The Fall of Urdu and the Triumph of English in Pakistan: A Political Economic Analysis

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C O N T E N T S

ABSTRACT

In this paper, we investigate both how the use of language in higher education in Pakistan has evolved and why the medium of instruction remains a contested terrain. We focus on the struggle between advocates for the use of Urdu and the use of English. By examining the repeated failed attempts by high political authorities to replace English with Urdu, we demonstrate the usefulness of Avner Greif's evolutionary, path-dependent theory of institutional change. We also argue, however, that Jack Knight's focus on the struggle over resources is necessary if we are to understand why the futile attempts to make Urdu the dominant language of education persist.

JEL Classifications: I23, I24, P16, Z13

Keywords: Higher Education, Education and Inequality, Language, Pakistan.

"Whoever controls the language, controls the culture."
Dennis Peacocke

There are sharp differences within Pakistan's educational system: It is divided by medium of instruction and social status. At the top end exist the traditional elite English-medium schools. More recent entries include non-elite private English-medium schools aimed at the middle class as well as a large number of Urdu-medium madrassas which largely cater to low-income students. In between are public sector Urdu-medium primary and secondary institutions as well as public sector schools which offer instruction in other vernacular languages such as Sindhi and Balochi.

This paper begins with setting the context in terms of providing an overview of the state of language inequality in today's Pakistan. We then provide an overview of Pakistan's colonial past and a discussion of how Urdu became associated with the Muslim struggle for independence. This is followed by a brief outline of language policy shifts in Pakistan since the founding of the nation in 1947. We review the historical record in order to explain both why the Pakistani authorities have largely failed in their quest to establish Urdu as the universal language of education and why this failure has led to several attempts to reassert Urdu's predominance. In the third section, we utilise the institutional analytical frameworks of Avner Greif and Jack Knight to better understand the historical narrative of section II. We consider why clear policy pronouncements in support of Urdu were never implemented, despite the ostensible support for Urdu from the Pakistani religious establishment. Our final section closes by presenting a research program which our analysis suggests, as well as considering some interesting theoretical issues raised by this analysis.

I. CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE USE IN PAKISTAN AND ITS HISTORICAL ROOTS

Pakistan is a multilingual, multicultural society with more than 66 spoken languages (Lewis et al, 2016). At the time of independence 56 percent of the population spoke Bengali, i.e. the population of then East Pakistan; while the majority language of West Pakistan was Punjabi (67 percent of West Pakistan) followed by Sindhi and Pashto; only a minority spoke Urdu. However, Urdu, despite being a minority language, has emerged as the proclaimed national language and English the language of official business.[1]

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[1] Present-day linguistic make-up of Pakistan: Punjabi, 44.15 percent; Pashto, 15.42 percent; Sindhi, 14.10 percent; Siraiki, 10.53 percent; Urdu, 7.57 percent; Balochi, 3.57 percent; Others, 4.66 percent. *Census Report of Pakistan*. Population Census Organisation, Statistics Division, Government of Pakistan. 2001. Table 2-7, p.107.

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With reference to schooling, Pakistan is characterised by five broad (pre-university) schooling streams using three different language categories: elite English-medium schools (including military cadet schools), non-elite private English-medium schools catering to the lower-middle and middle-income classes, government-run Urdu-medium schools, public vernacular (mostly Sindhi or Pashto) medium schools, and madrassas (Islamic seminaries) which mainly use Urdu. However, university education is mostly imparted in English. For many university students who have received earlier education in another language and are not very proficient in English, this is a particularly challenging situation. Moreover, English opens doors to much coveted jobs in the military and civil service and gives not only a social, but also a psychological advantage to those fluent in the language (Phillipson, 1992). In contrast, Urdu comes with its own cultural history and ideology as it was Urdu that became associated with Muslim identity during the struggle for independence. Hence, as these groups struggle for their respective language, they are also struggling for their cultural heritage and access to economic power. The adoption of language as the medium of communication for state business or private business is both a product of educational policy and also a process that affects educational policy.

1. Pre-Partition Urdu becomes Associated with Muslim Identity

Before partition, the main political actors in the area that became West Pakistan constituted the British colonisers, both Muslim and Hindu leaders (the former represented Muslim League and the latter the Congress party), the Muslim Urdu-educated intelligentsia of Delhi and Lucknow, the Muslim poets and *ulema*, and the local vernacular-speaking feudal landholders and peasants (Rahman, 2011).

