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Transitional Polity of Pakistan: Analysis of Political Order and Decay

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Abstract

This article examines the evolution of Pakistan's transitional polity, analyzing the interplay between modernization, class structure, and political institutionalization. Drawing upon theories33 of political development by Samuel P. Huntington, Francis Fukuyama, and others, it explores how Pakistan's post-colonial state inherited colonial structures but failed to establish stable political institutions. The paper focuses on the emergence and transformation of the middle class—from the colonial salariat to a fragmented, consumer-driven group—and its limited role in democratization. Using a historical-analytical method, the study argues that Pakistan's middle class, while expanding economically, has remained politically passive, enabling elite dominance and contributing to political decay. The research concludes that the silent collapse of Pakistan's middle class signifies a deeper erosion of state accountability and democratic vitality within a procedural democracy.

Keywords: *Pakistan polity; political decay; modernization; middle class; colonial legacy; political institutionalization; democracy; social transformation; class structure.*

Introduction:

Polity is a condition of being constituted as a state. It is a politically organized entity with a government having its resources at its own disposal. Transitional polities are those societies and countries which freed after World War II and are still struggling to attain stable political institutions. Transition is a process of cumulative and necessary change from one mode to another. Transition of polities involved a shift from traditional societies towards modern nation-states. In later half of twentieth century countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa gained independence but generally regarded as unlikely to be ready for self-government. These countries tried to adopt the political institutions of their mother colonial power. They have written constitutions, new industry and urban areas but devoid of having stable political systems (Kebschull, 1973). Dictatorships, Political mobilization, weak political parties, military coups, civil disturbances comprised the political experience of these modernizing countries.

Modernizing societies followed the path of development already taken by industrial capitalist societies. Their development strategy was the transfer of western technology and rationality, in order to increase production which ended into dramatic failures. These post-

colonial states were unable to break with the institutions and international framework of capitalist societies. There was realignment of economic and social forces and kind of development through state intervention and international assistance. Massive industrialization and rapid modernization triggered social mobilization in these developing polities. New heterogeneous social groups emerged in a society where colonial class structure was already existed. In absence of strong political institutionalization these mobilized social groups in search of more opportunities brought chaos and led society towards political disorder and decay (Huntington, 1968, p. 8). Political order is comprised of three components that are state, rule of law and accountability. When there is a state with weak political institutions it eroded the rule of law and authority in a polity and gives way to political decay as a continuous process (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 5).

Transitional polities in absence of strong political traditions as they only adopted the political institutions as copy prints from colonial rule, proved to be unable to channelize the new emergent classes and groups. In west the newly emerged middle class after industrial revolution with their strong public opinion demanded democratic political institutions and developed state. In developing societies middle classes developed their own public sphere which worked primarily towards their own socio-economic empowerment giving least importance to demand political institutionalization or democratic endeavors. Depending on situation, middle class could act as an agent of change or work for maintaining status quo. If the middle class believed that their children would retain the middle class status then they would contented with semi democracy and even autocracy to block even distribution. On the other hand if the middle class is not guaranteed their status they would accompany lower class to push for redistribution and democracy (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2003, p. 3). Pakistan is a developing country with an emerging middle class with a number of 61 million which is 35% of total population (Durr-e-Nayab, 2011, p. 7). During last decade (2002-2011) both population and real per capita consumption grew by 33% resulting in doubling the size of middle class to 15 million households (Javaid, 2014). It is a fluid heterogeneous socio-economic group disintegrated and fragmented in upper middle class, middle-middle class and lower middle class, having common social characteristics and values. It consists of civil military bureaucracy, professionals, government employees, traders, self-employed workers, skilled workers and middle income landlords.

Pakistan a fragile democracy had a propertied, educated and entrepreneur middle class. Their income and expenditure power made it a rich consumer class more or less like Singapore, where as a class it is emerging but its role as a bulwark for democracy is grim (Siddiqa, 2011, p. 63). A recent lawyer movement in 2007 was a move of professional class to restore judiciary but the outcome was inverse lawyer community made its on behavioral framework of authority where they themselves are stakeholders and nobody is allowed to be negotiated (Siddiqa, 2011, p. 63). It was a movement of professional class to restore judiciary but it ended up in making them a distinct pressure group.

