

CONTENDING IDENTITIES OF PAKISTAN AND THE ISSUE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

IJAZ KHAN

ABSTRACT

A democratic progressive Pakistan is tied with a Pakistani identity based on the facts of plurality of its being. And conversely, a centrist militarist Pakistan as it must always rely on the religious argument will continue to give in to the rise of religious extremism in society and state. The main argument of the present article is that there is a direct connection and overlapping of interests between democratic governance and ethnic based plural identity in Pakistan. Further the religious based identity is fed by and feeds the conflict with India, contributing in a substantial manner to the military dominance; conversely the ethnic national movements by conflicting with the centrist state upheld by the military are part of the regional peace movement.

Introduction

Pakistan is a state of contending identities. These contentions are operational at two levels, parallel and horizontal. On parallel level is the contention emerging from the religious basis of its creation. There is a debate between those who consider Pakistani identity to be basically religious, to be more precise, Islamic, and those who, though agreeing to Muslim identity of Pakistan, argue that being Muslim does not mean being Islamic. They point out to the essentially secular personality of the leader of Pakistan movement, Mohammad Ali Jinnah. However, both are centrist positions and have found each other as useful partners against the ethnic/national identity contentions. This has been generally true at least till Gen. Musharaf took over in 1999 and more specifically after the post 9/11 2001 change in Pakistani foreign policy.

These centrist identities are in turn challenged by regional/provincial and ethnic identities, that include Pashtun, Baloch, Sindhi, Punjabi and since 1980s the Muhajir (*refugee*, [refugees from India who came to Pakistan after 1947, not the Afghan refugees). There are other identities contending for recognition along with these. They include Saraiki in Punjab, Makranis and Barohis in Balochistan and Chitralis, Gilgitis and Hazarawals in North Western Frontier Province (NWFP). The real debate and contest is between the centrist religious based (irrespective of the debate between the Muslim Nationalist or Islamic fundamentalist stands) and these ethnic/national contentions, that in the opinion of this study has the real potential for a fundamental change in Pakistan's decision making and democratic or otherwise development.

The post colonial state of Pakistan characterized by long direct military rules, and continuous military control, lack of democratic political culture and an immature and weak civil society had been pursuing a policy of creating a unitary state national identity of Pakistan by negating the existence of the multi ethnic and plural reality of the society. This has resulted in a culture of intolerance and undemocratic governance.

While there are good studies on identity of state and society of Pakistan, most take centrist positions. Amongst the centrist positions Waseem's stands¹ out as a liberal albeit centrist position, even if he appears to be sympathetic to the peripheral view. The study by Cohen² also suffers from the same limitation as it views the identity crisis as it appears from the center and does not show any appreciation of the non centrist secular

¹Mohammad Waseem, *Politics and the State in Pakistan*, Progressive Publishers, Lahore, 1989. Also read by the same author Mohammad Waseem, 'The Dialectics between Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy', in *Pakistan; Nationalism without a Nation?*, Christopher Jafferlot, Manmohar, (Ed) New Delhi, 2002, pp. 263–282.

²Stephen Cohen, 'The Nation and State of Pakistan', *The Washington Quarterly*, 25(3), Washington, Summer 2002, pp. 109–122.

perspectives. The issue looks different when looked at from the various ethno nationalist points of view. While to the centrist liberal the issue is how to secularize Islam. They do it by emphasizing the difference between Muslim and Islamic. However, as they are viewing the issue from a unitary identity stand point, they limit their argument to only administrative justice and issues of democratic representation and fair distribution of assets. While these may be very important, they do not represent the whole picture. Their perspective is simply an argument for a gradual evolution of a central unitary identity based on willing and democratic involvement of the various contending ethno national identities and their final erosion. The issue for the ethno nationalist is a system of governance that guarantees protection of their cultural, ethnic, linguistic, economic and political identity within a federal, democratic and secular Pakistan. While the ethno nationalist liberal democratic view shares with its centrist counterpart concerns about democracy, Islamaization, and militarization of the State, their agendas differ when one goes beyond these issues. For the centrist liberal the journey ends with these issues, while for the ethno nationalist it continues for the achievement of recognition of their separate identity. While the centrist liberal considers the existence of these contending identities to be a temporary phenomenon, for the ethno nationalist Pakistan can only survive as a State if it accepts and adapts itself to a plural multi ethnic identity. Further, the centrist liberal has time and again compromised on democratic principles and conceptually centrism feeds on statism, which results in militarism and thus is circumscribed to play the role of democratizing the state and society of Pakistan.

