

## CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE POLITICS OF PAKISTAN (1948-1958)

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### Abstract

*This research seeks to enhance our understanding of the crisis of political leadership that Pakistan had to face as a newly emerged country. The primary objective of the paper is to find out factors behind the crisis of leadership. Inefficiency and internal clashes and rivalries of political leadership resulted in the empowerment of non-elected institutions like civil and military bureaucracy. The article applies a mix method approach and relies on the primary and secondary sources. The study argues that after the death of its founder, the political leadership of Pakistan was mostly incapable and inexperienced in handling the affairs of the state that paved way for the non-elected institutions to capitalize their role in the political matters and ultimately becoming the supreme authority. This study suggests that the crisis of political leadership was one of the major fundamental causes in destabilizing the country politically. The political leadership was so busy in power politics that they yielded their authority to the civil and military bureaucracy who became dominant during 1948 to 1958.*

**Keywords:** Crisis, Leadership, Democracy, Politician, Military, Bureaucracy

### INTRODUCTION

The achievement of Pakistan was a result of conscious, deliberate and dedicated efforts of the different prominent Muslim leaders, led off course, by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Other prominent leaders were Syed Ahmed Khan, Agha Khan, Syed Amir Ali, Maulana Muhammad Ali, and Allama Muhammad Iqbal (Hayat, A Leadership Odyssey, 2021). All of them contributed in their own way to the Muslim separatist political movement. This movement was led by Syed Ahmed Khan. Through his dedicated efforts, Muslims were declared as separate political community having separate political demands. The separatist movement was a response to the British political system introduced in India which divided its inhabitants into a majority and minority communities. Jinnah as a prominent leader not only focused on the basic rights of the Muslims of the united India but also moved away from the traditional political definition of the 'Muslims' of the leadership of Aligarh movement and changed the simple Muslim community into a political force. Unfortunately, majority of the Muslim leaders after the creation of Pakistan were unable to play any constructive role for the betterment of the country

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The civil-military bureaucracy sat on the driving seat and ran the affairs of the state. It actively interfered in the political matters of the country (Hayat, A Leadership Odyssey, 2021).

Similarly in the provinces, most of the politicians were inexperienced as they assumed offices for the first time. They had no idea how to handle the state affairs. The reason perhaps was their personal political clashes. Governors of the three major provinces, namely East Pakistan, West Punjab, and North West Frontier Province were British and former civil servants. Although Jinnah was handling all important matters in the center as Governor General and as president of the constituent assembly of Pakistan but after his death, the leadership of the country could not prove competent enough to handle national policies. The civil and military bureaucracy became very powerful. The supremacy of hierarchal institutions was created and their constant interference in



the elected institutions was also a factor that played a significant role in destabilizing the political scenario of the country. Despite the fact that Jinnah wished bureaucrats to not interfere in political matters but at the same time he feared that bureaucracy would not leave its British traditions in the new state (Ziring, *Pakistan: The Enigma of Political Development*, 1980). He expressed his feelings in his address to the civil servants that they should perform their duties only as servants of Pakistan and their colour, cast and creed should not affect their responsibility in the new state (Afzal, 1989).

Soon after the creation of Pakistan, the bureaucracy was required to run the affairs of the state as British ruled India through their services. Beside that Pakistan faced many other challenges. It lacked infrastructure and a foreign policy base. It also had financial problems and for a year it depended on Indian currency with a Pakistani stamp to run the affairs of the state. It lacked all sorts of facilities and the menace of Indian aggression was looming high that caused a survival issue.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The book, *Charismatic Leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah* discusses in detail the qualities of Jinnah that made him a great and charismatic leader. It discusses Jinnah's ability to steer the ship of Muslim independence by attracting more and more people to the cause of a separate state for Muslims (Hayat, *The Charismatic Leader: Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Creation of Pakistan*, 2014). For a year, Jinnah was though successfully coping with and managing the affairs of Pakistan but after him a crisis of leadership hounded the country that led to the uncertain political future as civil and military bureaucracy was assuming a prominent role.

