986: 233), citing various sources, says that "Not very much is known about the ethnic origins of the Pukhtuns; it is clear that they embrace a range of peoples of diverse origins. They are not often mentioned before the eighteenth century although Babur describes them as a community given to plundering who live to the south of Kabul".

for the British and had failed to attract any economic and commercial interests. Second, the Pukhtun tribes were virulently resistant to colonial rule and almost every one of them fought against the British and ambushed and killed their personnel and civilians to which the latter retaliated by burning villages and crops, destroying wells and fruit trees and starving women and children by blockade (Tendulkar, 1967: 1-11).

As the British had taken over the region from the Sikhs who had, during their 20-year rule, made it part of their Punjabi empire, initially the region was kept as a part of the Punjab province. But in 1901 it was accorded the status of a separate province of the North West Frontier. Still, the tribal territory between the NWFP and Afghanistan, which consisted of two-thirds of the province's territory, was excluded from the six settled districts of Peshawar, Mardan, Kohat, Bannu, Hazara and Dera Ismael Khan, and was given the special administrative status of political agencies of Malakand, Kurram, Khyber, North and South Waziristan.

The NWFP became a province with two kinds of boundary: one that separated British India from Afghanistan and the other that distinguished settled areas from the tribal belt that was part of British India on the map but a no-man's land in reality. Special laws like the Frontier Crimes Regulation under which people could be summarily sentenced to transportation for life were devised to deal with the unrelenting resistance. The colonial authorities were so apprehensive of Pukhtuns

that when they introduced reforms in India in 1909 and 1920⁷, the NWFP was entirely excluded and those who demanded reforms were punished by using the regulation that was meant for civil crimes.

Pukhtun Resistance and Oriental Myths

In 1849, when the British captured the southern part of Afghanistan and made it part of their Indian empire, Pukhtun tribes offered a bloody and protracted resistance to the colonial army. So overwhelmed were the British by the resistance that they seemed to have found the exact opposite, 'the Other', of their 'civilised' self in the shape of insolent Pukhtuns – the noble savage. Thus started the orientalist discourse of the Pukhtun society as a wild land of 'unruly' and independent people that could neither be conquered nor tamed by the invading armies and eulogised them as the martial race that would rather die for its *Pukhtunwali* (Pukhtun code of honour) than submit to the will of the alien power.

The most detailed and the most popular book on Pukhtun history, *The Pathans*, written by a British governor, Olaf Caroe, is a good example of such stereotyping. Although the first section of the book is based on extensive research and explores the origins and history of Pukhtuns in great detail, when it enters the modern times Caroe's account turns into the history of a relationship between the 'high-minded' British officials and the 'valiant' Pukhtun tribal chiefs and khans.⁸ In a rhetorical

⁷ These were Morley-Minto Reforms 1909 and Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms 1920 aimed at granting of constitutional rights and electoral participation.

⁸ Moreover, Caroe's colonial self becomes too entangled to conceal his hostility towards anti-British nationalists and his admiration for the pro-British khans and the Muslim League. The Pukhtun leader, Dr Khan Sahib, once told the British Viceroy in the presence of Caroe that if he ever wanted to meet a

style, replete with laudatory adjectives, he stereotypes Pukhtuns as a special race of brave and shrewd people. The following paragraph illustrates the point.

The force of Pathan character, the bravery of the Pathan soldier, the shrewdness of Pathan assessments of political realism, once carried the forefathers of this people to high positions of authority outside their own country. So it will be again, and the more easily in the light of the renaissance in the home-land, to which in their hearts they return, however far away. They need have no fear that they cannot pull their weight in the larger organism; they are like the Scots in Great Britain. Like other highlandmen, the Pathans of Pakistan will be found before long to be largely in control of the fortunes of their country (Caroe, 1983: 437).

Such egregiously stereotypical and relativist portrayal of Pukhtuns has become a norm and even the work of professional historians suffers from it. For instance, American archaeologist and historian, Louis Dupree's (1980: xvii) rather poetic description in the following paragraph is hardly distinguishable from Caroe's:

The insolence of the Afghan (Pukhtun), however, is not the frustrated insolence of urbanised, dehumanised man in western society, but insolence without arrogance, the insolence of harsh freedoms set against a back drop of rough mountains and deserts, the insolence of equality felt and practiced (with an occasional touch of superiority), the insolence of bravery past and bravery anticipated.

This orientalist discourse has become so widespread, and so influential, that the modernist Asians, too, have resorted to such hackneyed images of Pukhtuns in their presentations. For instance, one of the most damning descriptions of Pukhtuns came from Jawaharlal Nehru, when he said: "They are a very child-like people, with the virtues and failings of children. It is not easy for them to intrigue and so their actions

Muslim League leader he did not have to look far for such a leader was standing right in front of him in the shape of Governor Caroe (Quoted in Khan, 1987: 116).

have a certain simplicity and sincerity which commands attention” (Tendulkar, 1967: 223). A typical modernist approach that smacks of the seventeenth century European product of the modern concept of childhood as an inferior version of adulthood — to be socialised, trained and educated.⁹

The trend that such a discourse has set has obscured the significance of the actual geographical and economic conditions of the region in shaping Pukhtun psyche and has led Pukhtuns to live the myths created about them. The nationalists have, indeed, worked on those myths to create a sense of Pukhtun nation. The notions of bravery, honour, freedom and egalitarianism, all encompassed in *Pukhtunwali*, have been blown out of proportions. What these accounts of affectionate affectations and romantic notions have done is to make the Pukhtun reality stand as an eternal category larger than its material social conditions and relations. A critical look at Pukhtun actuality, however, demonstrates something quite different.

Economic Changes under Colonial Rule

Despite indirect rule under the British, there were some significant developments that caused some far-reaching changes in the region. These were the introduction of new land revenue system, recruitment of Pukhtuns to the British army, market economy, modern education, and construction of roads and railway lines. The new revenue system imposed through the local khans and pirs, on the one hand, changed the

⁹ For details of this concept, see Ashis Nandy (1983: 15). A passage quoted by Nandy in a footnote deserves to be reproduced here: “The notion of the African as a minor...took very strong hold. Spaniards and Boers had questioned whether natives had souls: modern Europeans cared less about

landowner-tenant relationship by introducing permanent landownership, and on the other hand, led to the landlessness of peasants who were unable to pay the exceedingly high taxes. By 1930s over 60 per cent of all arable land was taken over by the landlords. During the 1911-1931 period the proportion of peasant owners dropped from 72.5 to 42 per cent (Gankovsky, 1971: 198). The introduction of market economy gave rise to a class of Pukhtun merchants, whose trade was further boosted by the introduction of roads and railways. The capitalist economic relations adversely affected the local artisans who had to compete with the British factory-made articles (ibid. 199).

As noted above the NWFP had two kinds of boundary: one that separated British India from Afghanistan and the other that distinguished the so-called settled areas from the tribal regions. The colonial administration did not interfere with the tribal regions and for all practical purposes they were maintained as a no-man's land. Naturally, when new economic relations were introduced they were restricted to the settled areas. Thus, with the two kinds of boundary, the NWFP was also introduced to two kinds of economy: in the settled areas, the introduction of new revenue system created a few big landlords and a large number of landless peasants; market economy gave birth to Pukhtun bourgeoisie and an increasing number of pauperised artisans and other proletariat.

In the tribal areas, the old economic relations remained intact though not necessarily unaffected. The fact that the new revenue system was not extended to the tribal areas

that but doubted whether they had minds, or minds capable of adult growth. A theory came to be

had a good reason: most of the tribal regions comprise rugged and dry mountains and patches of infertile land. Therefore, the colonial administration could not expect much in terms of land revenue. But the very fact that the tribal regions were infertile necessitated that the inhabitants looked elsewhere for their livelihood. In the face of the expanding market economy in the settled areas, the tribal belt developed its own market economy of smuggled goods and began to smuggle out the arms that were manufactured there.

That the colonial authorities regarded Pukhtuns as one of the so-called martial races provided the people of the region with an opportunity to become state employees. Recruitment to the British army and bureaucracy created a class of salaried individuals who had to interact not only with the British but also had to compete with other indigenous ethnic groups. As far as competition was concerned, the emergent Pukhtun bourgeoisie, too, had to deal with their counterparts belonging to other ethnic groups. The emergence of the new classes, new status groups, new interests and new demands gave way to the kind of social mobility that was soon to shake up the existing social and economic relations and the patterns of control and authority.

The new class of landowners that had acquired a prominent position in the power hierarchy through a legal right to own land was soon confronted with challenges of new economic formations. Under the new dispensation, the bourgeoisie was gaining power and the salaried class and urban proletariat were looking elsewhere for their

fashionable that mental growth in the African ceased early, that childhood was never left behind.”

livelihood.¹⁰ The colonial administration soon realised that to maintain the local power relationships there was a need for an active state patronage of the local elite. It was in the logic of colonial rule to oblige the most loyal and the most powerful among the khans and pirs. A conflict of interests between the big khans and the small khans ensued. A sense of being left out among the small khans gave rise to a feeling of resentment against the colonial government that eventually turned into contempt for and opposition to the latter.

The small khans were left with no option but to appeal to the popular sentiments. There they found a responsive audience among the peasants resentful of the high taxes that had led to their landlessness, among the traders who were unhappy with the influence of the landlords, among the educated ones searching for jobs, and among the state employees seeking promotions. The process of social mobility set in motion by the introduction of the market economy, modern education and state employment, was accelerated by a conflict of interests between the local elites as the disgruntled small khans began to translate their sense of alienation into nationalist and anti-colonial sentiment that eventually took the shape of a movement.

The Emergence of Nationalist Movement

The first thing that strikes one about the emergence of Pukhtun nationalism is that Ernest Gellner's¹¹ thesis that the rise of national sentiment results from

¹⁰ According to Gankovsky (1971: 200) at the beginning of nineteenth century there was not a single town which had Pukhtun majority, but by 1930s out of 26 cities of the NWFP 15 had Pukhtun majority.

¹¹ For an elaborate description of the pivotal role that industrialism plays in the rise of nationalism see Gellner (1983, 1996).

industrialisation is quite inadequate. If industrialisation is taken as a measure of development, Pukhtun region was one of the most backward and underdeveloped in British India. Even today, the NWFP is one of the less industrialised and modernised provinces of Pakistan. Also not useful is Gellner's (1983: 9) characterisation of agro-literate polity to explain the rise of Pukhtun nationalism because in that he treats agrarian society as a single whole, and does not differentiate between tribal and feudal set up. He overlooks the existence of agro-illiterate semi-tribal set up that Pukhtun society was at the time.

Gellner is right in saying that in an agro-literate polity a small ruling minority is rigidly separate from the great majority of direct agricultural producers or peasants and that the ideology of such a polity "exaggerates rather than underplays the inequality of classes and the degree of separation of the ruling stratum" (ibid. 10). But that does not apply to the agro-illiterate semi-tribal Pukhtun polity because here there is no concept of a ruling class but only of the respectable individuals, which means their status is not hereditary but contested – it is a 'prestige competition' in which individuals seek to influence the tribe by their qualities of moral rectitude, courage, wisdom, wealth, etc. (Anderson, 1975: 599) – and therefore, such a society precludes the possibility of a ruling class that can be separated from the rest of the society. This does not mean that such a society is classless.

What it means is that there is no apparent class stratification within the community, the tribe, and therefore only those who are outside the community – i.e., the small minority of occupational groups, like artisans, blacksmith, goldsmith, mullah (the

priest) and barber – make a separate class on the basis of their professions that are looked down upon. This is the kind of stratification based on caste rather than class. The ideology of Pukhtun society, *Pukhtunwali*, exaggerates the notions of honour, freedom and bravery but not that of inequality, hierarchy and authority. In fact, *Pukhtunwali* abhors any authority other than the one that the community collectively imposes. Even today, when Pukhtun society cannot be described as tribal, its value system, not the legal system though, continues to be regulated by tribal codes and customs.

The rise of Pukhtun nationalism can be explained as a result of the centralised bureaucratic state system's effort to replace the decentralised agro-illiterate semi-tribal system of control. For even in its indirect form, the colonial state tried to expand its writ through the extension of patronage and imposition of revenue. Nationalism thus became, on the one hand, the small khans' protest against selective patronage and on the other hand, the peasants' opposition to the burden of revenue. And the discontent of the newly emerged status groups universalised and legitimised the nationalist sentiment.

Interestingly, even the external factors that contributed to the rise of Pukhtun nationalism were related to the changes in the state system in the neighbouring Afghanistan. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Afghan ruler, Abdurrehman Khan (1880-1901), made an attempt to modernise Afghanistan by devising a policy to make the state institutions efficient enough to penetrate society

and to control tribalism.¹² With these efforts of state formation came the project of nation building.¹³ The most ubiquitous symbol of the nation, the national flag, accompanied by the most widely celebrated ritual, the national day, was introduced.

The succeeding regime of Habibullah Khan (1901-19) continued with the project of modernisation and nation building by setting up the country's first school of modern education, and by introducing the national anthem. During the same period the country's first printing press and first newspaper appeared. The stage was set for the first truly modernist and nationalist ruler, Amanullah Khan (1919-29), who gave Afghanistan its first constitution that defined the country as a nation with equal citizenship rights for everyone regardless of their religion. The constitution was written in Pashto language which was later, in 1936, declared to be the national language of Afghanistan, replacing Persian that was hitherto the language of the court (Rahman, 1996: 142).

History was rewritten to prove that Afghanistan as a nation had existed since time immemorial and national sport, Bozkashi, (originally Turkish sport) and national dance, Atan, (a provincial dance from Paktya) were made part of the Afghan history and culture. Amanullah's nationalistic policies, to a large extent, succeeded in creating a sense of Pukhtun nationalism. But Amanullah's centralising policies threatened to weaken the local power base of tribal chiefs who launched a movement,

¹² This and the following information on Afghanistan is taken from Olivier Roy (1986: 15,18) and Raja Anwar (1988: 17).

¹³ It is interesting to note that in order to build the nation and curtail the influence of tribalism, Abdurrehman imposed the Muslim law, the *Shariat*, for making the state laws effective (Roy, 1986: 15)

supported by the British, to depose the monarch. The Pukhtun nationalists in the NWFP considered this a colonial conspiracy against an independent-minded nationalist ruler. All this was happening at a time when anti-colonial and nationalist movement under the leadership of Mohan Das Gandhi had already gripped the Indian subcontinent.

In 1929, a small khan, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, launched a peasant movement, Khudai Khidmatgar. It was a reformist movement that proclaimed to struggle for social justice. The peasant base of the movement was understandable in an overwhelmingly tribal and agrarian society that was introduced to modernisation through the expanding system of modern bureaucratic state and market economy rather than through industrialisation or even large-scale rural industry and mechanised agriculture. Despite the emergence of new status groups and their new interests, aspirations and frustrations, however, initially it was the small khans and peasants who were hit hardest by the colonial policies.

In 1900, when the NWFP was still part of the Punjab province, reforms in the form of Punjab Alienation of Land Act were introduced. Although the Act helped to relieve the Punjabi peasants from the hold of voracious Hindu moneylenders, it did not disentangle the grip of landlords and pirs (Sayeed, 1968a: 283). The Act had little use for Pukhtun countryside where there were hardly any Hindus, whereas the domination of the khans and pirs remained untouched.

Ghaffar Khan's two main sources of influence were Amanullah and his nationalist policies and Gandhi and his non-violent anti-colonial movement.¹⁴ His Khudai Khidmatgar was an anti-colonial nationalist movement that professed to awaken Pukhtuns by reminding them of their 'glorious' past and to unite them against colonial rule.¹⁵

As noted earlier, it is not easy to trace the origins of Pukhtun history. The ruins of Gandhara civilisation in the region may indicate the existence of a great civilisation but they do not prove that it was related to Pukhtun culture in any significant way, as no link of continuity can be established. But to create a national sentiment there need not be a national history. It is also part of the nationalist project to create a national history. Ghaffar Khan set himself this project. He started his public career as a social reformer. Even when he turned his social organisation, Anjuman-e-Islah-e-Afghanistan (council for the betterment of Afghans), into a broader organisation, Khudai Khidmatgar, he categorically declared that it was a social movement rather than a political one (Tendulkar, 1967: 65).

To an extent it was true because most of his activities were of social nature. But his alliance with the Indian National Congress, his opposition to colonial rule, his support for the Khilafat movement and his nationalist ideas about Pukhtun history could hardly be regarded as merely social work. His tone as well as the content of his

¹⁴ Ghaffar Khan says in his autobiography, "I have been told that Amanullah Khan used to call himself the revolutionary king of the Pakhtuns. And indeed it was he who inspired us with the idea of revolution" (quoted in Sayeed, 1980: 18).

¹⁵ "O Pathans! Your house has fallen into ruin. Arise and rebuild it—and remember to what race you belong". Ghaffar Khan, (quoted in Easwaran, 1984: 25).

ideas had always been that of a social reformer, but not necessarily his activities. This, however, had less to do with his intentions and more to the limits of his intellectual capacity.

A man of great integrity and perseverance, Ghaffar Khan was not famous for his intellect. His main weakness was his lack of understanding of the complex social and political changes that were occurring in his society, and still less comprehension of the colonial system of control that had triggered those changes. He could not grasp the reasons behind the economic and social changes that had brought about a change in the attitudes and perceptions of the people. He romanticised the past and glorified Pukhtun history in a manner that betrayed incoherent thinking and moralistic approach. For instance, in his autobiography he goes into the details of what Pukhtuns used to be and what has become of them, and babbles:

Food used to be simple and because of that people's health was good, they were not as weak as they are today. There were no spices, no tea. Usury, alcohol and sex without wedlock were considered very bad and if anyone was suspected of indulging in these things he would be ostracised...there was no moral bankruptcy like in today's world. A guest would be treated to a greasy chicken curry...as far as food was concerned there was no difference in the rich and the poor. The rich and the poor used to dine together. Just like dress and food, houses were simple, too. The huge and comfortable houses of today did not exist, but still the kind of happiness and content that was there in people's life does not exist today. There were no diseases; men and women had good and strong bodies. Grown up girls and boys would play together till late in the night. They would look at each other as brothers and sisters. Moral standards were very high (Ghaffar, 1983: 12,13).¹⁶

¹⁶ My own translation from Pashto.

Such inchoate and trifling ideas could hardly produce a workable agenda based on a political ideology and protected by a clearly thought out strategy for action. The result was a politics of contradiction and ambivalence. Initially, Ghaffar Khan was in contact with various political and religious groups, including the Khilafat movement, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. Soon he opted for an alliance with the Congress, while finding it difficult to cooperate with the Muslim League, which he regarded as pro-British.

One reason for his alliance with the Congress, doubtless, was the latter's avowedly anti-British politics. Another important reason, it seems, was his belief that the Congress could never have a popular support in a province that had the highest percentage of Muslims compared to any province of India, and therefore would have to depend on his support. He worked tirelessly among the Pukhtun peasants and secured a large following for himself. With the support of his Khudai Khidmatgar, the Congress won 17 out of 50 seats in the 1937 provincial elections. The Congress victory looked all the more impressive with its 15 out of 36 Muslim seats in comparison with the Muslim League, which could not win a single seat.

Already wary of the increasing popularity of an anti-colonial group like Khudai Khidmatgar in the strategically most sensitive region of India, the British authorities were alarmed by the results. Although Ghaffar Khan had no radical social or political agenda, except for his uncompromising anti-colonialism, the big khans, too, became increasingly apprehensive of his growing popularity among the peasants who had already shown signs of discontent with the colonial system of land revenue.

Moreover, when Ghaffar Khan's elder brother, Dr Khan Saheb, formed the provincial government, he stripped the big khans of their power and privileges by depriving them of their positions as honorary magistrates and subordinate judges that the British had conferred on them.

The British authorities soon realised that their policy of patronising the big khans, which they had so far been pursuing, was not going to work in the face of the Congress' emergence as a popular party. To counter a political party they needed another political party. The Muslim League, almost completely rejected by the Pukhtuns though, with its claim of being the sole representative of the Indian Muslims, and its anti-Hindu rather than anti-colonial politics quite comfortably fitted into the slot. The big khans who had already begun to look up to the Muslim League, were further encouraged by the colonial patronage of the party. Shortly afterwards almost all the big khans, most of them with colonial honorary titles, joined the Muslim League (Talbot, 1988; Khan, 1987). But already hated by the peasants these khans were in no position to win popular support.

It did not take the British authorities and the Muslim League leadership long to realise that the only way to divert the popular support from the Congress and its ally, Khudai Khidmatgar, was to propagate against the Congress being a Hindu organisation. The Muslim League, with colonial support, began to enlist the support of mullahs and other religious leaders in various parts of the province, for claiming that whoever supported the Congress was working against the interests of Islam. At the same time the Muslim League was launched in the non-Pukhtun district of

Hazara by a Maulana Shakirullah, President of Jamiat-ul-Ulama, who became the first president of the Muslim League, assisted by the secretary of Jamiat-ul-Ulama, as the secretary of the Muslim League (Khan, 1987: 55-70).

The British Governor, Cunningham, instructed the big khans to meet each mullah on individual basis and tell him to serve the 'cause of Islam' for which he would be duly paid. The Mullahs were told that in case of good progress they would also be considered for government pension. A Cunningham policy note of September 23, 1942 reads: "Continuously preach the danger to Muslims of connivance with the revolutionary Hindu body. Most tribesmen seem to respond to this" (Sayeed, 1980: 20). While in another paper he says about the period 1939-43: "Our propaganda since the beginning of the war had been most successful. It had played throughout on the Islamic theme" (ibid.).

In the semi-tribal Pukhtun society, the pirs were quite influential for they were the only non-Pukhtuns who could own land. This enabled them to build their own power base outside the traditional assembly of elders (Jirga) of which they were not entitled to be the members. The dual status of being a spiritual leader and a landlord empowered them to mediate not only between god and man but also between man and man (Talbot, 1988: 5). Like the big khans, the pirs, too, were the recipients of official patronage. When the government-sponsored Muslim League campaign for the 'cause of Islam' was launched the pirs extended their full support and started propagating against the Congress and Khudai Khidmatgar.

But despite all these efforts, the Muslim League could not muster the support of Pukhtuns. In the 1946 elections, many big khans were the Muslim League candidates.¹⁷ The Congress once again defeated the Muslim League and emerged as the majority party with 30 out of the total 50 seats. In the Pukhtun areas Congress' victory was particularly impressive with 16 out of 22 seats.

Aside from the Muslim League's internal feuds and organisational weaknesses, the main reason for its defeat was that its anti-Hindu propaganda and demand for Pakistan were not comprehensible for the majority of Pukhtuns. The number of Hindus in the towns of the NWFP was extremely small, whereas in the countryside they did not even exist. Therefore, the Muslim League propaganda against Hindu domination was simply 'laughable' to Pukhtuns.¹⁸ Also difficult for the Muslim League was to persuade Pukhtuns that Ghaffar Khan being a friend of 'Hindu' Congress was a lesser Muslim, because despite his secular politics Ghaffar Khan was a deeply religious man – a practising Muslim – and always referred to the words and deeds of the Muslim prophet, Mohammad, in his speeches.

According to the British and Muslim League plan, the NWFP, as a Muslim majority province, had to become part of the future Pakistan. Ghaffar Khan, who did not believe in the idea of Pakistan and was a staunch ally of the Congress, could not perhaps even think of the NWFP becoming a part of Pakistan.

¹⁷ Among the leading khans were: "Nawab Sir Muhammed Akbar Khan, the Khan of Hoti, Nawab Mohabat Ali Khan, the Khan of Kohat, Nawab Qutbuddin Khan, the descendant of the pre-British rulers of Tank, and a major *jagirdar*, Mir Alam Khan, one of the largest landlords of the Peshawar valley, and Muhammed Zaman Khan, the Khan of Kalabat" (ibid. 17).

When the creation of Pakistan became a reality and the Congress accepted the partition of India, Ghaffar Khan was “completely stunned and for several minutes he could not utter a word” as for him it was “an act of treachery” on the part of the Congress which had thrown Khudai Khidmatgars to wolves (Azad, 1988: 210). This obviously demonstrates, on the one hand, his total dependence on the Congress and, on the other hand, his lack of understanding of the political developments that were taking place in the late 1940s. For a while, Ghaffar Khan and his brother, Dr Khan Saheb, were perplexed and did not know what to do. At last they came up with the idea of an independent state of Pukhtuns and a formal call was made on June 1947 at a meeting of the Khudai Khidmatgar for an independent Pukhtunistan.