The military action authorized by the secular and populist Bhutto against the Pashtun and Baloch nationalists in the 1970s are more glaring examples of the difference between the centrist non religious thought and the pluralist point of view. In the post Zia era (1979–1988), known for the increased role of religion in state affairs increased Talibanization of Pakistani State and

society may have brought the ethno nationalist and centrist democrat closer, the basic difference between the two persists. While the centrist at times finds the military domination of decision making in Pakistan acceptable and at times shares the military's attitudes towards Kashmir and India, the ethno nationalist has consistently been at odds with the military domination and opposed to the India centric security perceptions of the State, Kashmir, Afghanistan and nuclear policy.

This paper explains the relationship between lack of democratic culture of tolerance and acceptance of the other, and insistence on a unitary religious based identity, militarization and religious extremism. Pakistan has evolved in a peculiar manner with both internal and external dynamics leaving their imprint on its identity and determining its governance, impacting both state and society and their mutual relations. The study looks at current issues of governance by examining the debate about democracy and governance in its historical perspective and finds that issues of identity lies at the heart of them. The paper looks at these issues from an ethno-nationalist point. It is argued that a democratic secular Pakistan is only possible through evolving a multi ethnic identity and federal structure guaranteeing the rights and identity of the many ethnicities that make the society of Pakistan.

Pakistani State

Pakistan very neatly fits the description of a post colonial state. Post colonial state refers to the continuation of colonial economic relations and thus continuity of political control of the ex-colony by the former colonial power. Further, it also means the continuation of influences on attitudes and the state society relations. Post colonial states by inheriting the bureaucratic structures, made and trained to suppress the civil society, main purpose being to control rather than to organize for development, continue to face the dilemmas of a conflict over control between the civil society and the military and non military bureaucracies. It did not take long for the colonial system of bureaucratic

control and authoritarian centralism to reproduce itself in the new state structure. A primary reason for this outcome was the weakness of the available political organisation and its roots in the civil society.³

Central leadership of Pakistan mainly came from areas that were left on the Indian side of the partition. More blood had been spilled during partition than for attainment of independence. The security perception of this new State was shaped by experiences of freedom struggle. For Pakistan, freedom struggle was not just the struggle of the people of India for freedom from the British imperial rule, but more significantly, the movement was for avoiding being ruled by the Hindu majority in a united and independent India. So, Pakistan movement was more anti Hindu than anti imperialism/colonialism. This religious undertone of Pakistan movement based on the fears of a Hindu majority provides the basic point of reference to Pakistan's foreign policy throughout its existence. This also is the basic contradiction in its quest for identity, this society and state faces till today.

Religion and Unitary Nation Identity

The role of religion in creating a separate political identity as justification for the creation of Pakistan has played havoc with the issue of national identity. The marriage of secular concept of nationalism with Muslim religious identity and coining of the term Muslim nationalism,⁴ and thus making this a basis for a Pakistani state and society that is a modern and not a theocratic state has made most centrist Pakistani scholars apologetic. The

³Gardezi Hasan, 'Making of the Neo-Colonial State in South Asia: The Pakistan Experience' in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, xvii (2), 1997, p. 88. Also read, Mohammad Waseem, 1989.

⁴For good articulation of this particular Pakistani predicament differentiating between Muslim nationalism which is the basis for Pakistani nationalism and Islamic theocratic identity read Hamza Alvi, 'Pakistan and Islam: Ethnicity and Ideology; State and Ideology in the Middle East and Pakistan', in Fred Halliday and Hamza Alvi, (Ed.) *Monthly Review of Press*, New York, 1988.

gradual growth of religion in governance, and policy making and implementing, especially in its relations with India and Afghanistan and dealing with ethno-national identities, has strengthened the religious content of the Pakistani identity question.