The British colonisers came to the Indian Subcontinent with the objective of resource extraction, which required the imposition of Anglo colonial rule. When British imperial control was established, British rulers replaced Persian with English as the official language in British India during the 17th century (Powell, 2002). They also introduced English as a medium of instruction as they wanted to create a local gentry that would help them administer colonial India. (Rassool, 2007). However, English language education was only made available in major urban schools and higher education institutions while the education of the rest of the locals was imparted either in Urdu or vernacular. An incentive to join the English-medium schools was the opening of civil service positions for the local population in 1832, 41 years after the 1791 Act of Native Exclusion (Spear 1958, in Rahman, 2006, p.30), for which the main selection criteria was competence in English. The Congress and Muslim league leadership emerged from these English-medium schools. Jinnah, in his freedom movement used the English-educated bureaucracy, military, and judiciary, which had originally been in the service of the British Raj. This led Hamza Alavi to dub the newly formed state of Pakistan "a vice-regal" state – a state that continued to be ruled by the "salariat" in power: the military, bureaucratic and also landed elite that continued its pre-colonial administrative practices (Alavi, 1972). Jinnah in using these very intermediaries in his struggle for the Muslim national movement had made these social structures even more strongly embedded in what emerged as the state of Pakistan (Nasr, 2001). It is not surprising that these English-educated agents/actors opted for English as the language of official state business, as this had been the language of business in colonial India.

Language has often been associated with national and regional/ethnic identity formation, but in the case of India, Urdu became associated with religious identity -- the Indian-Muslim identity—between the late 18th and the early 20th centuries (see Rahman, 2011, for a detailed discussion). This occurred despite the fact that Indian Muslims spoke a variety of languages including Bengali, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi and Gujrati. Yet, it is modern Urdu that is associated with Islam in the Indian subcontinent.

Linguistic historians trace Urdu's ancestor as an Indic language which incorporated words from local languages (*bhasha*) and Sanskrit, and its allusions were to India and the local culture, though the script was Perso-Arabic (as opposed to Devanagari). The Islamisation of the language began in mid-eighteenth century as Muslim poets purged the language of its Indic element: local (*bhasha*) and Sanskritic words were removed on the excuse that these terms were "obsolete, unfashionable and rough"; moreover, Indian and Hindu cultural allusions and metaphors were substituted with Iranian and Islamic references. As more than 4,000 local words were banished, what emerged finally was highly Persianised Urdu full of Islamic cultural references _ an identity marker for the educated Muslim elite of Delhi and Lucknow (Rahman 2011). This, in turn, alienated the Hindus, and led to the Sankritisation of Hindi, creating the Urdu-Hindi divide (Brass 1974).

The association between Urdu and Islam, further developed during the British era: As Muslim political power shrank, Muslim Ulema, along with poets and political activists, started writing and publishing pamphlets in Urdu: it became the favoured language for religious debate between Muslim scholars, and, in time, emerged as a repository for Islamic literature. Thus while the Urdu poets and Ulema together nurtured Urdu, and while it is true that Urdu has also been associated with modernity and enlightenment (the Delhi Renaissance), it is the association with Islam that predominates (Rahman, 2011).

2. Post-Independence: Colonial Legacy and the Nation-building Project

At the time of independence, Pakistan, like most other ex-colonial countries, was faced with the problem of developing a language policy in a multilingual society. As in many new countries, formulating an appropriate policy was complicated by different language groups competing for recognition and status. The nation's founders, as mentioned above, were themselves trained in English. The military, judiciary, and the civil service were Anglicised institutions who wanted to continue state business in English, but they also wanted to unite an ethnically diverse population under the umbrella of a national language. With reference to the national language, the struggle was initially between Urdu and Bengali: While the former had become a symbol of Muslim unity, the latter was the majority language of East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) which was the largest and most populated province of Pakistan. It would appear incongruous that Punjabi, despite being a widely spoken regional language was not even in the running. Punjabi was never used in the domains of power, not even at the time of Ranjit Singh,[2]

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[2] Ranjit Singh was the most powerful indigenous Punjabi-speaking ruler of pre-colonial Punjab; like most other rulers of India, he used Persian for official documentation; although, the informal conversation in the court was in Punjabi (Rahman, 2019).

and Punjabis also supported the choice of Urdu as a unifying symbol of the federation. The Urdu lobby thus comprised both the Urdu-speaking mohajirs, the middle-class Punjabi speaking intelligentsia of Punjab, which claimed to give up their local vernacular in the interest of the federation, and to a lesser extent, the similarly Urdu-educated intelligentsia of urban Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Baluchistan. The Bangla leaders and Bengali majority of East Pakistan in contrast advocated for Bengali as the national language.