Hamid Yusuf in his work, *Pakistan: A Study of Political Development 1947-97*, covers the constitutional and political development during different governments and martial law regimes (Yusuf, 1999). However, He did not discuss in detail the crisis of leadership that paved way for the empowerment of civil and military leadership.

Similarly, Keith B. Callard's *Political Forces in Pakistan*, highlights the difficulties faced by the new state and political instability during 1947-1958 (Keith B Callard, 1961). He, however, also misses the mainstream leadership and its role in identifying and finding solutions of the problem that ultimately caused the strengthening of civil and military bureaucracy in political affairs of the country.

### METHODOLOGY

Descriptive and analytical methods are used in this research. Both primary and secondary sources are utilized for the conduct of this research. This research is based on books, journals, newspapers, magazines, reports, speeches and statements, civil and military gazette, unpublished dissertations and online data like articles, videos of interviews and documentaries.

#### **Leadership Crisis during 1948-58**

Pakistan emerged as an independent country on the map of the world on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947. With its emergence, it adopted a parliamentary form of government to run the affairs of the state envisioned in the interim arrangement of the Indian Independence Act of 1947 (Akhtar, 1974) which in return was based on Government of India Act 1935. The interim arrangement was to be replaced by the new constitution of the Constituent Assembly (Malik, 2001) that was formed for the specific purpose of drafting the constitution. Many members of Constituent Assembly were belonged to constituencies that did not become parts of Pakistan after partition. In the new interim government, the governor general enjoyed substantive powers of appointments to high state officials of judiciary, civil and military bureaucracies. He also had the power of the dismissal of federal legislature and imposition of emergency in the country. A council of ministers was constituted to advise the governor general on important issues of the state. Although, in parliamentary form of government, the beauty lies in elections for transferring powers to the elected representatives but during the first decade, no elections were held which became the very first barrier in the way of democracy to flourish in the country.



Pakistan's hopes and despairs after independence had also much to do with its founding fathers. That is why Leonard Mosley calls the creation of Pakistan as "one-man achievement" (Mosley, 1961). Jinnah's death caused more than a leadership vacuum in the country's leadership as Pakistan lost a great leader and founder of the state (Munir, 1980). However while Jinnah's unusual role make him a unique figure, it also represents a weakness of our freedom movement which neither did not create a wider section of big leaders. Those who accompanied Jinnah were mostly not even his pale shadows. The weakness came to be exposed when Jinnah died 13 months after independence. Beverly Nichols had foreseen the danger: "if Gandhi goes, there is always Nehru, or Rajagopalachari, or Patel or dozen others but if Jinnah goes, who is there?" (Beverly, 1944). Jamsheed Marker also mentioned in his book, *Cover Point* that the death of the founder of the state was the end of an epic era and no other leaders were there to fill that gap. Neither any one had the capacity to lead the country. And really when Jinnah went, there was no one there (Marker, *Cover Point: Impressions of Leadership in Pakistan*, 2021). "Quaid-e-Azam's successors did not possess any of his qualities, nor did he command the obedience that had been reserved for Jinnah alone" (Ziring, *Pakistan In The Twentieth Century: A Political History*, 1999). Nazimuddin's appointment as his successor spawned the struggle between the center and the provinces, and between the provinces of Western Pakistan and East Bengal. Nazimuddin was the total reverse of Jinnah, in temperament, in bearing, in experience, in oratory, in all categories where by personalities, notably leaders, are judged (Ziring, *Pakistan In The Twentieth Century: A Political History*, 1999) . The political leadership lacked the administrative experience and dependent upon the bureaucracy to run the affairs of the state. The political role of bureaucracy became wider due to the flaws of political leadership.

