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# Political Culture in Pakistan's Domestic and Foreign Policies<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Several factors are cited as shaping public policy in Pakistan. Elite interests, institutional structures, and public opinion are among those usually identified. But to fully capture the enduring patterns in domestic and foreign policies also requires examination of the underlining influences of political culture. Only by reference to Pakistan's popular political culture and the country's various political subcultures can we understand the predisposing forces contributing to policy outcomes and a frequent resistance to change. The paper will posit the importance of clashing subcultures for explaining obstacles to a consensus on national identity, the uncertain acceptance of democratic institutions, and the difficulties in implementing social and economic reforms. It will also argue that political culture is necessary to appreciate attitude toward national leadership, the tolerance of corruption, and the country's ready acceptance of conspiracy theories. The frequent difficulty in reformulating strategic foreign policy choices is also shown to be traceable in part to base values in political society. The paper will conclude by suggesting missed opportunities by Pakistan's leaders to modify the political culture in the national interest.

A country's domestic and foreign policies are normally explained in terms of the pursuit of national and elite interests, the determinations of individual leaders, the constraints of institutional and situational factors, and even the influences of popular opinion. Yet these explanations are incomplete if we also fail to recognize a country's deep-seated political values and

predispositions, usually identified as its political culture (or cultures). Political culture orients individuals and groups toward more specific attitudes and behaviors. Without the recognition of the role of political culture we cannot understand a country's more enduring policies or appreciate the possibilities for change.

Political culture as depicted in this paper should be distinguished from the concept of national character. The latter, an older concept, was essentially a collection of stereotypical impressions of a people immutable to change. Political culture, by contrast, while distinguishable from attitudes and opinions that are often mutable with persuasion and a changing political climate, can evolve slowly. Only national traumas in the form of watershed national events seem capable of transforming elements of political culture more rapidly.

There is no direct way to catalogue the principal elements of a political culture. It is often possible to look behind opinion surveys for evidence of cognitions, evaluations, and feelings to find underlying orientations to the political world. We have also have a window to the substance of a political culture from its political and social institutions.<sup>2</sup> The way different elites and non-elites relate provides reliable insights into their political culture. Indeed, the relationship between the governors and the governed and what expectations they have of one another, as well as how the rulers and citizens view their own roles can be highly revealing.

Democratic political systems would seem to require supportive or complementary culture. Cultural explanations tend to identify traits in society, its values and norms, which either ease or impede the acceptance and implementation of liberal policies. Important empirical studies have singled out certain individual qualities that underlie mass support for democracy. Inglehart identifies these as a tolerance of out-groups, interpersonal trust, emphasis on civil rights and political participation, and a sense of subjective wellbeing.<sup>3</sup> As a precondition for a liberal polity, political culture collectively embodies those values or norms that contribute to a pluralist

system, fairness in application of the laws, holding leaders responsible, and participation in matters affecting one's fate. A case is often made that an open society also underpins the acceptance of free enterprise, contributes to a work ethic and integration into a world economy. If so, elements of a political culture that contribute to a liberal state may be essential to the full flowering of economic development.

Political culture does not of course offer a wholly adequate explanation. Certain structural conditions such as those in the legal and institutional environment may better explain the opportunities and obstacles to policy reforms. Individual leadership qualities and predilections may offer more parsimonious accounts for behavior. Political culture, with all its value as an analytic tool, should never be seen as an ultimate precondition for understanding change or stasis. There are more than a few examples of where a country appears to have transcended its past and its deposited values. Conversely, a country may appear to have predisposing democratic values and still be unable to realize democratic institutions. In a reversal of causality, political regimes can strive to create a supportive culture. Not infrequently, elites will also allege that a political culture is too immature to carry democratic reforms.

This paper examines Pakistan's popular political culture and five of its subcultures. It should enable us to better understand the absence of a consensus on national identity, ambivalence over democratic institutions, difficulties in achieving the rule of law, and obstacles to building support for social and economic reforms. Political culture can help us appreciate popular evaluations of national leadership and a penchant toward conspiracy theories. Normative predispositions among decision makers are also useful in explaining the emergence and persistence of strategic policy choices toward regional neighbors and more distant states. The discussion will conclude by suggesting missed opportunities by Pakistan's leaders to modify the political culture in ways that could contribute to the national interest.