Finally, the following language hierarchy emerged: English was the language of choice for state business, Urdu was deemed the national language, and Bangla (with Pashto and Sindhi) was relegated to provincial status. However, despite the assumed integrative appeal associated with Urdu, the decision was opposed by the Bengalis of Eastern Pakistan who, being the majority, were unhappy that their language, Bangla, had been relegated to the status of provincial language. Murshid (1985) provides a detailed account of the Bengali movement in the early 1950s which finally led to Bangla also being given the status of national language. However, the seeds of resentment had already been sown, and in 1971 culminated in the majority of Pakistan (East Pakistan) seceding from their once cherished homeland.

II. MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION—STATED POLICY VS PRACTICE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

With respect to the medium of instruction, the Advisory Board of Education held its first meeting in 1948 and resolved that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction at the primary stage. Moreover, it was also recommended that English be replaced by Urdu in the universities (ABE, 1949), while secondary education should be in Urdu (ABE, 1955). As a result, a number of institutions were established to do basic work in Urdu, from coining new terms, to translations, to developing new tools and techniques to expedite its adoption as an official language (Rahman 1996, pg. 233).

Since this first conference on education in 1948, the basic aspects of language policy have remained constant. English, especially for higher education, is justified by the state, in the interest of modernisation because it is the language of science and technology. On the other hand, Urdu is justified in the interest of Pakistani national unification. The documents kept insisting that mother tongue is the best medium of instruction for a child but, except in East Pakistan (until 1971, when it became Bangladesh), Sindh and some parts of Khyber Paktunkhwa (KP), no mother tongues were used as medium of instruction.

1. Urduisation vs English Bias: Ayub Khan's 1960s

By the end of the 1950s, despite the efforts of the Urdu lobby to promote the use of Urdu and the ruling elites apparent support of these efforts, it was English which emerged as the dominant language in government and higher education. In fact, by this time the expanding middle class (both Urdu-speaking *mohajirs* and Punjabis) -- initial Urdu advocates—had also realised that the best chance of acquiring power, social prestige and affluence was by joining the superior civil services, the officer cadre of the armed forces or to get a professional degree: The Central Superior Services (CSS) exams were held in English, and higher education was also in English. Hence, the urban Urdu

middle-class also had a strong incentive to be educated in English. Not only the urban upper middle class but even feudal/tribal elites, though not literate themselves, sought to educate their children in elite English-medium schools (Rahman 1997).[3] Moreover, under the patronage of General Ayub Khan, who himself was an Anglicised military dictator, the armed forces started developing their own schools—cadet colleges and PAF Model Schools—to provide subsidised, English-medium schooling, to prepare students for careers in the defense forces.[4]

In 1959 the Sharif Commission on Education defended the above-mentioned government-subsidised English-language educational institutions in the name of efficiency and modernisation (CNE, 1959), However, the commission also recommended that both Urdu and Bangla be used as mediums of instruction from Class VI onward and in this way, in about fifteen years, Urdu would reach a point of development where it would become the medium of instruction at the university level. The Commission had also stated that until Urdu was ready to replace English, English should continue to be used for advanced study and research. This statement allowed confusion to take root in terms of how and when and by whom it would be determined that Urdu was ready to replace English. This was a convenient method of maintaining the status quo, and English was given a fifteen-year extension (Khalique, 2006).

In 1966 students from less privileged Urdu-medium institutions protested against government-subsidised cadet schools, and a new commission under Justice Hamoodur Rahman was set up to examine student unrest and students' welfare problems. The commission agreed that cadet colleges and PAF schools violated the constitutional assurance that 'all citizens are equal before law (Paragraph 15 under Right No. VI)' (GOP 1966, pg. 18) because teaching in English excluded some students. Nevertheless, Judge Rahman's commission defended these schools by concluding that such schools "are intended to produce some better type of students who would be more suitably disciplined and equipped for eventually entering the defense service of the country or filling higher administrative posts" (GOP 1966, pg. 18). As a result these cadet colleges actually multiplied from 1970 onwards. The Hamoodur Rahman Commission also criticised those universities which had adopted Urdu as a medium of examination in BA for being over-zealous: Karachi, Punjab and Sindh universities were criticised for allowing Urdu and Sindhi as languages for instruction and sitting exams.