Ironically, the very demand for a new independent state of Pukhtuns when a Pukhtun state, Afghanistan, already existed became a confirmation of the British division of Pukhtuns (Anwar, 1988: 30). The logic of this demand is understandable if one is convinced that nationalism is not about preserving the history, culture and traditions of a people as the nationalists claim but is about gaining and maintaining political power by appealing to popular support in the name of common history, culture and traditions.

Pukhtun nationalists demanded an independent state because they could see that in future Pakistan they would be dominated by the Punjabis, whereas in case of

¹⁸ Cunningham wrote that for 90 per cent the demand for Pakistan was not intelligible and for the “average Pathan villager in these parts, the suggestions that there can be such a thing as Hindu domination is only laughable” (quoted in *ibid.* 29).

becoming part of Afghanistan they had to give up the politics of Pukhtun nationalism because Afghanistan was already ruled by Pukhtuns. Thus a new national identity was imagined and constructed which shared the past with Afghanistan but did not want a future with it. Afghanistan's support for the idea of a new state was acceptable but not Afghanistan itself (ibid. 31). Moreover, Ghaffar Khan, who continuously evoked the past glory of Pukhtun nation, contemptuously said about Afghans (Pukhtuns): "We do not want to be one with those naked people" (quoted in ibid. 31). Thus, the anti-colonial nationalist made the colonial Durand Line that divided Pukhtuns the basis of his brand of Pukhtun nationalism.

By that time, however, the plan for the partition of India and creation of Pakistan had already been finalised and therefore no new demand was to be entertained. When Ghaffar Khan insisted, the British only agreed to a plebiscite in the NWFP. Ghaffar Khan and his brother Dr Khan Saheb did not like the idea but had to accept it because the latter was the elected chief minister of the province and his refusal would have meant an admission that he was no longer sure of his support among the electorate.

The plebiscite was to be based on the question whether the NWFP should remain part of India or become part of Pakistan. The Khan brothers demanded that the question should be whether the NWFP be declared an independent state of Pukhtunistan or become part of Pakistan. The British authorities refused to oblige. The Khan brothers boycotted the referendum saying that the whole idea was preposterous, when elections had already been held only a year ago and an elected Congress ministry was in office, unless the new demand for an independent state was incorporated.

The Muslim League, once again with the full support of the British officials, launched a vigorous campaign by sending its workers to the villages and denouncing the Congress boycott as un-Islamic and exhorting the people to vote for Pakistan as their religious duty (Talbot, 1988: 27). By that time the Hindu-Muslim riots had already begun to take an ominous turn and therefore the deeply religious Pukhtuns could not be expected to remain untouched even if they did not personally suffer from the carnage.

In the emotionally charged atmosphere when the Congress was not in the field, the officially supported Muslim League propaganda worked very well indeed. Out of the total 572,799 votes 292,118 (51%) were polled, of which 289,244 (99%) went in favour of Pakistan and only 2,874 in favour of India (Khan, 1986: 131).¹⁹ Although the Congress alleged massive rigging the referendum had sealed the fate of the NWFP and it became part of Pakistan. The Khan brothers were left with no option but to change their strategy according to the new political situation.

After the creation of Pakistan they declared that their demand for Pukhtunistan did not mean an independent state but an autonomous province within Pakistan where Pukhtuns would have the freedom to live their life according to their social and cultural norms without the domination of Punjabis (Azad, 1988: 213). But the managers of Pakistan were not willing to trust the Pukhtun nationalists even if they

¹⁹ The referendum, like the elections, was based on restricted franchise as only 572,799 people were eligible to vote out of a population of 3.5 million in the settled districts, whereas the tribal areas and the frontier states were not eligible to vote (Sayeed, 1980: 24).

had changed their minds in conformity with the demands of the new political reality. One of the first acts of the founder of Pakistan was to dismiss the elected Congress government in the NWFP. This was the beginning of a highly centralised and authoritarian rule in Pakistan, which had no room for any demands of provincial autonomy and regional self-assertion.

Although Pakistani apologists argue that Dr Khan Saheb's Congress ministry was opposed to Pakistan, and therefore the central government could not afford to have a hostile government in the strategically sensitive region like the NWFP, the future events proved that he, unlike his brother, Ghaffar Khan, was more of a conformist and opportunist to have created any problems for the Pakistan government. He had given clear assurance to the governor, Cunningham, that no anti-Pakistan activity will be encouraged and that there was no question of declaring the independence of the province (Sayeed, 1968a: 271-72). The best (or worst) example of Dr Khan Saheb's opportunism was his concurrence to become the chief minister of West Pakistan under the notorious One Unit, which was imposed against the wishes of the smaller provinces.

What seems to be a more plausible explanation for the dismissal of the NWFP government by Jinnah is: 1) his autocratic style of governance and a distaste for a difference of opinion, and 2) the early managers' sense of insecurity regarding the future of a country that was termed 'unnatural' by its adversaries. The most objectionable part of Jinnah's decision to dismiss the NWFP government was that he

did not ask the governor to dissolve the assembly and hold fresh elections but advised him to dismiss the ministry and invite a Muslim League man to form the government.

Ghaffar Khan, after taking oath of allegiance to Pakistan on February 23, 1948, however, continued to struggle for provincial autonomy. Pakistan's response to his activities was even worse than that of the colonial rulers'. Soon after the partition, his party paper, *Pukhtun*, was suspended and within a year he and his associates and followers were back in prison. In 1956 his property was confiscated in lieu of fines, whereas prison terms and house arrests continued till his death in 1988.²⁰ But the undemocratic and intolerant political culture of Pakistan, in a way, proved to be a blessing in disguise for Ghaffar Khan as it spared him of getting down to serious political thinking and working out a clear political agenda and strategy. Otherwise, he would have faced two obvious challenges.

- 1) After partition, when the British had left, anti-colonial nationalism needed to be transformed into ethnic nationalism. This required new nationalist rhetoric, new ideology and new strategy.
- 2) So far Ghaffar Khan had depended almost completely on Gandhi and his politics but when the Mahatama was no longer around he had to prove his

²⁰ Ironically, he had willed to be buried in the Afghan town of Jalalabad, across the Durand Line, a line that he had made the basis of his Pukhtun nationalism and among those 'naked' Pukhtuns whom he had so contemptuously rejected to be part of.

political credentials, which he had hitherto avoided by claiming to be a social reformer rather than a politician.²¹

In the face of continued state persecution and imprisonments, however, these challenges were averted. For the next two-and-a-half decades Pakistan was to see no democratic political activity, nor would there be any elections that would have required the Pukhtun nationalists to legitimise their demands by popular support. The absence of electoral politics, the successive governments' intolerance for dissent, Ghaffar Khan's exemplary stubbornness as well as the vagueness of his political agenda all helped to turn him into a legend. He became a saintly character adored by Pukhtun nationalists. But in the 'profane' world of market economy and job competition saintliness is not of much use.

Initially, a large number of Pukhtuns were sympathetic towards separatist demands. The reason was that geographically and historically the NWFP and Balochistan have not been part of South Asia. Hence physically and culturally Pukhtuns and Baloch are quite different from the rest of the South Asian people. Even their languages have little in common with South Asian languages and therefore, despite the influence of Urdu, Pashto and Balochi languages still are unintelligible for the neighbouring Punjabis and Sindhis.

Such cultural and linguistic differences were bound to play a role in shaping the political aspirations of the people contrary to the integrationist policies of the

²¹ Ghaffar Khan was probably the only Congress leader who had the 'fullest faith' in Gandhi's purity

Pakistan government dominated by Punjabis and Mohajirs. The sense of a lack of participation became even more jarring due to the absence of electoral politics for more than two decades after the creation of Pakistan. Under the circumstances, the separatist sentiment had the potential to become a serious threat, had there been a strong political organisation behind it. But the ineptitude and ambivalence of the nationalist leadership precluded the possibility of any such eventuality.

The directionlessness of the Pukhtun nationalism, however, did not stop the government from taking it a bit too seriously. The real danger, probably, was not Pukhtun nationalism but the support it was getting from India and Afghanistan. Afghanistan was the only state that opposed Pakistan's application for membership at the United Nations. Interestingly, Afghanistan's policy on the issue was as ambivalent as that of Pukhtun nationalists'.

On the one hand, Afghanistan claimed that after the departure of the British the Afghan border with British India, the Durand Line, had ceased to exist for it had lost its validity the moment one of the parties to the agreement, the British, was no longer there. On the other hand, it supported Pukhtun nationalists' demand for a separate state that would only further cement the Durand Line. All this contributed to the fears and insecurity of Pakistan's rulers that resulted in the persecution of Pukhtun nationalists. Despite the power tussle between the nationalists and the government, however, Pukhtuns have become well entrenched in the socio-economic system of Pakistan and for quite understandable reasons.

and "held almost identical views on many a problem" with his mentor (Tendulkar, 1967: 404).

Pukhtun Integration into Pakistani State System

Like other regions of Pakistan the NWFP has been faced with the rigors of modernisation accompanied by its attendant dislocation, uprootedness and insecurity. What has exacerbated the problem is that it has been one of the most neglected regions of Pakistan. Whether it is governmental development projects or private sector investments, the NWFP has been the recipient of less than its due share. The colonial regime's interest in the region, as mentioned above, was solely for strategic reasons and therefore it built only cantonments and military training centres in the region. As far as mechanised agriculture and industrialisation were concerned the region had failed to attract colonial interest. The infrastructure in the NWFP was as much developed as was required for defence logistics.

After partition Karachi became the hub of industrial activity that gradually flowed into Punjab. The NWFP proved to be such an unattractive area for industrialisation that even the local investors shied away from investing in their region and instead opted for the established industrial regions of Sindh and Punjab. By 1967, although the NWFP had 17.7 per cent of West Pakistan's population, its share of fixed assets was only 7 per cent, and of production in manufacturing industries around 6 per cent (Ahmed, 1998: 195). On the other hand, the central government's bias in favour of Punjab adversely affected the mechanisation of agriculture in the NWFP.²² But such

²² The NWFP received only 5.4 per cent tractors and 3.3 per cent tubewells out of its share in West Pakistan's tractors and tubewells (Ahmed, 1998: 195).

disparity has failed to accentuate ethnic discontent because the benefits that Pukhtuns have accrued from Pakistan have outweighed it.

Being the so-called 'martial' race, Pukhtuns had been one of those people whom the British regarded as 'good' soldiers and thus recruited them to the army in large numbers. In fact, among the Indian Muslims, after Punjabis, Pukhtuns had the largest number in the British army. After partition, it was estimated that 77 per cent of wartime recruitment was from those parts of Punjab which became part of Pakistan whereas 19.5 per cent recruitment came from the NWFP (Cohen, 1984: 42, 44). This situation continues to be the same, making Punjabis and Pukhtuns the two over-represented ethnic groups in the army.²³ In a political system that came to be dominated and later controlled by the army, this share was certainly going to favourably place Pukhtuns in the power hierarchy of the state and therefore, make them more inclined towards integration in the state rather than separation from it.

The concentration of economic activity in the southern parts of Sindh and Punjab obliged Pukhtuns to look southwards rather than northwards (Afghanistan). Pukhtun investors, transporters and labourers have been increasingly moving towards the south for better investment, business and jobs.

Unlike Sindh and Balochistan, where there is a strong resentment that their land has been taken away by Mohajir and Punjabi settlers and their resources are in the control and use of the central government and Punjab, the NWFP's land and resources are

²³ At the same time Sindhis' percentage was 2.2 and Balochs' 0.06 (ibid.).

firmly in local hands. Indeed, many Pukhtun civil and military personnel share the exploits of Punjabis and Mohajirs in Sindh.

Administratively, too, unlike Sindh and Balochistan, where Mohajirs and Punjabis dominate, the NWFP is ruled by Pukhtuns. Even in the public sector there is no significant presence of people from other regions.

The army-dominated system has enabled Pukhtuns, who, at the turn of the century, had one of the smallest number of educated youth compared to many other ethnic groups of India (Page, 1987: 12), to gradually increase their presence in the civil bureaucracy.²⁴

By late 1960s, Pukhtuns were well integrated in the state system of Pakistan. When the first free elections were held in 1970, their preferences were quite obvious. The Pakistan Muslim League (PML) with its 7 seats emerged as the main winner (although it had polled less votes, 22.6%, than Jamiat Ullama-i-Islam's (JUI) 25.4%) whereas, the nationalist party, National Awami Party (NAP), headed by Ghaffar Khan's son, Wali Khan, won only 3 seats and 18.4 per cent votes. The combined votes of the centralist parties like the PML, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), JUI and Jamaat-I-Islami were 69.4%.²⁵ Even today this pattern continues to be more or less the same.

²⁴ Pukhtun army officers, like Punjabis, have benefited from military governments' policy to entrench army officers in the civil bureaucracy.

²⁵ For details of the number of votes and seats see Choudhury (1974: 128-29).

The political parties that have won the highest number of votes in the 1993 and 1997 elections are the centralist Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League. Throughout these years the NAP, now ANP (Awami National Party), has been winning only in the prosperous region of Peshawar and Mardan.²⁶ This region is not only the most fertile in the NWFP but also the most educated and thus has a larger share in power. And as a real beneficiary of power and privileges its support for the ANP obviously means not a desire for separation but for a bigger chunk in power and privileges. The ANP's politics of ethnicity represent these desires very well indeed.

Even when Ghaffar Khan, the 'champion' of the downtrodden, was leading the party, it was not clear, as earlier mentioned, what exactly was the nationalists' plan for the future of Pukhtuns. The main issues that were raised were either the establishment of an independent state or a share in the existing one. Despite being a social reformer and peasant leader, Ghaffar Khan never favoured any radical social or agrarian reforms that would have broken the hold of the landowners and benefited the peasantry. In fact, the Congress ministry's action to strip the landed gentry of its privileges was not to his likings as he thought it would antagonise the big khans (Sayeed, 1980: 21).

His son, Wali Khan, has faithfully followed in his footsteps as far as the lack of a clear political plan and commitment to certain social and political programme are concerned. What he has not learned from his father, however, is the populism of

²⁶ In 1973 the Bhutto government banned the NAP. Later, when Wali Khan was in jail, Sher Baz Khan Mazari formed the National Democratic Party (NDP), which was joined by the former's supporters. In 1986, Wali Khan formed the ANP.

Ghaffar Khan. Under Wali Khan, the party lost its populist aura and ended up becoming an elitist pressure group whose politics is to enter into or withdraw from one alliance or another to make or break a government.

Unlike his father, who always remained in contact with the masses and launched mass movements irrespective of the state persecution, Wali Khan's preferred political strategy till 1980s was to court arrest or to go abroad at a time of political crisis (Waseem, 1987: 111). Never in his long political career has Wali Khan elaborated his political objectives. Instead he tried to distance himself from goal-oriented politics and programs that could lead to confrontation. He had an aversion to socialism and had broken his alliance with the Bengali leader Maulana Bhashani in 1967 for the latter's socialist leanings (ibid.). Although in his public rhetoric he talked about democratic rights, secularism, provincial autonomy and cultural-linguistic rights for Pukhtuns, in 1979 he objected to the Baloch leaders' use of the term nationalities and suggested that they be characterised as "distinctive cultural and linguistic entities" (Harrison, 1981: 89).

In 1972, when his party formed government in the NWFP, in alliance with a religious party, Jamiatul Ulama-I-Islam, Urdu was made the official language, liquor was banned, workers' strikes banned and police brutality used against Peasants. Not only the NAP agreed to the continuation of emergency but also signed the 1973 Constitution, which gave less powers to the provinces than the colonial Government of India Act 1935 did (Ahmed, 1998: 200). Although he suffered years of persecution and imprisonment at the hands of Pakistani state, he contented himself

with the criticism of individual rulers and avoided confronting the state establishment itself, which in Pakistan's case means the army. No wonder, Wali Khan was cleared of treason charges and released by the military dictator, general Zia ul Haq. All these factors led the leftist and radical elements to quit the party and by 1980s Wali Khan's party had no fangs left.

Conclusion

Pakhtun nationalism had emerged as an anti-colonial movement of the small khans and peasants. After partition, it turned into the party of those who aspired to control administrative power in the province and to have a sizeable share in the Pakistani state system. In its third phase, the party has become a platform for the provincial investors, civil servants and army personnel. In 1997 elections, the ANP won 8 out of its 10 National Assembly seats from Peshawar and Mardan region,²⁷ not only its traditional support base but also the one, which has the largest number of local investors, civil servants and army personnel. For these groups, nationalism means the protection of their privileges that emanate from private and public sectors of Pakistan. Although separatism did not suit them even before 1970s, after the war in Afghanistan and that country's destruction even the few idealists cannot think of any future other than the one inside Pakistan.

Furthermore, the Afghan war has created a class of drug and arms dealers that includes not only the tribal drug barons but also army personnel who made fortunes out of the clandestine western arms supplies to the Afghan fighters. Most of these

²⁷ Election special, *Herald*, Karachi, 1997.

arms and drug dealers have become financiers of various political parties and quite a few even members of the legislative assemblies. On the other hand, most of the dirty work against Afghan governments, whether communist or mujahideen, that has led to the current Taliban rule and civil war, has been carried out by Pukhtun officials.

Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that the ANP has become a pressure group whose politics revolves around bargain for ministerial portfolios and government permits for its leaders to set up factories. Till 1998, the party at least had two issues to emotionally charge its supporters: opposition to the construction of Kalabagh dam and a demand to change the province's name from the NWFP to Pukhtunkhwa. After the Nawaz Sharif government had shelved the Kalabagh Dam project, the only issue that was left was the name of the province.

Ironically, at last a nationalism that had virtually become nationalism in name seems to have become nationalism for name only. Not surprisingly, the ANP is not a member of the nationalist alliance, Pakistan's Oppressed Nations Movement (PONM) that was formed in 1998, after all the Pukhtuns of the NWFP are no longer an oppressed 'nation', even if many of them are as oppressed as any people in any of Pakistan's four provinces.

Chapter-6

Baloch Ethnic Nationalism: From Guerrilla War to Nowhere?

To focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class or modernization is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is, above and beyond all else, about politics and that politics is about power. Power, in the modern world, is principally about control of the state.

John Breuilly¹

Baloch nationalism is yet another phenomenon that defies theories, which see nationalism as an effect of industrial social formation or print capitalism, for Balochistan is the least industrialized region of Pakistan with the lowest level of literacy. It is a nationalism that emerged in a tribal set-up well before the partition of India and was opposed to Balochistan's accession to Pakistan. But unlike Pukhtun nationalism, it did not get recognized as a force to reckon with. After partition, however, the Pakistani state's treatment of the region turned Baloch nationalism into a potent force which attracted international attention in the 1970s when a guerrilla war was launched that culminated in a bloody confrontation with the Pakistan army.

Introduction

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan with the smallest number of people. With over 222,000 square kilometres the province covers 42.9 per cent of the total area of Pakistan. Its population of 6.5 million, according to the provisional results of 1998 census, is just five per cent of Pakistan's total population. It is the most

impoverished province of Pakistan with the lowest per capita income compared to the other three provinces. Ethnically and linguistically it is the most diverse province of Pakistan. Baloch are the largest ethnic group in their province, but do not constitute a majority. Their number is closely followed by Pukhtuns. The third largest ethnic group is Brahui, followed by a substantial number of Sindhis and Punjabis. Interestingly, the majority of Baloch live outside Balochistan, mostly in Sindh and Punjab.

Although rich in mineral resources like coal, iron ore, marble and sulphur, Balochistan is the driest province of Pakistan and therefore there is very little irrigation and farming. Because of severe weather and scarcity of fertile land, the social mode of Balochistan has predominantly been nomadic pastoralism complemented by patches of settled agriculture. And it was around these patches that tribal life was organized. The livelihood of the people has been dependent on myriad economic activities such as growing crops on small pieces of land, tending pasture land, cattle breeding, especially sheep and goats, trade and work in mines. The social organization of the province continues to be based on tribalism till this day (Qasir, 1991: 26).

Before colonial rule, Balochistan was a highly fragmented society. The concept of state authority did not figure very prominently in the tribal mode of localized social life. Whatever pockets of power and control existed were based on the internal organization of local tribes. Although various conquering armies like Persian,

¹ (1993: 1).

Afghan, Sindhi, and Sikh continuously overran the region, all avoided permanent control of the tribes (Wirsing, 1981: 4). Internal efforts at political unity and the establishment of the state, too, had not been common. It was only in the eighteenth century that the sixth Khan of Kalat, Nasir Khan, established a unified Baloch army of 25,000 men and 1,000 camels and organized the major Baloch tribes under an agreed military and administrative system (Harrison, 1981: 16).

Nasir Khan also set up a bureaucratic structure of the state by appointing a number of administrators with specific portfolios and duties like management of internal and foreign affairs, collection of revenues from crown lands, tributes, blood compensation, etc. But despite these innovations there was a structural weakness in the Kalat state; it did not have an organic bureaucracy that could incorporate various tribes. The tribes were only a fighting force of the state to be awarded with land grants for the supply of troops and maintenance of order. Therefore despite some semblance of political unity, there existed a considerable degree of tension between the centralizing authority of the Khan and the localized powers of the tribal chiefs (Hewitt, 1996: 50). It was a system that owed more to the powerful personality of the Khan than to an institutionalized structure. And therefore after the death of Nasir Khan his system came crumbling down.

Colonial Division of Balochistan

After annexing Balochistan in 1884, the colonial administration exploited the tension between the Khanate (the Khan dynasty) and the tribes with disastrous effects. The British needed a safe passage from Sindh to Afghanistan through Balochistan. The

Khan guaranteed their safety but failed to control the anti-British tribes. The British used this as an excuse to attack Kalat claiming that the tribal attacks were a breach of the treaty and when the Khan refused to surrender, he was killed and his state dismembered (Swidler, 1977: 91). Thus ended the first and so far the last political organization that had brought the whole of Balochistan (including those regions which are now part of Iran and Afghanistan) under one state authority. Baloch nationalists nostalgically remember the era as a glorious period in their history.

In the face of continued tribal resistance, the colonial administration restored the Kalat state but only to divide it with more precision. The Khan of Kalat was forced into a subordinate position to the British government, in which he was not allowed to negotiate with any other state without the consent of the British; he was obliged to allow British troops on his territory and was responsible for checking any outrages near or against British territory and to provide protection to merchants (Siddiqi, 1991: 22). As a reward for his cooperation the Khan was granted Rs. 100,000 subsidy, whereas subsidies to the tribes were made conditional on their loyalty to the Khan and their ability to maintain peace (Swidler, 1977: 91).

Soon the colonial administration started their dividing practices by playing off rival chiefs against each other. Balochistan was divided into seven parts. In the far west, the Goldsmid line assigned roughly one-fourth area to Persia in 1871, and in the north Durand line handed over a small strip to Afghanistan in 1893. Part of Balochistan was named British Balochistan to be centrally administered by British

India, whereas the rest of it was divided into a truncated remnant of the Kalat state and three puppet principalities (Harrison, 1981: 19).

Colonial interest in this economically unattractive region was purely strategic as Balochistan shares a long border with Afghanistan and Iran. While reducing the powers of the Khan of Kalat, in 1876 the British forced him to accept a contractual notion of sovereignty according to which the tribal chiefs were to accept the authority of the Khan but had the legal right to refute that authority in certain circumstances (Hewitt, 1996: 51).

An administrative system that was called the Sandeman system of administration was imposed on Balochistan, which treated it as a political agency ruled through an indirect rule of the political agent of the governor general. Rather than a direct administrative authority the political agent acted as an advisor to the Khan of Kalat. In the new arrangement the tribal chiefs were allowed to devise their own methods to manage their day-to-day local affairs but when it came to issues of importance they were required to consult the British official. The issues of importance for the British, of course, were strategic access to Afghanistan and safe movement of troops in the frontier areas.

Under the indirect rule a council of chiefs, Shahi Jirga, was established in which the tribal leaders could politically represent themselves. The Shahi Jirga was not an independent body, but an institution working under the tutelage of the colonial administration and answerable to the British chief commissioner. The special status

of Balochistan was not affected by the administrative changes in other parts of India during the first and second decades of twentieth century. Although colonial intervention increased in the twentieth century and by 1930s the powers of Khanate were usurped and the powers of the council virtually eliminated, even then the constitutional reforms were not extended to Balochistan (ibid. 52; Ahmed, 1975: 21).