Pakistan's political culture is not exceptional. Although those predispositions toward the political world that stand out are in some contrast to more homogeneous and secular Western political cultures, they bare resemblance to other later developing countries. Predictably, Islamic norms stand closest to other Islamic states. Even then, however, Pakistan's political values have been fashioned in ways that are reflective of its own historical narrative. The means by which Pakistan's base political values have been transmitted and inculcated through processes of socialization also give the culture distinctive aspects.

As in other political cultures, socialization to Pakistan's popular culture and its several subcultures is usually subtle. Much of it occurs through the family and begins early in life. State schooling consciously seeks to create common national values, and religious education and indoctrination through madressas and mosques also leaves a strong imprint on the young. The electronic media creates or reinforces orientations for large numbers of people. Military service offers another powerful means to transmit value through programmed socialization. We must also distinguish between socialization in urban and rural areas and the variance that exists in both.

It is fair to ask whether someone not native to Pakistan can make an informed assessment of its political culture. Even decades of acquaintance with the country and its political scene cannot substitute for an understanding that comes with personal maturation within the society. Still, there can be some advantages in being an outsider for formulating perceptive, unbiased observations. No example better exemplifies this than the observations of the French nobleman Alexis de Tocqueville who, a little more than a half-century after American independence, traveled to the United States and wrote a still treasured commentary about its political system and society. From this we can take some comfort in knowing that it is possible to have insights, free of condescension, that can contribute to a better understanding of another people's political culture.

## **Popular Political Culture**

Rather than a dominant mass or popular culture, Pakistan's has a pluralistic or mixed political culture, some might say a fragmented culture. But before trying to differentiate and disaggregate that culture, it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of two major orientations that seem to permeate the political system. Both are ultimately consequential in setting broad parameters for policy makers. Perhaps the most visible feature of this normative political landscape is *a weak consensus on national identity*. While there may be an overriding Pakistani political consciousness as a result of nearly 60 years of statehood, there remains strong disagreement over what larger purpose the nation is meant to serve. Differences are apparent between those seeking a progressive and modernizing state as opposed to a theological and traditional one. Is it Pakistan's destiny to create a just political order among South Asians, or does it also have a broader mandate to link its ideals to Muslims elsewhere?

Whether and how Pakistan can be both an Islamic and democratic state remains unresolved. Plainly, popular support for the tenets of democracy eroded sharply during the 1990s. The system has continually struggled to reconcile majority rule and minority rights. Despite the strain of egalitarianism that runs through Islam, can state institutions and policies be entrusted to the choices of a poor, ill-educated electorate? Or should Pakistan's citizens defer to more qualified elites? And what recognition and power should be accorded to the differences among Pakistan's people expressed in their primordial ethnic, sectarian and tribal loyalties? To what extent are these identities compatible with the Pakistan's national identity? The answers for individuals and groups form their evaluations of political reality and its imperatives.

The absence of consensus of course explains differences in prescribing the role of religion in shaping governments' policy priorities and the sectarian conflict and intolerance toward religious minorities that is endemic. It is also needed to

understand the resentments of the less populated provinces toward Punjab. Support for the Kashmir cause and the largely Pashtun insurgency in Afghanistan reflect not so much varying stakes felt by Pakistan's ethnic, sectarian and regional populations as differing assumptions about the mission of the Pakistani state. Division produces efforts by the country's leaders to promote issues that promise to unify the country. Whatever the righteousness of the cause, the enduring Kashmir dispute and the need to maintain strong defenses against an Indian threat to Pakistan's independence are used to compensate for a weak national identity. Yet there is reason to believe that the public in Pakistan is more inclined toward an accommodation with India than are those elites who have a vested interest in the perpetuation of an adversarial relationship.

A second and related general feature is Pakistan's political culture is its *anemic civic culture*. Strong civic cultures are ones that are participatory rather than passive, and are built around the normatively legitimated activities of organized interests. As elsewhere, the extent to which a civic culture is participatory or passive does much to determine how people are governed. Pakistan displays features of a participatory culture in its often-vigorous independent print media and the open expressiveness of a small number of professional and business associations. As religious movements move toward organized political action they can also partake in the civic culture.

In the main, however, the sense of obligation by the public to participate in the political process is weak. Pakistan's civil society appears primarily passive by most measures, whether gauged by voting participation or the role of private voluntary organizations. Popular action, when it occurs, tends to be ad hoc. At its core, the passive civic culture results from a weak sense of efficacy among citizens that their participation can be consequential. The lack of effective unionism is one manifestation and perhaps the absence of a reforming zeal another. Some detect more generally a continuing erosion of political community throughout the country brought on by a breakdown of social bonds needed for people to work together.