Despite these setbacks, the Urdu political advocates kept up their pro-Urdu movement, demanding that signboards should be in Urdu (Pakistan Times, 21 February 1961), that proceedings of meetings be in Urdu (Abdullah, 1976). However, despite all the efforts of the Urdu lobby, the elitist officer corps of the higher administration, judiciary and the military kept using English. Higher education, especially in scientific and technological subjects, also continued to be given in English. Urdu was allowed eventually for Arts (i.e. Social Sciences and Humanities) and although the policy was couched in the language of popular demand and facilitated access to higher education, it

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[3]Examples include Aitchison in Lahore and Burn Hall in Abbottabad.

[4]In the words of Rahman, "the elite of wealth (feudal and tribal lords; business magnates, etc.) and the elite of power (the military and bureaucratic elites) made arrangements to facilitate the entry of their children into the elite, thus narrowing its base of selection, through promoting elitist schooling while professing to create equal opportunities for all through vernacularisation" (Rahman 1997).

actually ghettoised the non-Science students and disciplines since they bore the stigma of being culturally and intellectually inferior (Rahman 2019).

In 1969, there was a new government and a new committee (headed by Air Marshal Nur Khan) was constituted to overhaul the educational system. This committee recommended that Urdu and Bengali should be used as the medium of instruction by1975 (PNEP, 1969). This was the first time that an official document acknowledged the fact that there is 'almost a caste-like distinction between those who feel at ease in expressing themselves in English and those who do not' (PNEP, 1969, pg. 14). It was observed that: 'Not only does the use of English as the medium of instruction at higher levels perpetuate the gulf between the rulers and the ruled, it also perpetuates the advantages of those children who come from well-to-do families, . . . '(PNEP, 1969, pg. 3). However, the elite English medium schools (including the cadet colleges) remained, and the New Education Policy (1970) left the task of examining 'the question of the change over from English to the national languages' to a commission which would be established in 1972 (NEP, 1970, pg. 19). Thus, the incipient radicalism of Nur Khan was reversed as the status quo asserted itself.

2. 1970s: The Democratic Bhutto Years

1971 marked the partition of Pakistan. In West Pakistan the democratically elected Peoples' Party formed the government with ZA Bhutto as Prime Minister. The 1973 Constitution of the Republic was promulgated under Bhutto with Article 251 pertaining to language in education. The article declared Urdu as the national language and pledged to further its development; moreover, a time frame of 15 years was set for the replacement of English with Urdu. Interestingly, the timing of the Constitution coincided with the lapse of the fifteen year extension given to English by the Sharif Commission and hence refreshed that extension for another fifteen years.[5]

Given Bhutto's left-leaning socialist agenda and secular views, and his Sindhi roots, he was looked upon with suspicion by the Urdu lobby which by now comprised a large religious element in the Jamiat-e- Ulema-i-Islam (a religiously motivated party). Afraid of being categorised as the "Other", and in an attempt to placate his opponents Bhutto succumbed to the integrative appeal of both Islam and Urdu, while Sindhis demanded to promote and encourage Sindhi as an official language in the province, in congruence with Article 251(3) of the Constitution (see above), This culminated in the Urdu-Sindhi language riots of January 1970 and July 1972. These riots were the response of the supporters of Urdu to what they thought was an effort to dislodge them from their position and make Sindhi the dominant language for education and administration (Amin, 1988). Finally, Sindhi was adopted as the official language of Sindh, but little effort was made in real terms to give the language its due official status. In KPK and Balochistan, similar efforts were made by the provincial governments. But, at the federal level, and in elite schools, English reigned supreme (Rahman, 1997).

Bhutto chose to placate the Urdu lobby (who by now was mostly aligned with religious parties) by announcing cosmetic Islamic measures rather than the less emotive,

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[5] The constitution also recognised the linguistic rights of speakers of regional and minority languages by allowing the provincial governments freedom to develop their languages.

and more controversial, strategy of giving Urdu the place of English in educational institutions (Rahman 1997).[6] Thus, it was in Bhutto's regime that religion came to occupy the public sphere and different language lobbies were solidified into different groups: the Urdu lobby was with the religious parties while the ethno-nationalists and the Anglicised elite were left of centre, being either inclined to socialism or liberalism, respectively (Amin, 1988). The fortunes of Urdu would now be connected more closely than ever before with the struggle between the religious and the secular in Pakistani politics (Rahman, 1997).

