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**An Estimate of the Nature of Pakistani Civil Society**

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**Abstract:** Civil society as an independent identity distinct from state is the product of modern struggle for the division of public and private spheres. Till very recently the terms state and society were used synonymously with the term civil society most often used for the state. However, the modern trend for democratization of polity has brought about a clear division between state and society with the state concerned only with the activities of the public sphere while the civil society with the private sphare. However, in most of the developing states the distinction between the two is still imprecise. This paper investigates the nature and status of Pakistani civil society and highlights the various hurdles in the way of an active, vibrant and functional civil society. The paper shows that the dominant role of the military, extra specialized role of the bureaucracy, centralization of power, non-independent role of the judiciary and discouraging role of the political institutions have been the main hurdles restricting Pakistani civil society with the results that it has remained controlled, restricted and emasculated during both the civilian and military governments.

Keywords: State, Civil Society, State, centralization of Power, Non-governmental organizations and voluntary institutions.

1. **Introduction**

Civil society is a term mostly used for autonomous social units and associations outside the domain of government which have attained sufficient degree of independence. Previously, the concepts of state and society were applied interchangeably to mean state only and the state was idolized controlling every aspect of human life. The Greek sages (Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) and even the Modernists (Hobbs, Locke and Rousseau) used the term civil society to mean state [28]. This assumption of using the term society for state was a contributing factor supporting past totalitarianism where the state denied any personal/private space for activities such as culture, religion, family and private life. Adam Ferguson, David Hume, and Adam Smith (the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers) were the pioneers who clearly presented the term civil society as a complex net of human relations distinct from the State. Ferguson opines that this demarcation of civil society from the state was rendered necessary by the emergence of state despotism where the state tried to emasculate the society [17/16]. English philosopher also made a valuable contribution to the field of state-society relationship. Kant made no distinction between state and society while Hegel [16] thought civil society as a domain for the open struggle of economic elements and self seeking individuals. Hegel understood society as the ethical life between the family and the state. For him civil society and the state were antonyms where the society was totally independent from the state [48/264].

Marx disagreed with the past research in the field and thought of civil society in term of the autonomous realm of private property and market relations [44]. Antonio Gramsci [15], while upholding the central Marxian approach, separated economy from the civil society and related it to the state and its cultural politics. For him civil society was manifested in the shape of trade union, schools, church, and other associations through which the ruling elite use its hegemony/domination over the society. Cohan and Arato [12] argued that the trends of civil society are against stateism and promote the optimal way to describe the latest common modern form of self organization. This shows that civil society is a dynamic concept which has passed through a process of metamorphosis throughout the history. As Giner [14/304] says, “[t]here is no such thing as the classical conception of civil society. There is a Lockean interpretation, but there is also a Hegelian one; and then there are Hobbesian, Marxian and Gramscian theories of it.” What keeps civil society unite is not the boundaries of a state but rather the values, ideas, social capital and networks [28]. However, state and society work as two complementary and indispensable elements that are detached but contiguous, distinctive but mutually dependent internal articulations of the social system as a whole [7/44]. The growing interest of researchers and academicians in civil society, especially in 2000s is the result of growing awareness in the areas of political pluralism, clash of civilization and conflict of identities [44].

The term civil society has been variously defined by different scholars in the field for example, Keane [25/14] says that society constitutes all of the voluntary cultural and economic institutions that have to do with sphere of actions “outside of the domain of state,” and may apply various kinds of pressure on the institutions of state for retaining their independenc as against the state while M. Lutfullah Karaman and Bülent Aras [24] reveal that the keystone of democratic civil society is the liberty and autonomy from the political hegemony. Qadeer [1997: 5 as cited in 35] is of the opinion that Pakistani civil society is discernible in contemporary social institutions, such as labor unions, political parties, media and press, community organizations, citizen clubs and in traditional structures such as clans, neighborhood organizations, village, ethnic communities, traders associations, social networks and religious orders. These are middle structures regulating, balancing and influencing the state, and also organizing joint efforts in public affairs.