A deficiency of public trust goes hand in hand with a weak civic culture. It results in a deep cynicism toward Pakistan's political institutions and a passive acceptance of government corruption at all levels. Although opposition parties regularly use the issue of corruption to dethrone incumbent regimes, the public is mostly reconciled to unethical behavior among all politicians, not excepting some religious leaders. The popular desire may be for a more just society, yet the public is largely resigned to having those in political life be greedy and manipulative. Cynical popular views may serve as a defense against disappointment but also inhibit mobilizing support for reform efforts.

No popular movements have emerged as they have in other countries to challenge the civic morality of those who govern. Nor is there visible a popular expectation that political leaders and parties can deliver on promises. In fact, there is little pressure on those who seek office to present substantive programs. Demands for political and economic reforms, as often as not, come from external pressures on Pakistan. Despite the visible inequities in the legal system and also total absence of government delivery on social goods or provision of a welfare safety net, the public remains largely reconciled to a status quo.

Of nine Muslim countries and six with large Muslim minorities in a World Values Survey conducted from 1999 to 2001, Pakistan (in 2001) had the smallest proportion seeing politics as "very important" in their lives. Only 4 percent labeled it as "important" while 80 percent named religion. Among Pakistanis, 50 percent reported discussing political matters with friends, roughly 40 percent occasionally and only 10 percent regularly. On this measure, Pakistan ranked clearly ahead of only Morocco among the countries surveyed. When respondents were asked about confidence in their national government, less than 35 percent answered in the affirmative, and only 10 percent expressed a "great deal" of confidence." The level of confidence expressed was considerably lower than in any other Muslim country surveyed. By comparison in Pakistan, the level of confidence in the religious institutions was almost 90 percent, in

the press, just under 50 percent. When the survey asked whether democracy, despite its problems, was better than any other form of government, only 40 percent of Pakistanis answered in the affirmative.<sup>4</sup>

Rather than looking to the political process and its institutions, the public in its desire for change and recognition of the obstacles places its faith in larger-than-life figures. These individuals are expected to somehow transcend the difficulties and be able to rectify perceived injustices and overcome hardships. But since no individual can possibly realize such high expectations, disillusionment follows. All the nation's heroes are ultimately pulled from their pedestals. Only the iconic Quaid-e-Azam has been spared, likely by his tragically short tenure as the nation's leader. Others who rose initially to high public esteem were all destined to disappoint and had ignominious ends. The most recent aspirant to national savior status, A. Q. Khan, has escaped this fate despite his tarnished legacy of personal gain. His non-political persona and his more narrowly defined historical role may have made this possible.

Where most citizens of Pakistan feel helpless in the face of larger forces shaping their lives, a willingness to embrace conspiracy theories deeply colors the popular culture. This predisposition is fed by a general distrust of official explanations, the feeling of never being given the full truth by authorities. Intrigue and deception are seen as the rule, not the exception. The result is a popular willingness to embrace wild conjectures that have the least measure of plausibility. More straightforward, parsimonious explanations are readily dismissed. A receptive public cares little that these theories cannot incorporate unintended consequences or that they portray perpetrators as unerring and omnipotent. Moreover, the lack of hard evidence presents no handicap; indeed, it only goes to demonstrate the depth of the conspiracy and the deviousness of the conspirators.



## **Pakistan's Subcultures**

Different segments of the society have somewhat distinctive cognitive maps of the political world. The cultural mix in Pakistan derives from varied exposures to the colonial legacy and Western influences, but is far more shaped by the country's post-independence experiences of elites struggling to promote their interests. Among others, we single out here five of the most distinctive subcultures: the military, the feudal/political, the Islamist, the bureaucratic, and the cosmopolitan. The discordance among these subcultures gives much of the shape of Pakistan's national politics. Although their competing predispositions bear on social and economic reforms and influence foreign policies, most directly affected are the prospects for genuine and sustainable democratic practices.

