

## **The Dominance of the Military Bureaucratic Oligarchy**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The predominant position of the bureaucracy and the army in the structure of state power in the newly-formed country was due to the form of the freedom struggle on the one hand and the nature of the Muslim League on the other. Since the freedom struggle was essentially a constitutional one, the state apparatus of the colonial regime remained largely intact at the time of independence. The bureaucracy and the army, which constituted the “steel frame” of the raj, continued after the emergence of Pakistan to determine the parameters within which political and economic changes were to occur. The predominance of the bureaucracy and military in the exercise of state power in Pakistan was also due to the fact that unlike the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League was more a movement than a political party. During the Pakistan movement it had not been able to institutionalize its popular support in terms of a stable party structure, a manifesto based on mass support for the solution of Pakistan’s economic and political problems and a political culture which could ensure the primacy of representative political government in the structure of state power. The dominance of the Muslim League by retrogressive

land- lords had further undermined the ability to create, in the new country, a political framework within which popular aspirations could be realized.

At the time of independence, the principal protagonists in the exercise of state power were the bureaucracy, the military, the big landlords and the nascent bourgeoisie. Hamza Alavi in his pioneering work has argued that because of colonial development the institutions of the army and bureaucracy are “overdeveloped” relative to the ruling classes (the land lords, the indigenous bourgeoisie and the metropolitan bourgeoisie). Accordingly, the military bureaucratic oligarchy has ‘relative autonomy’ within the state and is able to intervene and mediate whenever the rivalry between the ruling classes becomes so intense that it threatens the frame work within which rivalry is conducted: “I have argued that this relatively autonomous ‘overdevelopment’ of the state in such peripheral societies as Pakistan and its dominating presence in civil society is related to the plurality of economically dominant classes in these societies, namely metropolitan capital, the indigenous bourgeoisie, and landowner classes, whose rival interests and competing demands are mediated by the state. The post colonial state which thus sits in judgment over them must enjoy a degree of freedom vis-a-vis each of them individually, though collectively it must remain subject to imperatives of the social order in which these rival classes are together ensconced and the structural imperatives of peripheral capitalism.”<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

The relative autonomy of the military bureaucratic oligarchy and its ability to perform a mediating function has been considerably undermined since the 1970's. The reason is that important changes have occurred since the 1960's within the military bureaucratic oligarchy and in its relationship to civil society.

The military-bureaucratic oligarchy in Pakistan was never a

static monolith but an institution whose internal social composition and relationship to society were subject to change in the process of economic and social development. In the immediate post independence period the officers were predominantly from the landowning class with an ideology derived essentially from the British military traditions. Attitudes of professionalism and the need to insulate the armed forces from the daily conduct of civil affairs prevailed. However, during the mid-sixties and seventies the social origin of the officer corps shifted towards the petite bourgeoisie in the urban areas and in the countryside. This shift in the class origins of the officer corps was accompanied by increasing ideological factionalism in terms of a fundamentalist religious ethos on the one hand and a liberal left-wing ethos on the other. The tendency towards the emergence of opposing political perspectives within the officer corps was reinforced by two important developments. First, the right-wing Jamaat-i-Islami systematically sent its sympathizers and many of its cadres to seek a commission in the armed forces; second, the radical nationalist rhetoric of former Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto and the rapid promotion of officers who appeared committed to his regime also influenced the officer corps.

The most important consequence of the opposing ideological trends within the military was its politicization as an institution and thus the erosion of its 'relative autonomy'. To the extent that the military was politicized by opposing political forces operating outside it, the ability of the 'military-bureaucratic oligarchy' to 'mediate' between these opposing political forces was undermined. Moreover, the task of mediation was also made increasingly difficult as the regional question gained iii in Pakistan, and the military began to be seen as the representative of the interest of the ruling elite of the Punjab by the people of other provinces of Pakistan.<sup>3</sup>

## **I The Sociology of the Officer Corps**

Indian officers in the British Indian Army were recruited from the landowning class, though not necessarily from the aristocracy. As Mac Munn suggests, “the staunch old Indian yeoman who came into the Indian commissioned ranks via the rank and file of the Indian landowner of lesser class made the Indian officer as we know him.”