From its very inception, the state of Pakistan was thought to be more than a physical/legal entity that provided welfare, order, and justice to its citizens. Pakistan was to be an extraordinary state—a homeland for Indian Muslims and an ideological and political leader of the Islamic world. Providing a homeland to protect Muslims—a minority community in British India—from the ‘bigotry’ and ‘intolerance’ of India’s Hindu majority was important. The Pakistan movement also looked to the wider Islamic world, however, and Pakistan’s leaders have been concerned about the fate of other Muslim communities living under duress, stretching from Palestine to the Philippines. Both the history and the future of Pakistan are rooted in this duality, a complex relationship between Pakistan the state—a physically bounded territory with a legal and international personality—and Pakistan the nation—mission-bound to serve as a beacon for oppressed or backward Muslim communities elsewhere in the world. Other causes include an attempt to create a truly Islamic state within Pakistan, one that would be guided by Islamic scriptures and traditions.⁵

Islam has been used as a tool of policy by Pakistani state throughout its existence. It has been used both in foreign and domestic policies. This tool graduated into a full and equal partner in decision making with Gen. Zia Ul Haq’s military *coup de’ tat* in 1977. Support for Islamists in Afghanistan during 1980s was both a result of this continuously growing alliance between the Pakistani State and the religious right and a crystallization point for the upgradation of the status of the

⁵Stephen Cohen, ‘The Nation and State of Pakistan’ in *The Washington Quarterly*, 25(3), Washington, Summer 2002, pp. 109–122 at 109.

religious forces in State affairs. This fitted well with the US strategy of confronting the Soviet Union (Communism) generally as well as more specifically in Afghanistan. Pakistani establishment had always found the religious right a good ally/tool in its India policy as well as (more importantly for the purposes of this study) dealing with voices of dissent within the country. Religious right has considered ethnic nationalism as an enemy as much as the Pakistani State had, rather more so. That has become more evident from Pakistan's Kashmir policy that hinges on support for Mujahideen and militant groups in the post Soviet Afghanistan period. However, it must be remembered that even before the Afghan experience Pakistani State never had any liking for secular Kashmiri nationalists like Sheikh Abdullah or even Kashmiri separatists demanding an autonomous State based on secular Kashmiri identity, like Kashmir Liberation Front. Domestically, Pakistani establishment have found ready and useful allies in the religious forces in its attempts to deal militarily with the 1971 uprising of Bengalis in the then East Pakistan or Pashtuns via religious forces among Afghan Pashtuns.

The oligarchy comprising feudal politicians, civil servants and military officers that ran Pakistan in its early years saw the Islamists as a barrier against the potential tide of ethnic nationalism, which they saw as a threat to Pakistan's integrity. India was seen as backing the ethnic-based political movements in an effort to undo Pakistan. The Islamists, with their anti-Hindu bias, were also seen as useful in forestalling Indian influence within Pakistan.

The mainly secular elite of the country had assumed that they would continue to lead the country while rallying the people on the basis of Islamic ideology. But Muslim theologians and activists, organized in religious parties such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, saw each 'concession' to Pakistan's Islamic identity as a victory against the secular elite. Although small in number, and stigmatized by their pre-independence opposition to the idea of

Pakistan, the Islamist leaders started articulating the vision of Pakistan as a state organized on Islamic principles. The Islamists demanded that the new nation should assume its role as the leader of the Muslim world and run its affairs according to the theologians' interpretation of God's word. These Islamists have become so assertive over time, especially after the Zia interlude that Maulana Maududi (founding leader of Jamat-e-Islami Party of Islam, who has provided intellectual inspiration to a large number of Islamic fundamentalists not just in Pakistan) has been presented as the ideologue of Pakistan along with M A Jinnah (founding father of Pakistan, referred to as Quad-e-Azam) as founder and Allama Iqbal (the poet philosopher considered as the person who presented the idea of Muslim separatism) as thinker of Pakistan.

Pakistani establishment have found religious extremists as natural choice for alliance/usage as tools of foreign policy due to its own religious identity basis, its perception of India as a Hindu State, which has not accepted Pakistan as an independent state deep down. The United States also considered Islamic forces as good allies during the cold war against atheist Soviet Union and the centrist post colonial Pakistani State, dominated by the military has always considered secular, nationalist and democratic forces a challenge to its hold over power.⁶ This provided the basis of alliance between the two on the simple principle that enemy of enemy is a friend.