### ***Military Culture***

The military operates within a culture that sees itself as saviors, keeping the country together as well as protecting the nation from its enemies. The dedicated socialization process of the military effectively reinforces the idea that is the paramount national institution, the repository of confidence in Pakistan's future. The army prides itself on its professionalism—its incorruptibility and disciplined. It also claims for itself special responsibility for foreign policy and the national defense, and a veto over any domestic policies that could compromise its corporate interests. A sense of entitlement justifies the enormous sums spent to further the wellbeing of those retired personnel who have loyally served in the military's higher ranks.

Cohen describes four distinctive generations into which the officer corps has been socialized.<sup>5</sup> The British generation perpetuated the structures and values of the old Indian army. Among its normative features was its highly secular orientation. The second generation, post-1955, was the American. Aside from adopting U.S. military doctrines, this generation thought of itself as bearers of modernity but at the same time developed an inflated sense of its martial qualities and exaggerated feeling of

superiority over its Indian army counterparts. A Pakistani generation between 1972 and 1982 saw increased efforts to re-professionalize the military after the 1971 debacle. But it was also more socially conservative and Islamic, assets, as Rizvi points out, that have enhanced officers' career advancement.<sup>6</sup> The fourth generation has recruited its officers from a broader societal base for whom the army has become a vehicle for social and political advancement. It is also more parochial in its views, leaving it more suspicious of those outside the Islamic world. While religiosity is in greater evidence in the officer corps, efforts are made to weed out extremists or anyone, for that matter, who might put another loyalty above that of the military.

Because the army strives to have it appear that it is acting in the public interest,<sup>7</sup> it is not unmindful of democratic and constitutional prescriptions and it periodically finds it necessary to justify actions as lawful and legitimate. Still, where the country's generals believe that they are the final arbiter on what is good for the state, its culture cannot be compatible with democratic norms or a liberal constitution. As Zehra writes, the army seeks "special status in society that would give it immunity from criticism and civilian-managed accountability."<sup>8</sup> The army has contempt for the traditional political class, civil society, and the media. The army presumes to have the responsibility to take the reins of government. A civilian leadership viewed as having failed by its policies to secure the nation or one that has in any way threatened the military's corporate interests cannot be tolerated.

Whenever the army has become embedded in politics it has never been able to find a formula by which to extricate itself. Civilian leaders who have dared to challenge the army, either by trying to wrest control or by forcing it to share power, have failed badly. As prime minister, Z.A. Bhutto was thwarted in his attempt to bypass the army with his own Federal Security Force, and Muhammad Khan Junejo in the same office was removed when he sought to exercise powers independently of General Zia's. Nawaz Sharif met the same fate when he tried to gain

ascendancy over the army through the appointment of loyalists in key army positions.

No small part of the military culture is socialization to the belief that India, the country's implacable enemy, has never reconciled to Pakistan's independence. This is drilled into its officers at the Pakistan Military Academy, the Military Staff College and the National Defense College. The promotion system insures loyalty and conformity to the norms and also the continuity of the military culture over time. The cognitive picture of Pakistan engaged in an eternal struggle with India serves to rationalize the army's claims on the country's resources and, indeed, its very ascendant position politically. The norm of hostility carries with it not only far reaching implications for Pakistan's politics but a deep-seated suspicion of any moves toward reconciliation. The military's traditional hard line may, however, have moderated in recent years.

Underlying the military perception of the United States is the belief that the Americans cannot be trusted. There is an inclination to view Washington's policies, notably in the Islamic world, skeptically and often with contempt. U.S. policies in the Middle East are frequently considered as naïve. At the same time, the military has no desire to alienate the United States. It values American military equipment and continues to believe that Washington can do more to pressure India on Kashmir. Pakistan's military ties to the United States are also viewed as serving to constrain any preemptive armed attack by India. Pakistan's leadership is ever heedful that a complete break with the United States could push Washington into a full strategic relationship with India.

### ***Feudal Political Culture***

Elite feudal values in Pakistan and hereditary politics leave a distinctive imprint on Pakistan's political landscape. And through cross-memberships, feudal norms also infuse the cultures of the military, the civilian bureaucracy, and an urban industrial class. Political engagement by large landowners has

always offered a preferred way to defend class interests and the status quo. And constituency-based economic and social power has enabled feudal families to dominate the country's political class. Feudals have over the years successfully blocked serious land reform and other distributive policies, as well as social reforms. As Husain has written, "In a modern liberal system, government has to . . . concentrate on providing social goods, e.g., education, health and security, and a predicable, competitive, open and fair environment for private activities. In a feudal system, provision of social goods is not important, since society at large is not important. Transactions are important since that is how favors and penalties are dispensed."<sup>9</sup> Their power has also given feudals, their families and friends, privileged access to lucrative contracts, government funds, and profitable enterprises. Their weak sense of civil obligation is clearly expressed in their avoidance of taxes. Illegal activity is perceived as an entitlement of power that is, in any case, justified by the attitude that everyone is engaged in the same behavior.