Pakistan’s civil society has been dominated by the state during both military and civil regimes alike. Pakistani political culture has not been developed to provide for an autonomous and developed civil society with the results that its basic components could not act as controlling body over the arbitrary working of the state. The enforcement of official ideology and narrative has stunted the growth of a functional civil society. Various restrictions were imposed on the citizens’ basic rights in one way or the other. Consequently, the state has remained the main controlling agency over the society [22/17]. Aqil Shah [41/358-9] opines that “The nature, composition, and development of civil society in Pakistan have been shaped by several interrelated factors: a lingering legacy of colonial rule where the colonial state controlled the society, the peculiar demands of postcolonial state formation, the ruling elite’s need for political legitimization, and long periods of military rule”. The ruling elite willfully controlled and depoliticized the public sphere [41/360]. State accountability to the people, individual rights, dissent, freedoms of expression and critical thinking, decentralization and provincial autonomy were distorted for defense needs and security threats by unfriendly neighbor states: India and Afghanistan. Rizvi [38] mentions the domination of state’s coercive arms over the political institutions that has restricted the growth of a viable society more than other factors. Malik [30/4] argues that in Pakistan the progress of state and society is imbalance. The state since independence has developed while the civil society has remained stagnant. And the crucial point is that this state’s expansion has been at the cost of essential civil organizations ‘including the political parties, constitution, judiciary, pluralism, free media and other activist groups outside the public sector. State power in Pakistan has been increased at the cost of society with the result that the non-representative state institutions (civil-military bureaucracy) manage the reins of society. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (hereinafter Bhutto) (1971-77) further enhanced the state’s position in cultural, educational and economic spheres by his nationalization process where he nationalized industries and some of the educational institutions where the state further bereaved the society of its independence. On the other hand, the legal and political institutions have also not played an independent role. The role of the judiciary, civil and military bureaucracy, political parties, and the centralized character of the state will show how civil society has been kept weak and underdeveloped.

1. **Judiciary**

Pakistan’s judicial history is rich but a bit complicated. Pakistani courts have been highly responsive to political dynamics and have time and again bended their decisions to support the civilian and military regimes and have declared time and again that the military coups are constitutionally justified with the dubious actions of the presidents/dictators legalized under the ‘doctrine of necessity’ which being an anathema has restricted the independence and autonomy of the judiciary, with the result that the civil society in Pakistan has remained controlled with the fundamental rights of the people restricted. Cohen [13/57-8] is of the view that this situation has arisen because majority of the Pakistan’s judges were Mohajirs and had a strong ideological loyalty to the new state than constitutionalism. Mushahid Hussain and Akmal Hussain [19/55] are of the opinion that in Pakistan the judgments of the higher judiciary "reflected 'ground realities,' including [the] mood of [the] masses [and the] preferences of the power structure”. Since the independence of Pakistan, its benches (with the exception of Justice Cornelius, Justice Rustum Kyani, and Justice Iftihar Chaudhry) have been upholding the arbitrary rules and acts of the military generals and upholding their government's supra-constitutional authority and accepting the fused executive, legislative and military powers in the office of military executive [32/91; 22/11, 51-2].

The performance of Pakistani Judiciary is contextual. Its judgments in various cases represent domestic power dynamics. For example, during military rule, the courts have given judgments in various cases supporting the rulers and those judgments are highly democracy retarding decisions for instance, the decision in the case of Tamizuddin (1955) where the Supreme Court invalidated the Sindh High Court’s writ issued against the Governor General’s order regarding the dissolution of the first Constituent Assembly and upheld Governor General’s order as constitutional [10/86-7]; the Dosso’s case judgment(1958) upholding General Ayub ’s martial law; Supreme Court’s judgment confirming ban on the National Awami Party (1973) enforced by the then government; the Supreme Court’s judgment in the Nusrat Bhutto’s case legalizing Zia-ul-Haque’s martial law (1978); and the Supreme Court’s decision in the case of Khwaja Tariq Khan which declared the national and provincial assemblies’ dissolution in 1990 as constitutional. However, there are some of the judicial decisions which are democracy-promoting like decision of the court in the case of Usif Patel (1955) barring the Governor General from constitution making by National Convention [10/90]; the judgment in the case of Asma Jilani (1972) which declared the transferring of power to Yahiya Khan as illegal, unconstitutional and hence usurpation thus reversed the judgment given in Dosso case; the decision in the case of Benazir Bhutto (1988) which declaring political parties as citizen’s basic rights thus fundamental for election; the decision in the case of Haji Saifullah (1988) restricting the presidential power to dissolve the assembly; and the decision in Nawaz Sharif’s case which further restricted the arbitrary power of the president . According to Tayyab Mahmud [29], the superior judiciary of Pakistan during 1947-72 was independent enough to provide a strong protection of freedom of religion because the religious scholars (ulema) were not more aggressive. However, the superior judiciary of Pakistan during 1973-83 retreated from her position of explicit protection of freedom of religion of religious minorities.