As pointed out above, for Muslim League leadership that made up most of Pakistani elite after 1947, during the struggle for Pakistan, the real opponent was not the British imperial rule, but the Indian National Congress, which they perceived to represent Hindus. This experience of Pakistan movement and the tragic events of partition became the basis of a strong perception that Indian leadership had not accepted the division of the sub-

⁶For a comprehensive study of the United States support for militant religious groups in Afghanistan read John K. Cooly, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*, New Delhi, Penguin, 2001, pp.48-65.

continent and would not miss any opportunity to undo it. These perceptions were strengthened by the annexation of Hyderabad, Junagardh and most of Kashmir by India. The denial of what Pakistan considered to be its fair share in assets of united India, was interpreted as a further indication of Indian plan to economically strangle the new state at birth.⁷ The fact that most of the Muslim League leadership came from territories that did not become part of the state they had struggled for and in which they became refugees, was also significant factor in evolving India-centric threat perceptions of the new born state. Thus security policy became the central concern that determined the content and contours of Pakistan's foreign and domestic policy. Dominance of security policy paved the way for military dominance of State establishment and society.

Religious based Identity, Security Perceptions and Ascendancy of Military

With this background Army started a gradual journey towards almost total domination of Pakistan's decision-making elite, especially but not only security policy. The domination of security concerns also led to the domination by security policy of overall foreign as well as domestic policy. "The primary reason for military's emergence as the most influential element in ... decision-making lies in its significance in the country's power politics. It assumed the responsibility of guarding the Islamic ideological identity and frontiers of the country. The threat perception from India, viewed as a Hindu power which cannot bear the existence of an Islamic Pakistan, has provided a certain ideological justification to the argument that it is only the military establishment that can provide security to this ideological state. Projection of threat from India is fundamental to the survival of the Pakistani establishment that even views internal insecurity as a continuation of the external threat. Islamabad has always looked at the internal political turmoil as

⁷Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Economy of Defence*, Vanguard, Lahore, 1991, pp. 25-48.

the doing of a 'foreign hand' (insinuating India). It is in this background that Army has always kept the Kashmir issue on the hot burner."⁸

Under Pakistan's first military ruler, General Mohammad Ayub Khan (1958–69), the military vowed to build a modern, pro-Western Islamic state that would serve as a bulwark against Soviet communism. Although, religious parties disapproved of some of the liberalising domestic programme of Gen. Ayub Khan, they shared with the military the perception that viewed communism as the main threat to Islam. The military and *mullahs* regarded those Pakistanis who professed communism, socialism, ethnic and cultural nationalism and/or secularism, as their common enemy.

In the East Pakistan/Bangladesh crisis of 1971, the religious lobby led by the Jamaat-I-Islami's (JI) youth wings, actively joined the war alongside Pakistani troops fighting their secular Bengali opponents. The Razakars (Volunteer) force organised by the Pakistan Army was manned by those youths.⁹ The crisis resulted in Bangladesh's independence in December 1971, after India intervened militarily. This important episode illustrates a basic convergence of perception between the essentially secular State and religious forces that sees nationalists as adversaries. Similarly, the welcoming of religious Afghan opposition groups and their leaders in the 1970s clearly underscores the point that even otherwise secular Pakistani establishment found common cause with religious groups especially when it came to dealing with Pashtun nationalists and in areas of foreign policy. It must be noted that though Pakistan

⁸Ayesha Sadiqua Agha, *Pakistan's Arms Procurement and Military Buildup, 1979–1999: In Search of a Policy*, Sang-e-Meel Publications, Lahore, 2003, pp 55–78 at p.56.

⁹A.A.K. Niazi, *The Betrayal of East Pakistan*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1998, pp. 78–79.

had a civilian government then, the supervision of the Afghans in 1970s was supervised by the military.¹⁰

The nexus between the centrist state establishment and the religious forces touched its prime during the regime of General Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq (1977–88), who joined hands with the religious parties even prior to overthrowing an elected government. Zia Ul Haq and the religious parties had a common domestic enemy – the secular mainstream political parties. Zia’s personal proclivities also matched those of his religious strategic partners. Rigid interpretations of Islamic injunctions and jurisprudence were introduced during Zia’s eleven years.¹¹ His legacy still haunts the state and society of Pakistan.