Feudal politics is a contest for personal status and privilege. With parliament as the main arena, election to office is expected to satisfy individual ambitions but is virtually free of principles or programs. Any beliefs tend to be sectional and parochial rather than national and inclusive. Political competition is highly personalized in a serious game of winners and losers, usually vulnerable to bribery and intimidation. Personal loyalties rather than achievements are what matters. The culture can easily justify political bribery, corruption and nepotism. The ideals of good governance are given only lip service. Not bound by orienting ideologies, individual political loyalties can change opportunistically and easily. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the last ideologue to hold power, but he soon abandoned his socialist following in favor of his feudal cohorts. As Duncan has written, Bhutto was the first (and only leader) to convey to the people that they mattered.<sup>10</sup> He succeeded briefly in mobilizing the support of the intelligentsia, the educated class, and also captured the imagination and hopes of the masses.

The values of the feudal political class are essentially incompatible with those of a liberal democracy. The feudal system does not require a literate, politically aware citizenry and, in fact, seeks to keep one from emerging. A concerted effort is made to avoid stirring popular passions. It is an exploitative relationship or, at least, one of conveying the obligations of noblesse oblige. The business of politics is conducted in an informal manner that abhors transparency and accountability. Rather than offering a popular check on the privileged, democratic institutions are used to legitimize this elite's claims to power.

### ***Bureaucratic Culture***

Like most of the subcultures, the civil bureaucracy leans toward conservatism and the protection of privilege. As defense, the bureaucracy displays an insularity and detachment. No doubt the "Brahmanism" of which it is often accused is inherited from its colonial forbearers. For much of Pakistan's history, marked as it is by discredited popular institutions, the civil service has carried most of the burden of governance. Even when the political actors have tried to lead, bureaucratic cooperation must be won in order to realize policy objectives. The administrative class has been called "benevolent despots, whose destiny is to rule the people."<sup>11</sup> Its own self perception would at least agree as to its destiny.

The government bureaucrat strives for respect. Often, he demonstrates his power by the very arbitrariness of his decisions. Civil servants try to avoid taking responsibility for decisions, not being conspicuous. Although prized, efficiency and effectiveness are undermined by a hierarchic system of management. The professionalization to which he may proudly subscribe encourages impudence and arrogance rather than accountability and transparency. Members of the bureaucracy consider themselves responsible to their own professional norms but not to public scrutiny. The bureaucracy sees no reason to be representative or responsive. Though many in the bureaucracy have a commitment to public service, it is their sense of privilege

and low estimation of the public that is more visible. At least some departments of the bureaucracy offer opportunities for considerable financial self-enhancement. Being in position of higher authority is for many a license for enriching themselves at the public's expense. The bureaucracy lacks neither the means nor the will to cleanse itself.

The Pakistani bureaucracy has traditionally worked with the military, their interests and opportunities overlapping. Both cultures are predicated to keep intruding political forces at bay. The military depends on the bureaucracy to implement its vision of the society and safeguard it against interference from a political class perceived as incompetent and venial. The bureaucracy counts on the military to stave off its penetration by the politicians and their parochial goals. Z.A. Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif sought to "reform" the bureaucracy to better implement their policies and, in effect, politicize it. Both sought to dominate the bureaucracy not to curb its exploitive ways but to enhance their own personal control over the national levers of power.

There is a sense in both the bureaucratic and military cultures that mendacity in public expression can be a virtue. Obfuscation and feigned ignorance are justified when used in the furtherance of what is portrayed as in the national interest. Information can be manipulated for the greater good. Yet the usually cozy relationship between the bureaucracy and military is not infrequently strained. The military has no illusions about the civil bureaucracy. It views its own administrative capacity as superior in being more competent and less corruptible. Under military regimes, key public institutions are often run by retired military officers, never more so than since 1999. Understandably, members of the bureaucracy are not pleased when their own career ladders are shortened or distorted.