In the post-Partition period in Pakistan, two factors have further Integrated the officer corps into the propertied class:

1. Since the Ayub era, the policy of giving land grants to senior army officers has created a landed elite among even those’ officers who did not come from large landowning families. This phenomenon has continued to this date, with the addition that now many officers are being granted land in urban estates.
2. Many army officers have been provided with opportunities of joining the trading or industrial elite. A number of officers were given prestigious places on boards of companies after retirement, while for others contracts and credits were arranged to help set up prosperous firms. Since 1977, this tendency has appreciably intensified. The appointment of army officers as chairmen of many public corporations in the nationalized sector as well as WAPDA (Water and Power Development Authority) and the NLC (National Logistics Cell) has increased the military’s ability to grant lucrative contracts to officers operating private firms in trade and industry.

Thus, an influential section of the army establishment is

now closely integrated with the landed and business classes of Pakistan.

According to Stephen Phillips Cohen, there have been three distinct generations in the Pakistan Officer Corps:

1. The 'British' generation: pre- 1947.
2. The 'American' generation: 1953-1965.
3. The Pakistani generation: 1965 to date.

It must be emphasized that each generation absorbed some of the characteristics it inherited from the earlier generation, through the culture embodied in the process of training promotion and daily social life of the officer.

The British-trained officers who entered the Pakistan Army at the time of Partition consisted of three distinct groups, but all three had served during the 1939-45 war. Two of these groups had entered the British Indian Army during peace time and received their training either at Sandhurst (e.g., Ayub Khan) or at Dehra Dun (e.g., Mohammad Musa). The third group of officers (the Indian Emergency Commissioned Officer) joined the British Army during the Second World War (e.g., Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq) AU the pre-war officers have now retired, and only a few who entered during the Second World War remain in the Pakistan Army today. However, the older officers left a permanent impact on the culture and attitude of the officer corps for they had organized the main training and educational establishments after Partition and served as a model for the younger officers.

Officers who joined the British Indian Army in regular commissions before World War II were carefully selected from scions of prestigious families of the landed elite or from upper-middle class families. A few were included from the ranks and were generally the sons of JCOs who had distinguished themselves in service. However, the same rigorous criteria of

selection did not apply to officers who had joined during the war through the Emergency Commissioned Officer's scheme. The official British analysis regarding such officers was that they were on the whole inferior to both regular Indian Commissioned Officers and their British Emergency Commissioned Officer equivalents.

Apart from the differing professional and attitudinal characteristics of the officers who originated in the British Indian Army, there was another important sociological characteristic. About 12% of the Muslim officers in the British Indian Army were not from areas that later constituted Pakistan. Many Muslim Officers from Delhi, UP, Eastern Punjab and Central Provinces, constituted an important section of the senior ranks of the Pakistan army until recently. The sons of these officers constitute an important faction of the current officer corps. These officers exercised the option of migrating from their home towns in India and are especially charged with a sense of communal feeling against the Hindus and a sense of mission about living in an Islamic state. For example, one of the most senior officers of the Pakistan Army stated in an interview with Cohen:

“I am a pure Rajput; my family has been Muslim for only two or three generations. But I felt that India had to be divided, and told Messervey (the first Commander of the Pakistan Army) that I would rather live in a small country as a free man than as a sweeper in a large country . . . I did not want to see my children serve under Hindus.”

Another senior officer who was a lieutenant-colonel in 1946, and who also chose to leave his home for Pakistan, saw the new state as an opportunity to build a society according to Islamic values

“I basically belong to India, Lucknow; all the people

who belong to this part of the world (Pakistan), came here automatically. We had the choice or option: but I think more than anything else it was a desire to have a homeland of your own where you could model it according to your own ideology, your own genius.”

With the establishment of Pakistan’s military relationship with the United States in 1953, extensive changes took place in the Pakistan military establishment at the level of organization and training. But perhaps even more important was the Americanization of the ethos of the officer corps. This occurred essentially as the result of two aspects of the American military aid program:

1. Hundreds of Pakistan Army officers were sent to the United States for specialized training. The mental attitudes that were inculcated during this period and the ideological perspective adopted were then diffused within the officer corps on their return.
2. An extensive motivation program was mounted by United States Army personnel in Pakistan. This was done by creating a separate cell in the Inter-services Directorate and involved systematic indoctrination of Pakistan officer corps.

Evidence of the extensive organizational changes and of the Americanization of the Pakistan Army’s ethos is provided by a close associate of former President Ayub Khan:

“The changes brought in the army— few other armies went through such extensive tremendous changes. The field formations, the schools, the centers and even General Headquarters — everything was changed. The Americans affected everything — the scales were completely different, hundreds of our officers went to

America, and we had new standards of comparison.”<sup>9</sup>

The profound effect which the training of Pakistan army officers in the United States had on their minds can be judged by the views of a young Pakistani colonel who was trained with the United States Special Forces

“.....We were friends. I made many friends in the United States. Didn't you know we were the best friends and allies you had in the area, the only dependable one? Why did you not realize that? Our two countries are so much alike, we think alike, we like the same things. . . . There could be a new alliance to hold back the Russians.”