The current military disposition that started in 1999 has attempted to legitimize its rule on appeal to the modernizing and progressive agenda. Gen. Musharraf started with introduction of administrative reforms to devolve power to grass roots level. The actualization of that plan in the shape of local governments has in fact resulted in weakening of the provincial governments as there is turf war between the two. In differences between the federal and provincial governments, these local governments have become tools of the federal government, thus, undermining the federal state structure even further. The provinces though not representing the correct ethnic identities that make up Pakistan, nevertheless represents the lesser evil to a unitary state structure. On current reports of a proposed constitutional amendment to increase the powers of provinces a columnist identified the real issue being more of political culture and the reality of a vast difference that

¹⁰The individual responsible was the then Inspector General of Frontier Constabulary (a para-military force having regular army officers as Commanders) Maj. Gen. (Retd) Naseerullah Babar (Then a serving Brigadier, who joined PPP after retirement and continued his interests in Afghanistan). Gen. Babar who became interior minister in the Benazir Bhutto government (1993-1997) is considered to be responsible for the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan.

¹¹ International Crisis Group Asia Report ‘Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military’, No. 49, 20 March 2003, pp. 2–3.

exists in the word of law and reality of practice. He wrote, “Assuming the government agrees on reducing the Concurrent List to a bare minimum of four to seven subjects and also assuming the opposition votes for the constitutional amendment bill to make the change lasting, the big 'if' is whether this exercise will affect the fundamental power imbalance between the establishment comprising the military-bureaucracy combine and the political parties/parliament. After all there couldn't be a bigger paradox than the provinces becoming relatively more powerful but still being ruled by the same establishment...

... The precise paradox to consider is that even though Pakistan is a federation, it is being ruled by the military – the head of the federation, President Pervez Musharraf, is a serving general. The country is essentially functioning as a unitary organism in an authoritarian manner. Will greater autonomy for the provinces change this fundamental paradigm? Even during the previous three periods of military rule by Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and Ziaul Haq - the legitimisation of their takeovers by the Supreme Court notwithstanding - Pakistan structurally remained a federation but was governed de facto as a unitary state. Thanks to this structural distortion of Pakistan's polity, the association between the centre and the provinces has never been that of two sovereigns 'independent of each other and yet dependent' but one of a delegator and delegates. The federal relationship was consultative only when the centre deemed it necessary”¹²

The Civilian Interludes

Pakistan has been ruled for most of its existence by the military directly. For the time when it has not been ruling directly, it has continued to control vital policy areas from behind the scene. Due to a variety of reasons, the civilian governments could not change this lopsided development of Pakistani State-society relationship. The above development has given birth to a particular mind set, which could only have been challenged by a

¹² Adnan Rehmat, “Balancing Act”, *The News on Sunday*, 18 September 2005.

politically mature visionary leadership that had the simple understanding that it is only through democratic process and system that even their personal rules can acquire substance and sustenance.

Pakistan is a heterogeneous country with ethnic, linguistic and regional diversity and socio-economic disparities. Pakistan's track record in accommodating these identities and discontinuities in the national mainstream has been rather disappointing. A monolithic notion of national identity and an authoritarian political and economic management could not accommodate the demands for political participation and economic justice by these identities and interests. The break up of Pakistan and the establishment of Bangladesh in December 1971 was Pakistan's internal failure to create a sense of participation and socio-economic justice among the Bengalis of the then East Pakistan, who constituted the majority of Pakistan's population. In a bid to cover up its failure, the Pakistani state used brute force in East Pakistan, inflicting innumerable atrocities on the Bengalis.

One sees a little change with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto taking over in late 1971. Pakistan Army stood discredited and the civil society was represented by the popular Bhutto. Under his leadership, Pakistan appeared to have learned a lesson from its East Pakistan experience. So in 1970s one notes a move towards acceptance of cultural diversity. However, due to the lack of mature democratic political culture, even the populist government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto¹³ did not or could not make much headway in actualizing the political/administrative expression of that diversity in any meaningful way. His insistence on his personal control of all the country led to armed

¹³ Prime Minister of Pakistan 1971-1977. Father of Benazir Bhutto, former prime minister of Pakistan and leader of Pakistan Peoples Party, which was founded by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1967.

resistance by Balochs as well as a violent reaction among Pashtuns.¹⁴

Pakistan saw another civilian interlude in the 1990s when two civilian prime ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharif, took turns to rule the country. Both of them did not match the popular appeal of the senior Bhutto. Both ruled with the limitations on the exercise of their powers as a result of the continuous preponderance of the military in the country affairs and Zia Ul Haq's introduction of an amendment in the constitution that tilted the constitution towards the President unevenly. They simply lacked the constitutional power or personal intellectual capabilities as well as political commitments, as both were closer to the centrist Pakistani position and such could not and did not even attempt to address the issues of identity, that were at the root of failure of democratic culture and institutions to develop.