1. **Civil Bureaucracy**

Three reasons can be put forward for the immense power which civil bureaucracy has acquired in Pakistan; a) Jinnah’s severe illness soon after partition, b) incompetence and mediocrity of leaders that came after Jinnah, and c) the incompetency of the Muslim League to reconcile the pluralist ethnic and political groups [22/29]. Bureaucratic domination in Pakistan is a colonial legacy because before independence, the areas comprising Pakistan were relatively constitutionally less developed and were more under direct bureaucratic rule [47/83]. So in the subcontinent the co-existence of bureaucratic authoritarianism with procedural democracy has been one of the long-lasting legacies of colonial rule [21/19]. The mindset that “The civil society should be managed, governed and controlled and it is the bureaucracy that can do that” has also helped in retarding the growth of a functional civil society.

Bureaucracy must be accountable. This accountability should be to the people through their elected representatives. The accountability of the bureaucracy demands that it should be restricted to its instrumental role. To make it accountable it must be controlled by the political institutions-the parliament, the executive, political parties, interest groups etc. In Pakistan the political institutions have not been developed enough to restrict bureaucracy to it role. Fred Warren Riggs [36/158] opines that the chief executive can control bureaucracy, both civil and military, only if he has a power base outside the bureaucracy. This means that he requires an extra bureaucratic power base to control bureaucracy. But history shows that executive has always been dependent on the bureaucracy for various reasons. They are always short of legitimacy and have no power base in the masses. So to gain legitimacy and acquire a power base, the executives have been dependent on the bureaucracy rather than the masses. In the same vein, the political parties as political institutions were not tolerated to develop by the colonial masters. They groomed the bureaucracy because the colonial masters were concerned with the preservation of peace and collection of the revenue, the functions which only bureaucracy could effectively perform. Similarly, the legislature, as a political institution is also an instrument restricting bureaucracy. However, its power to do so depends, Riggs [36/124-9] says, on the electoral system, political parties and interest groups. In Pakistan, the interest groups, the electoral system and the political parties have been unorganized, ineffective and not autonomous and have failed to perform their specialized functions. This situation has given major cushion to bureaucracy to perform extra-bureaucratic functions because when the political institutions are incapable to restrict bureaucracy to its specialized functions, it inevitably acquires a major role in policy making . The bureaucracy then resists the various reforms in the society which threaten its privileged position, through various methods and means [11/167-86].

1. **Military**

Being a developed institution the military has, through various means, kept the political and societal institutions weak and dwarfed. Societal and political institutions and groups have remained fragmented and stagnant under the military hegemonic conditions-conditions which according to Saeed Shafqat [40/8-9] have produced anti-system movements. Aqil Shah [41] opines that military’s role in the politics of Pakistan has contributed to the pitiable societal development while Shafqat [40/255] argues that both civilian and military governments in Pakistan have been controlling the resources of the civil society and have been hindering the development of political parties and autonomous groups. Repeated military interventions in politics, along with the enforcement of martial law, derailing of the political process and the weakening of political and societal institutions and norms have restricted the growth of civil society in Pakistan. It is therefore, vital to investigate the contributing factors of the military’s strength in Pakistan.