3. 1977-1988: General Zia ul Haq's Pro-Urdu Stand

It was during General Zia ul Haq's martial-law that both Urdu and Islam came into their own. Zia himself hailed from middle-class Urdu-speaking background and therefore had the support of Urdu *mohajirs* and other Urdu advocates who appreciated his policies of Islamisation/Urduisation as part of his 'centralising ideology'. Now, Urdu was not only associated with Islam, but also with authoritarianism. In 1979 Zia ordered that all speeches should be in Urdu and also set up the Muqtadra Qaumi Zaban (National Language Authority) to consider ways and means for the promotion of Urdu as the national language of Pakistan and to make all necessary arrangements in this regard. By the end of 1979 many offices in Punjab began to use Urdu rather than English. He also ordered that Urdu be the medium of instruction in all schools from grade I, such that by 1989 the matriculation (10th grade) examination could be conducted in Urdu. Moreover, the Ministry of Education instructed schools not to use the English-medium nomenclature, and Islamic education was decided to be a compulsory subject until graduation. In light of the above initiatives Zia ul Haq was declared the 'Patron of Urdu', and such was the confidence of the Urdu lobby in him that in 1981 at the Annual Urdu Conference at Lahore (27-28 Nov. 1981) the Urdu lobby demanded that Urdu should be imposed through a presidential ordinance (Pakistan Times, 28 Nov. 1981). But, in the end, despite all the fervor and enthusiasm even the 'Patron of Urdu' and martial-law administrator, Zia ul Haq, could not purge Pakistan of the English language either in the official domain or as a medium of instruction.[7]

Although many of the government and federal model schools did adopt Urdu from grade 1, the cadet schools and elite private schools remained English medium. The major argument of the English lobby was that Pakistan would fall behind other countries if English was abandoned, while the Urdu lobby insisted that sufficient books did exist in Urdu and more could be translated. However, no practical steps materialised, and in 1983 the elite schools were given legal protection to prepare their students for senior and higher senior Cambridge examinations thus making the two parallel streams of education even more distinct. Instead, Urdu became a compulsory subject in these schools until

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[6]By now, it was clearer than ever before: the Urdu proto-elite was with the religious right wing while the ethno-nationalistic proto-elites and the anglicised elite were left of centre, being either inclined to socialism (Amin, 1988) or liberalism, respectively. The fortunes of Urdu would now be connected more closely than ever before with the struggle between the religious and the secular in Pakistani politics (Rahman, 1997).

[7]For newspaper articles related to the Urdu-English debate refer to Akhtar, B. M., Rahman, K. and Syed, M. 1986. *Qaomi Zaban Akhbarat Ke Aine Men [Urdu: The National Language as Reflected in the Press]*. Islamabad: Muqtadra Qaomi Zab.

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class 12. Moreover, on 11 October 1987 General Zia ul Haq himself allayed any residual fears of the English lobby by declaring that English could not be abandoned altogether (Rahman, 1997). According to Rahman, apart from a few editorials against the continuation of English language schooling, the reversal of the 1979 education policy, the biggest concrete step taken in favour of Urdu, was allowed to take place almost silently (Rahman, 1997). Moreover, in 1987, despite the initial fervour, ministries were also instructed to continue their proceedings in English.

Zia knew that the Urdu lobby would keep favouring him despite their disappointment in his pro-Urdu stance; and Zia in the end realised that he could not alienate the Anglicised elite in the long run. Hence, English reigned supreme and the net result were two parallel streams of education: Urdu-medium and English-medium.[8]

4. Failed Attempts to Democratise English (Post 1989)

As mentioned above, at the time of Zia ul Haq's assassination the position of Urdu was not much better than it was when he first took power reflecting the dominant classes monopoly over English. By now the religious Urdu-lobby had completely alienated the leftist secular forces and in 1989 Benazir Bhutto attempted to introduce English in all schools from class I as an attempt at modernisation, despite the fact that it did conflict with her party's socialist agenda.[9] This policy was hurriedly launched through a government notification, with no well-defined implementation strategy. Not surprisingly, little effort was made by the educational planners and school leaders in public sector schools to go beyond introducing English as a formality, mainly to show compliance to orders.