Contending Identities

We will now briefly introduce some of the contending identities without going into their details. All of them require full separate studies. The main focus of this study is the understanding of Pakistani establishment view and dealing of identity issue and its consequences for democratic governance and not the specific identity challenges faced by the State of Pakistan.

Pakistan's early leaders sought to patch over domestic differences and tried to forge national identity on the basis of religious symbolism and centralization of authority. Pakistani rulers were consistently unsure that the will or consent of the people would be sufficient to unify the ethnically disparate people thrown together in the new country. Although Pakistan had been created on the assumption that the majority of Muslims

¹⁴ Hasan Askari Rizvi, "South Asia as seen by Pakistan", *South Asia Journal*, a quarterly journal of South Asia Free Media Association, Lahore
http://www.southasianmedia.net/Magazine/Journal/seenby_pakistan.htm.

in undivided India supported the demand for Pakistan, support for its creation had not been overwhelming in some of the regions that were included in it and the leadership of the movement for partition came overwhelmingly from areas that did not form Pakistan. This lack of local connection made that leadership of indigenous concerns and realities. Such attitudes also were a result of a typical post colonial authoritarian state that mistrusts popular initiation of any movement or change. This has squarely put the ethno-identity contenders in the forefront of popular movements for democracy and secularism.

For the highly centralized post colonial state of Pakistan that was in the process of creating a national identity, any talk of provincial rights and differences based on culture, language or ethnicity were anathema. These were considered as negating the very basis of Pakistani nationhood, which was based on religion and the Urdu language. “Language is an important tool of imperialism, defined as the domination of one collectivity over another. The term ‘linguistic imperialism’ defined as the privileging or domination of one language over others, refers to its use by the elites of power, culture, and money in so many domains as to limit the access of speakers of other languages to positions of power and privilege.¹⁵ Urdu became the defining basis for Muslim religious identity, which provided the justification for partition of India and the creation of Pakistan.¹⁶

Insistence on Urdu as the only language became the first *casus belli* for the battle cry of various ethnic identities that made up the state of Pakistan. Bengalis¹⁷ rose up against Jinnah’s proclamation of Urdu as the only national language of Pakistan in 1948. This movement gradually led to an alienation process

¹⁵ Tariq Rehman, *Language and Politics in Pakistan*, Oxford, Pakistan Paperbacks Edition, 1996, p. 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-78.

¹⁷ Bengali Language Movement was launched to force Pakistani establishment to declare Bengali as a national language along with Urdu.

which rejected the Muslim/Islamic religious basis of Pakistani identity and paved the way for the ultimate breakup of Pakistan. It must be pointed out that Bengalis generally, and the leadership¹⁸ of this language and ethnic based identity were mainly Muslim Leaguers who had worked for the creation of Pakistan, a state based on religious identity.

Unlike Bengalis Pashtun national movement was led by former Congress members. They called for renaming of North West Frontier Province as Pashtunistan in 1948.¹⁹ Pashtun identity has been at odds with Pakistani state identity since the beginning. They have always been a suspect in the eyes of the Pakistani establishment, due to their historical ties with Indian National Congress, Afghanistan and later Soviet Union. All these three states have been supporting Pashtuns' national movements. Thus the Pashtun issue has an international and regional dimension. It is this external dimension coupled with Pakistani State's use of religion as a tool of policy that explains Pakistan's use of Muslim resistance to Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Pakistan's connection with the Pashtun religious forces started in the 1970s,²⁰ much before the Soviet intervention there. This mind set is at least partially responsible for Pakistan's support for Taliban in Afghanistan. That support is a corollary of a policy of Talibanization/Islamization of Pashtun identity. It is this issue with secular Pashtun identity that is preventing

¹⁸ Sheikh Mujib Ur Rehman, founding father and leader of Bangladesh's secession from Pakistan in 1971, a student leader at the time of Bengali Language Movement's inception in 1948 and actively leading it, was member of Muslim Student Federation, the student wing of Muslim League. Muslim League is the party that led the Pakistan movement. In fact Awami League came out of a split within the then Muslim League.