Liaquat Ali Khan already in office as Prime Minister assumed power through an established constitutional process. This was perhaps the only occasion in the history of Pakistan when succession in leadership was conducted under recognized norms (Marker, *Cover Point: Impressions of Leadership in Pakistan*, 2021). In Liaquat Ali Khan's cabinet, there were two prominent groups; Bengali school of thought and Punjabi group. There was a basic clash among both groups over the pro American foreign policy. Liaquat Ali Khan did not possess any electoral boundary in the new country. He was a migrant. He strengthened the central government to control the provincial affairs (Nizami, 2006) that made the provinces weaker. Punjabi-Mahajir conflict also erupted vigorously. Liaquat Ali Khan, long in the shadow of Quaid-e-Azam, was eager to assert his leadership and he did not want a head of the state that could interfere with his style of management (Nizami, 2006). Even he did not welcomed criticism from opposition upon the policies of Muslim League. Prime minister once stated that "do not oppose the league... if u destroy the league, you will destroy Pakistan" (Callard, 2011). Being a Prime Minister and President of Muslim League, he encouraged the league to be seen as nothing more than a hand maiden of the government (McGrath, 1996).

The conflicts between Liaquat Ali Khan, Nawab Iftikhar Hussain Mamdot and Mumtaz Doltana in the initial years of the country resulted in destabilizing the democracy. Liaquat Ali Khan commented about Hussein Shaheed Suharwardi and Maulana Abdul Hameed Khan Bhashani for "Dogs let loose by the enemies of Pakistan" (Talbot, 2022). Liaquat's low estimation about the politicians was revealed in the introduction of PRODA (Public and Representative Office Disqualification Act) that could initiate a penalty against the public office bearers in such crimes like nepotism, bribery and corruption etc. PRODA did not apply to the bureaucrats that mean the civil servants had supremacy on the politicians from initial years of the country. Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated at Rawalpindi on 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1951. His sudden absence caused a great vacuum in the political landscape of the country but the people of Pakistan, in their usual resilient manner, went on with their lives (Marker, *Cover Point: Impressions of Leadership in Pakistan*, 2021).

Decline of democracy started from the Liaquat Ali Khan's era. Governor *Raj* was imposed in Punjab for seven months (Mazari, 1999). Bureaucracy was a skilled and an organized institution comprising officers of Indian civil, police and accounts services. When the popularity and significance of Pakistan Muslim League (PML) declined, bureaucracy emerged as an important institution and



played a significant role in the political affairs of the country. Later on, military bureaucracy also joined hands with civil bureaucracy and paved the way for getting direct share of the bureaucracy in the politics of Pakistan. That is why Ghulam Mohammad, a former bureaucrat, came into power with the consent and support of General Ayub Khan (Bashir, 2015).

The gap created by Liaquat's sudden death was filled by civil and military bureaucracy. Khawaja Nazimuddin resigned from the office of the Governor-General and became prime minister. Ghulam Muhammad, who served as a minister in Liaquat Ali Khan's cabinet, became the next Governor General. His induction strengthened civil military bureaucracy (Kardar, 1988). The conspiracy of the Liaquat Ali Khan's murder was planned by senior bureaucrat of Punjab who was also a member in his cabinet (Mazari, 1999). Liaquat Ali Khan was not buried yet, when Malik Ghulam Muhammad nominated his name as a head of the new cabinet in consultation with Mushtaq Ahmed Gormani in Karachi. He was so keen in taking the charge of Governor Generalship that he travelled from Rawalpindi to Karachi. The United States (US) ambassador to Pakistan revealed in his secret telegram about the situation on 15 October 1951 that he had tea with Ghulam Muhammad a day before he had to take oath as a governor general and could not see any fatigue on his face (Nizami, 2006).

