

The Hindrance of Development in Pakistan

How Pakistan is Holding Itself Back

By Ashley Sanders

A **BSTRACT:** THIS PAPER seeks to explain the predominant reasons behind Pakistan's lack of development. While there is not one, simple definition of what a developing country is, there are a number of attributes a country may have that can explain why it has not become a developed country. Countries that engage in democratic processes typically fall under the classification of very highly, or highly developed. It is interesting, therefore, to see that democratic practices have not been able to bring Pakistan out of its state of low human development. Pakistan's society is comprised of a number of factors that can be linked to its lack of developmental success. The five of the most predominant of these factors are: Pakistan's historical political factors, civil-military relations, the role of Islam, the role of women, and regionalism. This paper explores these five factors and suggests steps that Pakistan should begin to take to remedy these issues.

A FULL, LIBERAL DEMOCRACY is a system that has fair, competitive elections along with conditions such as: nearly universal suffrage, a loyal opposition, and respected civil liberties. Democratic practices give countries an advantage towards economic growth and prosperity. In a study that analyzed economic growth from each year between 1960 and 2001, Halperin, Siegle, and Weinstein concluded that "citizens of democracies live longer, healthier lives on average, than those in autocracies. (Handleman, 2011 p 49)" Being a liberal democracy, it is generally believed, will naturally put a country in a better position to become developed. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) uses the Human Development Index to measure levels of development around the world. This index is a "way of measuring development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income into a composite human development index. (UNDP, 2011)" In 2011, Pakistan was ranked at number 145 on this list, as a country with low human development and an HDI of 0.504. Due to its inability to fulfill all of the requirements of a liberal democracy, Pakistan is not considered a full democracy, and therefore has not been able to reap all of the benefits that other democracies have. In 2011, the United Nations



Development Programme (UNDP) reported Pakistan's gross national income per capita as merely \$2,550. To put that into perspective, the gross national income per capita in the United States, which is a full, liberal democracy, is \$43,017, almost seventeen times higher.

Certain aspects of Pakistan's society reveal why it has not been able to transition to a developing country, despite its efforts towards democratization. First, it is useful to look at Pakistan's historical development to understand how it became the country that it is today and to show why it is only a semi-democracy. Pakistan was drawn up as a Muslim nation by Muslims, who were not politically organized. It is a country that was founded on the "belief that political power was essential to the higher ends of establishing God's law. (Mukherjee, 2010 p 69)" In 1947 Pakistan gained its independence from India at the end of British colonial rule. As a typical result of decolonization, "none of

Pakistan's regimes has been able to fully consolidate power. (Hoffman, 2010 p 79)" After gaining independence from Britain, India, especially with the help of Jawaharlal Nehru, was open to democracy. In Pakistan, on the other hand, "those who came to rule were not particularly open to democracy; they believed in personal cults and group interests, not in political institutions or systems. (Haqqani, 2006 p 222)"

In a full democracy, it is necessary to have elections that are "largely free of fraud and outside manipulation. (Handleman, 2011 p 31)" In Pakistan's 1954 elections, however, that was not the case. "The sanctity of the ballot box was sacrificed for the sake of political interests and coming to power by any means. (Haqqani, 2006 p 223)" The Jagtu United Front won the elections but had not been trained in democratic traditions and was not successful. In 1958, Pakistan faced martial law for the first time. The military ruler Ayub Khan came to power, but was forced to abdicate his position in 1968.

After his departure, however, democratic practices still did not ensue. He was succeeded by another military leader, General Yahya Khan, who presided over the separation of East Pakistan. In 1971, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was elected Prime Minister, but then declared himself the "Civilian Chief Martial Law Administrator. (Haqqani, 2006 p 225)" He drew up a new constitution for Pakistan in 1973, but he did not always follow what his own constitution said. He "not only persecuted his political opponents but refused to tolerate dissent, even from within party ranks. (Haqqani, 2006 p 225)" Therefore, at this point, liberal, democratic practices were still not in place in Pakistan.

