

# Ideology and Education

**Social Sciences in Pakistan: A Profile**  
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MEHTAB ALI SHAH

In a dictatorship such as the regime that currently rules Pakistan, where free debate is suppressed, and natural sciences remain at the disproportionate disposal of the defence complex, the slow progress in the development of social sciences is normal. The book under review is a collection of papers contributed by top Pakistani social scientists highlighting the difficulties they face in their respective disciplines.

Rasul Bakhsh Rais, professor of international relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, in his paper, 'Teaching of International Relations in Pakistani Universities', argues that the subject has not properly developed in Pakistani universities, and has strong foundation only at Islamabad and Karachi Universities where facilities for proper research exist. Many teachers in the country, who have no exposure to western universities, are unaware of several conceptual debates. Thus they teach in a descriptive manner. The Foreign Office documents are inaccessible to the academic community which is deprived from primary sources of research. Students have few optional subjects to select; theories of International Relations, International Law, Political Economy, and the post-war era are taught as compulsory subjects. This makes the subject dull. International Relations help students appearing for the competitive examinations. Rais points out that the lure of good salaries at private universities, on the one hand, and the intellectually congested academic environment, on the other, impels many reputed academics either to join private sector universities or go abroad. He recommends that the formation of an International Studies Association in collaboration with regional scholars will help enormously in the growth of the discipline.

Ayesha Siddiqi, a well-known defence analysis, dilating on the 'Development of

Strategic Studies' suggests that Strategic Studies is in effect the policy science for formulating policies on national security. In Pakistan the definition of national security is principally the army's domain. The army's influence in the development of Strategic Studies as a subject and policy has been so predominant that on the recommendation of the elite military institution, the National Defence College (NDC), the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad awards a one-year in masters degree to its graduates just for writing a paper aimed at pleasing their senior officers. Ironically, this one-year degree is equivalent to the two-year masters degree of the same university. Strategic analysis is an expertise that is the prerogative of the armed forces, some retired diplomats, journalists and academics, close to the army. There is relatively little independent thinking on policy matters. Citing the example of the Kargil crisis of 1999, Siddiqi points out that much has been written on this topic in India but only one version of the event, written by Shireen Mazri, which is the government's version has appeared in Pakistan (*Nawaz Sharif's version was not available in 2003*). Because of dearth of data, in comparison to foreign scholars, like Stephen Cohen, who have been given generous access to data by military establishment on strategic issues, Pakistani academics do not produce world-class research on strategic matters. Summing up her discussion, she argues that it is not only Strategic Studies, but education as a whole, particularly social sciences, that are in the state of limbo in Pakistan.

## Ideology as History

Moonis Ahmar and Farhan Siddiqi of Karachi University, in their paper 'Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies' opine that this is a relatively new discipline that has emerged from the traditional discipline of International Relations, focused on Morgenthau's concept of "realism". 'Peace and conflict resolution, does not concentrate solely on interstate wars and conflict, but also studies issues such as ethnic violence, state repression and social conditions which influence the growth of crime, inequalities in society, etc. Ahmar and Siddiqi seemingly forget the contribution of John Burton in offering 'The World Society' as an

alternate paradigm to the study of International Relations. The Nordic countries played a pioneering role in the development of Conflict Resolution. The subject came to India first and then to Pakistan, where it faced stiff resistance from the armed forces, jihadis and their like-minded academics, to whom the study of Conflict Resolution looked like a conspiracy to undermine Pakistan's military preparedness against the militarily strong "Hindu India or Israel who are bent on disintegrating it". Peace Studies received a momentum in Pakistan after former prime minister Atal Vajpayee's visit to Islamabad in 2004, and the processes Track-II and Track-III diplomacy. Now it is even offered in the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), but is reportedly funded by the armed forces.

Mubarak Ali Khan, a non-conformist historian deals with the problem of construction of an artificial history subservient to the ideology of Pakistan. According to this notion of history, Pakistan was created in 712 AD, when the Arab invader, Mohammed Bin Qasim, conquered Sindh and laid the foundation of an Islamic polity in the subcontinent, which ultimately attained its formal shape in 1947. Khan correctly suggests that young minds are not happy with this coupling of ideology and history; thus this official interpretation is rejected, principally by Sindhi intellectuals. They present their own local history. Khan opines that history as a discipline should not be at the disposal of state-sponsored ideologues.

Picking up the theme, Syed Jaffar Ahmed, the director of the Pakistan Studies Centre, Karachi University, deals with the problem of teaching Pakistan Studies in the country, which he believes has been repeated for 12 years at school and the university levels, just to brainwash students to justify the creation of Pakistan. He argues that the syllabus has been designed in such a manner that one gets impression that Pakistan is a theocratic state, a part of west and central Asia only marginally connected with the Indian subcontinent. From this perspective, Hindus and British are the enemies or conspirators. Only the true faithful can save the country from internal and external machinations. Ahmed states that the governments of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Benazir Bhutto, planned to replace this unrealistic mindset by introducing the country as an amalgam of similar local cultures. They also intended to introduce regional languages as a measure for national integration. But this scheme was torpedoed by religious parties

which perceived it as a conspiracy against the country and religion. He strongly believes that Pakistan studies should be taught on the pattern of area studies, where a student learns about the culture, history, geopolitics and economics of her country.

Rubina Saigol, one of the editors of the volume, in her concluding chapter argues that the study of subjects like History, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology, etc, which are helpful for an understanding of state, institutions, society and culture, is on the decline in Pakistan for two principal reasons: first, they do not have market value, whereas most students go for Information Technology and Computer Sciences, Business Studies, and Economics; secondly, Pakistan lacks scholarly tradition; state interference in university has stifled the growth of independent inquiry. The right to dissent has been taken away through

a number of publications, ordinances and libel and defamation laws curtail press freedom and all freedom of thought and action. The net result of this state of affairs is that as compared to India, social sciences have not markedly developed in Pakistan. Saigol is optimistic that in a democratic set-up things will improve. She also advises that only a serious commitment by the state to divert resources from non-development expenditure into education will ultimately solve the problem.

Saigol's concluding remarks about the trampling of freedom of expression by the state or the university machinery in Pakistan would certainly vindicate those academic dissenters who have endured the ordeal of persecution and prosecution because of their original and argumentative ideas. **EPW**

Email: mehtab110@hotmail.com