Perhaps the most effective penetration by United States Army personnel at the ideological level was done by means of the motivation program conducted by a special cell in the Inter-services Public Relations Directorate. Cohen writes

“The USIS extended its operations in Pakistan under the so-called Motivation (later Troop Information) Program. A separate cell was created in the (Pakistan) Inter-services P. R. Directorate to handle the collection and distribution of American journals, books ‘and films throughout the Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force. The so-called Motivation’ Program was an elevation of normal P.R. to a higher sphere of intellectual education and indoctrination. It formed an integral part of the entire military aid program.”

This infiltration of the ideological and institutional structure of the Pakistan military establishment by United States military personnel reached a stage where the very national Image of the armed forces was affected:

“The American military presence somewhat compromised the purely national image of the armed forces... It seemed as if there were two military establishments in one country: one national, the other foreign.”<sup>12</sup>

The foregoing analysis has indicated that close organizational and ideological links between the Pakistan and United States military establishments developed during the period 1953 to 1965. Thus, in the very period in which the military- bureaucratic oligarchy could be regarded as being ‘relatively autonomous’ from the domestic ruling classes, we find that it had close structural connections with the institutions of metropolitan capital.

The important characteristics of officers who have joined the Pakistan Army in the last fifteen years are as follows

1. They are drawn much more from the middle classes than the landowning classes as in earlier years.
2. They have been subjected the least to direct foreign professional influence and are the products of a purely domestic educational system.

Many such officers who joined in about 1971 are now majors or colonels. As Eqbal Ahmed has suggested, this generation of officers with petite bourgeois social origins and a purely indigenous socialization is highly susceptible to the fascist ideology of the Jamaat- i- Islami.’ This tendency may be further reinforced by two factors:

1. The active attempt made by the Jammata-i-Islami to penetrate the officer corps with its own trained cadres on the one hand and to distribute its literature in the military establishment on the other.
2. The new program of sending combat officers to universities in Pakistan has subjected many officers to

more systematic indoctrination by the Jama'at, which dominates some of the important universities of the country.

## **II Politicization of the Military**

During the period after 1971 not only were the officer corps subjected to the indoctrination of the Jama'at-i-Islami but they were also exposed to the populist rhetoric of the Pakistan People's Party. Many young officers with a social conscience who were worried about the economic deprivation of the masses and the crisis of the state saw in Bhutto the harbinger of a strong new Pakistan. The nationalization of some big industries, the melodramatic handcuffing of some of the biggest industrialists, and the radical rhetoric against feudalism had an impact on not only the middle peasants and urban professional classes but also the new generation of army officers who originated from these classes. That the army top brass itself is aware and concerned about the influence of the Bhutto phenomenon on the minds of army officers is indicated by a 'prayer' issued to all units by General Headquarters, Military Intelligence Directorate, Rawalpindi in 1978-79: "God will provide men to the army who have strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and ready hands. . . "There is an implicit reference to the just executed Prime Minister Bhutto: "men who can stand' before a demagogue and damn his treacherous flatteries without winking."

It appears that perhaps the fundamental feature of the 'Pakistani generation' of officers is that they were politicized from both the left and the right wing of the political forces in civil society. This suggests that underlying the strict discipline there may be potential or actual factionalism among the officers, which may manifest itself if the armed forces as an institution are used to crush a popular political movement in Pakistan.

To the extent that politicization of the officer corps has occurred, the military may have lost the 'relative autonomy' which could be regarded as the basis of its ability to mediate between opposing political forces. In fact it can be argued that the politicization of the army and the erosion of its ability to mediate between opposing political forces are apparent from the nature of Pakistan's military regime. It has three characteristics which provide evidence for our arguments:

1. The fact that the military regime is not using a politically neutral ideology (as was the Ayub regime) but is using a particular form of religious ideology that is explicitly linked with the political position of a particular political party (the Jama'at i-Islami).
2. The thinly veiled support of the regime for the Jama'at- i-Islami and, more importantly, the provision of access to the political apparatus of the Jama'at into various institutions of the government.
3. The failure of the military regime to constitute a convincing civilian facade behind which it can retract. Thus, for example, the President General Zia ul Haq continues to retain the office of Chief of Army Staff, even after the formal withdrawal of Martial Law.