In 1985, elections were held, although General Zia-ul-Haq had no political opponents. Under his rule, during the tenure of Prime Minister Junejo from 1985-88, "martial law came to an end..."



political parties were revived, and there were greater freedoms of speech and dissent. (Haqqani, 2006 p 226)” Between 1988 and 1999, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif each held power two different times. According to Irshad Ahmad Haqqani, “neither showed any interest in promoting democracy in the country and instead indulged in personal aggrandizement and cronyism. (Haqqani, 2006 p 226)” Consequently, the military was able to rule from behind the scenes during this time.

From its beginning, Pakistan has been conceived of as a national security state. It is a country that is “constantly threatened by outside enemies, in particular by India but at times also by Afghanistan, Iran, or America. (Rashid, 2010 p 367)” As a result, it maintains a large standing army and spends between 30 and 40 percent of government expenditures on the military. This national security paradigm serves the interests of the military in asserting its role over the state. Defining Pakistan as a national security state has “allowed the army to define itself as the guarantor of Pakistan’s borders. (Rashid, 2010 p 268)” In turn, this has strengthened the military’s power and presence in civilian life. “In the sixty years since independence, none of the elected civilian governments have ever served a full term, because the military, the only institution that worked well in the country, has repeatedly intervened in politics. (El-Khawass, 2009 p 94)”

In 2002, General Pervez Musharraf was elected president of Pakistan, with 98% of the people’s votes. There were reports of physical abuse and intimidation of public sector employees (Talbot, 2002 p 312)” to pressure voters. Musharraf made efforts to portray his regime as being different from those that ruled before him. He spoke of the “need for ‘good governance’ and for governments to ‘serve’ rather than to ‘rule’ the people. (Talbot, 2002 p 313)” However, the military has still appeared in the lives of civilians as a pressure group, willing to take over to further its own interests. Poor civil-military relations have put a serious strain on the possibility for democratic development. Even prior to Musharraf’s reign, Amnesty International had charged Pakistan with “torture, imprisonment, and other human rights abuses. (Talbot, 2002 p

316)” By the time that Musharraf took power, the concept of martial law had become engrained in the Pakistani way of life. Musharraf faced opposition when he attempted to change the Constitution to sanction military rule. He has frequently been criticized for trying to formalize the involvement of the military in politics. The military’s presence in politics has restricted Pakistan from developing a democratic political culture. Along with attempts to integrate the military into politics, Musharraf also sought to integrate a moderate Islam, referred to as “Jinnah’s Islam” into Pakistan.

It can be argued that the role Islam plays in Pakistan’s politics has prevented it from flourishing as a democracy and into a more developed state. Islam is Pakistan’s official religion and Pakistan has the world’s second largest Muslim population, after Indonesia. Islamism is not present all throughout Pakistan but it has emerged in its politics on several occasions. On the international spectrum, “the military has been the chief sponsor of jihadi activism (Nasr, 1992 p 207)” in Pakistan. Islamism is also present in the domestic arena, although it has not been as powerful since 1999, when the military began to liberate Islamism from the Pakistan Muslim League (PML). Just as there are tensions in Pakistan between the military and civilians, there are tensions between the military and Islamists. Pakistan’s laws are heavily guided by Islam as well as by its constitution.

Muslim education begins at a young age in Pakistan, although education of democracy does not. In a study conducted by Muhammad Nazir, an educator and writer for *Educational Review*, schoolteachers in private and public schools in Pakistan were examined on the role of democracy in their classrooms. Only one of the teachers reported that “her school had a relatively open discussion culture, as long as it did not challenge the head teacher. (Nazir, 2010 p 335)” All of the teachers reported that the head teacher had the authority to assign any tasks to the other teachers, which they were obligated to do. Without the head teacher’s authority, they had no official organizational structure or written responsibilities. This reflects a culture with a large power distance, as demonstrated by the





