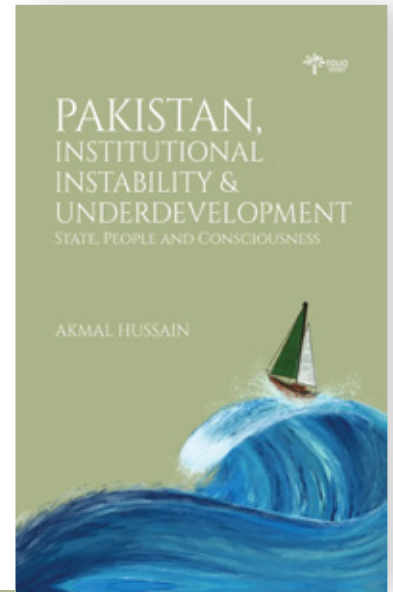


# BOOK REVIEW |

## Pakistan's Institutional Instability and Underdevelopment: State, People, and Consciousness by Akmal Hussain



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Akmal Hussain is an economist par excellence, but his book is all encompassing: covering history, politics, literature, neuroscience and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> He enquires into the epistemological issues of knowledge and consciousness. It is a study about what has caused institutional instability in the state of Pakistan, which he regards as a key factor in the underdevelopment of democracy, economy and the fragility of the state itself.

The author delineates three challenges that Pakistan was faced with at its creation in August 1947: to create a nation; make a constitution reflecting the will of the people; dismantle the dependence on the West, both economic and political. However, the author argues, that the constitution was sabotaged on four different occasions: by Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad in 1954, when he dissolved the Constituent Assembly; Ayub Khan's coup d'état of 1958, when he abrogated the Constitution of 1956; General Zia ul Haq suspended the Constitution of 1973, following his coup in 1977; and in October 1999, General Musharraf overthrew the elected government of Nawaz Sharif.

Maulvi Tamizuddin had challenged the Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad's dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, and the Sindh High Court ruled that the Governor-General had no power to dissolve it in February 1955. However, the Supreme Court over-ruled the decision of the Sindh High Court on technical grounds that it did not have the jurisdiction in the case.

Justice Munir legitimized the coup d'état of Ayub Khan using Kelsen's "doctrine of necessity". The author argues with sharp analysis that it was wrongfully applied to coup d'états, as coups only perpetuate the current system and class rule, while revolutions change the whole political, social and legal order. By removing the difference between the two and giving legitimacy to the seizure of power by force, based on the "principle of effectiveness", amounts to legitimizing might is right. General Zia suspended the Constitution of 1973 that the Parliament had made by consensus and that had been elected by universal adult franchise. He was encouraged and supported in this by the opposition parties. In October 1999, General Musharraf overthrew the elected government of Nawaz Sharif. The Supreme Court once again validated the coup based on the Doctrine of Necessity.

Akmal Hussain discusses how the Quaid's vision for Pakistan was inspired by the philosopher-poet, Allama Iqbal's thought and concept of Islam. Iqbal had sought the reconstruction and revival of the Muslim community and emphasized the spiritual, as opposed to its literal interpretation. Iqbal had sought the revival and regeneration of Muslims by the creation of an independent state in southwest Asia. The author quotes from the Quaid's speech in a radio broadcast on 26 February 1948, in which he said: "Islam and its idealism have taught us democracy. It has taught equality of men, justice and fair play to everybody. . . In any case, Pakistan is not going to be a theocratic state, to be ruled by priests with a divine mission. We have many non-Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Parsis, but they are all Pakistanis." Jinnah sought the de-colonization of the consciousness, but by September 11, 1948, Pakistan

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lost the Father of the Nation before he could begin the challenging task of nation building.

The author points out that General Zia-ul-Haque introduced militant Islam to serve American interests in Afghanistan and perpetuate his own rule, causing an intolerant and militant Islam to take root and spread in Pakistan. This policy eventually gave birth to the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and its offshoot, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which continues to be the scourge for Pakistan to date. The apogee of the TTP's depravity came with the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar on December 16, 2014, resulting in the deaths of 132 children and 15 adults!

The nation building project suffered a setback when the Muslim League, which had led the struggle for the creation of Pakistan under the leadership of the Quaid-i-Azam, began to be dominated by the landed elite, and having failed to establish the supremacy of the legislature, began to disintegrate. Quoting Hamza Alavi, the author argues that since the bureaucracy and the military were over-developed as compared to the civil society, the state became a dominant element in the political power structure.

The prime example of an "institutional collapse" is what Akmal Hussain scathingly describes as "sub-colonialism". In a revealing section he discusses with candor the partisan economic and political policies that led to the alienation of East Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh, resulting with East Pakistan, which had most of the Pakistan's population, breaking away from the home country. He describes how the export earnings from East Pakistan's primary goods were transferred to the nascent industrialists of West Pakistan, and the racist attitude of the ruling elite towards Bengalis. The first injustice to East Pakistan came with the formation of the One Unit, whereby power was concentrated in the central government, and the two wings were to be governed based on parity, rather than in proportion to their population. He points out that this constitution was imposed on the country by the Governor-General, approved by the Commander-in-Chief and made by bureaucrats, the former two were from West Pakistan, and the senior bureaucracy was dominated by people from the same wing. The dissonance between the two wings started with the language movement, and the demand for regional autonomy began as early as 1954 by the United Front parties of the then East Pakistan. That struggle culminated in the 6 points of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, whose Awami League won 167 out of 169 seats from what was then East Pakistan to the National Assembly, while the Pakistan Peoples Party under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto won only 83 out of 131 seats from West Pakistan. However, when negotiations broke down, General Yahya Khan, the President, resorted to military action. A bloody civil war followed, and since the two wings were separated by 1600 kilometers, it presented an ideal opportunity for the Indian military to train the local militias or Mukti Bahini, who resisted the military operation. Not surprisingly, the Pakistan

Army was surrounded and forced to surrender to the Indian Army!