General Musharraf assumed power in October 1999 through a military coup. Musharraf's modernisation and "enlightened moderation" in religion replaced the more fundamentalist policies of Zia ul Haq. His government reiterated Benazir's pro-English stance supporting English as the language of and for development (Shamim, 2007). However, again no proper implementation strategies were adopted to translate these policy statements into practice in schools in Pakistan.

In 2010, under the 18th amendment to the Constitution, education became a provincial issue. This made the provinces more autonomous than before with the result that the Punjab government under chief minister Shahbaz Sharif decided to support the local demand for English in the public. The Punjab government passed an executive order converting a number of government Urdu-medium schools to English-medium. The schools did not have sufficient numbers of teachers to implement this policy in any meaningful way nor were the students exposed to English outside school so the policy failed. In 2011 the British Council concluded that teachers still taught in Urdu and Punjabi just as they did before this policy was declared (PEELI 2013, pg 22–23). In 2014

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[8] Under different circumstances, perhaps the demand for Urdu emerging as the national language might have been viewed as compatible with social justice and may have appealed to Pakistani leftists and liberals, but Urdu had now not only become associated with rightist Islamic forces, but also with authoritarian rule which had even labelled ethno-nationalists (vernacular supporters) as anti-state actors, hence, forever alienating the liberal, socialist forces.

[9] Benazir Bhutto's civilian government announced that English would be taught in all schools from Grade 1 (it was previously taught from Grade 4 in public sector schools).

the decision was reversed, and today the confusion regarding medium of instruction continues, and in practice, public schools can be Urdu, English, Sindhi, or Pashto medium, depending on their location, with English being introduced in some public schools from grade III and in some from grade V. Matriculation (i.e. 10th grade) examination may be taken in Urdu or English, but Intermediate (i.e. 12th grade) examinations take place in English (Abbas 1993). Moreover, some English medium schools are now offering British O-level and A-levels to their students, thus increasing the gulf between the two groups. Higher education continues to be in English, and examinations for access to key government positions remain in English as well.

The above narrative illustrates that while the state/ruling elite apparently supported Urdu because of its supposed integrative value, in the formal official domains it continued to support English. This attachment to English maintained the ruling elites' social distinction from the non-elite,. In time, there seems to be a gradual evolution of the middle-class towards English as well and the strength of Urdu advocates has weakened because of growing demands for English instruction. In fact, with time, most of the Urdu-speaking middle-class has in fact been coopted: this is reflected in the growing demand and, in turn, mushrooming growth of low-income private English medium schools of varying quality (ASER, 2006). But, this emphasis on English-medium instruction has not weakened the distinction between the elite and non-elite as the quality of teaching in these schools is limited. Therefore, the vicious cycle continues, and this unequal education system continues to reproduce inequality.

III: INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSES OF HISTORICAL CHANGE: USING THE FRAMEWORKS OF GREIF AND KNIGHT TO UNDERSTAND PAKISTAN'S LANGUAGE CONFLICT

Greif defines an institution as a *system* of norms, beliefs, organisations, and rules "exogenous to each individual" but which "generalises behavioural regularities".[10] In one sense, language does seem to fit into Greif's definition of an institution. Language can certainly be viewed as a set of distinct rules of communication which is human-made but not chosen by the individual. Moreover, to anticipate Greif's theory of institutional change, the continual use of language depends on the strength of payoffs in terms of facilitated communication with others.

On the other hand, there is an aspect of language which escapes the definition of an institution. Language is not generated through a belief system or a set of norms in the same way that a pre-pandemic handshake or procedures governing marriage might be. While the particular language we use is learned, our ability to communicate in the enhanced way which humans can is a genetically programmed capacity more similar to the capability of walking on two legs. The issue of language as an institution becomes, relevant, however, when studying language choice or the way in which different forms of linguistic expression are used in different social contexts. Language becomes more like an institution when its use changes. In this sense, norms might govern the words and grammar appropriate for communication within a social group, beliefs might make one

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[10] The term *system* here is used to highlight that an institution is not a monolithic entity, but comprises of inter-related elements that conjointly guide behaviour.

more likely to elevate one language over another and rules might regulate which language is permitted to be used in particular government sanctioned contexts. Greif, by distinguishing between rules and beliefs, places motivation at the centre of the analysis and argues that if prescriptive rules are to have an impact, individuals must be motivated to follow them.