Economic Change and Pauperization

By the turn of the century the landscape of Balochistan had undergone a considerable change when railway lines, roads, post offices, rest houses and a cantonment of British troops were constructed. With that even the neglected economic sector of the region saw some changes. The establishment of railway lines boosted mining, especially coal mining in northern Balochistan, and the amount of coal extracted went up from 122 tons in 1886 to 47,300 tons in 1903.² At the same time, market economy made its entry, migration to the more economically developed areas started, the number of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes decreased, and the number of settled population increased.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, 95.5 per cent of Balochistan's population lived in the countryside with their nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle in which cattle breeding played an important role. By 1911 the number of settled population had gone up to 54.3 per cent of the total population, and by 1931 it had further increased to 62.7 per cent. Economic changes, however, did not bring prosperity to the region;

² In this section I have extensively drawn on the seminal work of Russian anthropologist Y.U. Gankovsky (1971).

instead, they triggered economic deterioration and pauperisation. During the last decades of nineteenth century there was an astronomical increase in tax. For instance, during 1879-80 and 1902-03 there was 82 per cent tax increase in Sibi and during 1882 and 1895 there was 350 per cent increase in Quetta region. The tax, which was collected in kind (wheat) for the British troops, led to the landlessness of many peasants. Till the beginning of twentieth century most of the land was cultivated by peasant owners; tenants were few and agricultural labour non-existent. But by 1931 there emerged a considerable number of tenants and labourers.

The development of commodity-money relations converted Balochistan into “an agrarian appendage of the metropolis” as the import of factory-made articles coupled with high taxation led to the “bankruptcy of local artisans whose numbers dropped 63 per cent during the 1921-1931 period alone” (Gankovsky, 1971: 203-205). On the other hand, the new mercantile class catering to the needs of the British garrison was wholly imported from Punjab and Sindh (Ahmed, 1975: 24-25). Therefore, with the total exclusion of indigenous Baloch, settlers came to control whatever modern economic relations developed in Balochistan. By that time economic conditions in most parts of Balochistan had progressively deteriorated.

Emergence of Nationalism and Accession to Pakistan

Despite economic changes, however, the structure of Baloch society remained predominantly tribal. It was introduced to capitalist economic relations but was far from entering an industrial capitalist economy. Hence the emergence of nationalism in Balochistan was not the effect of industrial social organisation, which Gellner

(1983: 40) regards as the cause of nationalism. It was also not caused by print capitalism, which Anderson (1991) believes is a trigger for nationalist sentiment. Indeed, it was Baloch nationalists who first introduced Baloch society to print media.

Baloch nationalism emerged as a response to the intervention of the state. The highly fragmented nature of Baloch society initially did not allow the emergence of an organized nationalist movement, though sporadic resistance to colonial rule continued throughout. The first successful nationalist campaign was launched in 1929 against state recruitment that turned into an armed mutiny. The following year, in 1930, several underground political groups were formed and an anti-colonial 'quit Balochistan' movement was launched.

In 1935, the first nationalist party, Kalat National Party, was formed with the objective to achieve 'independent, united Balochistan' after the departure of the British. At the same time, Baloch newspapers appeared and one of them, *Al-Baluch* from Karachi, published a map of independent Balochistan that included Iranian Balochistan, Kalat, Baloch principalities, British Balochistan and some parts of Punjab and Sindh (Siddiqi, 1991: 25, 31; Harrison, 1981: 22-23).

As the British withdrawal from India became apparent, Baloch nationalists speeded up their activities in support of an independent Balochistan. The Khan of Kalat argued, ironically with the help of Jinnah as his legal advisor, that the legal status of Nepal and Kalat was different from the rest of the princely states in India as the two, unlike other states, maintained their treaty relations directly with the Whitehall rather

than dealing with British Indian government. He maintained that the 1876 treaty had pledged that the British “would respect the sovereignty and independence of Kalat”. In a memorandum to the 1946 British Cabinet Mission, the Khan emphasized that a government or governments succeeding the British would only inherit the states that had treaty relations with the colonial government in India and not those whose treaty relations were with the Whitehall (Harrison, 1981: 23).

This was a legal and legitimate demand but the government of a country, which had illegitimately been ruling India, was not impressed by the legality of the argument. As the Cabinet Mission could not question the legality of the demand it left the issue unresolved.³ Later, an unrepresentative council of tribal chiefs, Shahi Jirga, established by the colonial regime, and the Quetta municipality, were entrusted by the viceroy with the task of deciding the fate of Balochistan. The members of Shahi Jirga and Quetta municipality obligingly endorsed the official plan by supporting accession to Pakistan.

One day after the creation of Pakistan, on August 15, 1947 the Khan declared the independence of Kalat with an offer to Pakistan for special relations in the areas of defence, foreign affairs, and communication. Pakistan rejected the offer and after a nine-month tug of war Kalat was forcibly annexed when Pakistan army's garrison commander in Balochistan was ordered to march on Kalat and if the Khan refused to agree to the accession arrest him (ibid. 24, 25). Nationalists rejected the Khan's

³ Ayesha Jalal (1992: 275) claims that the last viceroy, Mountbatten, tried to “find a more ‘democratic’ method to determine the future of Balochi people, if that was possible.”

capitulation and his brother launched a revolt against Pakistan that continued till his arrest in 1950.

Pakistan's interest in and treatment of the region was not much different from that of the colonialists'. If anything, Pakistan's treatment was worse than the colonial regime's because the new nation-state was more interventionist than its predecessor. During colonial rule the province was treated as a special administrative zone; the Pakistani state continued with that legacy. The colonial administration's reforms towards representative rule in India did not include Balochistan and therefore there was no legislative assembly there at the time of partition. Jinnah, in keeping with the colonial tradition, constituted a governor general's advisory council for Balochistan to be ruled directly by him (Ali, 1973: 252).

To strengthen his grip on Balochistan and other frontier areas the governor general created a ministry of states and frontier regions and in an un-parliamentary manner kept the ministry under his own control. To rule Balochistan as a governor general's province was so surprising that at a press conference Jinnah was asked if "he was in favour of a dictatorial form of government, rather than a democratic one" (Sayeed, 1968: 239, 250). Whatever territorial identity Balochistan had, was eliminated when, in 1955, the One Unit scheme was imposed that amalgamated the four western provinces into one.

The actual physical resistance to the One Unit was more pronounced in Balochistan than anywhere else, and at one point it seemed as if the province had seceded because

there was an open defiance of the central government's authority (Feldman, 1972: 203). Just before the imposition of first martial law in 1958, the army moved into Kalat and arrested the Khan, his retainers and Baloch political leaders in various parts of Balochistan. The unrest further increased when the army demanded that weapons should be handed in at police stations and the tribesmen refused to comply. Pakistan army deployed tanks and artillery and resorted to bombing of villages. The chief of Zehri tribe, Nauroz Khan, organised a guerilla force to fight the army for the return of the Khan to power and the withdrawal of the One Unit. But Nauroz Khan was arrested, and later died in prison, whereas his son and others were hanged on treason charges (Harrison, 1981: 27, 28).

The 1973-77 Insurgency

It took Pakistan 23 years after its creation to grant Balochistan the status of a province in 1970. The same year the National Awami Party (NAP) won the largest single block of seats in the provincial assembly and in 1972, in alliance with a religious party, Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI), formed the government.

Before going into the details of the 1973-77 insurgency it is instructive to look at the status of Balochistan compared to other provinces at that stage. Although the year 1972 saw elected governments at the centre as well as in the provinces for the first time in Pakistan's two-and-a-half decades' existence, for Balochistan it had an added significance: so far the province had been ruled by the central establishment like a colony. The administrative control of the province by Punjabis and other non-Baloch, the extremely low rate of literacy, the exploitation of its resources by the

central government, and its overall impoverishment, judged by the following figures provided by economist Omer Noman (1990: 64-65), are staggering.

Balochistan's per capita income at \$54 was 60 per cent of that of Punjab. Whereas the literacy rate for Pakistan was 18 per cent, for Balochistan it was only 6 per cent. Despite its mineral resource endowment, its share in industrialisation was as insubstantial as 0.7 per cent. Balochistan provided 80 per cent of Pakistan's gas production, saving an estimated US\$275 million in foreign exchange per year, but the royalty that the province received for the gas was as trivial as \$1.2 million. The majority of the administrative personnel in the province were from Punjab. Out of 830 higher civil personnel in the province only 181 were Baloch. Out of twenty provincial department heads only one was a Baloch in 1972.⁴ Punjabis and other settlers also controlled the business and whatever little industry there was. Even development plans like building infrastructure and exploration of minerals were conducted by the central government.

When the NAP came to power, the major task before it was to rectify these imbalances and to redress the long-standing Baloch grievances. At that time Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party was in power at the centre. The People's Party had a majority in Punjab and Sindh but had won only one seat in the North West Frontier Province and none in Balochistan. Bhutto was as centralist as any of his

⁴ Akbar Khan Bugti, the chief of Bugti tribe and former governor and chief minister of Balochistan, while commenting on the regional disparity, recounted an interesting anecdote to me in 1997 in Quetta. He said: "In 1948 when I was at the civil services academy, there was only one Bengali out of over two dozen CSP (Civil Service of Pakistan) candidates. When I visited East Pakistan in February 1971, just before the army action (that led to the creation of Bangladesh) I met that Bengali who was a

predecessors. And the fact that he had little say in the affairs of the two strategically important provinces was a thorn in his flesh.

Bhutto's centralist tendencies and his support base in Punjab warranted that a check be placed on the reforms of the nationalist administration in Balochistan. Just before the appointment of the NAP governor, Ghous Bux Bizenjo, Bhutto wrote a letter to him, which smacked of the central government's concern about its control over the province. Of the seven points that Bhutto emphasised, three need to be quoted here as they highlight the major areas of tension between the centre-province relations. The letter, as published in the Government of Pakistan's White Paper on Balochistan in 1974, goes:

“The Provincial Government should take steps to ensure that all inhabitants of the province, both local and non-local, receive equal and fair treatment, and that the non-locals are not in any manner harassed.”

“The Sui Gas installations are located in the province of Baluchistan. They are of national importance. Every effort should continue to be made to ensure that there is no disruption in the proper running of these installations or in the transmission/distribution of gas from Sui. The Provincial Government shall continue to ensure the maintenance of law and order in the Sui area and a smooth labour-management relationship.”

senior civil servant. When he embraced me he said with tears in his eyes: “You remember, I was the

“Every effort should be made to preserve national integrity. Fissiparous tendencies are not only harmful to the nation but also affect our international relations. Therefore, movements like Azad (independent) Baluchistan Movement, however nebulous, should be firmly put down, and not be permitted to affect our relations with foreign powers, particularly friendly neighbouring countries.”

As noted earlier, the majority of the administrative personnel in Balochistan was Punjabi and other settlers. And this was one of the factors that made the nationalists think that Balochistan was being treated as a colony. Naturally, Bhutto and the Punjabi bureaucracy expected that the first elected government in Balochistan would most certainly try to change that arrangement. Bhutto’s instruction with an emphasis on ‘non-locals’ was to register the concerns of Punjabis.

The instruction about ensuring the proper running of Sui gas installations and uninterrupted transmission/distribution was indicative of the central government’s fear that the nationalist administration might demand fair revenue for its gas supply. In fact the issue was not only the revenue but also that when the rest of the country was benefiting from the natural gas from Balochistan, the province itself had no gas supply.

The third point is significant in geopolitical sense. The Independent Balochistan Movement was aimed at establishing an independent state of Balochistan comprising all the Baloch areas of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Shah of Iran was very

only Bengali at the academy. And here we see the result of that.”

sensitive to the nationalist tendencies in Iranian Balochistan as well as the Soviet Union's support for nationalist forces. Pakistan and Iran both being in the American camp and Iran being a rich oil-exporting country Bhutto did not want to harm his cordial relationship with the Shah. The NAP leader, Wali Khan, had charged in the national assembly, and later during his trial in the Supreme Court, that Bhutto was reluctant to install the NAP government in Balochistan because the Shah had expressed his disapproval (Sayeed, 1980: 115-116).⁵

The above three issues may have been at the core of the centre-province relationship, but the real reason for the tension was the central government's unwillingness to allow provincial autonomy. It is in the nature of the nation-state that it regards demands for regional and ethnic autonomy as provincialism, tribalism and narrow nationalism. The nation-state recognises only one form of nationalism as legitimate and that is the nationalism of the state itself. But some states are more repressive and intolerant than others. Pakistani state has undoubtedly been one of the most repressive and intolerant. From the very beginning, as noted earlier, it has been insensitive to provincial grievances and oversensitive to the voices of dissent. The provincial demands had always been termed as 'narrow provincialism' harmful to the integrity of the state.

In Balochistan's case ethnic demands and the NAP government's actions were translated as a threat to the "survival of Pakistan as an integrated state" (White Paper, 1974: 15). Also as a harbinger of 'progress and modernity' the state establishment

⁵ Senator Abdul Hayee Baloch, leader of the Balochistan National Movement (BNM), too, pointed out

blamed the trouble on “a vivid contrast between primitive life and progress” (ibid. 32). Thus, the provincial government’s actions aimed at asserting its regional authority and disallowing the central government’s interference in its affairs were described as the tribal chiefs’ efforts to discourage developmental plans that the central government had intended for the province. This was an interpretation to gloss over the actual underpinning of the tension. The real issue was simple: Balochistan had been the most underdeveloped province, ruled almost entirely by non-Baloch. The nationalist government was set to tackle that issue on a priority basis. And it rightly believed that Balochistan’s underdevelopment was caused not only by the central government’s negligence but also by the exploitation of provincial resources by the centre.

Therefore, one of the first actions of the nationalist government was to transfer non-Baloch administrative staff to their respective provinces for it justifiably felt that without the indigenisation of the administration the provincial resources would not come under the control of the provincial government. In principle, Bhutto was in favour of an increase in Baloch representation in the administration. He had, in fact, presided over the governor’s conference at which the decision to repatriate Punjabi and other non-Baloch bureaucrats to their own provinces was taken. But later the Bhutto government’s White Paper on Balochistan listed the transfer of Balochistan Reserve Police personnel as one of the misdeeds of the NAP administration.

to me in 1997 that the Shah of Iran was one of the most important factors in the Balochistan crisis.

Selig Harrison (1981: 116) has noted that there were two contradictions in the Balochistan situation. The first one was between the regional Baloch elite and the central elite of Pakistan. The under-representation of the Baloch in the central as well as provincial administrations and the Punjabi-Mohajir domination of the state structure had clearly set the two interests in conflict. The emergence of the elected government of the PPP could not mitigate the conflict because the party had won not a single seat in Balochistan. The second contradiction was between the large rural and small urban population of Balochistan and the Baloch elite.

One has no reason to disagree with Harrison on identifying the dual contradiction. But his conclusion that the NAP government of the Baloch elite was interested in tackling the first contradiction only, misses an important point. Ironically, the nationalist government's reforms had set it against the local elite and therefore the first challenge to its authority emerged in the form of a resistance from the tribal elite. This can be understood in terms of the nature of nationalist politics.

Nationalist politics, as discussed in chapter two, though undoubtedly class-oriented is not necessarily class-based. Nationalism is a populist form of politics, which tries to mobilise people on the basis of common culture, language, history and ethnicity regardless of their class. The nationalist elite endeavours to replace the outside domination with the local and indigenous one. For that it appeals to every member of the community in the name of self-determination and self-rule. And as soon as it comes to power it employs all those methods against which it had struggled. For

instance, it struggles against state intervention but the moment it captures state power it starts intervening in society in the name of collective good of the community.

Balochistan's extreme economic poverty demanded that the nationalist leadership mobilised and united various classes for a state-sponsored utilisation of the provincial resources. But the problem was that Baloch society was based on localised interests and tribal social organisation. If the selective intervention of the British, and later the Pakistani state, had led to the underdevelopment of the province and its people in general, it had also ensured the maintenance of power and privilege of the local elite. In its efforts to gear provincial resources to the development of the province the nationalist government soon realised that most parts of Balochistan were beyond the authority of the state administration. Therefore, it felt that unless these so-called tribal areas were brought under the provincial authority it could not carry out its program of reforms. This brought the localised tribal interests in conflict with the nationalist government.

Soon tribal stirring and unrest erupted in various parts of the province. Settlers were attacked, and government officials kidnapped. In some cases even the NAP-affiliated Baloch Students Organisation (BSO) was reported to have been involved. When the unrest took a more serious turn the provincial government requested the central government's help. It did not take the NAP government long to realise that the central authorities were more interested in handling the situation on their own rather than working under the command of the provincial administration. Thus, an essentially provincial matter soon turned into a clash between the centre and the

province. The shortsighted central government, as if already waiting for a situation to undermine the provincial government, immediately blamed the unrest on the inability of the provincial administration. And later in the White Paper accused the NAP government of not cooperating with the central authority.

The revolting tribes had blamed the situation on the partisan actions of the NAP. The central government followed suit and criticised the NAP administration for having launched a victimisation campaign. The irony was that the NAP was trying to expand the writ of the state authority but the central government, rather than appreciating its efforts to bring various tribal areas under control, instead encouraged those who were threatening the state authority. Also, without appreciating the NAP government's rather federalist and moderate policies the Pakistani establishment resorted to its usual methods of demonising the NAP by saying that the party was basically anti-Pakistan, as it had opposed the creation of Pakistan (White Paper: 14).

Manipulating the unrest for its own designs, the central government did not confine itself to charging the provincial government with exceeding its constitutional authority, but in a well-orchestrated operation gave the Balochistan problem an international and conspiratorial dimension. Early in 1973, Pakistan authorities entered the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad and discovered a cache of 300 Soviet submachine guns and 48,000 rounds of ammunition. While displaying the arms to diplomats and the media, the government alleged that they were destined for

Balochistan, more than 1200 kilometers to the south⁶ (Harrison, 1981: 35). The elected government of the NAP was dismissed and governor's rule imposed on the province.

In resistance to the central government's intervention the Baloch nationalists launched an armed struggle, which soon turned into a bloody war with the Pakistan military. There were around 55,000 Baloch fighters, including 11,500 organised combatants, fighting against the over 80,000-strong military force that was called out to quell the resistance. The conflict lasted for four years claiming the lives of 5,300 Baloch guerillas and 3,300 army men. At the height of the conflict, when Pakistan air force was indiscriminately bombing Baloch villages, the United States-supplied Iranian combat helicopters, some of them also manned by Iranian pilots, joined in. Iran also provided US\$200 million in emergency and financial aid to Pakistan (Harrison, 1996: 298; 1981: 36). Ironically, the Pakistani state's brutal use of superior firepower, less than subtle portrayal of ethnic interests as feudal and tribal interests and attacks on the so-called 'feudal relations' antagonised almost every Baloch tribe and therefore reunited the warring tribal factions against the centre (Hewitt, 1996: 59).

It was only after the fall of the Bhutto government in 1977 that an uneasy and temporary truce was effected. The military regime released the nationalists who were being tried by the Bhutto government. Although general Zia ul Haq's emphasis on

⁶ Iraq denied any involvement, claiming that it was an act of the anti-Saddam Hussain plotters. The Iraqi diplomat, from whose house the arms were discovered, had disappeared three days before the operation and after a few months was executed by the Iraqi government for an attempted coup. Many

Islam and Pakistani nationalism had little attraction for the Baloch nationalists, they had realised that it was not possible for them to achieve their objectives by fighting the massive and well-equipped armed forces of Pakistan. While the Baloch nationalists might have been thinking of their next move, the political developments in the region took away the initiative from them and made the future of the region more dependent on what was happening across the border in Afghanistan.

In 1978 communist rule was imposed on Afghanistan. By the end of 1979 factional fighting led to the instability of the communist regime and the Soviet forces entered Afghanistan to help the shaky government. The Soviet presence in Afghanistan led to unprecedented western military supplies to the region through the military regime of Pakistan. For the next decade or so the northern frontier regions of Pakistan, i.e., the North West Frontier Province and Balochistan, were an arena of the combined efforts of the Afghan resistance groups, Pakistan army and western defence and intelligence personnel to fight against the Soviet forces.

During that period, due to the strategic importance of Balochistan, massive western aid poured in. In 1982, the military regime launched a special development programme funded by the US, the European Economic Commission (EEC), Japan and Arab states (Noman, 1990: 202). The extent of infrastructural development was such that five new airports, one naval harbour and three fishing harbours were built. The objective behind these projects is well explained by a RAND Corporation Trip Report, which, while recommending the US assistance, said that it “would be

journalists in Pakistan agreed with the Iraqi version and believed that the Iraqi diplomat had

politically less provocative because while it would have a clear cut military utility, it could be disguised as economic aid” (cited in *ibid.* 202-203).

After the fall of the communist regime in Afghanistan and the collapse of the Soviet Union itself, Baloch nationalists found themselves surrounded by hostile forces in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The 1973-77 insurgency was a political adventurism, rather than a war of national liberation. It was a spontaneous response to the intervention of the central government and the undemocratic dismissal of an elected provincial government. As one Baloch politician put it, after the Pakistani establishment’s refusal to accept the will of the people in East Bengal (Bangladesh) in 1971, the dismissal of the nationalist government in Balochistan was the second time that it violated the principle of representative rule.⁷

But the nationalist leadership’s reaction was impulsive and lacked a political strategy. Therefore, the insurgency started as a sporadic revolt against the state authority, gained momentum when more and more tribes joined in, but had no clear goal to achieve. “It was clear from the start that Baloch nationalism was lost in a blind alley. It wanted space within the state, but launched a struggle against that state.”⁸ It was a misfortune of the Baloch that their leadership did not take into account the intolerance of the Punjabi establishment and, especially, the Punjabi army’s penchant for brutality, which was graphically demonstrated only a few years earlier in Bangladesh.

collaborated with Iranian and Pakistani intelligence for the drama (Harrison, 1981: 35 fn).

⁷ Abdul Hayee Baloch, interview, Quetta, 1997.

⁸ I.A. Rehman, interview, Lahore, 1997.

There is a view in Balochistan that Bhutto was willing to give in and reach an agreement with the nationalists but the Punjabi establishment did not allow him to take that course as that would have meant concessions to the leader of the nationalist party, Wali Khan, the Pukhtun nationalist bitterly hated by the Punjabi establishment in those days.⁹ As far as the Pakistan army was concerned it could not afford yet another defeat after its humiliation in Bangladesh. And even when the Bhutto government decided to pull out the army, the generals resisted arguing that after a considerable loss they had better “clean up”.¹⁰

For two decades (1978-1998) Baloch nationalists remained rather clueless; some stayed in exile, some in seclusion, some opted for mainstream politics and some even came to power. If the losses and disappointments of the insurgency have disheartened the radical ones, the co-optation by the state and the benefits from the developmental schemes have neutralized the pragmatic (opportunistic?) ones. One of the radical nationalists, Attaullah Mengal, whose government Bhutto had dismissed, was so disenchanted that during his exile in 1980, he had said: “We can’t live in a federation because the Punjabis would always dominate us” (cited in Harrison, 1981: 66). But in 1997 his party supported his son be to the chief minister of Balochistan. Mengal is once again in exile and one of the most vocal leaders of the Pakistan’s Oppressed Nationalities Movement (PONM).

⁹ Tahir Mohammad Khan, who was minister of information in Bhutto’s cabinet, expressed this view to me in an interview in Quetta 1997.

¹⁰ Abdul Hayee Baloch, interview.

Another significant development in the politics of Balochistan during the last two decades is the split between Baloch and Pukhtuns. Although it had started with the change of heart of Pukhtun nationalists of the NWFP when their leader, Wali Khan, opted for more conciliatory and less confrontational politics (see previous chapter), the split between the Baloch and Pukhtuns of Balochistan took an organized shape when a Pukhtun leader from Balochistan, Mehmud Khan Achakzai, formed Pushtunkhwa Milli Awami (national people's) Party (PMAP) in 1989. Except for the PMAP's view that "Pakistan is a Punjabi empire subjugating other nationalities",¹¹ which is in line with the feelings of Baloch and other nationalists in Pakistan, the demands of the PMAP go right against the interests and aspirations of the Baloch nationalists. The PMAP believes that it has three options: 1) Balochistan should be declared as a two-nation province comprising Baloch and Pukhtuns, or 2) a new province for the Pukhtuns of Balochistan should be established or 3) Pukhtun areas of Balochistan should be made part of the NWFP.¹²

After the military coup of 1999, however, the fight against a common enemy has once again acquired more urgency than group interests. The military regime's desperate moves to manage Pakistan's dwindling economy, for which it seems to believe the exploration of Balochistan's oil and gas resources hold some hope, have once again radicalized the nationalists in Balochistan. The military ruler announced in December 1999, that the exploration work would soon be started.¹³ Since then Balochistan has experienced various violent incidents including the murder of a high

¹¹ Mehmud Khan Achakzai, interview, Quetta, 1997.