### ***Islamist Culture***

The Islamist political culture is meant to be the repository of religious truth and tradition. The culture joins Islam

with the practical aspects of governing to which it seeks to provide a moral basis. Adherence to the culture provides an agenda for Islamic politicians but also offers Pakistan's secular leadership a reference against which the country's policy makers gauge their discretionary boundaries. For some it has also been a valued source of legitimacy.

Outside of Pakistan, Islamic political culture often seems ambiguous about where it stands on liberalism and democracy—not only because there is suspicion about the ancestry of these principles, but also because the sources of Islamic authority offer no definitive guides. With parliamentary systems and free markets so readily identified with Western values and practices, there is always the challenge of making these institutions acceptable, often only after having shown that they are not anti-Islamic. The case against liberalism's transferability to the region often draws on its historical associations with imperialism. The non-Muslim world is also described as fixed too much on the purely political components of democracy. Islamic democracy is often described as incomplete without social democracy and the promotion of economic justice.

The Islamist political culture in Pakistan has demonstrated its compatibility with those institutions and processes associated with the country's constitution and pluralist politics. But the same culture that motivates religious party parties also orients jihadist groups standing outside the political system. In either case, rather than following an older tradition in South Asia that focuses on personal responsibility through spirituality, this culture gives legitimacy to political activism. When in political opposition, Pakistan's religious parties have stood in the forefront in agitating for freedoms of expression and competitive electoral politics. Participation in the political system is conceived of as the legitimate vehicle for implementing and securing basic doctrines. Although mainly identified with socially conservative goals, the culture is also predisposed toward promoting economic reforms, including land redistribution and welfare policies. At the same time, radical,

extra-system Islamic groups find in the culture support for violent means to further an almost exclusively religious agenda.

While the parties and movements they represent are perceived as cleaner than other political forces, many individual religious party leaders are widely known to use their positions for personal enhancement. In political life, most religious party leaders are as political expedient as other politicians. Despite doctrines espousing equality, most religious parties are as hierarchical and prone to hereditary leadership as their more secular political adversaries. Like them, moreover, the religious parties are not adverse to cooperation with authoritarian regimes.

Predictably, Islamists' strongest clash is with the cosmopolitan culture of Western educated, oriented Pakistanis. The Islamist political culture is steeped in an anti-Americanism that also offers a way to attack Pakistani regimes aligned with American policy. There is a predisposition toward conspiracy theories that find American policies antagonistic to Islam and designed to weaken the country's defenses and corrupt its educational system. There is also a culturally rooted antipathy toward India. Islamist beliefs set the outer limits on the kind of policy initiatives that can be employed in negotiations with the New Delhi government, especially over Kashmir. For the Islamists the struggle over Kashmir involves not only justice for Kashmiri Muslims but also the greater goal of liberating the Muslim minority of Hindu India.

### ***Cosmopolitan Culture***

Those who are described as belonging to a cosmopolitan subculture are relatively small in number. They reside in the country's urban centers, and are comparative well off and educated. Because they have a major presence in the media, higher education, and the professions, their voices in national affairs are heard disproportionately. They are the vanguard of the country's modernizers. Their subculture gives priority to a national identity over more parochial attachments. But their values are also visibly fashioned through contacts with Europe



and the United States. Some sharing the cosmopolitan orientation also find their points of reference in the Arab or Muslim countries. All apply external standards in their normative evaluation of Pakistan's politics

Members of this subculture also identify with the Jinnah legacy, which they interpret as having prescribed for Pakistan a tolerant and liberal society. Most are displeased with in the political direction that the country has taken over six decades and lay blame on the country's leaders for having discarded Jinnah's vision. The cosmopolitan culture best articulates Pakistan's democratic goals. Its members are among those in the forefront in arguing for minority and women's rights. Curiously, however, little of the energies of the cosmopolitan class have been dedicated to pushing progressive policy agendas and social reform. Instead, its members seem as preoccupied with protecting their privileges and assets as those identified with other subcultures.

The cosmopolitan culture rejects the military's ascendancy in Pakistan's politics. Although in its disillusionment with the country's civilian leaders, its members have often welcomed military rule as a means of restoring democracy, the honeymoon with the military is never long lasting. Despite being culturally inclined toward the West, those subscribing to the subculture can be highly critical of its policies. Many have grown increasingly distrustful of the U.S. and resentful of what are considered its double standards, including what is perceived of as a willingness to tolerate Pakistan's military-led government.