The above three characteristics of the regime suggest that this military regime is organically linked with particular political forces. Therefore the military cannot now be regarded as having political 'neutrality' and relative autonomy on the basis of which it is supposed to mediate opposing political forces or "sit in judgment over them".

## **CONCLUSION**

The military and bureaucracy at the time of independence acquired a predominant position in the structure of state power. This was due to the fact that institutions in civil society during the colonial period remained weak, and the Muslim League being more a movement than a party could not provide sufficient countervailing power to subordinate the state apparatus to the political system. Gradually the army and bureaucracy developed a symbiotic relationship. There was also a shift over time in the social origins of the officer corps: From the landowning class to the petit bourgeoisie. This shift was accompanied by a “politicization” of the officer corps as they were subjected to the ideological influences from the right and left wings of the political spectrum. The result was an undermining of the “relative autonomy” of the military bureaucratic oligarchy, and its associated difficulty in constituting a credible civilian facade.

### **References and Notes**

1. Hanza Alavi, *Class and State in Pakistan, The Unstable State*. ed., H. Gardezi and J. Rashid. First published by Vanguard Publishers, Lahore 1983.
2. These ideological factions do not normally manifest themselves due to the rigid chain of command in the military hierarchy and the stake of all officers in the integrity of the armed forces as an institution. Nevertheless, the successful attempt at a coup d’etat in 1977 by what later emerged as a religious fundamentalist military regime, and the unsuccessful attempt by younger officers against the regime in January 1984, are symptomatic of the differences in ideological perspectives within the military.
3. In Pakistan, the military and the bureaucracy assumed control of state power soon after independence. Such dominance of the military bureaucratic oligarchy was derived from the structure of state power itself; moreover, political institutions and the forms of mobilizing

political power were not developed enough to ensure the dominance of the popular will. In contrast to the political institutions, the military-bureaucratic oligarchy which Pakistan inherited from the colonial state was highly developed, and after independence it began to reign supreme.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the first Governor General of Pakistan, was a man with a towering personality and a democratic vision. However, at the dawn of independence he was too ill to wield effective control over the state (he died in September 1948, a year after independence). He was, therefore, unable to establish an institutional framework through which the military and the bureaucracy could be subordinated to the political process.

Prime Minister Liaqat Au Khan, Jinnah's trusted assistant, lacked the initiative and imagination to control the affairs of state effectively after Jinnah's death. The provincial assemblies were elected on the basis of a limited franchise extending to only 15% of the populace. Consequently, members of these assemblies and the cabinets which they elected were aware of their isolation from the masses. They, therefore, willingly became instruments of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy. This comes out clearly in the events of 1963. In April 1953, the Governor General, Ghulam Mohammad, who was an old bureaucrat, dismissed the Nizamuddin Government even though the Constituent Assembly had given it a vote of confidence. Soon after the dismissal of the Nizamuddin Government by the Governor General, the Constituent Assembly met again and passed another vote of confidence — this time in favour of the new Prime Minister, Mohammad Ali Bogra, who had been nominated to the office by the Governor General. Not only did the Governor General appoint the new Prime Minister, but he also nominated ministers and assigned them their respective portfolios. Thus, state power effectively passed into the hands of the Governor General. The function of the Constituent Assembly was reduced merely to rubber-stamping the actions of the Governor General and the military-bureaucratic oligarchy whom he represented. Over the years, there have been some shifts in the relative power exercised by each partner, but what has remained is the complementarity between these partners in the military-bureaucratic oligarchy. For a detailed

discussion on this period, see H. Alavi: *The Military in the State of Pakistan*. Sussex, Mimeo 1974.

4. 4. Sir George MacMunn, *The Martial Races of India*, (n.d.) p. 233 in US Department of State, Office of External Research, Security

Decision-making in Pakistan, by Stephen P. Cohen, (Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, 1984).

5. 5. US Department of State, Security Decision-making in Pakistan, chapter 4.
6. Stephen P. Cohen, The Indian Army (Berkeley University of California, 1971), p. 145.
7. U.S. Department of State Security Decision-making in Pakistan, p. 61.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 72.
10. Ibid., p. 73.
11. Ibid.,p74.
12. Ibid, p. 75.
13. Eqbal Ahmad, 'Pakistan Sign Posts to a Police State', Outlook, 18, May, 1974,