Military in Pakistan has full control, either directly or indirectly, over the political and societal institutions and groups. Army has been a decisive element in the politics of Pakistan because of having unfriendly relations with both Afghanistan and India [37/51-7; 46/124] and, according to Cheema [9/137] and Malik [31/145] the cold war when Pakistan army was purposively supported by the US to fight communism. The military’s powerful role, Rizvi [37/16-22] argues, is ascribed to multiple factors including weak economy, vertical and horizontal divisions in the society, lack of unity and vague national identity; lack of disciplined and well organized political parties, political leadership and interest groups; weak democratic traditions, army’s west-oriented temperament, its well organized structure, its monopoly over the instruments of war; its hierarchical structure and esprit de corps; the longing of the civilian leaders for retaining an efficient and strong army to face the hostile environment, and the deployment of the military in ‘non-professional’ fields. Aziz [5] is of the opinion that the dominance of military in politics is due to its consciousness of her interests -the outcome of historical institutionalism and path dependency theory (the result of the colonial history). Newberg [32/10] argues that “The army helped to keep parliaments at bay; by absorbing a huge share of the national exchequer; the military influenced the distribution of resources [and] the nature of domestic political debate”. The comparative strength of the military (and not merely the underdeveloped nature of political organizations as Huntington [18/196-8] claims) has helped in its intervention into politics and no independent group, political organization or class has been permitted to grow under its hegemonic control [40/12]. Zia expanded military’s role further when he said that "Pakistan's armed forces were responsible for not only safeguarding the country's territorial integrity but also its ideological basis" and "preservation of that ideology and the Islamic character of the country was...as important as the security of the country's geographical boundaries" (the daily Muslim, March 14, 1984) thus providing the military the power to intervene into politics in order to defend Islam and Pakistan’s Ideology. Strong religious enthusiasm has also supported the existence of strong military.

Another argument for the strength of the Pakistani military is that it has been continuously trying to achieving economic independence. Pakistan military has established a number of organizations like Fauji Foundation, Army Welfare Trust, Shaheen Foundation, Bahria Foundation etc. for the betterment of both serving and retired workforce. These organizations are the military’s economic arms like the Turkish “Army Mutual Assistance Association”. These organizations are claimed to be nongovernmental and are considered to be parts of the society, but in reality they are the tools of the state, the military, which manages them. So, the state supervises society by its tools which are claimed to be nongovernmental. Some other profitable projects have also been started by the military for gaining more economic autonomy besides allocating and distributing land to the retired military officers .

About all of the Pakistani civilian governments have been controlled by the military. Muhammad Khan Junejo’s government was dissolved in 1988 because he took some decision against the military’s wishes for example, Naik Mohammad, a Major General, was replaced by Aslam Hayat, a civilian, as Director Intelligence Bureau without the consent of Zia [40/216]; he signed the Geneva Agreement on Afghanistan without Zia’s approval; constituted an independent and impartial inquiry on the incident of Ojri Camp; and replaced Sahibzada Yaqoob, a Lieutenant General and Zia’s man by Zain Noorani as a Minister for foreign affairs [40/217]. In 1990 Benazir Bhutto’s government was dissolved because she removed in May 1989 the ISI’s (Inter Services Intelligence) chief, Hamid Gul, a Lieutenant General, and appointed him as corps commander, Multan against the army chief’s advice [40/228]; she interfered in the Army Selection Board’s process and tried to extend the term of Alam Jan Mehsud, a Lieutenant General and corps commander Lahore [40/230; 45/367; 27/47, 228-9]. Nawaz’s government was dissolved in 1993 because he had developed difference with army over the question of sending Pakistani forces against Iraq in August 1990 [38/210-11]; General Beg, the then COAS, issued a statement in July 1991on the mounting danger of Pak-India war which Nawaz was not agree with; he appointed Javed Nasir, a Lieutenant General, as Director General ISI against army chief’s consent [38/211]; and had developed disagreement with the military over the Operation Clean Up launched in Sindh [38/212]. Nawaz’s government was again dissolved in 1999 because of his interference in the military high command [5/48; 43/40]. His stand on Kargil issue and peace initiative with India in 1999 were seen with distrust by the military [43/40; 30].