Middle class in subcontinent is the descendant of colonial Indian middle class. It was the product of ideas and institutions of British India which constantly moved between religion and secular nationalism without being able to sustain consistency (Joshi, 2001, p. 83). Pakistani middle class is product of traditional values of pre independence era and new

opportunities offered to them by partition. Muslim educated middle class was concentrated in UP, CP, Madras and these were the areas where Muslim league was popular. This educated class enjoyed privileged status during Muslim rule and later benefitted from the modern education system of British. They took advantage of ever political, social and educational opportunity provided by colonial rule and in 1906 during Shimla deputation their major concern was quota in government jobs. This group is also called salaried class or Salariat (Alavi, 2002, p. 5123). Salariat had its own demands, shared aspirations and narrow class interests. The Apex of Salariat is civil and military bureaucracy. The main beneficiaries of independence have been bureaucracy and military themselves who have enjoyed lavish perquisites and have grown considerable in number (Maddison, 1971, p.136).

This class had conservative orientation while having western education, British colonial life style, and British organizational framework with English as official language. They enjoyed superior position in Pakistani society in terms of income, power and prestige but persisted in thinking of themselves as middle class (Maddison, 1971, p. 136).

Pakistan in contrast with India not opted for social policy but functional inequality was accepted as natural outcome of capitalist mode of production. There was a deliberate and aggressive attempt to practice development strategy based on massive industrialization. Private sector was least interested but government moved heaven and earth to attract private investor through policy of easy and huge credits from Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Cooperation and Industrial development Bank of Pakistan. Initial years of rehabilitation and reconstruction gave rise to new class of industrial capitalist and professional people whose number grown rapidly as a result of new administrative and expanded official setup. There was a distinct increase in number of class I, II and III officers. There was expansion in service sector, public spending was huge in housing, health and education. Migrants were provided with claims in terms of property, Korangi housing project built satellite towns in urban areas (one of the exemplary housing projects of South Asia) and government employees were provided with medical facility, lavish housing and handsome salaries. Housing corporations gave cheap housing and developed plots were sold on a nonprofit basis. During Ayub era modernization along with development was the strategy opted as state policy. Job opportunities, new industrial units and government projects absorbed the skilled labour force. Expansion of economy and green revolution reinforce a class which was affluently living with their available incomes. There was a change in consumption pattern, income streams and wealth profiles of different classes.

Rapid modernization and progress in absence of political institutionalization ensues disturbances in 1969. Social mobilization was the outcome of overturned economic class structure. Ayub military regime failed to control the social chaos due to absence of any political or dictatorial mechanism of control.

Till 1965 until the governments third five year plan the less development pace in East Pakistan was accepted as temporary functional equality which would be abolished later on as the effects of development trickled down. The sense of deprivation in Bengali intelligentsia and middle class was the major cause of East Pakistan tragedy. Bengal was the area intact with colonial rule much prior than the rest of India. The sentiments of nationalism and freedom emerged here much before than the rest of India. Bengali middle class was much aware about their persistent condition in post partition state. Civil disturbance in 1971 was the movement

of Bengali middle classes for sake of fair share in material and non-material opportunities for life chances.

During Bhutto era the emergent middle-income groups were expecting to have huge share from the egalitarian slogans of PPP but in the end same perplexed groups were used by industrialist and bureaucratic elite to build pressure on Bhutto government in 1977. Nationalization policy benefitted the middle-income groups. Huge number of nationalized educational institutions converted the privately held jobs into government employment overnight while having all financial benefits. Bureaucracy in administration of nationalized industries distributed jobs and hired workers under nepotism and many lower household moved into middle-income households. Public sector was investing in health, education and other social services which absorbed huge number of labor force. Foundation of Technical institutes, *Sanazars*, public medical colleges, educational institutions, *katchi abadis*, roti plants and textile industry were the continuation of Ayub's public sensitive state and policy.

Modernization, urbanization, huge remittances and educational opportunities were overturning the class structure. In contrast in India controlled modernization didn't mobilized social groups beyond the state developments.

During 70's and 80's large number of migrant laborers left for Middle East and now there was huge flow of money in lower households. During Zia regime this flow of remittances along with foreign aid changed the economic and social structure of Pakistan. Market oriented economic policy and flow of capital breed middle class businessmen traders and shopkeepers. The flow of huge remittances shifted many household into the middle class category. Military government was investing less in social sector which results in low level of development but economic individualism emerged in affluent classes.

The 1990's brought another wave of revival of middle class as the beneficiary of the increasing pace of globalization and the spread of consumer culture (Daechsel, 2006, p. 11). Government spending in social sector and physical infrastructure shrinked and even low economic development had expanded the ranks of middle classes and staggering increase in income and expenditure on those facilities prior which were prerogatives of few (Qadeer, 2006, p. 15). During Zia regime society started to turn into consumer society and process was hastened by the liberalization process. There were two track society operations. Firstly there was religious rhetoric and secondly life was turned towards consumerism and material advancement (Qadeer, 2006, p. 15).15The two political parties PML-N and PPP followed short term policies to enhance their vote bank. For poor classes direct way of bribery was to enlist their support by purchasing vote at the time of elections through money or distributing necessary eatables like ghee, flour, etc. or exploiting the influence of local influential on poor people.