¹⁹ D. G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1967, p. 451.

²⁰ It was the secular government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto that welcomed most of the later day Mujahideen leaders, including Gulbadin Hekmatyar and Buhannudin Rabbani in 1973 and trained and supported them against the Pashtun nationalist President of Afghanistan, Daud Khan. Daud Khan had been supportive of Pashtun nationalist challenge to Bhutto's government in Pakistan.

Pakistan from going all out in its declared policy of aligning itself with 'War against Terrorism' today.

Sindhi identity that gives its name to the province of Sindh faces a peculiar problem. Sindhi ethnic movement is the most aware and vocal of the different identities in the post Bangladesh (1971) Pakistan. They face the challenge of becoming a minority in their own province. Sindh's largest towns like Karachi and Hyderabad are predominantly non Sindhi. Most Urdu speaking refugees from India after 1947 have chosen these cities to live in. The non Sindhi population have been multiplied manifold by large scale movement of industrial labour from rest of Pakistan, especially Pashtuns and Punjabis to the urban centres of Sindh. Sindh was scene of widespread language riots in 1970s, when the government of Pakistan Peoples' Party introduced Sindhi as compulsory language in Sindh schools.²¹

The language riots in Sindh in the 1970s gave spur to a new identity consciousness, the Muhajir (refugee) identity (referring to refugees from India only). By 1980s the Urdu speaking refugees started their own identity movement.²² This movement led by Altaf Hussain has added a new dimension to identity politics in Pakistan. It has specific relationship with the Pakistani establishment of both love and hate. A movement of urban middle class, it challenges the feudal structure of Pakistani state and society as well as the religious right in urban centres of

²¹Feroz Ahmed, "The National Question in Sindh" *Pakistan Forum*, Vol. 2, No. 12, 1972, pp. 10-17+3. Also read Tariq Rahman, "Language and Politics in a Pakistan Province: The Sindhi Language Movement" *Asian Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 11, 1995, pp. 1005-1016. Sindhi Nationalists' views can be found at good web site maintained by the Sindhi diaspora in US and UK at Sindhi World Congress Web site <http://www.worldsindhicongress.org/>.

²²Muhajir Quami Movement (Refugee National Movement) has become a force to reckon with in the urban centres of Karachi. Widely rumoured to have been sponsored by Gen. Zia to counter the popular appeal of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, it has become a secular movement of middle class urban youth and is along with Bhutto's party also stopped and rather reversed the appeal of the religious right mainly Jamat-e-Islami.

Sindh. Though Sindhi nationalists reject this new claimant to separate identity, their claim is an issue that has opened both practical and theoretical issues that has to be tackled both at theoretical and practical levels. Discussing that will take us out of the scope of the current study.

Baloch identity contention has been the most vocal and violent. Pakistani State has used military force on three occasions - 1962, 1973-7, and 2004 to suppress its armed and violent expression. The Baloch territory flows into Iran as well. Balochistan became a full province only in 1970. The issue of Baloch identity is their smaller number and a very large territory, being the largest province of Pakistan. They have to contend with Pakistani State on one side and Pashtun identity on the other as Pashtuns almost form fifty percent of Balochistan's population. Then they sit on vast riches of energy resources, thus attracting a lot of international and regional strategic and financial interests. They are tribal and educationally far behind the rest of the ethnicities that make up Pakistan. Their essentially tribal and feudal leadership represents their national aspirations. The Pakistani state has tried to increase its influence and assimilate their identity into the unitary Pakistani identity by using modernization, education and anti-tribalism as slogans.²³

Punjabi identity presents a different case. It is a majority identity that emerged in post-Bangladesh (1971) era. One notes a recent assertion of a Punjabi sense of identity.²⁴ How deep it is

²³A good study of the Baloch ethnic/national question has been done by Aijaz Ahmad. See his "The National Question in Balochistan" *Pakistan Forum*, Vol. 3, Nos. 8-9, Focus on Balochistan 1973, pp. 4-18, 37.