### **Conclusion: Culture and Democracy**

The patterns of political culture help to fill in a picture of Pakistan's politics and society that is otherwise incomplete. Pakistan popular culture forms the boundaries of public policy. However, it is the orientations and values of elite subcultures that most directly determine the direction and substance of public policy. These subcultures reflect the often-deep fissures in the

values of the society and its political system. They also contribute to those differences. In many respects the divisions over the identity and goals of the Pakistan state have widened and complicated the job of policy making in addressing some of the country's most formidable challenges domestically and in foreign affairs. It is often responsible for what appear to be conflicting, contradictory, and self-defeating policies. Using the prism of political culture offers particular insight into the inconsistencies and obstacles in furthering a democratic Pakistan.

The failing of Pakistan's democracy over nearly six decades, measured by long periods of authoritarian rule and flawed civilian democracies, is in no small part because of the way certain elites in society pursued their interests and the fashion in which those who rule as democrats discredited their mandate. Still, despite the battering they have taken—demonstrated in prevailing popular attitudes—democratic aims in the country survive. Western notions of democratic values and institutions still find largely hospitable soil in Pakistan. From an ideological-constitutional standpoint, democracy does not represent an alien goal in the country. Such basic beliefs as representative government and rule of law remain to a large extent part of the society's aspirations.

The popular culture contains a deep yearning for justice. Writing in 1989, Duncan observed that Pakistanis continue to hold a faith in the law despite their cynicism that the courts can be impartial and independent.<sup>12</sup> Although that faith has undoubtedly been further tested in recent years, citizens no doubt retain the desire to live in a predictable, safe environment governed by a rule of law, be it secular or religious. Together with other elements of a functioning democracy they wish to be free of arbitrary authority. For all of respect usually accorded a military that prides itself on defending the country from its enemies, a substantial portion of the public believe that civilian rule is Pakistan's normal mode of governance and that the constitution should be the touchstone for those exercising authority.

That Pakistan also has another powerful heritage of values from which to draw, its Islamic traditions should not preclude accommodation with democratic norms. To the extent that democratic representation is viewed as promoting the common good and public welfare, there can be harmony with Islamic doctrine.<sup>13</sup> Most in Pakistan find no moral problem in believing that they can remain true to an authentic Islam and also realize the liberties and material benefits identified with the West. Pakistanis want to vote, form parties, hold their officials accountable, as well as retain their faith in Islam.<sup>14</sup> Even while materialism, individualism, and Western morality may draw disapproval, those Western liberal values—when identified as civil and human rights, equality before the law, representation, and individual liberty—are viewed positively. As Touqir Hussain has observed, for all of its culture and interest clashes “The nation seems to have a great resilience, a strong will to survive, and a faith-based sense of optimism and exceptionalism.”<sup>15</sup> The case can be made, then, that Western notions of democratic values and institutions should find a more hospitable soil in Pakistan than elsewhere among Islamic states, none of which have a comparable democratic foundation.

In order to realize a generalized political culture that strengthens Pakistan's capacity for sustaining an open and stable polity, certain changes would no doubt contribute. Ideally, among these, the military will need a better sense of the limits of its capacity to govern and a fuller recognition that its interests are unsustainable where Pakistan fails to develop in competition with its neighbors. The bureaucratic culture will be required to adapt a different set of obligations to the public it serves. The politicians will have to agree to a new set of rules that govern competitive behavior in a sustained political process, and that places national priorities ahead of personal and parochial concerns. The Islamists must find ways to reconcile traditional values with a Pakistan that also aspires to be a modern nation state. And members of the cosmopolitan elite must find ways to better translate their liberal values so they can be absorbed by the larger society.

Given the resistance to change of political cultures, none of this is bound to happen quickly. Still, the expanded electronic media offers many more opportunities for communicating reoriented values to large numbers of people. Periods of national trauma have already been mentioned as providing greater opportunity for modifying basic values. So too may those critical regime changes that promise to push aside older constellations of power. Conceivably, Z.A. Bhutto's assumption of power in 1971 and Pervez Musharraf's in 1999 were such times. In both cases, hoped for changes in the basic rules of politics and the recruitment of a new breed of people into political life did not occur. Instead, the leaders, concerned with securing their regimes, returned to familiar practices rather than seeking far-reaching changes in the political landscape. In any case, any political reforms designed to allow Pakistan to become a more functional state and cohesive society must also address needed transformations of its political cultures, both popular and elite.

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