Cohen [13/130] argues that army cannot address problems faced by the country (having no specialized experience in them), nor is it ready to allow other state institutions to grow and develop. When in power, the military cannot tolerate other’s mistakes while the saga is that its own performance has sometimes worsened the situation. Cohen [13/158] is of the view that Pakistan’s military thinks that it must veto any civilian decision that affects ‘national security’-a concept so broadly defined that not only includes purely military matters but also foreign and domestic issues, economic policy, budgets, and many other areas which are of interest to military. Zia said “[W]hen the political leaders failed to steer the country out of a crisis, it is an inexcusable sin for the armed forces to sit as silent spectators. It is, primarily, for this reason that the army had to intervene to save the country” [23/129]. When the civilian government has mass support and has power base in them, the government can control the army. For example during his initial days Bhutto implemented many reforms affecting the army. However, when his power base in the masses eroded, he sought army’s support which the army thought as a golden opportunity (for reforms see 37/213-6).

1. **Political Parties**

Being the essential conditions of democracy, political parties are liaison role between the society and government. However, in Pakistan since independence we have no well disciplined and organized political party to perform that function. Muslim League, a party of the Muslims of undivided India for establishing Islamic unity to achieve Pakistan was confronted with three main weaknesses: a) it had no consensus on the future program; b) had no agreement on addressing regional claims; and c) had no organized party cadres in the Muslim-majority provinces [2/104]. To defend its position as the Indian Muslims’ only representative party, it started to harass the opposition who were accused as both traitors to Pakistan and Islam. Furthermore, Liaquat Ali Khan, first prime minister of Pakistan, said in 1950 that “The formation of new political parties in opposition to the Muslim League is against the interest of Pakistan” [46/93]. League’s leaders had started to equate the nation with the Muslim League; “If you destroy the League you destroy Pakistan” [Miss Fatima Jinnah quoted in 39/83]. Muhammad Ali Jinnah even recommended that there should be no other party besides Muslim League [39/83].

Pakistan’s civil and military rulers have used state machinery to harass dissenters and opposition through repressive and oppressive rules, ordinances and imposition of governor’s rule and have provided many opportunities to army and bureaucracy to intervene into politics with brutal consequences for democracy and political stability and civil society. Both civilian and military governments have used various ordinances (used as political instruments) to punish political opponents and supervise rather stunt the development of the society’s organizations [for the various ordinances see 40/38-9; 37/64-5, 101-2; 32/79]. Ayub Khan (1958-69), besides the above instruments, introduced “Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies Registration and Control Ordinance” in 1961for controlling voluntary organizations. The state started restraining both the religious and secular institutions of society fearing that they will help in establishing a functional civil society which might criticize state policies [35]. This attitude of intolerance and non-accommodation has resulted in the restriction of political and civil liberties, discriminatory accountability, absence of consensual and accommodationist culture and violence [46/12-3].

During democratic eras the political parties have created a sort of authoritarianism with the objective of muting and weakening the opponents rather than adopting the principles of cooperation, accommodation, tolerance and conciliation for establishing a democratic polity [40]. Bhutto provided a purely parliamentary constitution in 1973. However, the later amendments to the constitution distorted parliamentary democracy, restricted criticism of the government, constrained the fundamental rights, and restricted the powers of judiciary. Bhutto applied almost full emergency powers. Mian Mahmud Ali Kasuri (People's Party Law Minister) had warned in early 1973 that, “Once elected, the federal and provincial heads of government will be absolutely irremovable . . . the prime minister will become a virtual dictator . . . the president of Pakistan will be like an appendix in the human body." In fact, Bhutto's use of military power, hostilities against politicians, provincialists, and opposition parties etc. sounded apprehensively like military dictators. The way he manipulated the constitution beyond any opposition, the state power and its constitutional apparatus resumed dictatorial colors [32/26]. In such circumstances civil society was virtually handicapped. To weaken the opposition, Bhutto in May 1974 amended the constitution to empower the PM (Bhutto) to declare a political party as illegal if it works against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan. The National Awami Party was declared illegal using this amendment. Using Burki [8/72-3] words “His aim was to create a one-party state with himself at the top like a Napoleon”. Bhutto equated government opposition with anti-state activities and, as Newberg [32/118] says, “responded to opposition by bringing all the power of the state to bear against it: first intelligence units and paramilitary forces, then civil and military courts and finally, the army”. The National Alliance Party (NAP), which was working for minorities’ rights, won 10 out of 20 seats while no seat was won by the PPP in Baluchistan Provincial Assembly. On various charges, which Siddiqi [43/64-7] claims to be doubtful; Bhutto dissolved the NAP-JUP coalition government in Baluchistan in 1973, thus ushering into a period of increased nationalism and militancy in Baluchistan. Bhutto never tolerated opposition and used various tactics to mute it. He established his personal paramilitary force, the “Federal Security Force” (FSF), in 1972, to emasculate the opposition [40/177-81]. Thus the lack of effective opposition and several layers of security, Ziring [49/144] demonstrates, Bhutto was untouchable with dictatorial power. Media was tolerated if not critical of his actions or policies and only favorable coverage was allowed [42/344-5].