²⁴A sense of Punjabi national euphoria was created during and after a Punjabi international conference was held in Lahore, Pakistan on 30 January 2004. Representatives from both parts of Punjab were present. Punjab was divided in 1947 between India and Pakistan. Chief Ministers of both the Punjabs were present on the occasion. For a good analysis of the conference and its impact on Punjabis and Pakistan read Moonis Ahmar's "Punjabi Nationalism: Myth or Reality?" *The Daily News*, Islamabad, 10 February 2004.

and what role it plays in the political front remains to be seen. Traditionally Punjab has remained the most amenable to the establishment's sale of a unitary Pakistani identity, with no insistence on Punjabi language or any related issues. Perhaps that can be explained by the fact that it provided the ruling elite of the state and have been (at least its elite) the main beneficiary of Pakistani centrist structure and identity.

It is important to note other contending ethnic identities, even if due to limitation of space one cannot deal with them in more detail. Some of the more vibrant ones are Saraikis in South Punjab and Brohis in Baluchistan or the not so vocal which includes Chitralis and Hazarwals in North West Frontier Province.

All these contending identities have their own peculiar problems and the issue of accepting them as parts that form the plural Pakistani state level identity is not simply a question of recognition. It will require a lot of research, debate and accommodation within these identities as well. It must be remembered that there are a number of issues that need to be resolved between these identities as well as the issue of implications for modern education for development in the era of globalization, of accommodating in practical manner all these languages. However, one can start by accepting the fact that ignoring them or suppressing them has not been and is likely not to be the way to go about it.

Conclusions

The real answer to the continuing debate on Pakistani identity is not to look at history for an answer, for the history of Pakistan is inextricably entangled with the history of India, or as some would argue, was a part of it until 1947. The attempts to find justification for its creation by emphasizing the difference between Muslims and Hindus and providing religious basis for Pakistani identity and then trying to somehow delink religious scriptures from its governance has resulted an intellectually weak

argument. A gradual increase of the role of religious forces in the governance of the state is clearly noticeable to any keen student of political history of Pakistan. A gradual nexus has developed between Pakistani identity based on religion thus denying its plural social existence by promoting a unitary national identity, a continuous threat perception of India giving rise to security issues and thus resulting in the dominance of the military supported by a deeply entrenched colonial bureaucracy (and thus protecting its own privileged status) and state structure has defined state-society relations which are heavily tilted in favour of the state structure. The movements of the contending identities have found common cause with movement for secular democratic governance. By challenging the unitary identity based construction of the state these movements have become the main participants and expression of social justice, plurality, tolerance and democratic change. Thus any democratic change in Pakistan's governance is tied with acceptance of the plural multi national/ethnic basis of Pakistani identity. This basic change will affect and be affected by changes in the India-centric threat and security perceptions.

There is no need for Pakistani establishment to continuously look for justification for the creation of Pakistan, as the argument for its legitimacy for its continued existence and survival as State. Looking towards past has brought it to a confrontation with itself. States' continued existence is justified and ensured by current and future policies and course of action and rarely if ever by past. How Pakistan addresses its plural identity issue will determine its future. The specific constitutional, administrative and political methods have to be looked into. For the issue is not so simple. The plural ethnic/national identities have their own issues. It involves a restructuring of provinces/federating units that reflects these identities. Followed by a really functioning federal structure it must be based on a real democracy that is not controlled actually or intellectually by any unitary structure like the military. Ethno nationalist identities have become the main source of strength for

democratic change in Pakistan. The autocratic state allied with religious overtones that have bred extremism and intolerance has correctly viewed ethno-nationalist movements as a threat to their continued status. They are, however, gravely mistaken to consider them as threat to state security. It is through accommodating and accepting the plurality that make up the state of Pakistan that its security can be ensured. That can only be achieved through a democratic process has also become sufficiently evident. In all fairness one must acknowledge that some elements within the state that can be termed as its more enlightened portion do realize this. However, they do not know how to go about it without fundamentally altering the power status quo, with which their interests are tied and they do not want to disturb.

The answer lies in looking towards the future; for whatever reason, the Pakistani state is a reality today. Its more urgent need is to evolve a consensus on where it wants to go from here, not where it came from. And the manner it deals with its identity issue will determine that future to a deterministic level.

Dr. Ijaz Khan is Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Peshawar, North-Western Frontier Province, Pakistan. Email: ijazk@hotmail.com