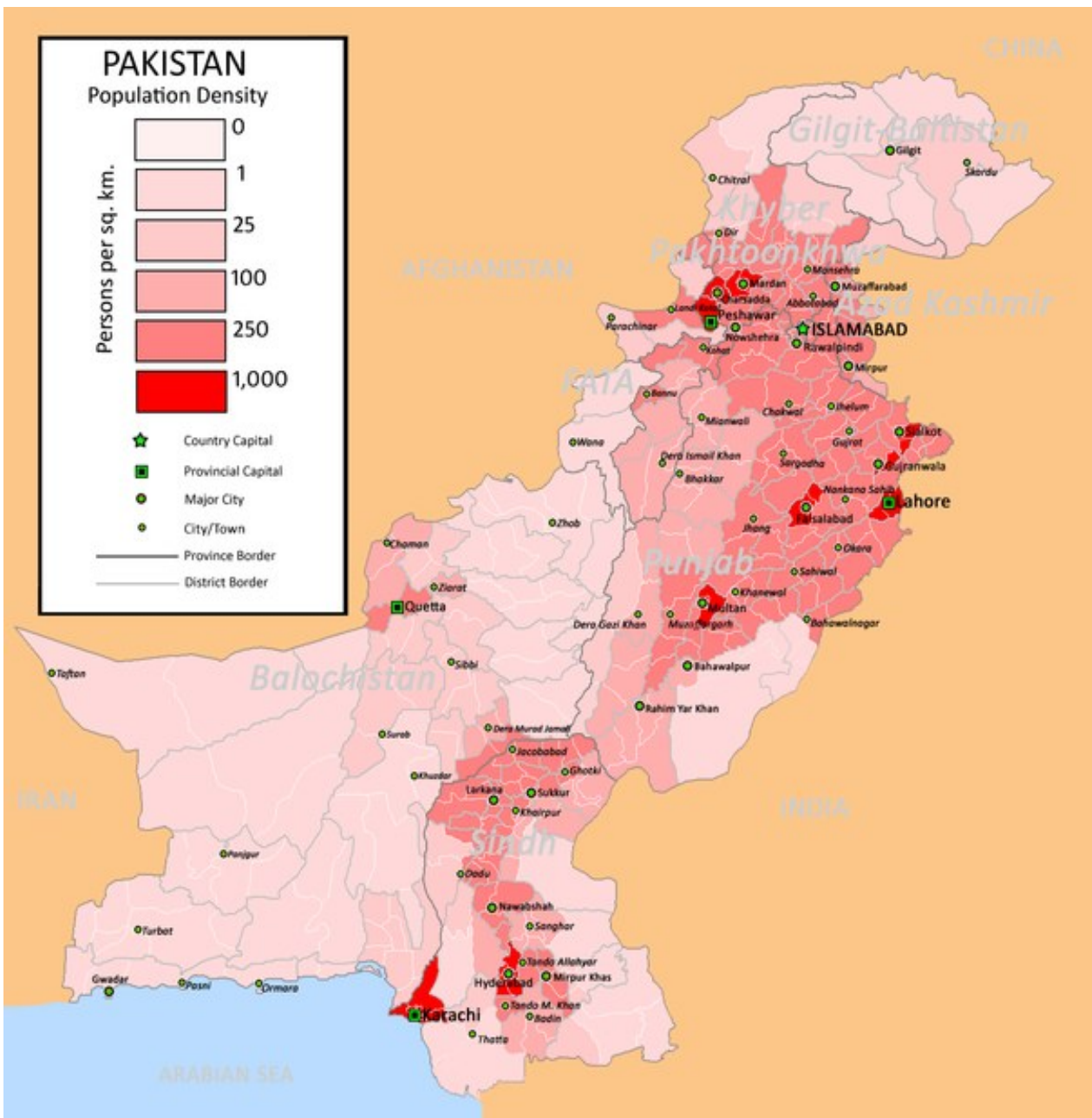
Hofstede Model. This reflects “a psychological mindset that prevents subordinates from challenging authoritarian attitudes. (Nazir, 2010 p 335)” This mindset is present in the teachers and begins to form innately in the children, who are being taught in this environment.