Similarly, Zia, when came to power, initiated a sterner rule. He abolished political parties when they criticized his government; jailed people who questioned his orders and restricted courts’ jurisdiction when they disapproved his orders. The “doctrine of necessity” was applied to enfeeble civil society [32/26]. Zia banned media, political parties, labor unions, student organizations, at all levels [34/118]. Zia’s PCO (Provisional Constitutional Order) 1981 was a mighty instrument against society organizations which empowered the executive and equipped him with wide emergency provisions. Amendments were made in Pakistan Penal Code’s Section 499 to take legal action against the editors of newspapers for unfavorable publications [4/85]. All decisions, actions and orders by the regime could not be questioned "in any court on any ground whatsoever" [32/180-1], thus crippling the courts of most of their power; people’s fundamental rights violated and the opposition leaders imprisoned, persecuted, exiled, tortured and subjected to brutal treatment.

1. **Centralization of Powers**

Pakistan has experienced centralizing tendencies since 1947. Jinnah had held 3 most important positions from the beginning: as a Pakistan’s Governor-General; as a Muslim League’s president and as a president and a legal advisor to the Constituent Assembly [23/24]. Khalid Bin Sayeed [39/253-71] argues that Jinnah was not accountable; could adapt and amend any article of the Indian Act, 1935 till April1, 1948; was not bound by the advices of the ministers; could override the orders of the prime minister; could proclaim emergency; and could make laws for any province or take its administration. But Ziring [49/51] argues that after partition the situation was such that Jinnah as Father of the Nation was irreplaceable. The views of state and ethnic elite after independence were conflicting. The former supported centralization while the later favored provincial autonomy and state elite’s "nation-building" attempts were seen as "nation-destroying" by ethnic leaders [2/72] and, Samina Ahmad [1/91] says, the state elite tried to establish a strong and centralized structures, use intimidation and force to repress dissents and co-opted preferred sections of the socio-economic elites. The stress on integrity produces a federal polity only in name with strong unitary tendencies. Every Pakistani leader has emphasized on the existence of a powerful center and has opposed the demand for provincial autonomy. Jinnah said “You have carved out a territory, a vast territory. It is all yours: it does not belong to a Punjabi or a Sindhi or a Pathan or a Bengali…Therefore, if you want to build yourself up into a nation, for God’s sake give up this provincialism” [13/205].

Ilhan Niaz [33/62-83] argues that centralism was the product of the inefficiency and inexperience of the provincial elite to administer provincial matters and their readiness to leave them to be dealt with by the center. Although both Pakistan and India have received similar administrative structure from Britain, the former has experienced a more centralist and authoritarian rule because Britain considered the regions constituting Pakistan strategically more important than economically and were unstable requiring military for suppressing the local rebellions and also Afghanistan and Russian’s expansionist designs. This policy of centralism and authoritarianism was sustained by the successive governments [46/53-65]. Every constitution of Pakistan has empowered the central government with the provincial autonomy reduced to a farcical status. This centralization resulted in ethnic divide in Pakistan as the small provinces have resented the Punjabi-Mohajirs domination of the state [27/21].