The schemes like yellow cab, green tractor program aimed at to enlist support of lower middle class. PML-N was conservative in outlook, supported market economy and had the support of businessmen and industrialist. PPP was left of center appeals to salaried and rural middle class. Economy was slowed down in 11 years of democratic rule but the income of middle income household remained in a position to bear the expenses in much comfortable way. State not practiced any rigorous policy for development but the economic opportunities were available to middle classes in terms of starting any business, shop or having job

opportunities. Loans from public sector banks, cooperative societies, and sand easy credit schemes became a way of cashing public support. Budget deficit and inflation never became hurdles in way of increasing pay of government employees and pensioners. Old age benefit and benevolent fund gave another way to middle income groups to maintain their income at handsome level.

Musharraf regime with modernist outlook accelerated the modernization with material base. NGO sector was encouraged, mushroom growth of education institutions and new jobs for huge labour force. Communication, dissemination of information and migration of labour to Europe and other western countries brought huge flow of remittances. US aid and economic policies of Musharraf era brings the consumer culture at its peak. There was a lot of induction of sources not even in urban centers but according to S Akbar Zaidi villages were no more considered rural areas but as ruralpolis. They have each and every kind of facility like urban areas; only in name they are called villages. Migration is a continuous process from the time of Ayub regime and later developments made this process reach up to 67%.

After Bhutto regime there was a decline in investment in sectors like social welfare and physical infrastructure. Five years plans were devoid of any long term investment. Elected democratic governments purchased vote banks through short term bribery policy like Benazir Income Support Program for lower classes and laptop schemes for middle educated class. There is no long term investment in health, education, housing, or any other social infrastructure. Privatization brings everything branded and luxurious, can be grabbed who can afford it. One of the huge investments in building universities and degrees are being distributed at doorstep. This opportunity is being availed by middle classes to occupy the job for earning livelihood. Motorway, Metro and Orange/ Green trains are the priorities while investment in public hospitals, water filtration plants, cheap housing, food, public school and colleges and foundation of new major industrial units, new dams, public road transport in small cities and energy shortages are the least concerned issues. Roads are choked with traffic, cell phones companies are major beneficiaries, shopping malls and branded luxury goods showrooms are mushrooming and consumer culture is at its peak. Modernized middle class are in a race of having branded education, choosing well paid professions and like to spend money on modern amenities for good standard of life.

Silent Collapse of Middle class

An elitist state with an accommodative system for socio-economic ascendance of middle class eroded the agency of buffer class and a nexus of interests has been created between the elite and middle ones. Middle class expanded but it has nothing to do with political stability and democratic setup. Pakistan is now being indulged in procedural democracy with a new nexus of civil and military bureaucracy and politicians. Large number of poor class is being exploited to fill the ballot boxes and middle class is no more priority for the state. The silent collapse of Middle class is on the way. The indifference of Pakistani middle class towards the political structure ultimately led towards their own demise. The contemporary economic and political setup is eating away the gains which were achieved in last decades. The non-bothering policy led towards a system where middle class is being squeezed. The policy of the government is to squeeze these middle ones and considered them as voiceless ones. They are being exploited as they are the waging class dependent on the

government policies. Capitalism and consumerism added fuel to fire and made middle class less secure in the present scenario. Newly introduced tax structures favored wealthy over working class. The stagnant wages, inflation, privatization, heavy taxation for working class is the signs that middle ones no more matters to the state. Every new budget is an effort to drain the income of middle class. Economic gains of last seventy years are on the decline and government became non responsive in the domain of social and economic provision of lower and the middle ones. Middle class was considered the pioneers in reinforcing the political and democratic order but Pakistani middle class non responsive political attitude led towards not only the political decay but its own demise.

Conclusion

The historical trajectory of Pakistan's polity reveals a complex relationship between economic modernization and political stagnation. While industrialization, remittances, and globalization expanded the middle class, this group failed to function as an engine of democratic consolidation. The nexus between the civil-military elite and bureaucratic power sustained a procedural democracy devoid of substantive participation. The middle class, preoccupied with consumerism and socio-economic security, gradually lost its role as a political intermediary. As economic pressures, taxation, and privatization erode its stability, Pakistan faces a silent collapse of the very class once expected to sustain democracy and political order. True political reform, therefore, depends on reconstructing participatory institutions and reactivating the middle class as a conscious agent of accountability and change.

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