The societal role of women in Pakistan also indicates difficulties towards democratization. While women are granted civil liberties, their ability to exercise them is frequently hindered. This hindrance happens as a result of traditions, customs, and religion. Marriages in Pakistan are frequently arranged, sometimes to settle disputes between men, and sometimes even without the woman’s consent. Fathers are considered the legal guardians of children and mothers have no legal authority over their children. In this male-dominated society, there is a prevalence of violence against women. Legally, women do have the right to press charges against an abuser, but

in most cases they do not report the abuse. This is because there are requirements for reporting a crime and if they are not met, the situation could be manipulated to appear to be the woman’s fault. For example, if a woman is raped, it is necessary for her to provide four Muslim adult witnesses, otherwise she could end up prosecuted for illicit consensual sex.

For the most part, women in Pakistan are unlikely to inherit, own, or manage large stretches of land. Women typically have no personal income and therefore cannot buy any land of their own. Although they are entitled to bank loans and other forms of credit, women are usually limited by their inability to provide collateral, as well as by their low literacy levels. In 2007, according to the UNDP, “women’s labour participation rate was less than 35 per cent in Pakistan. (UNDP, 2009 p 59)” The women who do work typically earn less than half of what men in the same





positions earn. Men have more power within the workforce as well as in politics in Pakistan. Men set and enforce the political standards and women are obligated to abide by them. Female activists in Pakistan have argued, without success, against the application of quotas for women in political parties and have demanded direct elections, instead.

Another issue which has made it difficult for Pakistan to become a developed country is the existence of regionalism within it. Pakistan has four distinct provinces: Balochistan, Pashtun, Punjab, and Sindh. Each of these provinces is

unique and looks upon itself as its own distinct state, rather than part of a country. Aside from being four, divided regions, the provinces are all engaged in ongoing conflicts. Balochistan, which consist of forty-four percent of Pakistan’s land mass, wants full autonomy from Pakistan’s government. It has been involved in the Balochian Conflict with the Pakistan government attempting to win this autonomy through violence. This violent struggle has resulted in the death of over 7,000 Pakistani citizens. The Pashtun region is one that is extremely poor, and shares a border with Afghanistan. Due to the lack of money in the region, the few schools that exist



are inadequate for children's learning. Therefore, Afghanistan steps in and offers these children the opportunity to study in *madradas*, which are Islamic schools that feed and house the children, while teaching them a more militant version of Islam than what is typically taught throughout Pakistan. Afghanistan has used these children to help them fight in wars that they have been involved in, most notably in the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and today during the War on Terror. The Punjab region is partially in the province in Pakistan and partially in India, which has created an ongoing conflict between the two countries. The Indo-Pakistani War of 1947 was a violent dispute over the division of the Punjab Province as a result of the partition that created Pakistan. Both countries still feel that the entire region should belong to them, and therefore are still at odds with each other. The Sindh province has been involved in the Sindhi-Mohajir Conflict since 1947. The Sindhi people desire a national language and cultural identity and violently resist the Mohajir, Urdu-speaking refugees. The tensions that exist in all of the provinces of Pakistan have made a unified country unattainable for Pakistan.

It is crucial for Pakistan to remedy these issues in order for development to be a possibility. It is apparent that their definition of "democracy" is very different from that of the United States. That is not to imply that Pakistan should become more Western to be successful, but that it should adapt the standards and requirements of a full, liberal democracy. It is especially necessary, however, for leaders in Pakistan to always be elected to avoid the possibility for a military coup and martial law. It is also necessary for gender equality to be something that the Pakistani citizens strive for. A step towards achieving this would involve having women and men be considered equal under the law. If a law applies to men, it should apply in the same way to women. Having educated, free women in Pakistan's society would have numerous benefits including an increased workforce, innovation, increased household incomes, and improved family health. Although it would be difficult to end conflicts within the four provinces that have been ongoing for over sixty years, the Islamabad government should work to unify them, rather

than treating them as four entirely separate regions. In the years since its creation Pakistan has allowed itself to delve further and further into these problems rather than making efforts to improve its situation. Until Pakistan begins to reform these aspects of its society, it will be unable to become a developed country.

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