¹² *ibid.*

court judge. The government believes that these are the work of those elements, which are opposed to the exploration. One of the radical nationalists, Khair Bux Marri, who had played an active role in the 1970s insurgency, but has been living a secluded life for the last two decades, seems to have been chosen to be one of such elements and the government has implicated him in the judge's murder and put him behind bars.

With Marri in prison and Mengal and Achakzai in exile, there may not be much political resistance to the central government's plans in Balochistan but as recent press reports suggest Baloch nationalism is once again becoming active. And when political channels are not available the means that the nationalists usually adopt are always less than peaceful.

¹³ The following details are from Haroon Rashid's reports in the monthly *Herald*, Karachi, November and December 2000.

Chapter-7

Sindhi Ethnic Nationalism: Migration, Marginalisation and the Threat of 'Indianisation'

In systems where 'ascribed' cultural differences rationalise structures of inequality, ethnicity takes on a cogent existential reality.

John & Jean Comaroff¹

It is a measure of the political system of Pakistan that Sindh is the most developed province of Pakistan but its indigenous people are, after the Baloch, the most marginalised. In no other region of Pakistan is the divide between urban prosperity and rural deprivation as wide as it is in Sindh. Due to the concentration of commerce and industry in its capital city, Karachi, Sindh has the highest per capita income in Pakistan but its rural inhabitants are among the poorest in Pakistan (Syed, 1992: 191).² Such a striking disparity has made Sindh the hotbed of various kinds of nationalism ranging from separatist and right-wing autonomist to socialist intellectuals and left-wing peasant groups. An interesting part of Sindhi politics, however, is that since the first free national elections in 1970, Sindhis have overwhelmingly been voting for a federalist Pakistan People's Party founded by Sindhi politician Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and now led by his daughter Benazir Bhutto.

¹ Cited in Ranger (1999: 20).

² According to one estimate, soon after partition Sindh's per capita income was 40 per cent higher than that of Punjab's (Wright, 1991: 301).

This chapter examines the ethnic nationalism of the indigenous Sindhis who are predominantly rural. The main thrust of the argument here is that nationalism is the product of and a response to the interventionist nature of the modern bureaucratic state. Although identity, culture, industrialisation, print capitalism and class do play a role, it is only an auxiliary one: in response to the treatment these categories get from the state.³

Background

The Peripheral Region

The social and political landscape of Sindh has traditionally been characterised by isolation from the power centres, repressive feudalism, stranglehold of the pirs (religious guides), and exploitation by the settlers. Due to its geographical location, Sindh was a peripheral region for the invaders from the north as well as for the rulers in Delhi. Although the first Muslim invaders (AD 711-712) had landed in Sindh from the Middle East, the subsequent invasions were all from the north. The longest lasting Muslim rulers of India, the Mughals, who had come from Central Asia, had chosen Lahore and Delhi as the centres of their empire. At the peak of their rule, the Mughals tried to impose a revenue system throughout India, but Sindhi clans resisted the central state's attempts and rebelled against its heavy revenue demands and therefore the system could not be applied in its entirety (Ahmed, 1984: A-150). Hence, the political and socio-economic structure that developed in Sindh was different from the northern regions of Punjab and the North West Frontier Province.

³ For the principle role of the state in engendering nationalism, see John Breuilly (1993); for emphasis on industrialism, Ernest Gellner (1983); and for highlighting the importance of print capitalism, Benedict Anderson (1991).

In 1843, when the British took over Sindh and, after four years, made it part of the Bombay Presidency, the autonomous status of Sindh came to an end, but the power and prestige of the local elite was left intact for political and administrative reasons. Gradually, however, the modern state apparatus started to intervene which brought about some significant changes in the local power relations and economic structure. But due to its different historical experience, the modern history of Sindh, too, has taken a shape quite distinct from other regions of Pakistan.

Legalisation of Feudalism in Sindh

In the chapter on the colonial state in India, we have noted that the colonial officials had difficulty finding the owners of land, as there were no individual owners, because the pre-colonial state itself was the supreme landlord. The situation in Sindh was quite different from the rest of India. Here, the colonial officials did not face much difficulty in finding the owners of land. For in Sindh, by the time of the colonial takeover, powerful individuals during the Talpur rule (1782-1843) had already become the de facto owners of land and had established one of the most repressive feudal systems in the Indian subcontinent. As one colonial official said: “there is no trace of anything like right of cultivators, or any right except that of the Zamindar” (quoted in Ahmed, 1984: A-153). Therefore, Sindh had developed into more of a fiefdom of the local elite rather than a part of the central power. This did not change under colonialism, because no uniform agrarian policy was applied to all regions; it varied according to the particular conditions of a region and the influence and power of the local elite.

For instance, in many parts of India, Muslim landholdings were made “subject to critical scrutiny, detailed inquisition and frequent resumption and commutation to pension” (Hardy, 1972: 39) and the land was used for buying loyalty to the administration. But in Sindh, such interference with the Muslim estates was avoided by treating the landholders “as ‘the aristocracy of Sind’ and despite reservations confirmed them in their incomes and privileges” (ibid. 40). Consequently, waderos (landlords) and pirs not only continued with some of the largest landholdings in India but also became legal owners of that land. The interventionist colonial state had imposed its authority on the region, but continued to treat it as an outpost of the Bombay Presidency. The economic and social discrepancy that existed between Sindh and the rest of the Presidency remained as wide as ever before. The gap between the rest of the Presidency and Sindh was all the more conspicuous because the former was one of the most prosperous regions of India, whereas the latter one of the most pauperised.

Despite colonial interest in developing Karachi as a port city, Sindh remained isolated across its mountains, deserts, salt flats and swamps, as “a backwater, out of touch with the rest of the Presidency and out of sympathy with it” (Seal, 1971: 68). Though administratively part of the Presidency, its legal and governmental system remained different, for most of the Bombay legislative Council enactments did not apply to Sindh, which was ruled under a separate system of government and an almost independent judicial system (ibid. 69).

Such duality of policy was a logical outcome of the main objectives of colonial rule: a system that aimed at gaining maximum control and profit with minimum change in the status quo; a system that judiciously exploited the productive sector, while self-consciously neglecting the social services sector. The state tried to change the economic and political structures of society according to its own requirements for profit, while restricting the corresponding change in the social sector to the minimum. That objective was achieved by selective intervention, uneven development, and discriminatory policies all under the guise of the much-glorified 'rule of law'. The effects of this system on Sindhi society were alarming.

Agricultural Hinterland

Prior to colonialism, the rulers of Sindh, especially Talpur Mirs, were more interested in game than in agriculture and therefore during their reign large tracts of fertile land were converted into hunting grounds (Divekar, 1983: 333). Contrary to that the colonialists regarded Sindh as 'irrigation province', like Punjab, that could be developed into a fertile and lucrative agricultural region. They brought the existing inundation canals under the management of the Public Works Department, and then elaborate surveys were conducted to estimate the potential irrigability of the land and to convert the inundation canals into perennial systems so that agriculture was not just dependent on rain (Whitcombe, 1983: 691). By the twentieth century, Sindh came to be classified alongside Punjab, the United Provinces and Madras, as a province with the best prospects for investment (ibid. 678). With the opening of Sukkur Barrage Scheme in 1932, an additional seven million acres came under

cultivation. And by the time of partition in 1947, Sindh had become “a surplus province to the tune of some 500 million rupees” (Talbot, 1988: 55).

But the economic benefits of the booming agriculture in Sindh did not improve the life of the local population, because the province was relegated to the status of agricultural hinterland, providing “food grains to the deficit regions of India and raw cotton to the textile mills of Bombay, Ahmedabad as well as in England” (Ahmed, 1984: A-156). Moreover, the irrigation system that was geared to enlarge the revenue base and to increase production was used for extensive rather than intensive cultivation, which precluded the possibility of any structural change (ibid.). But the pressures of market economy that forced the cultivators to produce cash crops on a large scale anyway changed the rural landscape by devaluing the ‘self-sufficiency’ of the rural life, and by making it increasingly dependent on urban centres. As a result, a redefinition of the balance of power between urban and rural sectors as well as a sea change in the structure of power relations between various social classes was unavoidable.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, only 1.4 per cent of the Muslims, who were 78 per cent of Sindh’s population, were literate (Seal, 1971: 84). The immense poverty of the Muslims, the stranglehold of the oppressive feudal system, the lack of education facilities, and the high cost of whatever educational institutions were available, all worked against the ‘luxury’ of education.

Traditionally, government service in Sindh had been the exclusive prerogative of Hindus (Alavi, 1988: 76), and the predominantly rural Sindhi Muslims had avoided it. But under the new circumstances, when India was virtually run by the district officers and each one of them was the “mother and father” of his area (Page, 1987: 2), state employment had become the source of power, prestige and influence and therefore sought after for the rich and poor alike. But the low level of literacy among the Sindhi Muslims severely restricted their entry into the state employment sector. In 1895 there was no Muslim magistrate in Sindh and by 1917, the Hindu share in the higher ranks of the judiciary was as high as 80 per cent (Ansari, 1991: 185). Even as late as 1947, there was only one Muslim official in Sindh secretariat (Braibanti, 1963: 378).

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, when India was passing through a grim period of economic depression caused by growing population, state policies that had led to increased landless labour, heavier indebtedness among the peasants and natural disasters like famine, Sindh had its own share of economic hardships and rural indebtedness. The burden of the land revenue that the British had imposed forced the rural community to borrow more than ever before from the Hindu moneylenders, *bania*, to pay taxes to the government. The indebtedness of the rural Muslims was so widespread that by 1936 barely 13 per cent of them could manage to stay free from it (Ahmed, 1996: 189). Many who could not pay their debts had to lose their land, for under the British law the creditors were allowed to charge unlimited interest and if the debtors were unable to pay their property would fall to the moneylenders (Ansari, 1991: 185).

Also, when land had become an alienable property, which required neither force nor local influence to keep but only a legal procedure, the Hindu moneylenders became increasingly interested in it. Prior to colonial rule, the Muslim rulers did not allow Hindus to acquire land and therefore only a handful of them had land, but by the beginning of the twentieth century almost half of the cultivable land in Sindh, i.e., over three million acres, was in their possession (Boreham, 1998: 69).

Pre-partition Politics

All these factors contributed to shape the future course of Sindhi politics, especially the post-partition politics of regional and ethnic nationalism. But it is important to note here that the growing interest of the Sindhi elite in modern politics must not be seen as a reaction to colonial rule. That is nothing more than the nationalists' rhetoric, and therefore not only a fragile tool for analysis but a misleading one. For an analysis of the rise of Sindhi politics calling for Sindhi rights, one needs to ask this question: Sindh was made part of the Bombay Presidency more than half a century ago, then why was it that the Sindhi elite became active in politics only in the early twentieth century?⁴ Here I will identify some of the factors that encouraged the Sindhi elite to take up politics as a vocation.

There were two important factors: 1) the emergence of new social classes and interest groups, and 2) the colonial administration's political and administrative reforms. If

⁴ Sindhi Muslim elite had formed the Sind Mohammadan Association in the early 1880s, but that was more of an elite social club for the promotion of their social and educational interests rather than a political platform.

the first factor was the result of the introduction of the modern bureaucratic state and its market economy, the second was the state's response to the emergent situation. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were five discernible social groups in Sindh, namely, 1) the traditional Sindhi landlords, waderos and pirs, 2) cultivator landowners, 3) Hindu absentee landlords, moneylenders and traders, 4) state employees, and 5) landless tenants/labourers.

As noted above, the class of waderos and pirs continued to dominate rural life in Sindh even after the colonial takeover. They had suffered the least from the economic hardships of the province. The Hindu *bania* and absentee landlords were the beneficiaries of the new system. The two groups that were adversely affected by the new system were the cultivator proprietors and the landless tenant/labourers: the former were burdened by the land revenue that led to their indebtedness and the latter were the creation of the feudal system that made legal distinction between the landowners and the landless and turned them into hapless serfs. The Hindu traders and the state employees' position had become precarious due to the increasing competition in trade and job market.

Small wonder then that the demand for the separation of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency was first made in 1913 by a Karachi-based Hindu trader-politician, Harchandra Vishindas. His call was couched in the usual nationalistic jargon of "Sindh's distinctive cultural and geographical character", but in actual terms it was the voice of a comparatively fragile commercial class of Sindh that felt threatened by the more prosperous Bombay traders (Ansari, 1991: 186). Vishindas was soon joined

by a Sindhi Muslim politician, Ghulam Mohammad Bhurgri, who, though originally a wadero, was a successful London-educated lawyer representing the Muslim urban interests (Boreham, 1998: 90).

It was not a coincidence that only a few years earlier, in 1909, the colonial administration, faced with the growing radicalisation of the nationalist forces, had adopted a strategy “to encourage provincial ambitions, and particularly Muslim provincial ambitions, to offset challenges to its authority at the centre” (Page, 1987: xii). The Morley-Minto Reforms introduced an elected element to the provincial councils and, for the first time, it was allowed that provincial grievances may be voiced and provincial governments be confronted with them (ibid. 4). With the official blessings Sindhi waderos and pirs, too, became active participants in the provincial politics.

Understandably, Sindhi politics at the time was non-confrontational and elitist. The colonial administration’s acknowledgement of waderos and pirs’ status and the showering of official honours and privileges had made it very unlikely for the local elite to rock the boat that they were so comfortably sailing even if there was a tinge of danger on the horizon in the shape of the newly emergent groups and classes. Instead, they jumped into the political arena only at the calling of their benefactors to fight the newly emergent groups that were increasingly becoming a potent threat to the interests of both the local elite and the colonial administration. Although there were some sporadic and abortive anti-British efforts like the Hur insurgency and the participation of the pirs in the Khilafat movement, they did not have the support of

the waderos and therefore had little bearing on the future course of Sindhi politics, which came to be dominated by them.

Separation of Sindh

In 1936, Sindh was separated from the Bombay Presidency and accorded the status of a province. The campaign for the separation of Sindh was based on the belief that Sindh had lost its distinct identity under the Presidency, but the underlying reason was the step-motherly treatment that Sindh was subjected to by the Presidency administration. The fact that Hindus had a majority in the Presidency and Sindhi Hindus had grown more prosperous during that period had helped to create a communal wedge between Hindus and Muslims. After the separation, the communal feeling did not disappear but had undoubtedly lost its intensity because Muslims enjoyed a solid majority in the province, and therefore they had little reason to worry about the dominance of a Hindu minority, a prosperous and influential one though. It was also the Muslim majority status of Sindh, which shaped its attitude towards the Muslim League politics.

Sindhi politics during the decade before the partition were marred by inter-personal and factional squabbling between the waderos but soon they had to agree on one issue: whether Sindh should become part of Pakistan or not. Within a few months after the separation of Sindh, a non-communal party, Sindh Ittehad Party, was formed on the pattern of Punjab's Unionist party, with the sole objective of protecting the interests of Sindhi rural elite, both Muslim and Hindu, and the next year, in the 1937 elections, the party won the largest number of seats (Sayed, 1995: 18, 19). Till that

time the Muslim League was virtually non-existent in Sindh and could not even win a single seat there.

Support for Pakistan

The decade before partition saw Sindh as a politically unstable province where the making and breaking of governments and ministries had become a routine. A colonial official has very rightly summed up the situation, when he said: "There are really only two parties in Sind, those who are in and those who are out, and the main question is how those who are out can get in" (cited in Jalal, 1992: 114). The details of the intrigues, corruption and opportunism of the Sindhi politicians make interesting reading, and are part of almost every study dealing with the Muslim politics of that period. But such anecdotes do not explain the growing communalisation of Sindhi politics and the support for Pakistan.

The task of exploring the Sindhis' aspirations becomes all the more difficult when one realises that Sindhi Muslims consisted of mainly two classes, the waderos and the haris (landless tenants/labourers). As far as middle classes were concerned their number was very insignificant. According to the 1931 census of India, 81.1 per cent of Sindhis were haris, 7.5 per cent cultivating proprietors and 11.4 per cent non-cultivating proprietors (Boreham, 1998: 53). More than 80 per cent of the cultivated land was in the control of a few thousand absentee landlords (Khan, 1967: 87).

What had made matters worse was that the haris were virtual slaves with no freedom of opinion or action. The note of dissent by a member of Government Hari Enquiry Committee in 1947 well illustrates the conditions of the haris.

The hari, who has cultivated a piece of land for several generations, does not know how long he will be allowed to stay on it. Fear reigns supreme in the life of the hari – fear of imprisonment, fear of losing his land, wife or life...He might have to leave his crop half ripe, his cattle might also be snatched and he might be beaten out of the village. He might suddenly find himself in the fetters of police under an enquiry for theft, robbery or murder...As soon as the Zamindar appears on the fields the hari and his children go and bow before him till they touch his feet, then rise up to kiss his hand. A good-looking wife is a constant source of danger even to his life. The hari is asked to surrender her and he is subjected to intimidation, threat or coercion. If he does not yield, the wife is kidnapped or he is sent behind the bars in a false criminal case and the wife left alone is compelled to live with the Zamindar (cited in Ahmed, 1984: A-157).

Yet another source of repression was the pirs, who not only were some of the largest landlords but also held sway over the spiritual life of Sindhis as religious guides and messiahs. Such almost total control over the temporal and spiritual beings of the majority of Sindhi Muslims coupled with the lack of communication and education facilities made it very difficult to know their real desires and preferences. The 1943-44 annual report of the Muslim League aptly described the situation when it said: "...we should require years to create political consciousness among the Muslim masses of the province, where on account of long distances, scattered villages, illiteracy, and local influences, it is rather difficult to easily approach the people" (cited in Talbot, 1988: 34). Under the circumstances, what we are left with is the politics and preferences of a handful of waderos and pirs.

Despite their less than issue-oriented politics, however, there is ample evidence that the Sindhi elite desired to maintain the autonomous status of Sindh and therefore any plan or politics that would jeopardise that objective was unacceptable to them. The bitter memory of the Presidency period was fresh enough to guard them against any alliance that would turn Sindh into an insignificant unit in the future administrative arrangement of the Indian subcontinent. But the problem was that in the 1940s there were only two political forces, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. To have a say in the politics of the day, Sindhis had to choose between the two.

The pitfalls of an alliance with the Congress were many: the Congress' radical anti-imperialism and confrontational politics did not suit the interests of the Sindhi elite; the dominance of Hindu minority over the economic and administrative sectors of Sindh remained an unhappy feature and from the Sindhi Muslims' point of view could become even worse in the wake of a Hindu-dominated Congress rule. Furthermore, at least two of the Congress' professed objectives looked ominously threatening to the interests of Sindhi elite. 1) The Congress' promise of land reforms, which the Sindhi elite, who had some of the largest landowners of India amongst them, did not even like to be mentioned let alone implemented. 2) The Congress' plan for a strong centre that allowed not much autonomy to the provinces. Yet another aspect of the Congress that might have made it an unattractive proposition was its politics of mass mobilisation. Sindhi waderos abhorred the idea of any contact with the haris for that might have led to the latter's political consciousness and to the weakening of waderos' control.

On the other hand, the Muslim League's elitist and communalist politics was more palatable to the Sindhi elite's taste and more suitable to their interests. As the recipients of official honours and titles the Sindhi Muslim elite felt more comfortable with the Muslim League's so-called 'constitutional' rather than confrontational politics. Also appealing was the Muslim League's demand for autonomous Muslim states within the Indian union. Therefore, in 1943, the Muslim League members in the Sindh Assembly passed a resolution demanding 'independent national states', on the basis that "no constitution shall be acceptable...that will place Muslims under a Central Government dominated by another nation" (Jalal, 1992: 110).

However, this did not mean that Sindhi politicians were in favour of the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. One of the most influential Muslim League politicians, Ghulam Hussain, was "an outspoken enemy of the Lahore resolution (later called Pakistan Resolution)" and "all against Pakistan" and believed that even Jinnah himself did not have his 'heart in the proposal at all'" (ibid. 109). For the Sindhi elite the situation was that of being between the devil and the deep blue sea. They feared Hindu domination in the Congress rule and Punjabi domination in the case of Pakistan. Anyway in the end Sindh opted for Pakistan.

The Growth of Sindhi Ethnic Nationalism

A Sindhi nationalist, Allah Bux Soomro, who was a staunch opponent of Pakistan and was killed before partition is reported to have said to G.M. Sayed, a separatist Sindhi nationalist who had once supported Pakistan: "You will get to know that our difficulties will begin after Pakistan has come into being...At present the Hindu

trader and money lender's plunder is worrying you but later you will have to face the Punjabi bureaucracy and soldiery and the mind of UP...After the creation of this aberration (Pakistan) you will have to struggle to fight its concomitant evils" (Sayed, 1995: 46).

From the Sindhi point of view, it was a prophetic warning. Soon after the partition Sindhis realised that Pakistan did not mean independence for them, but a domination of another kind, of a rather worse kind. They had to face, as Allah Bux had warned, the Punjabi bureaucracy and military and the mindset of the UPite Muslim settlers, the Mohajirs. So much so that soon Sindh was to lose its regional identity that it had regained after its separation from the Bombay Presidency, and see its language, Sindhi, being replaced by the north Indian Mohajirs' language, Urdu, something that had not happened even during colonial rule. It is not surprising then that most Sindhis believe that for them the most repressive form of colonialism started after the creation of Pakistan.⁵ Unfortunately, the events, the facts and the figures that will be presented in the following section graphically substantiate this belief.

One important point, which needs to be noted while analysing the creation of Pakistan and the politics of ethnicity there, is that national identity is a complex process of interacting and intermingling identities and interests. Any effort aimed at building such an identity on the basis of a single religious, linguistic, regional or ethnic identity has to be a tenuous one unless the importance of these multiple

⁵ Most of the Sindhis that the author interviewed during 1997 and 1998 expressed this view, the most prominent among them being politicians like Imdad Mohammad Shah and Rasul Bux Palijo and historians like Hameeda Khuhro and Ibrahim Joyo.

identities is well recognised. For various identities surface at different points in time under myriad political, social, economic as well as cultural pressures.

During the years leading to the partition, Muslims had become conscious of their religious identity because, in the wake of independence, they perceived a Hindu-majority rule to be the main threat. But soon after the partition regional, ethnic and linguistic identities that lay dormant among the Muslims had to surface for now when the perceived threat to their religious identity had disappeared they had to determine their place within the Muslim community on the basis of other identities, which were no less important. That was a natural thing to happen in a multi-ethnic state like Pakistan. In fact, there did exist the potential in these identities to be quite explosive because colonial rule had led to an uneven development that had created extreme inequalities between regions, ethnic groups and linguistic entities.

A measure of sensitivity on the part of the early managers of Pakistan might have diffused the situation and channelled it into a direction that could lead to the identification of commonalities rather than differences. But that was not to be part of Pakistan's fortunes. On the contrary, the founders of Pakistan proved to be more sensitive towards the denial of any expression of difference, grievance of inequalities and the demand for a fair share rather than towards their acceptance and resolution.

As detailed above, Sindh was one the most impoverished provinces of Pakistan despite being agriculturally a surplus one. Its capital, Karachi, however, had by that time become an important commercial and industrial port city. Due to its infra-

structural capacity, and also, perhaps, for being the birthplace of the founder of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Karachi was selected to be the capital of the new state. As a prosperous and promising town that had also become the capital, Karachi attracted the bulk of the Urdu-speaking Muslim refugees from India. The two developments that were initially welcomed by Sindhis, having little clue that both were going to be a bane rather than a boon.

The Influx of Refugees

The partition of British India had led to the biggest cross-migration in recorded history. Around 17 million people moved in the opposite directions across the newly established border between India and Pakistan (Jalal, 1992: 1). Naturally, it was a daunting problem for the administration of a nascent state of Pakistan. But the process of rehabilitation of refugees itself is not the issue here. The main question here is to explore as to why Sindh, one of the more peaceful provinces that was comparatively less affected by communalism though, had to suffer the most from the influx of refugees.

There were many political, economic and cultural reasons for the Sindhi response to the refugee problem. And all have left indelible mark on the ethnic interaction within the province, the relations between Sindhis and other ethnic groups of Pakistan, especially Punjabis and Mohajirs, and, of course, between the province and the central government.