Our analysis begins with a consideration of how aspects of any institution – norms, beliefs, rules and the distribution of advantages – are relevant to the Urdu-English choice in Pakistan. Social norms are defined as informal rules of behaviour which are not codified but are reflected in the spontaneous behaviour in the population. Beliefs attach judgments (either positive or negative) to a particular form of behaviour, and rules create government-sanctioned hierarchies of behaviour.

Modern institutionalist theories of change deploy a metaphorical game theoretic framework which focuses on the payoffs from a particular transaction or series of actions. Greif develops a theory of change by labelling structural features of a society as 'quasi-parameters' if these features evolve over time and either reinforce or undermine the payoffs from a particular transaction or activity. With respect to language choice in higher education, the activity or transaction is the act of being educated in a particular language and the payoffs are the differential benefits one gets from being educated in that language. The quasi-parameters that might disrupt the structure of payoffs could be changing shares of population from different linguistic groups, the rising educational attainment of the general population, and changes in the domestic polity and economy with the global political economic environment. If, for example, demographic shifts raise the percentage of the population which is Urdu-speaking or attend Urdu-medium schools then one could argue that payoffs from using Urdu in higher education would increase. On the other hand, the rising educational attainment of a population combined with the predominant use of English in higher education could signal to non-elite families of those children attending secondary school that these children too should have access to English instruction. Such changes in the shares of population with a specific characteristic (Urdu competence or general educational attainment) could signal a change in beliefs about the appropriate use of English, which in turn might culminate in shifts in behaviour with respect to language use in the context of higher education. We propose the following four hypotheses that can both account for the continued persistence of English as the language of choice in higher education as well as the continued persistence of Urdu as a possible alternative. These conflicting long-term tendencies allow us to deploy an additional institutional change argument by Jack Knight who, in contrast to Greif, focuses on distributional struggles over rules, rather than the evolution of norms.

The first hypothesis addresses the quasi-parameter of rising educational attainment. We posit that increased schooling strengthens the parents' demand for English instruction for their children, since this provides a potential pathway to eliter occupations.

The second two hypotheses focus on the quasi-parameter differential birth rates for distinct sectors of the population. In the first place, we argue that a higher birth rate in the population more closely attached to political Islam will demand increased education in Urdu-medium madrassas. In this case, the priority of parents lies less in the social advancement of their children, but in ensuring that their children are embedded in a moral order which offers salvation to all within it. History and contemporary events tell us that this motivation can be as powerful as any direct material interest in social advancement.

Our third hypothesis is that an increase or decrease in the share of the Urdu-speaking middle class will either increase or decrease the demand for Urdu as the medium of instruction in higher education. Note that if this share of the population is growing, the second and third hypothesis do not necessarily reinforce each other if the less elite Islamist population sees their children as becoming educated in madrassas rather than morally threatening secular universities.

Our fourth hypothesis examines the quasi-parameter of global political economic evolution. We hypothesise that Pakistan's increasing openness and dependence on the world economy and political economic culture increases the perceived payoffs from the use of English, which in turn strengthens the demand for higher education English.

These propositions, if correct, allow us to construct an evolutionary dynamic which anticipates the rise of two segregated educational systems—one culminating in the strengthening of English-medium university institutions and supporting elite and non-elite secondary schools and the other culminating in a network of madrassas taught in Urdu as well as intensive instruction in Arabic.

This Greifian framework allows us to better deploy Jack Knight's analysis which stresses conflict over distributional shares as the major reason for institutional change. In his book, Institutions and Social Conflict, Knight presents a study of the " … rationality of social institutions that place greater emphasis on the role of strategic actions (pg 19). Thus, rather than conceiving social institutions as the product of efforts to constrain social actors within a collectivity, Knight argues that "social institutions are conceived as a product of some to constrain the actions of others with whom they interact." This analysis puts much more emphasis on power relations than Greif's approach. As Knight states, "Those "actors with a relative bargaining advantage can force others to comply with the equilibrium strategy of the strong actors whether or not they want to do it and from this it follows that social actors follow the institutional rule not because they are pareto improving but simply because they cannot do better than to follow them." (pg 127)