The author has an erudite discussion on how the economic policy advocated by Kuznets was followed by Ayub Khan's economic adviser, Dr Mahbubul Haq, which only exacerbated the inequality in the country. However, just an opposite policy was followed, whereby redistribution from the poor to the rich took place as the assumption was that it would maximize saving and investment, and the author quotes from the Third Five Year Plan to support his contention: "First it is clear that distribution of national product should be such as to favor the saving sector". There was a concentration of industrial assets by the end of the 1960s, and he quotes from Rashid Amjad's study that 18 monopoly houses, controlled 60 percent of the assets of companies listed in the Karachi Stock Exchange. Thomas Picketty, six decades later, overturned the Kuznets thesis, arguing with empirical evidence that there is a tendency for inequality of income and wealth to increase, unless countered with policy intervention.

The author analyzes in detail the failure of the IMF programs in Pakistan over the decades. The IMF program had conditionalities: reduction of public expenditure to reduce the fiscal deficit; increasing the interest rate and trade liberalization; exchange rate devaluation so that it is in line with the market forces and the privatization of state-owned enterprises. While the aim was to integrate Pakistan into the global market, but countries like Pakistan had structural issues that hampered its economic growth. However, not only did the economic growth slow down but poverty increased, as did the current account deficit and inflation. He shows that the actual effect of the IMF program was the opposite of what they claimed was the objective. The author goes on to argue that there is enough research to prove that the impact of IMF programs on underdeveloped countries has been negative, and their economic situation has just worsened. The author is critical of the New Institutional Economics (NIE), arguing that its focus is just sustained growth but with little interest in making growth work for the people or for the protection of the environment. According to the NIE analysis, undeveloped economies are unable to sustain a high per capita income, unlike the developed countries. An inability to achieve export diversification into high value-added products, led to an inability to sustain high economic growth. A major problem with Pakistan's economy is that it is oriented towards low value-added goods, which constitute 82% of Pakistan's exports: rice, leather, yarn and textiles. Pakistan is ranked 87th out of 108 countries in the Economic Complexity Index, because its export structure has not changed towards knowledge intensive products.

Mismanagement and corruption became the hallmark of the civilian governments, both under Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto. Quoting Hafiz Pasha and Shahid Javed Burki about the Benazir government, the author says that USD 15 billion or 25% of the GDP was lost due to corruption, mismanagement and nepotism in 1996-'97. This was particularly so in the state-run enterprises like the Pakistan International Airlines or Pakistan Steel Mills, amongst others. Both Pasha and Burki considered authorities in their field, also suggest that several banks were lending for projects of "dubious feasibility on political grounds", resulting in bank default. This resulted in less credit available for genuine entrepreneurs and increase in interest rates, which was discouraging for the genuine investors. The author refers to Mushtaq H Khan's Report for the World Bank, in which the rent seeking politicians and bureaucrats formed a nexus of power and facilitated each other to misappropriate state resources. However, these characteristics of corruption and mismanagement became the hallmark of many civilian governments before, and since Benazir's stint in power.

The last chapter of the book on Consciousness, Heart Knowledge and Development, breaks away from Descartes's materialism. While emphasising the role of reason and analysis through language, the author draws from traditional wisdom as well as quantum mechanics to show that humans also have the faculty of a direct experience of the transcendent. In critiquing materialist philosophy, he quotes Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr as saying that the whole is not simply the sum of parts, but rather that the human experience of beauty and truth indicates the indivisibility of wholeness, wherein the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The author discusses the nature of silence evoking a wholeness beyond language. He draws upon the Cambridge linguistic philosopher, Wittgenstein, the literary icon, Georg Steiner and the Muslim Sufis to argue that silence is a mode of knowing the truth. He mentions the great thirteenth century Sufi poet Rumi as saying that the Divine's message is only heard in silence.

With a holistic approach, he addresses the question as to why 76 years after the birth of Pakistan, it is still faced with such challenges as: 38.9% food insecurity; 40.2% stunted children; 64.7 of the population without access to safe drinking water, and 50% of diseases and 40% of all deaths caused by contaminated water; mean years of schooling only 5.3 years, while 72% of the labor force is unskilled. Pakistan's unbridled population growth rate of 2 per cent is much higher than that of Bangladesh's 1% and India's 1.04%, causing a negative impact on its social indicators.

The book is a sad tale of the misgovernment of a state created with the highest of ideals, but its people betrayed by an incompetent and self-serving ruling elite with a "colonized consciousness"!

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