The initial sympathetic Sindhi response to the refugees did not turn into opposition and antagonism for reasons of provincial particularism, of which Sindhis have been accused by the Punjabi-Mohajir dominated Pakistani establishment.⁶ The economic slide-down, the social upheaval, the deteriorating law and order situation, the fear to be swamped by the outsiders, and the Pakistani state's less than sympathetic response to Sindh's grievances, all were very solid reasons for the growth of ethnic nationalism.

After the initial influx of refugees, it became obvious to Sindhis that for them it was not going to be just a matter of welcoming their Muslim brethren. The whole process was going to change their life for the worse. The reason was simple: the incoming Muslim refugees were destitute, while the outgoing Hindus were those prosperous people who had been managing the economic and commercial life in Sindh. Another problem was that the number of incoming refugees was too large to manage and therefore it led to social disorder in a comparatively peaceful province. Sindhis also believed that the Muslim refugees were responsible for the communal violence that had led to the large-scale Hindu exodus.

For those Sindhis who could think of replacing the outgoing Hindus there was no consolation in the fact that most of the skilled jobs were being taken up by the Muslim refugees who were more qualified and skilled. For Sindhi haris it was disheartening to see that the land they had tilled for the Hindus was being awarded to

⁶ Whenever the provincial government complained about the centralisation of powers in the Centre, it was termed provincialism (Callard, 1957: 185).

the Muslim refugees rather than given to them.⁷ Yet another disturbing thought was that the Hindus, despite being believers in a different religion though, shared a common language and a culture with Sindhis. On the contrary, the Muslim refugees (Mohajirs) shared the religious belief with Sindhis but nothing else: the language, culture and social and historical experiences of the Mohajirs, majority of whom consisting of north Indian Urdu-speakers, had little in common with Sindhis.

Sindhis, in fact, were soon to realise that most of the Mohajirs considered themselves to be the descendants of the Muslim rulers, and due to the United Provinces' proximity to the centres of power, and their early exposure to modernisation, looked down upon Sindhi culture as "feudal, primitive and backward".⁸ The fact that communal Muslim politics had started in the UP and the Muslim League that had created Pakistan was founded by the Upites, whereas the Muslims belonging to the majority provinces that had now formed Pakistan were only a late entrant had made the Mohajirs to presume that they were the 'real founders' of Pakistan and therefore it belonged to them as much, if not more, as to the indigenous people of Pakistan. The Mohajirs had an air of arrogance about "being there not by kind invitation but by right" (Ansari, 1998: 92).

In the face of Sindhis' social, economic, cultural and psychological quandary the new state's actions, to put it mildly, were less than a consolation. Indeed, the insensitive

⁷ Around two million acres of land is estimated to have been awarded to the Muslim refugees who claimed to have left their land in India (Ahmed, 1998: 71). According to Gankovsky and Gordon-Polonskaya, "of the 1,345,000 acres abandoned by Hindus as many as 800,000 acres were seized by Sindhi Landlords" (cited in Jalal, 1991: 87).

⁸ Personal communication.

and authoritarian attitude of the state was to rub salt in the wounds of Sindhis. As the majority of Mohajirs opted for settling in the major towns, Karachi had to take their largest number. Before Sindhis could lose their capital city to the Mohajirs, however, the central government had come up with a plan to separate it from Sindh and turn it into a federally administered area. This implied huge financial losses for Sindh because Karachi was the major commercial and industrial centre, not only of Sindh but also of Pakistan.

Although Sindh at the time had a Muslim League ministry, the provincial government could not help to resist the centre's decision, which it believed to be harmful for the province's interests. The governor general M.A. Jinnah's response to the Sindh Muslim League's opposition was that "he would hold the Sindh ministers to their promise" (Ali, 1973: 199). The initial promise, however, was not about the separation of Karachi from Sindh but for making the city Pakistan's capital and for providing accommodation and other facilities to the government. A delegation of Sindh Muslim League called upon Jinnah to apprise him of the unanimous opposition of the chief minister Ayub Khuhro, his cabinet and the provincial League to the plan. But Jinnah angrily refused to budge and instead told his party men that Pakistan was his creation and the Muslim League which was "nothing but a mob...had played no part in it" (Sayed, 1995: 131) and ordered them to make all the necessary arrangements. When the orders were not followed, Jinnah, in a swift, severe and scandalous manner, retaliated by advising the governor to dismiss chief minister Ayub Khuhro on charges of corruption and maladministration.

In May 1948, when the constituent assembly, after a heated debate, resolved⁹ to turn Karachi into a centrally administered area, Sindhi politicians protested that their province was being 'beheaded' and Sindh Muslim League Council adopted a resolution censuring the decision for creating a "grave and deplorable" situation (Ansari, 1998: 97). Turning a deaf ear to the protestation, Jinnah urged the Sindhis to accept "willingly and gracefully" the decision of the "the highest and supreme body in Pakistan", and on July 23 1948, Karachi was placed under the control of the central administration (Ali, 1973: 252).

At the time Sindh was under severe economic stress caused by the departure of prosperous Hindus, the arrival of a large number of destitute Mohajirs and devastating floods. The situation was exacerbated by the loss of Karachi, which was a major source of Sindh's revenue. The Central government had promised to pay compensation, but what it paid was no less than a brutal joke: for an estimated loss of around 600 to 800 million rupees Sindh was paid only six million (Qasir, 1991: 24).

The centre's interference in Sindh's affairs did not stop there. More draconian actions were yet to come. The reason for the dismissal of Khuhro government was not only his opposition to the separation of Karachi but also his refusal to take more refugees from Punjab. The ouster of Khuhro, however, did not end the widespread opposition to the further inflow of refugees. To muzzle that opposition, in August 1948, the governor general issued a proclamation under Section 102 of the

⁹ The resolution said: "all executive and administrative authority in respect of Karachi and such neighbouring areas which in the opinion of the Central Government may be required for the purposes of the capital of Pakistan shall vest in and shall be exercised by or on behalf of the Government of Pakistan and the legislative power shall vest in the Federal legislature" (cited in Ali, 1973: 252).

Government of India Act, 1935 and declared a state of emergency on the grounds that “economic life of Pakistan is threatened by the circumstances arising out of the mass movement of population from and into Pakistan” (Ali, 1973: 267), and more refugees from Punjab were forced on Sindh.

While being tried on charges of corruption and maladministration, Khuhro continued to enjoy the majority support in the Sindh assembly. In December 1948, the Sindh Muslim League elected him as its president. The central government was at its wits’ end to deal with this embarrassing situation. An undemocratic action that could not be justified through a democratic process required some more highhandedness. Hence, to deal with the ‘anomalous situation’, as the main architect of the Act, Chaudhri Muhammad Ali (ibid. 369), put it the constituent assembly passed the Public and Representative Offices (Disqualification) Act (PRODA). The purpose was to give the governor general/governor the arbitrary powers, which did not require him to consult his ministers, to disqualify, through “highly abnormal operations”, those politicians who “incurred the displeasure of the central government” (Callard, 1957: 81, 102, 103).

When the court declared the appointment of Jinnah’s handpicked chief minister, Pir Illahi Bux, illegal, an unelected politician, Yusuf Haroon, was given the job (Ahmed, 1998: 73). But the unhappy province did not prove to be an easy fair, and after sometime governor’s rule was imposed that placed Sindh under the direct control of the central government. Commenting on the situation, C.M. Ali, one of the most influential government officials who would soon become Pakistan’s prime minister,

complained that, “Sind politics reverted to the old pattern of strife among the ministers and constantly shifting loyalties among the members of the assembly” (Ali, 1973: 370). A degree of fair-mindedness on his part might as well have afforded him to add that the Pakistan government itself had adopted the old pattern of colonial coercion, control and imperious tactics in dealing with the provinces.

The One Unit Scheme

One of the most damning acts of the Pakistan government to undermine regional identities of various ethnic groups was the imposition of the One Unit scheme on the four provinces of West Pakistan. The idea of amalgamating the four provinces into one unit might have been as old as Pakistan itself, for the state had come into existence with an anomalous power arrangement: Bengalis formed the majority of Pakistan’s population, but the state power was in the hands of the Punjabi-Mohajir axis. In any representative dispensation Bengalis were to overturn that arrangement. The ruling elite had no intention to allow such an eventuality.

Due to the Bengali majority in the constituent assembly, the issue of One Unit was never discussed there during its seven-year existence and when the proposal was put before the Muslim League parliamentary party it was defeated by 32 to 2 votes.¹⁰ But that did not stop the Punjabi-Mohajir dominated establishment from pushing through a proposal which they had begun to articulate soon after Pakistan’s creation on the basis of “administrative efficiency, greater economy and as a foil against provincialism” (Jalal, 1991: 197). The general opposition to the plan was based on

two considerations: that it was an attempt to obstruct the Bengali majority and create a semblance of parity between the two unequal wings and that the intention, the methods adopted as well as the content of the scheme were arbitrary and in violation of the democratic norms (Callard, 1957: 189).

It was the first serious blow to the whatever little political process there was in Pakistan, for its implementation had necessitated, first, the dissolution of an unwilling constituent assembly on October 4, 1954, and then the dismissals of provincial governments who were opposed to it and their replacement by pliable ones (Sayeed, 1987: 79). On March 27, 1955 the governor general amended the Government of India Act 1935 through an ordinance that empowered him to create the province of West Pakistan comprising Punjab, Sindh, the North West Frontier Province and Balochistan.

Sindhi reaction to the plan was resounding and unequivocal: they saw the plan as an attempt to establish Punjabi domination over the smaller provinces and to negate their regional autonomy and ethnic identity. The Sindh chief minister, Pirzada Abdus Sattar, was supported by 74 of the 110 Sindh assembly members in his opposition to the plan, but that did not impress the central government (Sayeed, 1987: 78; Callard, 1957: 187, 188). Instead the elected chief minister was dismissed and replaced by an unelected Ayub Khuhro, who had been disqualified under PRODA barring him from holding a public office for seven years.

¹⁰ This was pointed out by a Sindhi member of the constituent assembly, Pirzada Abdus Sattar, (cited

Punjab was the only province to benefit from the new arrangement at the expense of the smaller provinces. Sindh, probably, was to bear the heaviest brunt. During Pirzada Abdus Sattar's chief ministership, the Sindh government's agenda included the demand for the return of Karachi, resistance to Sindhi land being awarded to civil and military personnel, building of irrigation works, and promotion of Sindhi culture and literature (Ahmed, 1998: 73). After the One Unit all Sindh-oriented policies were shelved and resources were channelled to the 'national' projects. Under the Punjabi-Mohajir bureaucrats, rural Sindh was ignored and Rs. 330 million from Sindh were tuned to counterbalance Punjab's one billion rupees deficit. Of the Rs. 2,000 million that the Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation allocated for development schemes, Sindh received only 200 million. The promotion of Urdu as a national language was expedited, and Sindhi language was systematically discouraged by banishing it from Karachi Municipal Corporation and University of Karachi and by rewriting road signs, signboards, voters' lists etc. in Urdu¹¹ (Sayed, 1995: 140-143; Ahmed, 1998: 74). The efforts to do away with Sindhi identity were stretched to such preposterous limits that postmen were advised not to deliver the mail that carried the word Sindh in the address (Ahmed, 1998: 74).

Compared to other ethnic groups of Pakistan, Sindhis have had the highest literacy rate in their mother tongue. According to 1951 census Sindhis were five times more literate than Punjabis, Pukhtuns and Baloch (Qasir, 1991: 24). Also, compared to other indigenous languages of Pakistan, Sindhi has the largest number of

in Callard, 1957: 187).

¹¹ Karachi University students were disallowed to answer examination questions in Sindhi (Rahman, 1996: 114).

publications, including daily newspapers. Unlike other provinces where the mother tongue had never been the medium of instruction, Sindhi language had been so since 1851.¹² But in an utter disregard of its importance in Sindhi society, in 1958, Sindhi as a medium of instruction was replaced by Urdu.

Yet another development which has its roots in colonial rule but whose pace and magnitude increased during the One Unit period was the awarding of Sindhi land to non-Sindhis, especially Punjabi and Pukhtun, civil and military officials. The irrigation schemes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that had created lucrative agricultural land in Sindh, had attracted a large number of outsiders. Two factors, which the colonialists believed would help to increase their control and profit, accelerated the settlement of Punjabis in rural Sindh: 1) to make rural Sindh more stable, i.e., more loyal and subservient, Punjabi military pensioners were allotted land; 2) to increase productivity, Punjabis, who according to the racist stereotypes of colonial discourse were more 'industrious' compared to the 'lazy' Sindhis, were encouraged to settle in Sindh (Ansari, 1991: 188). By 1942-43, the government had sold or leased more than 1.5 million acres of newly irrigated land, most of it to the Punjabi settlers (Ahmed, 1984: A-157).

After partition, the issue was no longer that of stability and productivity but of sheer land grabbing by the dominant Punjabi-Mohajir-Pukhtun civil and military officials. After the construction of Kotri Barrage, the Punjabi settlement suddenly increased in the 1950s when the newly irrigated land was allotted to the army pensioners. Of the

¹² East Bengal was an exception but is not being included because it is no longer part of Pakistan.

land irrigated by the Guddu Barrage, 598,525 acres were reserved as state land. By 1971, 142,473 acres were allotted to non-Sindhis, mostly Punjabis.¹³ Sindhi nationalist, G.M. Sayed, quoting a Punjabi writer, Azizuddin Ahmed, claims that most of the generals were among those who grabbed Sindhi land and during the first five years of military rule, i.e., from 1958 to 1963, seventy five per cent of the allottees were non-Sindhi (Sayed, 1995: 146). Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that Sindhis believe that for them real colonialism started after the creation of Pakistan.

The Bhutto Interregnum, 1971-1977

On March 30, 1970 the Province of West Pakistan (dissolution) Order was promulgated and after three months the former provinces, Punjab, Sindh and the NWFP were re-constituted and Balochistan was accorded the status of province, and thus came to an end the one-and-a-half decades long period of the One Unit. The same year the first free general elections were held in Pakistan. Instead of leading to an elected government, the results of the elections provided a stimulus for the Bengali disenchantment when the Pakistani establishment refused to transfer power to the majority party that belonged to East Pakistan. In one year's time, after a bloody civil war, and the armed intervention of India, the east wing separated to become an independent state, Bangladesh. In the western wing, the defeated and humiliated Pakistan military handed over power to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto whose Pakistan People's Party had won the majority of the national assembly seats.

¹³ The allottees included civil and military personnel, Punjabis displaced by the construction of Mangla dam and federal capital areas, Islamabad and some frontier tribesmen. For detailed figures adopted from Sind Annual 1971, published by the Government of Sind, Films and Publications Department see Feldman (1976: 57).

Bhutto was not only the first elected prime minister of Pakistan but also a Sindhi. Bhutto's People's Party had won 62 out of 82 seats in Punjab, 18 out of 27 in Sindh, one in the North West Frontier Province and none in Balochistan (Rizvi, 1987: 176-77). Obviously, Bhutto had come to power on the basis of support from the largest province of Pakistan, Punjab, and therefore, he could not be expected to go against its interests. But neither could he ignore his support base in Sindh. It was a difficult situation in which the two provinces that had voted for him had a clear clash of interests. But that did not become a serious problem for Bhutto, who was more of a centralist, with a clear distaste for decentralisation of power and therefore for provincial autonomy. He, indeed, played the Punjabi game as well as his predecessors did.

Without hurting the Punjabi interests and provoking the wrath of his main constituency he, however, encouraged certain policies at the federal and provincial levels, which benefited Sindhis. He did that at the expense of another dominant group, Mohajirs, which was already losing out its privileges to the Punjabis who had also become the overwhelming ethnic majority after the separation of Bengalis. In all fairness to Bhutto, it must be said that he had no anti-Mohajir agenda. But it was a curious coincidence that he had come to power at a point when the Mohajir position in the power hierarchy had been seriously eroded by Punjabi dominance. Thus, some of Bhutto's actions might have accelerated the process of Mohajir slide down from a very privileged position that they had been holding since the creation of Pakistan, but certainly had not started it. Also, the actions that favoured Sindhis were not

necessarily meant to be anti-Mohajir but rather an effort to redress Sindhi grievances. Ironically, however, any step in favour of Sindhis would obviously hurt the Mohajir interests for they had acquired their privileges at the cost of the former.

The Language Riots

The termination of One Unit was, for Sindhis, only a partial recognition of their regional and ethnic identity, for unlike other provinces Sindh had also been deprived of its language as a medium of instruction during the One Unit period. Therefore, Sindhi nationalists and intellectuals demanded that Sindhi language should be restored as the medium of instruction and the status that it enjoyed before 1958 should be re-established. When Mohajir students protested against the move, violence ensued that resulted in Sindhi students burning the pictures of the Punjabi poet Mohammad Iqbal, who is perceived to have first 'dreamt' of an independent state for the Indian Muslims, and therefore is a major symbol of Pakistani nationalism. Mohajir students retaliated by burning Sindhi books in the Institute of Sindhology (Rahman, 1996: 121-22).

The clamour of the Sindhi demand became all the more boisterous after the People's Party came to power in December 1971. Shortly after Bhutto pronounced in unequivocal terms that Sindhis must not be made to suffer the fate of Red Indians of America (Syed, 1992: 192), a bill was moved in the Sindh assembly, in July 1972, to make Sindhi the medium of instruction.

The bill had clearly stated that “Sindhi and Urdu shall be compulsory subjects for study in classes iv to xii in all institutions in which such classes are held” but the pro-Urdu lobby interpreted it as a ‘funeral’ of Urdu which led to Mohajir violence against Sindhis in Karachi and the burning of department of Sindhi at Karachi University (Rahman, 1996: 124-25). One of the extreme actions that had annoyed and scared the Mohajirs the most was the unofficial move in the Sindh assembly to make it compulsory for the government employees to learn Sindhi within three months (Sayeed, 1980: 154). The situation deteriorated and the acrimony between the two groups increased when Sindhi and Mohajir delegates to the central government-appointed committee came up with some profligate and bizarre demands that were unacceptable to each party.

Some of the Sindhi demands that related to provincial autonomy, though unrealistic considering the highly centralised state system in Pakistan, seemed quite justifiable. Those demands were: the recognition of Sindhi not only as the official language of Sindh but also one of the national languages of Pakistan; the recognition of the four provinces as “four nations living in a confederation”; the return of the land that was given away to non-Sindhi military and civil officials; the provincialisation of the railways, post, electronic media, “organizations concerned with the development of industry, water and power, and the Civil Service of Pakistan”, and an increased share for Sindh in the Indus waters “to the level agreed to in an inter-provincial compact in 1945” (cited in Syed, 1992: 194). But some other demands that called for the setting up of “a militia consisting *only* of the old Sindhis”, and the appointment of old

Sindhis to *all* the top posts in the province (ibid.) (emphasis added) were outrageous as they tended to not recognise the existence of the “new Sindhis”.¹⁴

No less excessive were most of the Mohajir demands, either. Their ratio in Sindh’s population at the time was around 20 per cent,¹⁵ but they called for equal status for their language, Urdu; 50 per cent share in all the higher posts in the province, parity in high political and administrative postings and an exclusive reservation of technical and professional colleges in Karachi for themselves (Syed, 1992: 193-4). Although one of their demands, the last in the list of eight, that Karachi should be made autonomous and placed under an elected mayor with additional powers and functions, was just and reasonable because Karachi, probably, as town planner Arif Hassan has pointed out, “is the only big city in the world, which has no control over its affairs”.¹⁶ But as is obvious from the rest of the demands, they had more to do with the Mohajirs’ control over the city in which they had a majority than to its better and fair management. With such over the top demands from both sides, it certainly was not possible to reach an agreement. Nevertheless, as a compromise deal, the government issued an ordinance, which, while keeping the Language Bill intact, prohibited any discrimination in the provincial civil service appointments or promotions on the basis of a person’s inability to communicate in either Sindhi or Urdu for a period of 12 years (Sayeed, 1980: 155).

¹⁴ At that time indigenous Sindhis were called old Sindhis and Mohajirs and other settlers new Sindhis.

¹⁵ Even as late as 1981, according to the census, Mohajirs were 24 per cent of Sindh’s population, (Kennedy, 1991: 941)

¹⁶ Personal communication, Karachi, 1997.

The Quota System

Another contentious issue was that of the quota system. Since 1948, when the quota system was introduced to exact the regional inequality in representation in employment, it was unjustifiably biased in favour of Mohajirs. So lopsided was the system that Karachi city was separately mentioned by name but the three provinces were cobbled together in the category of "All other provinces and princely states of West Pakistan". Karachi's share was 50 per cent more than its share in population could justify. It was given an additional 15 per cent share for the potential migrants from India (Waseem, 1997: 227). Furthermore, when the system was revised in 1949 and 20 per cent quota was allocated to the merit category, Karachi being the most developed city of Pakistan, had naturally become the biggest beneficiary.

By 1951, Sindhis had become a minority in Karachi as 57.1 per cent of its population consisted of Mohajirs (Burki, 1980: 12). Before Bhutto, the martial law government of general Yahya Khan (1969-71) had already worked out a new formula to rid the quota system of its urban bias by allocating 60-40 per cent representation for rural and urban population, respectively, in provincial and federal services (Waseem, 1997: 228-231). During Bhutto's period, further changes were made to the system. Karachi's separate share was scraped and the merit category was reduced from 20 per cent to 10 per cent. While all the four provinces were designated a share on the basis of their total population, in Sindh, considering the huge gap between the rural and urban sectors, the provincial share was sub-divided as 11.4 per cent rural and 7.6 per cent urban. Whereas Sindhis saw the new quota distribution as an acknowledgement

of their long due share, Mohajirs viewed it as a yet another shove away from their already slithering privileged position.

The Bhutto government had made a conscious effort to increase Sindhi representation in the state and public sectors but their decades-long under-representation was so dismal that it required years of concerted efforts to rectify. The major obstacle in the way to balance out Sindhis' share is the structural discrimination that has become part of the Pakistani state system. The Punjabi-Mohajir dominated civil and military bureaucracy, continuing with the colonial legacy of discrimination based on racial stereotypes, has all along been treating Sindhis with contempt for being neither industrious like Punjabis nor brave like Pukhtuns (Burki, 1980: 85). Disregarding the oppressive feudal system in Sindh, Punjabis and Mohajirs have also made Sindhis the target of their modernist disdain by labelling them backward, parochial, and inward-turned.¹⁷ It has also been suggested that the military bureaucracy has not entertained the idea of employing Sindhis because they are mistrusted for having ethno-nationalist tendencies (Waseem, 1989: 409). As a result, most of the key police and civil positions in the interior of Sindh are entrusted to non-Sindhis.

A list compiled in 1970 revealed that during one-and-a-half decades of the One Unit, only 53 out of 184 postings of deputy inspectors general of police were given to Sindhis, and only 41 out of 150 postings of commissioners and deputy

¹⁷ In an interview with a Mohajir intellectual, Husnain Kazmi, in 1997, when I pointed out this anti-Sindhi bias, he said: "This is not bias. It is a fact. Sindhis had no skill, no ability, nor education. We brought education with us, but they created obstacles for education." See also, Wright (1991: 304).

commissioners were assigned to Sindhis (Ahmed, 1998: 75). Under the circumstances, the increased share in quota has only partially worked in favour of Sindhis and even after almost three decades of its implementation they remain grossly under-represented -- the details of which we shall see in the following section.

The Military Rule, 1977-1988

In July 1977, after weeks of unrest that had followed the results of the general elections, which the opposition had alleged were rigged, general Ziaul Haq deposed the elected government of Bhutto, imposed martial law, suspended the constitution and within two years after a dubious trial, hanged Bhutto. Sindhis were in a state of trauma from which they were to take years to recover. Punjab, too, was shocked where Bhutto's popularity was close to that in Sindh (Sayeed, 1980: 152), but for Sindhis it was a very personal loss: the loss of a person they loved the most in more than two centuries -- since the death of the saintly poet, Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai in 1752 (Kardar, 1992: 312). And that also at the hands of the Punjabi generals and Punjabi judges. It may have been a coincidence but a curious one that out of the seven judges the three who gave verdict in favour of Bhutto were from the three smaller provinces whereas the four who decided against Bhutto were all Punjabi.