The distributional issues associated with the struggle between Urdu and English are clear. If a change in rules privileges Urdu over English as the language of government and business, then we would expect to see a flow of competent Urdu speakers into important professional positions at all levels of society. This in turn could push English speakers to more specialised, niche jobs. Our hypotheses, suggest, that those advocating English would include not only the elite Anglicised officials already ensconced in privileged positions, but also those newly educated families of the middle class and lower middle class eager to have their children obtain English competence. This might, (as we noted in the historical narrative) even include Urdu speaking families. Faced with this opposition, advocates for Urdu could attempt to mobilise support from those families and children attending Islamic madrassas. This linkage between Islamism and demands for Urdu-medium higher education instruction reached its apogee during the rule of Zia ul Haq, but since then, the link between these sectors of Urdu-based education has weakened.

The results of any distributional struggle depend on the ability to mobilise populations which believe strongly that their future would be improved or threatened by any change in government policy. One major source of power for advocates for the maintenance of English is the simple fact that the medium of instruction in higher education is already English. This reality confirms Knight's argument that already

existing institutional relations might force subordinates to adapt to, rather than resist institutions. In addition, the existence of English instruction requires parents to invest in English-language training for their children. The fact that commission's studying the question of language in universities always picked fifteen years as the point when Urdu utopia would be reached suggests a great reluctance of policy makers to disrupt these plans. While the term 'crypto-morality' i.e. "the secret adherence to one morality while practicing another in public" (Greif, 2010, pg 229) was developed by Greif to describe how norms and beliefs prescribed by the state can persist within an oppressed community, we argue that this concept can be modified to describe the contradictory behaviour of political elite who, on the one hand, advocate Urduisation but, on the other hand, take measures which permit their cohort's children to attain high quality education in English.[11]

IV. CONCLUSION

The institutional interpretive frameworks we have deployed have the advantage of forcing the analyst to consider changes in long-term background factors which can restructure the payoffs from a particular action and unleash distributional struggles for changes in rules which can further cause net benefits to evolve. While Greif's approach focuses on shifts in norms and Knight considers struggles over rules, these approaches can be used together when certain movements in quasi-parameters create contradictory tendencies. This analysis provides a way to synthesise this modern, more general approach to social change to a more 'old fashioned', Marxist emphasis on how the reproduction and intensification of social contradictions can lead to distributional struggles. The advantage of this approach is that the analyst need not limit him or herself to the issue of class division. Moreover, the lack of a teleological conviction on how history should move allows the analyst to develop a more open-ended set of hypotheses about institutional change.

In the case of Pakistan, we have argued that increased educational attainment in the general population in combination with the continued ability of the Anglicised elite to maintain English as the primary medium of instruction in higher education has reinforced the use of English. Potential countervailing movements in quasi-parameters, such as the rise of Urdu medium madrassas, have not undermined the elite use of English because Islamic education has given rise to self-segregated educational systems in which the two student populations do not interact. Moreover, the relatively small number of native Urdu speakers within the population of Pakistan has also limited the ability of Urdu advocates to push forcefully for dramatic linguistic changes within universities and colleges. Finally, we also suspect that political economic globalisation has also reinforced the perceived payoffs from the use of English.

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[11] Greif (2010) uses the concept of crypto-morality to demonstrate how moral beliefs persist in societies despite dictatorial regimes and pressure for change: In hostile institutional environments minorities "pretend to hold the institutionally sanctioned moral belief, while secretly holding and transmitting another morality to their children" (Greif, 2010, pg 229). Hence, crypto-morality ("Crypto" from "kryptein", Greek for "to hide") is practiced by the common citizens in the face of a hostile state. Greif (2010) refers to various historical episodes including the former communist states to provide support for his narrative.

We have also noted the disconnection between the struggle of shifts in the medium of instruction at all levels of Pakistan's educational system and the meagre budgetary support for such changes. In this sense, Hamza Alavi's original argument that the state of Pakistan remains an instrument of an elite remains salient, even if his identification of English with neo-colonial rule is undercut by the growing non-elite popular support for the use of English.

These conclusions are tentative, but a strength of our use of these institutional theories of change is that our claims can be empirically investigated both by surveying different sectors of the population about their attitudes towards English education and by more closely exploring the groups behind contemporary disputes on language policy. Understanding the linguistic fractures bedevilling Pakistan is essential if Pakistan is to construct a more inclusive educational system that can overcome rather than reproduce its deep social divisions.

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