Both the military and civilian rulers have adopted an approach of authoritarianism which has resulted in disunity, economic degradation, and dissatisfaction and estrangement of the minority provinces. When not in government, Bhutto [6/8] said “The tragedy of Pakistan lies in the fact that although federalism is most appropriate for our conditions, nevertheless…Pakistan has been called a federation in name only. In practice, it has remained a quasi-unitary state...In the name of a strong centre the powers of the provinces were weakened to the point of being extinguished”. But he demonstrated quite contrary when he became the chief executive. Similarly, Nawaz Sharif during his second term (February 17, 1997–October 12, 1999) acted dictatorially to tease and remove anyone including the chief justice and the army chief [26/473]. The answer to Pakistan’s survival and progress, as Talbot [46/183] also indicates, is not in maintaining bureaucratic centralism, but in a consociational sort of power sharing mechanism, taking into account state diversity which has been buried by the traditions of non-accommodation, intolerance and viceregalism with the resultant catastrophic consequences. The disintegration of Pakistan (1971) was the price paid for over-centralization.

1. **Conclusion**

Pakistani civil society till recently was stunted, muted and depoliticized with less activism during both civilian and military rule. Military rulers banned political parties and political activities, disqualify opposition, repress political dissents, and weakened the courts. Media was control and emasculated not to publish or contain matters endangering the internal and external affairs including academic publications criticizing the government policies specially during Ayub Khan’s rule which was a “watershed in defining relations between state and society in Pakistan, as its main political legacy was centralization of state authority by cementing many of the political distortions that arose in the first decade” [21/55]. During democratic era of 1988-99 NGOs were intimidated with their activities controlled. Nevertheless, the NGOs have tried to safeguard the non-state sphere through instruments like Pakistan NGO Forum (PNF) [41/363-4].

However, Pakistani civil society is not non-existent. It is exists in the shapes of women associations, bar councils, labor unions; doctors, civil servants and engineers’ associations; student bodies and chambers of commerce with national repute. Pakistani civil society got momentum in 1969 in the shape of a protest movement when students, labor unions, engineers, lawyers and doctors jointly brought down the military-backed regime of Ayub Khan like a house of cards. A number of organizations are working in Pakistan for democratization for example, multiparty system; the opposition and criticism which the civil society organizations have leveled against the authoritarian tendencies like a countrywide protest against the 1999 military coup, the unlawful confinement of politicians, the unlawful constitutional amendments, and Musharraf’s referendum. Media associations like the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) and Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) are constantly criticizing government’s policies that try to curb freedom. Similarly, the Pakistan Institute for Labor Education and Research (PILER), the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), the NGO Resource Center (NGORC), the Social Policy Development Center (SPDC), and Madrasahs (religious schools) and Islamic Charities render priceless services to the society [41/368-9; 30]. Nawaz manifested absolute power with absolute majority in the National Assembly during his second term but it was only the Press which took up the gauntlet to challenge his dictatorial power. NGOs play a vital role in Pakistan. Take the example of the WAF (Women Action Forum), APWA (All Pakistan Women Association), FWCS (Family Welfare Cooperative Society), TK (Tehrik-i-Khawateen), Edhi Foundation, or CBO (Community-Based Organizations). APWA tries to improve the status of women in Pakistan and has strongly opposed women rights abuses and has raised voices against the customs of karokari and swara .

The civil society in Pakistan can be made more active, vibrant and functional if the main obstacles restricting its progress are removed. These impediments are bureaucratic centralization, imbalance democratic process, dependent role of judiciary, intolerance of opposition, colonial legacy, army’s dominant role, violation of civil rights and liberties, and state’s ideological structure. Talbot [46/93] mentions weak political culture (traditionalism, feudalism, lack of accommodation and tolerance, lack of accountability and transparency, family-centered and personality based political parties, army control of civilian domain, weak and underdeveloped political institutions and judiciary and lack of democratic values) as the main factor responsible for the stunted growth Pakistani civil society.

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