For Sindhis military rule means a rule by an occupying army because they have almost no representation in it. Pakistan army is exclusively Punjabi and Pukhtun, with over 95 per cent share (60 to 65 Punjabi and 30 to 35 per cent Pakhtun) (Sayeed, 1968b: 276; Kennedy, 1991: 946). On the other hand, despite reforms in the quota

system, Sindhi representation in the civil services has been marginal. According to the 1981 census, Sindhis were 11.77 per cent of Pakistan's population, but their share in gazetted posts was only 2.7 per cent, which rose to 5.1 per cent in 1983; at the officer level, Sindhis were 4.3 per cent, going up to 6.1 per cent in 1989; and in the senior posts their share of 3.6 per cent in 1974 went up to 6.8 per cent in 1983 (Kennedy, 1991: 943). In 1984 the chief martial law administrator secretariat had 1445 officers out of which only two were Sindhi, whereas out of 2606 officers in the 20 departments and divisions of federal secretariat only 77 were Sindhi (Waseem, 1989: 409). Even in the mid-1990s, though their share at the officer level had increased to 9.25 per cent, their number below grade 17 remained "virtually invisible" (Abbasi, 1994: 11).

Under military rule when public representatives lose their power and influence and all powers concentrate in the hands of military and civil bureaucracy, for Sindhis the channels through which they can articulate their interests become scarce (Waseem, 1989: 409). Hence, whenever there is military rule, Sindhis feel more alienated than ever. During the first military rule they lost their language as a medium of instruction, and tens of thousands of acres of land to Punjabi and Pukhtun military and civil personnel. Under the third military rule their leader was hanged and all those employed during his rule were expelled from government and public sector jobs.

The pent-up Sindhi anger against the military exploded in August 1983 when the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) called for a countrywide protest

against military rule. Response to the call in the rest of the provinces was lukewarm, but in Sindh it turned into a massive popular agitation. So spontaneous and widespread was the unrest in Sindh that not only the military rulers were perturbed, but also the MRD leadership itself was shocked. Indeed, the intensity and potency of the unrest was unprecedented in the history of a repressed people who have generally been stereotyped as docile and coward. During the agitation Sindhis resorted to jailbreaks, attacks on police stations, banks, and trains, and soon it became obvious that the administration in rural Sindh was faced with an upsurge bordering on a civil war. Army was called in and a massive witch-hunt of political workers and the People's Party sympathisers was launched. But Sindhis did not even shy away from confronting the heavily armed military force with which they had armed encounters, and it took days for the army to contain the situation (Mujtaba, 1992: 46). Interestingly, Sindhi separatist G.M. Sayed condemned the spontaneous popular reaction as a "save Pakistan movement", whereas the military regime called it "a conspiracy to create Sindhu Desh" (ibid.). The brutal treatment at the hands of the Punjabi army, once again reminded Sindhis that expecting a fair deal from the existing state system was in vain.¹⁸

On the other hand, the agitation proved to be the first serious blow to the military regime, and the generals had every reason to take the intensity of the Sindhi sentiments against their rule seriously. That they certainly did. But instead of giving a serious thought to the Sindhi grievances and their reparation, they intensified their persecution of Sindhis and devised methods of dividing them and blunting their

¹⁸ Imdad Mohammad Shah, interview with the author, Karachi, 1997.

opposition. It was obvious to the generals that one issue on which the majority of Sindhis stood united was their support for Bhutto. Also known to the generals was the Sindhi nationalists' hatred and distrust of Bhutto.¹⁹ Yet another point, which could not have gone lost on the generals, was the indifference of the urban centres of Sindh to the happenings in rural Sindh.

Soon the military regime started harnessing anti-Bhutto forces in Sindh. One of the problems in Sindh was that Sindhis had almost totally rejected the nationalists and had voted for Bhutto. In the 1970 elections, out of 27 national assembly seats in Sindh, Bhutto's People's Party had won 18, whereas out of 60 Sindh assembly seats it had secured 28. Mohajirs had voted for two religious groups, namely, Jamiat-i-Ulema Islam and Jamat Islami, while the rest of the seats were won by two groups of the Muslim League and independent candidates (Choudhury, 1974: 128). But the nationalists could not win a single seat and even the so called father of Sindhi nationalism, G.M. Sayed, lost his constituency to the People's Party candidate. The trend continued in the 1988 elections, when all nationalist groups - and by that time there were many - were rejected by Sindhis in favour of the People's Party, which had increased its percentage of votes from 44.9 in 1970 to 47 per cent.²⁰

Nonetheless, the regime cajoled the nationalists. The military ruler, general Ziaul Haq, the great champion of Islam and Pakistan ideology, paid a visit to one of the

¹⁹ One of the Sindhi nationalists, Hamida Khuhro, told this writer in an interview in 1997: "It's very difficult for me to say anything positive about Bhutto". Another Sindhi nationalist, G.M. Sayed, is reported to have said: "These brainless Sindhis worship Bhutto who was hung by the Punjabis after he had served their purpose", Hasan Mujtaba in *Newsline*, Karachi, February 1992: 41.

²⁰ *Herald*, Karachi, special issue, Nov/Dec. 1993.

most vocal opponents of that ideology, and an unflinching separatist, G.M. Sayed. On the other hand, the Mohajir constituency, which had all along been anti-Bhutto, was encouraged in its incipient ethnic politics. The erosion of the Mohajir privileges that had accelerated with the separation of East Pakistan, and Bhutto's policies, had made the Mohajir youth restless. They had already expressed their disenchantment with the existing political groups by forming the All-Pakistan Mohajir Students Organisation (APMSO) in 1978. Only a few months after the Sindh agitation, the organisation was turned into a broader political group, Mohajir Quomi (National) Movement, the MQM. Circumstantial evidence shows that the formation of the MQM was encouraged and even financially supported by the military regime (see chapter on MQM).

Interestingly, the unabashedly anti-Sindhi and anti-Bhutto MQM found its first sympathiser in the person of G.M. Sayed. The Jiye Sindh guards in the interior of Sindh supported the MQM chief, Altaf Hussain, and in return he bowed his head to the Jiye Sindh anthem at functions in Karachi.²¹ Apart from the two groups' links with the regime, there were some other commonalities in their interests. The reason for the nationalists' prop for the MQM was the realisation after the abortive Sindhi agitation that unless the major towns of the province, which are predominantly Mohajir, are mobilised in favour of Sindh's case, there is little hope for positive results. The MQM flirtation with Sindhi nationalists, too, was based on some pragmatic thinking: neither it considered Sindhis as serious a threat as it perceived

²¹ I owe this information to Khalid Mumtaz, a Karachi lawyer.

Punjabis to be, nor did it want a Bangladesh-like situation where Mohajirs had antagonised Bengalis by siding with the Pakistani establishment and later suffered.

Ironically, despite their anti-Punjabi-Pukhtun rhetoric both the MQM and the Sindhi nationalists were pampered by the Punjabi-Pukhtun dominated army that was haunted by Bhutto's ghost. Anyway, it was not a workable alliance because Sindhis and Mohajirs may have had a common enemy in the shape of Punjabis, their mutual clash of interests itself was too serious to put away for very long. So grave was the clash that one group's assertion would automatically lead to the negation of the other's: Mohajirs were calling for the recognition of an ethnic identity, which, Sindhis thought, was undermining their struggle for provincial autonomy.

Also important was the fact that the MQM had by 1987 become an important political group with widespread support among Mohajirs, and therefore was not obliged to play the establishment games lying down: it had its own games to play and its own agenda to pursue. It had become the sole representative of Mohajirs, but the Sindhi nationalists were by no means the representatives of Sindhis, who had chosen Bhutto's People's Party for the role. Therefore, the MQM must have realised that courting the nationalists would not earn them the sympathies of Sindhis. Shortly, Sindhis and Mohajirs were locked in bloody violence against each other that started with the September 1988 killings in Hyderabad.

The Violent Province

After the 1983 uprising and the creation of the MQM, Sindh became the most violent province of Pakistan. Rural Sindh was under the brutal control of Sindhi dacoits and urban Sindh under the terrorism of the MQM activists. In both cases the unemployed youth played a significant role. A considerable number of the dacoits consisted of those young Sindhis who were from amongst the 70 per cent unemployed graduates of the interior of Sindh, including doctors and engineers, and those whose jobs were terminated by the military regime (Kardar, 1992: 312). It is not surprising that in 1984, some of the most notorious dacoits were operating from the hostels of Sindh University, where they were staying with the nationalist Jiye Sindh Students Federation (JSSF) activists (Mujtaba, 1992: 45). In a chilling commentary on the situation a JSSF activist said: "We wanted to make these Sindhi dacoits our comrades in the national struggle, but they made us dacoits instead"(cited in *ibid.*).

No less depressing was the situation in urban Sindh either, where unemployed Mohajir youth, seeing little hope of a better future, were attracted to the MQM and were turned into terrorists who would play havoc on the life of urban dwellers. In mid-1992 army action, operation clean up, was launched against both the Sindhi dacoits and the MQM terrorists. Although the operation succeeded in its crackdown on the former, it was less successful in breaking the latter's hold over urban centres of Sindh, despite extensive arrests of the MQM leaders and workers. In Karachi alone, in 1994 some 1113 people were killed by the snipers. By 1995, Karachi had

become the most dangerous city of Asia and was termed the “city of death” when the number of people killed had shot up to 2095.²²

The government of the day embarked on yet another and more brutal crackdown using the combined force of various security agencies under the command of the interior ministry. Although this time the operation was more successful and the urban centres may have become less violent, as a result, they still are far from being safe. The success of the operation had more to do with the fishing out of the MQM terrorists than improving the general law and order situation. As an excuse for its failure to control violence, in 1998 the central government dismissed the elected provincial government in Sindh and imposed direct rule with the appointment of one of the prime minister’s advisers as the centre’s representative. That arrangement remained unchanged till the military takeover in October 1999.

Conclusion

What emerges from the facts and figures detailed above is that Sindhi nationalism is a response to the modern state system, which was introduced by the colonialists and became more interventionist after the creation of Pakistan. Under colonialism, Sindh was relegated to the status of agricultural hinterland where its resources were exploited but the services sector was neglected. After partition, it was turned into a refugee centre, its land given away to the ‘outsiders’, its resources channelled to serve the centre and Punjab, its provincial autonomy violated and through the One

²² Special map “City of Death”, *Herald*, Karachi 1996.

Unit scheme its regional identity eliminated and its language replaced. To boot, under every military rule it was denied the right to voice its grievances.

Under the circumstances, to designate Sindhi sentiments to the misleading charge of 'provincialism' and 'narrow' nationalism not only betrays the repressive assimilationism of the Pakistani state, but also reveals the dominant groups' attempt to deny the existence of inequality and exploitation that Sindh has been subjected to. That despite Sindhis' support for the federalist People's Party and their rejection of nationalist and separatist groups, they have remained a suspect in the eyes of the establishment speaks volumes about the nature of the Pakistani state system. After the two army and security agencies' operations Sindh may no longer be the most dangerous province, but it continues to be the troubled, rather than the troublesome province, as the Pakistani establishment likes to present it. And it shall remain so till the highly centralised and discriminatory state system of Pakistan, dominated by some ethnic groups at the expense of others, is not changed. That possibility does not seem very probable in the near future, especially in the face of yet another military rule that has been imposed on the country since October 1999.

Chapter-8

Mohajir Ethnic Nationalism: El Dorado gone Sour!

To build Pakistan it was necessary to cover up Indian history, to deny that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani Standard Time. The past was rewritten; there was nothing else to be done.

Who commandeered the job of rewriting history? – The immigrants, the *mohajirs*. In what language? – Urdu and English, both imported tongues, although one travelled less distance than the other. It is possible to see the subsequent history of Pakistan as a duel between two layers of time, the obscured world forcing its way back through what-had-been-imposed.

Salman Rushdie¹

With the emergence of the Mohajir Quami Movement (migrant national movement), the MQM, in 1984, Pakistan was introduced to an altogether new kind of ethnic movement. Before the MQM, almost all ethnic parties have been dominated and led by the ethnic elite, whether landowners or other propertied groups, even if they had a strong middle class support. The MQM is a departure from the traditional ethnic politics of Pakistan.

It is an urban-based middle class group led by predominantly lower middle class university graduates. Another distinctive aspect of the MQM politics is that unlike other ethnic groups that have been fighting for their rights, the Mohajirs as a group have been one of the privileged people at the expense of others, especially Sindhis: it was only when they started to lose some of the privileges during the 1970s and early 1980s that they began to assert their ethnic identity. Also, the MQM's rhetoric may

¹ (1995: 87).

not be different from other ethnic parties, but its organisational structure and modus operandi of urban terrorism is in sharp contrast to the rest of the ethnic groups. This chapter looks at the social and economic background of the Mohajirs and the emergence, growth and style of the MQM politics.

Socio-economic and Historical Background

The United Provinces (UP) of India, from where majority of the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs had migrated to Pakistan, was the traditional power base of the Muslim landed gentry of the Mughal Empire since the twelfth century. When the colonial administration took over power from the Mughal king, in 1857, the Muslim elite of the UP who were associated with the Mughal court maintained their position of privilege by continuing to serve the colonial administration. Their share in land holding, too, was not radically affected under colonialism (Page, 1987: 8).

However, when the colonial state began to establish itself as a modern bureaucratic 'rule-bound' administrative system and to expand its writ, its requirements for employment changed.² Modern-style education, with its emphasis on training rather than social and cultural refinement and etiquette, as was the case with the traditional education, became a prerequisite for state employment. Although the UP elite's adaptation to the changed political and economic conditions in which modern education and state employment had become important sources of status and prestige was rather smooth, they could not avoid the challenge of competition from other

² For a detailed account of the administrative changes see Misra (1977).

sections of society who were encouraged by the bureaucratic neutrality of the modern state and capitalistic mobility of the market economy.

So serious was the challenge that the UPites' share in the high-ranking subordinate judicial and executive jobs declined from 63.9 per cent in 1857 to 45.1 per cent in 1886-87 and was further reduced to 34.7 per cent by 1913 (Sarkar, 1989: 77). Although the Muslims being only 13 to 14 per cent of the province's population had an unjustifiably large share even in its reduced form, they developed a sense of insecurity and resentment as a community losing out some of their privileges (Alavi, 1988: 72). It was during this period of gradual but steady decline in the number of Muslims in privileged positions that the UP elite launched the reformist and educational movements. It was also during this period that they resorted to exclusionist communal politics as against inclusionary Indian nationalism of the Indian National Congress. The purpose of such politics was two-pronged: to weaken the nationalist movement and prove loyalty to the British and to secure state employment and, later, higher representation in the legislative assembly. These efforts paid dividends when in the Lucknow Pact of 1916 Muslims were given 50 per cent representation in the UP assembly, against mere 14 per cent share in population.³

The leading personality behind the Muslim reformist, educational as well as communal movement was an aristocrat from Delhi, Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-98). It

³ Bengali and Punjabi Muslims were 52.6 and 54.8 per cent, respectively, of the population in their provinces but secured only 40 and 50 per cent seats in the provincial assemblies (Ahmed, 1998: 95).

is instructive to analyse the main currents of Syed Ahmed's ideas, not because he was the most influential Muslim thinker of modern India, but, more importantly, because he was arguably the most significant contributor to the politics, culture and psyche of the Mohajirs of Pakistan who consider him as their spiritual leader. The analysis here is restricted only to those aspects of Syed Ahmed's thought, which had a direct bearing on the Mohajir politics.

A prolific writer who wrote on almost every social and religious issue, Syed Ahmed was socially and religiously liberal, but politically conservative and looked at any change in the existing order or any opposition to British rule with suspicion. So enamoured was he of the British and their modernity that when he travelled to Europe, he wrote to a friend: "The natives of India, high and low, merchants and petty shopkeepers, educated and illiterate, when contrasted with the English in education, manners, and uprightness, are as like them as a dirty animal is to an able and handsome man" (Smith, 1946: 17). He termed colonial rule as "the most wonderful phenomenon the world has ever seen" (Ahmad, 1967: 33).

Syed Ahmed was a representative of the Muslim landlords and, what Hamza Alavi (1988: 68) has called the "salarariat", a group of individuals equipped with modern education to serve as scribes and functionaries in the colonial administration. Himself being one of such functionaries employed in the colonial administration, Syed Ahmed's main concern was to dispel the impression that as erstwhile rulers of India, Muslims were a threat to the British colonialists. He denied that, "Islam was

essentially an advocate of independence” (Smith, 1946: 16).⁴ He presented a modern rationalist version of Islam that was dismissive of the folk, syncretic Sufi Islam of the countryside.

After the creation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, Syed Ahmed changed his mind on many of the issues that he had so far so vehemently supported and began to oppose them with the same vigour. For example, in the beginning he was an advocate of the Hindu-Muslim unity and believed that religious distinction apart, Hindus, Muslims and Christians all belonged to one and the same nation. But soon he turned into a staunch adversary of Hindus and declared that, “we do not want to become subjects of the Hindus instead of subjects of the “people of the Book” (Ahmad, 1967: 43). He had opposed the government’s encouragement of the vernacular, arguing that these languages, especially Urdu, were unfit for higher education and therefore had called for the promotion of English. But later in a rather dramatic volte-face, he came to regard English as “the bane of Indian education and Urdu its panacea” (Robinson, 1974: 91, 96). First, he was all praise for Bengalis, saying that “it was only due to them that knowledge, liberty and patriotism have progressed” in India, but before long he turned about and decreed that “Bengalis can in no way assist our progress”, and warned that if “we join the political movement (the Congress) of the Bengalis, our nation will reap loss...” (Seal 1971: 319; Hardy, 1972: 130).

⁴ Later one of his lieutenants, Shibli Nomani, went so far as to say that “fidelity to the ruling power was a religious duty for a Muslim” (ibid. 43). Anti-imperialist Muslim thinker Jamal Al Afghani vilified Syed Ahmed as a British lackey (Choueiri, 1990: 38). To ridicule his bicultural social life and single-minded political loyalty to British rule, an Indian Muslim novelist, Nazir Ahmed, wrote a novel *Ibn al-Waqt* (the time-server) whose protagonist was a caricature of Syed Ahmed.

Growing into a formidable communalist, he demanded a special quota for the Muslims in the Indian Civil Service, and favoured communal against joint electorates (Smith, 1946: 26). He opposed the Indian National Congress' demand for a representative rule on the ground that that would be detrimental to the Muslim interests and would benefit the Hindu majority only (Sayeed, 1968a: 18). Instead, he demanded parity in government jobs on the basis of quality, which, he believed, the Muslims had, rather than quantity (Alavi, 1989b: 1529).

Syed Ahmed's ideas had damning consequences for the relationship between not only the Hindus and Muslims, but also between the modernised UP Muslims and the rest of the Indian Muslims and were later to determine the Mohajirs' relations with the indigenous Pakistanis. As a spokesman of the aristocratic UPite Muslims, his concerns were restricted to the losses of his own class and the impoverishment of the lower classes among the Muslims of the UP did not attract his sympathies (Tarachand, 1967: 354). The main themes of his discourse were so rigidly organised "along caste, birth, class and status lines", that he denounced "the Congress for basing itself on the principle of social equality among the 'lowly' and the 'highly' born" (Chandra, 1989: 415).

Syed Ahmed's class-based ideas with an emphasis on racial superiority reflecting the Darwinian concept of the natural selection that defined communities in terms of superior and inferior races did not, despite his communalism, distinguish between Hindus and Muslims: some classes of Hindus, for him, were as superior as some

classes and races among Muslims were inferior. For example, among the Muslims, he believed, it was only the “Pathans, Syeds, Hashmi and Koreishi whose blood (smelt) of the blood of Abraham”, and therefore he hoped that they would “appear in glittering uniforms as Colonels and Majors in the army...provided (they did) not give rise to suspicions of disloyalty (to the British)” (Hardy, 1972: 130). Naturally, in such a schema, there was little room for Bengali and Sindhi Muslims who, being mostly Hindu converts, did not have the ‘blood of Abraham’.

Syed Ahmed is rightly regarded as the instigator of the two-nation theory that termed the Hindus and Muslims as two separate nations. It was his demand for a special quota for Muslims and separate electorates that drew a communal wedge between the Hindus and Muslims, which later became the basis of the partition of India. Although the details of the Muslim League’s formation in 1906 are beyond the scope of this chapter because the concern here is only to highlight the cultural background of the Mohajirs, suffice it to say that the party that created Pakistan was founded by the “men of property and influence” from UP who had graduated from Syed Ahmed’s Aligarh Muslim University (Robinson, 1974: 148-149). It is important to note here that because Syed Ahmed’s modernist rationalist interpretation of Islam turned it into an ideology, he is one of the main pillars of the ideological state apparatus of Pakistan. The ideological Islam of Syed Ahmed, that had, before partition, provided justification for colonial rule and denigrated the folk Sufi Islam of the Indian Muslims as irrational and superstitious, after partition, became a tool in the hands of the Pakistani rulers who have used it to legitimise their misrule and to deny regional and ethnic identities.

Mohajir Politics during 1947-1971

The Muslim League, which led Muslims to the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan, was not only founded by the Muslims from the UP and other Muslim minority provinces, but also was dominated by them, before as well as after the partition. In 1946-47, out of 23 members of the Muslim League Working Committee only 10 were from the future Pakistan areas. After partition, at the Muslim League council meeting in December 1947, out of 300 members 160 were immigrants (Waseem, 1989: 106-7). After Jinnah's death in 1948, an aristocrat from Lucknow, Chaudhri Khaliquzzaman, became the President of the Muslim League. During 1947-58, some of the most important government offices like prime ministership, ministerial portfolios like education, information and refugee rehabilitation, and provincial governorships were held by Mohajirs.⁵

These figures acquire an additional significance because, of the millions of Indian Muslims who migrated to Pakistan, only two per cent were from the UP. During the same period Mohajirs, on the whole, were only three per cent of the total population of Pakistan (ibid. 110, 114). But due to their over-representation in high-ranking jobs in the colonial administration, they came to dominate the administrative structure of the new state. At the time of partition, there were 101 Muslim officers in the Indian Civil Service (ICS) and the Indian Political Service (IPS). Ninety-five of

⁵ Out of seven prime ministers during 1947-58, two, Liaquat Ali Khan and I.I. Chundrigar, were Mohajirs. A conservative Mohajir ideologue, Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, was first, minister of refugee rehabilitation and then of information. A Mohajir educator, Dr Mahmud Hussain, was education minister. Chaudhri Khaliquzzaman and I.I. Chundrigar were governors of East Bengal and Punjab (Callard 1957: 342-345; Ahmed, 1998: 132)

them (83 ICS, 12 IPS) opted for Pakistan (Braibanti, 1963: 366-67). Out of 83 ICS officers, 49 were Urdu-speakers from minority provinces (Sayeed, 1987: 132, 156).

When the Mohajir-dominated government of the first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, introduced quota system in September 1948 to increase the number of underrepresented Bengali majority in the civil service, it was framed in a manner that, doubtless, increased the Bengali representation but did not affect the overrepresentation of Mohajirs and Punjabis. For instance, East Bengal was 56.75 per cent of the total population of Pakistan but its share in quota was 42 per cent, whereas West Punjab had 24 per cent quota with 28 per cent share in the population. Likewise, Karachi, where the largest number of Mohajirs settled, got 2 per cent share though its population was only 1.50 per cent. Furthermore an additional 15 per cent allocation was made exclusively for potential migrants from India (Waseem, 1997: 227).⁶

The revised quota of November 1949, which reduced the Bengali and non-Punjabi areas' share by 2 per cent and allocated 20 per cent to the merit category, added even more benefits to the Mohajirs' list, whose literacy rate at 70 per cent was the highest in Pakistan. By 1950, when Mohajirs were 2 per cent of Sindh's population their share was as big as 46.6 per cent among the successful candidates of civil service examination (ibid. 228). Although Mohajirs' share in below the officer rank in the military has been marginal, in the senior positions (above the rank of brigadier) it was

⁶ The rest of the 17 per cent was allocated to all other provinces and princely states of West Pakistan (ibid.)

disproportionately high at 23 per cent in 1968 when they held 11 out of 48 positions (Sayeed, 1968b: 278).⁷

With such overrepresentation, it is understandable that Mohajir politicians and bureaucrats showed little inclination for a 'democratic' and representational system of government.⁸ The other dominant group, Punjabi, too, was over-represented in the power hierarchy at the expense of Bengali majority which was completely marginalised in the new state system. The fear of the Bengalis' growing impatience with a system dominated by Punjabi and Mohajir politicians, bureaucrats and generals had become the single most important item on the policy makers' agenda.

Playing on the Punjabi-Mohajir politicians' fears of the majority, the bureaucrats trained in the colonial tradition devised some ingenious plans for administrative restructuring as well as for ideological engineering of the Pakistani state and society. In the process, political power gradually slipped out of the politicians' hands and into the control of the bureaucracy.⁹ Hence, in addition to their role of policy implementation, the bureaucrats also acquired the role of policy makers. A scheme of One Unit was carved out to amalgamate the provinces of West Pakistan into one province in 1955. The objective was to somehow neutralise the Bengali majority, which looked too big compared to the rest of the ethnic groups.

⁷ Since 1988, out of five chiefs of army staff, two, general Mirza Aslam Beg and the current military ruler (1999-), general Pervez Musharraf, happen to be Mohajirs.

⁸ A motion demanding a ban on all parties, except the Muslim League, for 21 years, was debated in the constituent assembly in 1954 (Noman, 1990: 24).

⁹ For one of the most interesting accounts of the first decade of Pakistan, see Ayesha Jalal (1991).

On the ideological plane, a Pakistani identity based on the negation of ethnic identities was projected and Urdu, the language of Mohajirs, which the Punjabi elite had already adopted, was made the national language as well as a symbol of unity. Ethnic languages and cultures were not only discouraged but also suppressed wherever they tended to be more assertive. Any protest against these homogenising moves and the demands for regional autonomy, representational rule and equitable distribution of resources were translated as a threat to the integrity of the state.

In the economic field regional disparities were allowed to accentuate by making Karachi and Hyderabad, where majority of the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs had settled, the centres of economic activity. The Karachi-based industrial houses controlled 96 per cent of Muslim-owned private industries, over 80 per cent of the assets of private commercial banks and almost 80 per cent of the insurance companies (Maniruzzaman, 1966: 89; Amjad, 1983: 247-8). These 'robber barons' treated the east wing, whose jute export earned 60 to 80 per cent of Pakistan's foreign exchange, as a colony and allocated most of the earnings to feed industries in West Pakistan (Maniruzzaman, 1966: 89).

Such concentration of political, administrative and economic power in the hands of Mohajirs and Punjabis was bound to accentuate the existing ethnic tensions in the multiethnic society of Pakistan. So it did and after the first free national elections of Pakistan in 1970, when the Punjabi-Mohajir axis refused to hand over power to the elected Bengali majority party a civil war erupted in the east wing of the country that led to the dismemberment of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Before discussing the post-1971 Mohajir politics, it is in order to examine the roots of the Sindhi-Mohajir conflict because since then it has been the most important factor in Mohajir politics.

Sindhi-Mohajir Conflict

Although the Indian Muslims that migrated to Pakistan as a result of the partition of British India belonged to many different ethnic groups coming from various regions of India, it was only the Urdu-speaking migrants who came to be known as Mohajirs. The cultural reason for that was that unlike the rest of the migrants, i.e., Punjabis, Bengalis, Gujratis, Memons, etc., the Urdu-speaking Muslims had no ethnic or linguistic links in the areas that formed Pakistan. Except for the few literate ones, especially among the Punjabis, the people of Pakistan did not speak Urdu.

Mohajirs considered themselves to be the real founders of the new state because the Muslim nationalist movement was launched by the UP Muslims and it had all along enjoyed the strongest support among them, whereas the Muslims of majority provinces that formed Pakistan had warmed up to the movement only during the last years before partition. Unlike the majority of the Punjabis, who were forced by the communal violence to migrate from East Punjab to West Punjab, Mohajirs' migration was largely based on a conscious choice in the hope of better prospects for jobs and status.¹⁰ But being the most vocal section of the Indian Muslims who came

¹⁰ In a paper based on interviews with women from rural and urban Sindh and Punjab, Nighat Said Khan (1996) has noted that the 90 middle and lower income interviewee said that they had not come to realise a dream, but fled from a disaster, whereas the 10 upper income women with professional

to dominate not only the state structure but also the media in Pakistan, they portrayed the whole process of migration as an act of sacrifice and therefore “presumed themselves to be there not by kind invitation but by right” (Ansari, 1998: 92).

Moreover, a sense of racial superiority based on the ‘bad science’ of the nineteenth century that was inculcated in them by a generation of Aligarh graduates, coupled with a higher rate of literacy, made them look down upon the indigenous people of Pakistan who, unlike these UPites, could claim neither ancestral links to the ‘Delhi Darbar’ (the Mughal Court) nor a privileged place in the colonial administration.

Mohajirs had, and still have, a particularly condescending attitude towards Sindhis with whom they had come to share the province of Sindh. If the proximity of the UP to the Muslim empire had benefited Mohajirs to become a privileged section of the Indian society, the distance and isolation of Sindh from the same meant a disadvantage for the people of Sindh who were left to be ruled by the local elite which had turned Sindh into the land of powerful waderos (feudals) and hapless landless haris (landless peasants) (see chapter on Sindh). The colonial system of control continued with the same pattern, thus turning the UP Muslims into one of the most literate, and leaving Sindhis to be one of the least literate of the Indian Muslims.

Mohajirs’ attitude towards Sindhis betrayed a strong urban bias against countryside. Traditionally, the non-Muslim Sindhis, especially, Hindus dominated the urban

backgrounds said that theirs was a conscious choice to migrate. But the paper does not indicate the place of origin from which these women migrated, and therefore, is of little help.

centres of Sindh. After partition, most of the Hindus migrated to India, and were replaced by Mohajirs. Unlike Sindhi Hindus, who, despite believing in a different religion, shared the culture and language of Sindh with Sindhi Muslims, Mohajirs were from a different culture, speaking a different language. The cultural and linguistic difference, urban and rural disparity, as well as Mohajirs' arrogance of being the descendants of the Muslim ruling elite, all contributed to their contemptuous attitude towards Sindhis. Both Mohajirs and Punjabis "stereotyped Sindhis as backward, lazy and provincial" (Wright, 1991: 304).

The only common thing between Mohajirs and Sindhis was religion. But that, too, could not become a basis for cordial relationship because Mohajirs' ritual, rationalised, modernised and ideological Islam was in sharp contrast with the folk, Sufi-influenced, syncretic Islam of Sindhis.¹¹ Furthermore, Mohajirs, rather than adopting the local culture and language, tried to impose their own on the local population. For them, "if there was to be integration, it had to be from the top of the social status pyramid where they stood and not from the bottom" (Wright, 1974: 191). The conflict between Mohajirs and Sindhis took a serious turn after the first elected prime minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a Sindhi, came to power in 1971.

¹¹ It needs to be noted here that there is a widespread romanticised secularist view of the Sufi Islam as a very tolerant version. As Kakar (1995:21) has pointed out: "Many a Sufi was openly hostile to the religion and social practices of the Hindus, paranoid – even at the zenith of Muslim power – that the Hindus would obliterate Islamic laws, Islam, and the Muslim community if they ever captured political power." It is more useful to see Sufi Islam as a culture-belief-based system, and modernist Islam as an ideology-based system.

Mohajirs Politics After the 1971 Break-up

Pakistan's first free national elections in 1970 had some drastic consequences for the geographical, political and administrative structure of the state. As noted earlier, because of the Punjabi-Mohajir dominated state establishment's unwillingness to transfer power to the Bengali majority party, a civil war erupted in East Pakistan that resulted in the dismemberment of Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh in 1971. After the dismemberment, Punjabis became the overwhelming ethnic majority of Pakistan. A group that was already ruling the country even when it was a minority began to look like an ominous threat to the other ethnic groups when it also became the majority.

Ironically, the first casualty was Mohajirs who had so far been partners with Punjabis in suppressing regional dissent in the name of Islam-Urdu-Pakistan ideology. After the defeat of Pakistan army in the east wing of Pakistan, the military handed power to the leader of the majority party in the west wing, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Some of the Bhutto government policies, at the federal level as well as in Sindh province, had far reaching consequences for the privileged Mohajir community. The policies that Mohajirs perceived to be damaging to their interests included the nationalisation of private sector enterprises, reforms in the civil services structure, reformulation of quota system and reintroduction of Sindhi language as a medium of instruction in Sindh.

As noted above since Pakistan's creation, the Karachi-based industrialists were in almost total control of the resources in both wings of the country. With the separation of the east wing they not only lost assets but also a major source of foreign exchange. On the other hand, the Bhutto government's nationalisation of banks and insurance companies was yet another blow to their interests. Some of the big industrial houses lost 50 to 75 per cent of their assets due to nationalisation (Amjad, 1983: 255). Although the government generously compensated these industrial houses and in actual terms a considerable section of these families remained unaffected, they certainly lost the official patronage, which hitherto had been showered on them (Noman, 1990: 76-77).

Interestingly, none of the twelve big houses belonged to the Mohajir's Mohajir, i.e., the Urdu speaker. In fact, half of them were Punjabi (Papanek, 1972: 27). Therefore, it was not the loss of these houses as such which threatened Mohajir interests. The damaging aspect of the nationalisation for Mohajirs was that when these enterprises became part of the public sector owned by the state, entry for employment, too, had to be made through quota system on the basis of state employment regulations. Under the circumstances, it was natural for Mohajirs, whose share in the industrial labour was as high as 90 per cent, to feel anxious, in fact, frightened (Sayeed, 1980: 155).

Although quota system has been in existence since 1948, its reformulation was not to the likings of Mohajirs. During general Yahya Khan's martial law regime (1969-71) a new formula based on 60-40 per cent representation for rural and urban Sindh,

respectively, was introduced to appease the underrepresented Sindhis who were predominantly rural (Waseem, 1997: 228). This was a major shift from the previous urban-biased allocation, which neatly delineated the share of Karachi city, but cobbled up the smaller provinces under “all other (except East Bengal and West Punjab) provinces and princely states of West Pakistan” (ibid. 227). Under the 1973 constitution, the Bhutto government abolished the special status of Karachi and brought down the percentage of merit seats from 20 to 10. After over two-and-a-half decades of privilege, for the first time Mohajirs were confronted with the spectre of representation based on population rather than special status.

Bhutto’s reforms of the civil service was yet another blow to Mohajirs who, after Punjabis, had a dominant position in the bureaucracy. Whereas Mohajirs held almost half of the senior positions in the public enterprises, their share in private business enterprises was even greater (Kennedy, 1991: 942-43). In 1973, when, after the separation of the eastern wing, they were less than 8 per cent of the total population, their share of the higher positions in civil service was as high as 33.5 per cent (ibid. 942). Mohajirs may have seen the Bhutto government’s dismissal of 1300 civil servants on charges of corruption as against their collective interest but the more serious setback came in the shape of a system of lateral entry. The system was introduced by Bhutto to facilitate the entry of technocrats into the state apparatus without the formality of a competitive examination. But in practice, it opened the gates of state administration to the party supporters. Mohajirs, whose majority had not voted for Bhutto’s Pakistan People’s Party, could not expect to benefit from the system in any significant manner.

Although all these factors contributed to the Mohajirs' fears of losing their privileged position in the state system as well as in the private enterprises, the actual horror was caused by the prospect of representational rule. It is an ironic, rather unhappy, aspect of the Mohajir politics that before partition they feared Hindu majority rule in an independent India, and now in a state they had helped to create they still feared majority rule, this time by Sindhi Muslims. Bhutto was a Sindhi and the first elected prime minister of Pakistan. In Sindh, like Punjab, Bhutto's party had won a majority. Thus, after one-and-half-decades of the One Unit, Sindhis, once again, were ruling Sindh.

In July 1972, the ruling Pakistan People's Party moved a bill in the Sindh Assembly to reintroduce Sindhi language as the medium of instruction, which it had been for more than 100 years (1851-1958). Even before the bill was passed, Mohajirs reacted violently and riots broke out in the urban centres of Sindh, leading to a situation that forced the government to call in the army to restore law and order (Ahmed, 1998: 41; Sayeed, 1980: 155). Once again, it was not the first time that Mohajirs refused to accept the language of the majority. The same Urdu-speaking people had, before the partition, turned the United Provinces into the main battleground in the Hindi-Urdu controversy by refusing to accept the language of the Hindu majority. After partition, when the constituent assembly accorded *equal status* to the language of Bengali majority in 1954, Mohajirs had rioted in Karachi (Wright, 1974: 199). Behind all these protests, the issue was that of privileges, which ensue from the dominance of a language for its speakers and the jobs that it ensures to them.

By the 1970s, Mohajirs' jobs and privileges had become a target from many different directions. Ayub Khan's 'decade of development' had widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Although the modernisation policies of the regime had led to large-scale migration from countryside to urban centres, hardly any policies were devised to encourage the absorption of such influx into the modern sector enterprises. An increase in industrial output did not result in a matching increase in the real wages of the workers. On the contrary, it led to a decline in the same (Burki, 1980: 46). According to an estimate, there was a fall of nearly 12 per cent in industrial workers' wages during 1954-67. The decline in living standards of the majority, neglect of social services like healthcare and education and growth in population were common features in the sixties (Noman, 1990: 41).

By the time Bhutto came to power, the country was economically in a shambles and shaken and demoralised by the civil war and the subsequent defeat of the military in East Pakistan. Then came the devastating oil price rise in 1973. Bhutto's erratic economic policies further deteriorated the situation. And when the available resources were diverted to defence and public administration the already neglected social services sector had to be squeezed even tighter (ibid. 86). During the Bhutto period (1971-77) the industrial growth that stood at 13 per cent during 1960s, witnessed a 10 per cent drop, coming down to a bare 3 per cent (Hussain & Hussain, 1993: 3). By 1977, the urban middle classes were under severe economic stress. A considerably large section of Mohajirs belongs to these classes.

There was one important aspect of the Bhutto period, which led to a sea change in Mohajir politics. Unlike the 1947-71 period, in which Mohajir bureaucrats ruled and the Karachi-based industrialists prospered, the Bhutto period had weakened the bureaucrats' hold over the state power and deprived the industrialists of much of the official patronage. Bhutto's unintentional contribution to the political system of Pakistan was the ascendance of army to the role of the most important player in power politics, superseding its erstwhile senior partner, the civil bureaucracy.

The Rise and Growth of the MQM

The Bhutto government had confronted Mohajirs with their worst nightmare – the spectre of representational rule – that they had tried so hard to avoid for decades. But general Zia ul Haq's military dictatorship proved no solace for a "declining former elite minority" (Wright, 1974: 200). The Zia regime was the first truly military and first unadulterated Punjabi rule in Pakistan. By 1983, almost all top positions in the military administration were headed by Punjabis (Noman, 1990: 194). Many civilian departments and institutions, too, were brought under direct military tutelage by extensive appointments of military personnel to the top positions. Zia institutionalised his dictatorship through "the military colonisation of other institutions" (ibid.). And to further infiltrate both public and private institutions, an allocation of 10 per cent jobs quota was made for the armed forces personnel (Waseem, 1997: 237).

During the same period, Mohajirs witnessed a gradual decline in their share of the government jobs and an increase in the Sindhi share. The Mohajir share of 46.8 per cent in senior positions in 1974 came down to 31.5 per cent in 1983. In the same category, Sindhis' share almost doubled by jumping up from 3.6 per cent in 1974 to 6.8 per cent in 1983. Moreover, Mohajirs lost over 50 per cent of their share in the officer level posts when their share of 30.2 per cent in 1974 dropped to 14.8 per cent by 1989 (Kennedy, 1991: 943).

The third military rule brought Mohajirs to the unhappy conclusion that, under the changed political circumstances, an authoritarian rule was as unfavourable to their interests as was a representational one. This was a bitter realisation for a people for whom Pakistan was no less than El Dorado. Soon the erstwhile champions of Islam and Pakistan ideology, who had hitherto contemptuously opposed any form of ethnic and regional politics as 'narrow' and 'provincial' were ready to embark on a political journey in which they would not support "anything which doesn't include the word mohajir", not even the constitution of Pakistan.¹²

In March 1984, a group of young Mohajirs, led by Altaf Hussain, converted the All Pakistan Mohajir Students Organisation (APMSO), which they had formed in 1978, into the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM), an exclusively Mohajir political group advocating the rights of Mohajirs. The son of a junior government servant from

¹² The MQM chief, Altaf Hussain, while responding to a question whether his support for "a free, democratic system, with no interference from the army" meant his support for the 1973 constitution, and the MRD's (Movement for Restoration of Democracy) demand for fresh elections", he said: "No. We don't support anything which doesn't include the word mohajir". *Herald*, Karachi, September 1987.

Agra, the 33-year old Altaf Hussain came from a conservative religious family that lived in government quarters.¹³

Initially, like the majority of Mohajirs, he was a supporter of the fundamentalist Jamaat Islami and its student wing, Islami Jamiat-i-Tulaba (IJT). But later he got disenchanted when, according to his own account, he “got an opportunity to see the IJT at very close quarters”. The immediate reason for the formation of the APMSO was the difficulty that he and his Mohajir friends had faced in getting admission to the Karachi University, but his search for a political identity had resulted from the hostility that he was subjected to for being a Mohajir in school, during a short military service, and at the university.

In August 1986, the MQM held an impressive public rally at Nishtar Park, Karachi. What catapulted the MQM to fame, however, were the bloody Mohajir-Pukhtun clashes in Karachi at the end of the same year. Although it was not the first time that Mohajirs and Pukhtuns had clashed, the methods deployed this time round were unprecedented. There was an organised ambush on selected Mohajir localities by heavily armed men to which Mohajirs retaliated in the same organised manner equipped with the same kind of sophisticated weaponry. What made the clashes curious and incomprehensible was that Pukhtuns and Mohajirs had little real clash of interests.

¹³ Information in this and the following paragraph is adopted from Altaf Hussain's interview with *Herald*, Karachi, September 1987.

The majority of Pukhtuns in Karachi are construction, transport, and industrial labour living in shantytowns: the jobs and accommodation to which Mohajirs do not aspire. There was one tangible area of clash, however, which had developed after the creation of Bangladesh. The Urdu-speaking migrants from Bihar who had, after the partition of India, settled in East Bengal migrated to Karachi in the 1970s. A considerable number of these Biharis were forced to live in shantytowns and seek jobs of any kind. Pukhtun land grabbers controlled most of the shantytowns in Karachi.

This may explain why the Mohajir-Pukhtun clashes were initially Bihari-Pukhtun clashes, which erupted in Orangi town in April 1985, after a Pukhtun-driven mini-bus ran over a young Bihari girl. But the ethnic conflict in Sindh and the emergence of the MQM cannot be relegated to a localised clash of interests. A situation that defies a plausible explanation usually tends to be explained by conspiracy theories. One of the theories that made rounds at the time suggested that the clashes were an organised work of the infamous Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Although the extent of the ISI's involvement in the clashes can never be determined, its contribution to the creation of the MQM has ample circumstantial evidence.

The hanging of a popularly elected Sindhi prime minister, Bhutto, by the military regime in 1979 had caused widespread anger and resentment among Sindhis. In 1983, when the opposition alliance, Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), launched an anti-martial law movement, it turned into a popular Sindhi agitation that was put down by the armed forces after days of clashes. One reason for

the failure of the Sindhi movement was that it was mainly rural-based and was not joined by the major towns of Sindh, which happen to be Mohajir-dominated.

Despite its failure, however, Sindhi agitation shook the regime out of its delusion of stability. It was quite obvious from the intensity and potency of the agitation that with the support of urban centres it could have become a fatal blow to the regime. That probability could not go unnoticed by the regime. After a few months, the MQM was formed. It may have been a coincidence but a curious one because at that time Altaf Hussain was "very close to the deputy martial law administrator of Sindh".¹⁴ Later, the Sindh chief minister, Ghous Ali Shah, was accused of giving Rs 30 million to Altaf Hussain to which the chief minister is reported to have said: "I helped it (MQM) to cut Jamaat Islami to size".¹⁵

No doubt, Jamaat Islami 's student wing, IJT, after years of support for the military regime, had by that time become a problem for it was protesting against the ban on student unions. But that was a minor irritant. The real threat was Bhutto's PPP. It was the hatred of the PPP, which forced Zia, one of the most ardent supporters of Islam-Pakistan ideology to visit one of the most vocal opponents of that ideology; Sindhi nationalist, G.M. Syed. Zia's relations with Syed and Syed's relations with

¹⁴ I owe this information to Brigadier A.R. Siddiqi, former director of the Pakistan army's Inter-Services Public Relations.

¹⁵ Sindhi nationalist and historian, Dr Hamida Khuhro told me this in an interview that was published in *The Frontier Post*, April 1990. In the same interview, she also said: "And it was not just by chance that the situation became worse after the 1983 movement in Sindh. Immediately after that we saw the rise of MQM...which was created by the military rulers to counter the Sindhis' anger at and dislike for martial law".

Altaf Hussain and support for the MQM was yet another indication that the latter was created with the consent and assistance of the regime.

Initially, the MQM's rhetoric was anti-Punjabi-Pukhtun and pro-Sindhi.¹⁶ It had such cordial relations with one of the separatist Sindhi nationalist groups, Jiye Sindh (Long live Sindh), that the latter's guards in the interior of Sindh actively supported Altaf Hussain. In return, Altaf Hussain bowed his head to the Jiye Sindh anthem at Ayesha Manzil and Liaquat Medical College functions.¹⁷ The reason behind Sindhi nationalists' prop for the MQM was the realisation after the abortive Sindhi agitation that without the help of Mohajirs the major towns of Sindh could not be persuaded to back their program. The MQM's flirtation with Sindhis, too, was a tactical move, rather than a conviction: it did not want a Bengal-like situation where Mohajirs had sided with the Pakistani establishment against Bengalis and therefore had to suffer after the defeat of Pakistan army. It should be noted here that despite the MQM and Sindhi nationalists' anti-Punjabi-Pukhtun rhetoric the Punjabi-Pukhtun-dominated army pampered them. The reason was their common hatred for and fear of Bhutto's People's Party.

The Sindhi-Mohajir alliance was an unnatural one because Mohajirs were denying the regional identity that Sindhis were fighting for. Therefore it was becoming increasingly difficult for the MQM to ally itself with Sindhis and press for its

¹⁶ One of the early MQM slogans goes: "Sindhi Mohajir Bhai Bhai, Dothi Naswar Kahan say aiee" (Sindhis and Mohajirs are brothers. Where have these Punjabis and Pukhtuns come from?)

¹⁷ I am indebted to Khalid Mumtaz, a Karachi lawyer, who was an MQM supporter in its early days, for this information.

demands at the same time. Also, within the MQM there were two groups: one anti-Punjabi, the other anti-Sindhi.¹⁸ By September 1988, it seemed, the anti-Sindhi group had prevailed as the MQM had its first major clash with Sindhis.

The MQM's rise to popularity among Mohajirs has been phenomenal. After the Awami League of East Bengal, the MQM is the only ethnic group in Pakistan with widespread mass support among its target community. In 1987, it swept the local bodies elections in the urban centres of Sindh. In the 1988 national elections, it emerged as the third largest bloc in the national assembly and the second largest political force in Sindh assembly.

Despite such an impressive electoral support, however, the MQM resorted to urban terrorism that soon transformed Karachi and Hyderabad into cities of violence, looting and murder. Structurally the most organised ethnic group in Pakistan, the MQM had a sizeable number of hardcore criminals among its members who, with the support of many of its leaders, terrorised, tortured and murdered with impunity.¹⁹ It introduced 'bhata' (forced contribution) system to which Mohajir shopkeepers, businessmen and industrialists were obliged to contribute. Refusal to pay by, or a sign of dissent among, Mohajirs in the MQM strongholds could wreak torture, loss of property and even loss of life.²⁰ Altaf Hussain was transformed into a cult figure. Initially, he was called **Al**taf Bhai (brother Altaf), but was soon elevated to the status

¹⁸ I owe this point to Zafar Abbas, the BBC correspondent in Islamabad.

¹⁹ See Mohammed Hanif's report in *Newsline*, Karachi, November 1992.

²⁰ During the 1992 army operation against the MQM, quite a few torture cells at its headquarters were unearthed.

of a pir (spiritual leader) and called 'Pir Sahib'. So devout was the MQM cadre that for simply failing to call their 'fuehrer', Altaf Bhai, young Mohajirs were shot dead.²¹ Journalists were terrorised into submission and those who refused to toe the line were threatened with dire consequences. The threats of the MQM were never just threats. In most instances they were translated into practice. Newspaper offices were attacked and journalists held hostage, abused and beaten.²²

The MQM's Charter of Resolutions

The People's Party's slim majority in the 1988 elections obliged it to seek the MQM's support to form government. As a condition for its support, the MQM presented the People's Party with a 25-point demands list that was called charter of resolutions. The charter was, in fact, the MQM policy statement, which clearly delineated its aims and aspirations. The demands were as follows:

- 1) Mohajirs be constitutionally declared a separate nationality in Pakistan.
- 2) Pakistanis stranded in Bangladesh be accepted and repatriated as Pakistanis.
- 3) Sindh domicile should only be given to those who have been residents of Sindh at least for 25 years, except those who settled in Sindh after the fall of Dhaka.
- 4) Only locals be recruited to all police and intelligence departments, and appointed in the province.
- 5) Arms licences be issued to Mohajirs and Sindhis and the procedure be simplified as in the case of Radio and TV licences.

²¹ Khalid Mumtaz told me that he had personally witnessed such an incident.

²² One such attack occurred when I was working with the daily *Dawn*, Karachi in the early 1990s. The MQM workers forced their entry into *Dawn*'s offices and held the editor, Ahmed Ali Khan, hostage and threatened him of further action if anything against the MQM appeared in the paper. The BBC correspondent, Zafar Abbas, was attacked and beaten at his residence.

- 6) Afghan refugees be shifted to camps near the Pak-Afghan border and not be allowed to buy property in Karachi and Hyderabad.
- 7) All immigrants into Sindh from other provinces be provided jobs in their respective areas in order to arrest the increase in Sindh's population.
- 8) Kachi Abadis (slums) set up by 1978 be relinquished and land grabbing be declared a crime.
- 9) Locals be given first preference for all government, semi-government, corporations and administrative jobs, from the lowest to the highest level. All non-locals already posted in the positions be sent to their respective provinces.
- 10) A modern and fast transport system be introduced in Karachi and Hyderabad and government transport be given to municipalities.
- 11) Only locals of Sindh be given the right to vote as hundreds of thousands of non-locals are enjoying voting rights in Sindh.
- 12) Minimum voting age be reduced to 18 years.
- 13) An honest census be held to determine the population of Sindhis and Mohajirs; Mohajirs be given their proportionate share in power, jobs and educational institutions, both in the centre and the provinces.
- 14) A joint committee comprising elected representatives of Sindhis and Mohajirs be set up to implement the quota system in a fair and just manner.
- 15) Uniform service and retirement rules be made for all federal, provincial, government and semi-government departments and corporations.
- 16) The Khokrapar rail route with India be immediately reopened.
- 17) The same postal tariff be fixed for India as is applied to other neighbouring countries of Pakistan.
- 18) A new hospital be set up, attached to Sindh Medical College.
- 19) Land allotments as reward to non-locals be stopped.
- 20) All local residents of Sindh who do not own a house, be provided plots at concessional rates and loans be given to help them build their houses.

- 21) Karachi Electrical Supply Corporation (KESC) be separated from the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). And all non-locals in KESC be deputed to WAPDA.
- 22) Municipal committees be given the right to collect motor vehicle tax.
- 23) Fuel adjustment charges be made uniform throughout the country.
- 24) Sindh government be authorised to collect sales tax.
- 25) Annual *urs* of Shah Latif Bhitai and death anniversary of Liaqat Ali Khan be declared national public holidays and observed as national days.²³

These demands give a good insight into the dilemma of the MQM's position as well as its interests and preferences. On the one hand, it tried to secure a separate identity for Mohajirs by demanding a separate nationality, repatriation of Biharis, proportionate share in power, and on the other, it endeavoured to form a collective regional identity with Sindhis by asking for issuance of arms licences to Mohajirs and Sindhis, provision of plots to "all local residents of Sindh", and an end to inter-provincial migration and allotment of local land to the non-locals.

The MQM's demand for the issuance of arms licences was quite telling for an urban dwelling people. Also noteworthy is the fact that although one of the demands clearly asked for giving preference to the locals in all appointments, the locals' recruitment to police and intelligence departments was further emphasised in a separate demand, indicating the MQM's propensity for reliance on agencies of

²³ This list was published in *The News*, Karachi, October 14, 1994.

control and coercion. The demand for “honest census” was based on the MQM claim that Mohajirs were 50 per cent of the Sindh population.²⁴

The People’s Party accepted the demands out of political expediency and its leader, Benazir Bhutto, even went to the extent of saying that “75 per cent of the points mentioned in the MQM charter of demands are actually from the theme of PPP’s election manifesto” (Mir, 1994: 11). But their implementation never materialised. The MQM broke its alliance with the People’s Party in 1989 and after the 1990 elections entered a new alliance with the Islami Jamhuri Ittehad (IJI). Despite the fact that the MQM legislators were given ministerial portfolios in federal and Sindh cabinets, its terrorism and violence continued unabated.

By that time the Pakistani establishment had lost its patience. First, it helped to form the MQM Haqiqi (real) comprising the MQM dissidents to counter the MQM’s unchallenged power base and to divert its supporters. When that strategy did not work an army action, so-called “operation clean-up”, was launched in 1992 to flush out its criminal elements and destroy its organisational structure. At the time, Altaf Hussain was already out of the country, while the rest of the leadership went underground to avoid arrests.

After years of terror, when Karachi had virtually become a besieged city at the mercy of the MQM goons, normality was restored. The operation continued for months and it certainly had succeeded in breaking the organisational structure of the MQM. But

²⁴ A former MQM provincial minister, M.A. Jalil, made this claim in an interview with me in 1997.

none of its leaders could be arrested, nor could its support-base be eroded (Hanif, 1992: 27). The continued support for the MQM among the Mohajirs had much to do with the nature and methods of the operation itself. For the personnel of the operation, in most cases Punjabis, every Mohajir that sympathised with the MQM or had a member of family as its member was a suspect and therefore deserved humiliation, arrest and even torture. Thus the MQM's reign of terror and torture cells were replaced by those established by the army's field investigation teams and other law enforcement agencies (ibid. 27, 28).

Revised List of Demands

In 1994, the MQM came up with a new list of demands for an alliance with the government or the opposition. Although the People's Party government and the Muslim League opposition both tried to strike a deal with the MQM and gain its support, the nature of the demands made it impossible for both parties to accept them. The demands, published in *The News*, Karachi on October 14, 1994, were as follows:

- 1) Unconditional withdrawal of all criminal cases registered against the MQM workers and leaders during the army's Sindh operation including the cases against Altaf Hussain.
- 2) Winding up the army's Sindh operation and withdrawal of all military and paramilitary troops from Sindh.
- 3) Constitution of a tribunal to probe extra-judicial killings during operation clean up.
- 4) Mohajir representation in the national and provincial assemblies and in the senate in accordance with their actual population.

- 5) The long-awaited national census be conducted under an impartial authority to ensure proportionate representation of Mohajirs.
- 6) Revision of the electoral boundaries of Sindh.
- 7) Enhancing the urban quota from 7.6% to 9.5% and from 40 to 50% in the federal and provincial services respectively in accordance with the strength of their population.
- 8) The spirit of democracy demands that all sections of population are represented in the government. Therefore, the positions of governor and chief minister Sindh be shared in rotation by Mohajirs and Sindhis.
- 9) The urban areas of Sindh should receive proportionate share of the federal and provincial funds for development.
- 10) Repatriation of stranded Biharis from Bangladesh to Pakistan be carried out without further delay.
- 11) Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and other municipal bodies be made autonomous and allowed to govern their affairs freely.
- 12) All employees arbitrarily sacked or removed from federal, provincial and semi-government services since July 1992 be reinstated.
- 13) Recruitment of mohajirs be made in the Sindh police on emergency basis to make it proportionate according to their population ratio.
- 14) Effective measures be taken to ensure access of Mohajir students to the educational institutions of interior Sindh.
- 15) The ban on MQM's political activities be lifted, and its constitutional and democratic rights to freely participate in political activities be restored.
- 16) Those affected during Sindh operation be fully compensated for their loss of properties.
- 17) The arbitrarily superseded elected local bodies of Sindh be restored forthwith till fresh LB elections are held.

- 18) Official patronage to the MQM Haqiqi be stopped and those involved in crimes be arrested immediately.

As is obvious from the list, it was unabashedly anti-Sindhi and urban-centred. Unlike the charter of resolutions, in which Mohajirs and Sindhis were listed together for certain rights, in the new list Sindhis are mentioned only in competition with Mohajirs. The UPite fear of representational rule continues to be the spirit of Mohajir politics as not only a proportional representation was advocated but also the rotation of Mohajir and Sindhi governor and chief minister was demanded in total disregard of the majority rule. The MQM continued with its exaggeration of the Mohajir population, and hence an increase in urban quota was demanded.

Interestingly, the first demand of the charter of resolutions, i.e., constitutional declaration of Mohajirs being the fifth nationality, was dropped and withdrawal of criminal cases against the MQM workers and leaders given first priority. Unofficially, however, the MQM has, instead of a fifth nationality, floated the idea of a fifth province (Mir, 1994: 11). The demand for declaring Karachi a separate province is not new. During the 1972 language riots, Mohajirs demanded the separation of Karachi from Sindh (Sayeed, 1980: 155). The MQM's change of heart from fifth nationality to fifth province, it seems, is the result of a realisation that whereas the demand for redrawing of administrative boundaries and establishment of a new province is well within the prescribed limits of the constitution, the nationality demand is unrealistic because the constitution of Pakistan does not recognise any nationality other than Pakistani.

Despite the army operation and widespread arrests, however, the law and order situation in Karachi and other cities of Sindh further deteriorated. In 1994, in Karachi alone, 1113 people were killed by the snipers. By 1995, Karachi had become the most dangerous city of Asia and was termed the “city of death” when the number of people killed had shot up to 2095.²⁵ Thus, the combined force of various security agencies under the command of the interior ministry was used to fish out the MQM activists. It was a more brutal and more successful action than the previous army operation. As a result, ‘artificial’ peace was restored to the urban centres. The violence may not be as widespread today as it was till 1995, but it continues to be part of Sindh’s urban life. The Punjabi-dominated administration’s response to the issue has, as usual, been of use of brut force against the MQM activists. Also, by creating and supporting the MQM Haqiqi, the establishment has been successful in weakening the MQM as the two factions have been killing one another’s supporters with impunity. The MQM’s claim of the state-sponsored genocide of Mohajirs may well be an exaggeration but the killing of numerous Mohajirs by the security personnel cannot be denied.

Conclusion

The MQM presents an interesting case of a privileged group that has become conscious of the gradual erosion of its dominant position in the state structure. As long as there was an unrepresentative rule in Pakistan, and Mohajirs had an

²⁵ *Herald*, Karachi, special map “city of death”, 1996.

unjustifiably large share in the public and private sector institutions, they were the champions of the official nationalism of Pakistani state. But the moment the balance of power shifted away from Mohajirs, and the structure of job distribution was altered, they started to express their discontent with the state.

The paradox of the Mohajir politics is that they are pitted against a discriminating state and one of its worst victims, Sindhis, at the same time. Since its emergence, it has been this dichotomy of the MQM position, which, on the one hand, made it unacceptable to a highly centralised, intolerant and non-accommodating state establishment that favours certain regions and ethnic groups at the expense of others, and on the other hand, to all those marginalised ethnic groups who wish to change the existing administrative structure of the state.

It is the irony of the Mohajir politics that they are confronted with a state system, in the building of which they played the most significant role. Throughout Pakistan's history, Mohajirs supported the centralising and homogenising policies of the state and regarded demands for regional and ethnic parity as narrow, provincial and unpatriotic. They backed centralist and conservative political and religious groups and looked at any change and reform with suspicion. In 1971, when civil war broke up in east Pakistan Mohajirs sided with the violent bands of Jamat Islami, Al-Shams and Al-Badr, and supported the Pakistan army's atrocities against Bengalis. During the language riots of 1972, it was the conservative religious groups, Jamat Islami and Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan, who were leading Mohajirs.

As far as Mohajirs' conflict with Sindhis is concerned, it continues to be the one between one of the most privileged and one of the most marginalised groups. Despite some gains during the last quarter of the 20th century, Sindhis continue to be a marginalised group. Likewise, despite some significant losses during the same period, Mohajirs continue to be an over-represented group. In 1993, whereas urban Sindh had an excess of 95 civil servants, rural Sindh had a shortage of 106 (Abbasi, 1994: 11).

In 1998, nationalist groups formed an alliance, Pakistan's Oppressed Nations Movement (PONM), for provincial autonomy, but the MQM took no part in it. Indeed, the MQM is the only ethnic group in Pakistan that has never been able to gain the sympathies of other ethnic groups. It is, perhaps, this realisation that has led to a significant change in the MQM's rhetoric and nomenclature. In 1998, it changed its name from Mohajir Quami Movement to Mutahida Quami Movement (united national movement). To drop the word Mohajir is a significant strategic change for a group, which had once said that it would not accept anything that does not include the word Mohajir.

In a rather unexpected development, recently the MQM has allied itself with a separatist Sindhi group and in a London rally on March 22, 2000, led by some of its top leaders, its supporters chanted anti-Pakistan and anti-army slogans and resolved to achieve independence.²⁶ Also its self-exiled leader Altaf Hussain had meetings with the PONM leaders, Attaullah Mengal and Mehmud Khan Achakzai and then in

September 2000 demanded a new constitution for Pakistan in accordance with the Lahore resolution. The MQM's new line has brought it closer to the thinking of Sindhi and Baloch nationalists whose main target is the administrative structure of the Pakistani state. For the first time, the MQM has made provincial autonomy rather than Mohajir rights the main issue. In an interview, Altaf Hussain said: "Once Sindh attains full provincial autonomy, the people of urban and rural Sindh can sit together and amicably resolve the question of rights for the people of the urban and rural areas. Sindhis and Mohajirs are sons of the land of Shah Latif (a revered Sindhi mystic poet) and have to live and die together in the province of Sindh".²⁷ This is a far cry from the MQM's anti-Sindhi politics. This new stance may have surprised many but then the MQM has never been short on surprises.

²⁶ *Dawn*, Karachi, March 23, 2000.

²⁷ *Herald*, Karachi, November 2000.

Chapter 9

At a Crossroads as Ever Before!

Pakistan today stands at the crossroads of its destiny – a destiny which is in our hands to make or break. Fifty-two years ago, we started with a beacon of hope and today that beacon is no more and we stand in darkness.

General Pervez Musharraf

(Pakistan's military ruler since 1999)¹

An individual's or a group's right to insist on its individuality, and its separateness is indisputable. And therefore the Muslim League's insistence and emphasis on the separateness of Indian Muslims was as much justified as the Indian National Congress' emphasis on all-India nationalism. But the treachery of nationalism is that the moment it achieves its goals it repudiates what it had fought for. On March 23 1940, Jinnah (1991: 17) had said:

Notwithstanding thousand years of close contact, nationalities which are as divergent today as ever cannot at any time be expected to transform themselves into one nation merely by means of subjecting them to a democratic constitution and holding them forcibly together by unnatural and artificial methods of British Parliamentary statutes. ...It is inconceivable that the fiat or the writ of a government...can ever command a willing and loyal obedience...except by means of armed force behind it.

But after achieving the state, Jinnah and other rulers of Pakistan tried the 'inconceivable': to build a nation with the fiat or the writ of a government on the basis of Urdu and Islam. The dismissals of the elected governments in the provinces, forcing Bengalis to adopt Urdu as a national language, terming any voice of ethnic

¹ Address to the nation on October 17, 1999. Excerpts published in *Herald*, Karachi November 1999.

discontent as provincialism and against the interests of the national state, all was repudiation of what the Muslim League had proclaimed to stand for before partition.

But this fact is ignored by those historians, Pakistani as well as western, who like to present the political history of Pakistan as a kind of derailment from the democratic and constitutional path to a bureaucratic-military authoritarianism.² The obvious implication is that Pakistan's founder had placed the country on a democratic path but his death gave rise to power-seeking politicians and bureaucrats who had no desire to see the country as a democratic state. This is an officially certified lie! It has two purposes: one, to place the founder of the state on the high pedestal of being a champion of democracy, and two, to lambast the rest of the politicians who followed Jinnah as the destroyers of democracy.

Military dictators have followed this line to justify their repeated disruptions of the political process. The official historians of Pakistan have used it to legitimise various misrules. That much is understandable. But the irony is that even many of the independent and left wing writers have succumbed to this trend. For instance, one of the left wing writers, while writing against the Nawaz Sharif government's intentions to further Islamise the constitution, resorts to such rhetoric: "The struggle for Pakistan was led by people who wanted to create a modern democratic state in which the will of the people would be supreme" (Rehman, 1998: 19). Who were those people and what proves that they wanted to establish democracy? The writer did not

² It is this group of historians who like to term Pakistan a 'failing state' and a 'failed state'. Recently, an American writer (McGrath, 1998) has titled his book as *The Destruction of Pakistan's Democracy*, detailing the palace intrigues and filibuster of the early years.

spell out but it is obvious that he has the leaders of the Muslim League in mind. A rather unhappy aspect of Pakistan's history, however, is that all available evidence indicates that the struggle for Pakistan was led not by those who wanted the supremacy of the *will of the people*, but by those who feared it; it was a movement of a people who were not willing to accept a Hindu majority rule under a representational (democratic?) system.

My main concern in the preceding chapters has been to demystify nationalism. Because, it seems to me that it is not only the nationalists who have always tried to mystify nationalism, but also all those theoreticians who, like Anthony Smith (1995: 73, 58), insist that "(e)thnic nationalisms do not generally correlate with economic trends" and that the "power of these political forces must be traced back to the 'ethnic substratum' of collective identity and community." On the contrary, my argument has been that ethnicity and ethnic conflicts are not new but ethnic nationalism, i.e., the politicisation of ethnicity is a recent phenomenon, which owes much to the modern institutions like the modern state, industrialist capitalism and communications. Of these, however, the modern state plays the most pivotal role because it constructs, preserves, and transmits national identities and connects them to interests through the parliament, popular literature, courts, schools, labour markets, etc. (Breuilly, 1996: 154). Also, because the modern state, as the manager of economy, necessitates that individuals, groups and classes look up to it, ethnic nationalism is always about the state.

The politics of the four ethnic groups that I have studied clearly demonstrate that not only economic trends are correlated to their preferences, but there also is a direct link between their policies and their distance from or proximity to the state structure. The Pukhtun nationalists' journey from separatism to integrationism has been a journey from Pukhtuns' exclusion from the state institutions to their over-representation now. Likewise, Mohajirs' travel from ardent support for state nationalism to separatist rhetoric is rather too obviously linked with their slide down from the position of dominance in the state structure. On the other hand, the two most marginalised groups, Sindhis and Baloch, have been as consistently nationalistic as their distance from the state has been unchanging.

Yet another interesting point that emerges from the four movements is that the power of these political forces cannot be traced back to the 'ethnic substratum' of collective identity and community. It lies very much in their social, economic and political location within the state system. Culture, history and language have been part of the symbolic and rhetorical armoury of these movements but not of their actual political agendas. As we have seen in the case of Pukhtun nationalism, sometimes tracing back the ethnic substratum of collective identity can go well against the political agenda of an ethnic movement. For instance, despite Pukhtun nationalists' rhetoric about their glorious past when it came to the question of reuniting with their ethnic substratum in Afghanistan they refused it by saying that they did not want to be part those 'naked' people. Also, Pukhtun nationalists have shown little concern for the Pukhtuns of Balochistan who want to be part of the NWFP.

The MQM, too, presents a good example that tracing back the ethnic substratum can be misleading. Mohajirs are not a monolith group but a combination of various ethnic groups from different parts of India. And it is not the ethnic past but their present distance from the indigenous groups that has given them a sense of identity and community. And for strengthening that sense they do not look back beyond the partition of India, except in symbolic terms, for instance, by extolling Syed Ahmed and Maulana Hasrat Mohani as their spiritual leaders.

Ethnic nationalism in the case of Pakistan, it seems to me, is not too complex an issue, because there is no subtlety, no sophistication in the state system of Pakistan. There is a clear pattern of ethnic disaffection and an unambiguously crude response of the state. Ethnic movements in Pakistan have always been about provincial autonomy and a share in the central government. But the state labelled them as secessionists and forced them to become secessionist. Bengalis succeeded, Baloch failed, and Mohajirs, it seems, are fighting a losing battle.

Pakistan's is only one tale in the huge anthology of the nation-states. The history of Pakistan is the history of the formation of a nation-state. And the nation-state is a worldwide phenomenon. Therefore, many aspects of Pakistan's history have a remarkable similarity with other postcolonial states. The names of the characters in the Pakistani drama may be different but their roles have a striking resemblance with players elsewhere. Pakistan is one of those unhappy countries that have hope only when a new government comes to power and that hope never lasts more than a few months. That is why when General Musharraf came to power he talked about the

prevailing darkness, only to imply that now that he has deposed a corrupt prime minister a new era shall dawn. But nothing has changed since and once again the hope is lost. Pakistan is certainly standing at a crossroads, but, unfortunately, not the one where one path leads to 'a beacon of hope' and the other to darkness, as the general put it. But at a crossroads where, paraphrasing Woody Allen, one path leads to despair and hopelessness, and the other to more poverty, repression, corruption and ethnic and sectarian violence. Let us pray Pakistanis have the wisdom to choose correctly.

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APPENDIX 1

Interviews and Informal Conversations (1997, 1998)

Karachi

1. Mazhar Abbas, Journalist
2. Ghafoor Ahmed, Naib Amir of Jamat Islami
3. Jafer Ahmed, Academic
4. Manzur Ahmed, Academic
5. Hameed Akhund, Civil servant
6. Hamza Alavi, Sociologist
7. Karamat Ali, Labour activist
8. Baber Ayaz, Journalist
9. Ishtiaq Azhar, MQM Senator
10. Hussain Haqani, former advisor to prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif
11. Arif Hassan, town-planner and writer
12. Karar Hussain, former vice chancellor of Balochistan University
13. Zahid Hussain, Journalist
14. Fakhrudin G. Ibrahim, former judge, governor Sindh and federal minister, Karachi
15. Khalid Ishaq, former member of Zia's Majlis-i-Shura
16. Ghaurul Islam, Journalist
17. Jameel Jalibi, former vice chancellor of Karachi University

18. M.A. Jalil, MQM leader, former minister of education in Sindh
19. Hasnain Kazmi, MQM Ideologue
20. Tausif Ahmed Khan, Journalist
21. Ahmed Ali Khan, Editor daily Dawn
22. Makhdoom Ali Khan, Lawyer
23. Akhtar Hameed Khan, founder of Orangi Pilot Project
24. Hamida Khuhro, Sindhi nationalist politician, historian
25. Nisar Khuhro, President Pakistan People's Party Sindh
26. Sher Baz Khan Mazari, Nationalist politician
27. Khalid Mumtaz, Lawyer, former MQM member
28. Yusuf Mustikhan, Baloch nationalist politician
29. Farooq Sattar, MQM leader and former mayor of Karachi
30. Ghulam Mustafa Shah, Academic, former federal education minister
31. Imdad Mohammad Shah, Sindhi nationalist politician
32. A.R. Siddiqi, former director, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR)
33. Tasneem Siddiqi, Civil servant
34. Zohra Yusuf, Journalist

Islamabad

1. Zafar Abbas, Journalist
2. Eqbal Ahmed, Academic, activist
3. Aslam Azhar, founder director general of Pakistan Television
4. Sikandar Hayat, Academic
5. Iqbal Jafer, Senior civil servant

6. Omer Asghar Khan, founder of NGO “Sangi” (federal minister since 1999)

Lahore

1. Durre Ahmed, Academic
2. Mubarek Ali, Academic
3. Ijaz Batalvi, public prosecutor in Bhutto trial case, defence council in Nawaz Sharif’s
4. I.A. Rehman, Director - Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
5. Rubina Saigol, Academic
6. Aziz Siddiqi, Journalist

Peshawar, Charsadda, Mardan

1. Ashraf Adeel, Academic
2. Latif Afridi, Pukhtun nationalist politician
3. Zulfiqar Gilani, director, Education and Resource Centre, Peshawar University
4. Qaiser Khan, dissenting high court judge in Bhutto trial case
5. Wali Khan, veteran Pukhtun nationalist politician, son of Ghaffar Khan
6. Afrasiab Khattak, Pukhtun nationalist, director human rights commission
7. Iqbal Tajik, Academic
8. Khalid Saeed, Academic
9. Asfandiyar Wali, President, Awami National Party

Quetta

1. Mehmud Khan Achakzai, president, Pushtunkhwa Awami Milli party

2. Abdul Hayee Baloch, president Baloch National Movement
3. Akbar Bugti, Baloch politician, former chief minister and governor of Balochistan
4. Tahir Mohammad Khan, former federal information minister
5. Inayatullah Khan, Pukhtun nationalist politician

Hyderabad

1. Ibrahim Joyo, Sindhi activist, historian
2. Rasul Bux Palijo, Sindhi nationalist politician