The conflicts of interest which originated with Khawaja Nazimuddin and Ghulam Muhammad, gave a new dimension to the political leadership of the nation. Ghulam Mohammad was a Punjabi bureaucrat while Khawajah Nazimuddin was a Bengali politician. Ghulam Muhammad set a mechanism of having all the authority in his hands. He had the support of army too as he extended the tenure of Ayub Khan as Army Chief for four years (Nizami, 2006). It is also a matter of concern that Muslim League had lost its control over state's political matters. It accepted a bureaucrat, Minister of Finance, Ghulam Muhammad as Governor General of Pakistan.

In April, 1953, a strong movement was launched against the *Ahamadi* community in Punjab, engineered and launched to overthrow Khawajha Nazimuddin (Nizami, 2006). Military took over the charge of the city of Lahore on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1953. General Azam Khan restored the peace of the city. Politicians lost confidence of the masses. People believed army as the best administrator and had more trust in them. During the same period wheat shortage crisis was also created in the country. Khawajah Nazimuddin was Prime Minister in 1953 and till that time bureaucracy had overlapped the politicians. Ghulam Muhammad dismissed the ministry of Khawaja Nazimuddin with the help of Ayub Khan, Federal Minister of Finance, Choudhary Muhammad Ali and Mushtaq Ahmed Gormani on 16 April 1953. Muhammad Ali Bogra who was the ambassador of Pakistan in US became Prime Minister and Muslim League also accepted him as its president. Ghulam Muhammad despite of his severe illness was not ready to resign. Muslim League's parliamentary party should not had endorsed the unconstitutional dismissal of Khawaja Nazimuddin by Ghulam Muhammad. It was a huge weakness of the political leadership that they could not take any stand against Ghulam Muhammad.

During Muhammad Ali Bogra's period, Pakistan entered into the agreements of South-East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) (Dingman, 1989) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) (Yeşilbursa, 2020) for the defense of the country. Muhammad Ali Bogra formed a new ministry. Ayub Khan, the Army Chief, became the minister of Defense. The intervention of Army in politics was also strengthened by the appointment of General Ayub Khan as a minister in 1954 reportedly asking to take over (Khan, 1967). Ayub Khan, as Army Chief also visited America in September and October of 1953 without taking into confidence the civil leaders of the country.

On the other hand, Muhammad Ali Bogra accepted the amendments in the constitution suggested by Khawaja Nazimuddin, Fazul Rehman and other political leaders of East Pakistan. The Constituent Assembly of Pakistan abrogated the PRODA Act. But before that Prime Minister take any further steps, Governor General Ghulam Muhammad dissolved the assemblies on 24 October 1954 with the support of Chief Justice of Federal Court and declared emergency in the country. This was the disastrous decision by the Governor General. Speaker of National Assembly, Maulvi Tameezudin challenged the decision of Governor General in Sindh Federal Court which declared the act of



Governor General unconstitutional. Federal government filed an appeal in Federal Court against the decision of the Sindh Court and annulled its decision.

Ministry of Interior Affairs was conferred upon Iskander Mirza and Chaudhary Muhammad Ali, the Secretary General of Civil Services was sworn as a Minister of Finance who was not even the members of Muslim League. All the important portfolios, like Governor General, Premiership, Defense, Interior and Finance were given to the Civil and Military bureaucrats. It was the duty of the politicians to act unanimously against the undemocratic acts of bureaucracy and should have launched a resistance movement against them but they were all busy in political cockpits and squabbles. It was the first civilian martial law that succeeded without any resistance.

After the decision of the Federal Court, the second constituent assembly was sworn in office which consisted of 80 members. The dictatorial rule of Governor General came to an end with the formation of second constitutional assembly. The politician still remained in the background and the centre of authority was only the Head of the State (Rizvi, 2000). Though the first constituent assembly had majority of Muslim League's members but the second assembly had only 25 of them. Governor General avoided general elections in the country to refrain majority of the politicians in the Assembly but when he (the Governor General) fell seriously ill, only 7 members of his cabinet make their way to the assembly out of 14 which caused not only his resignation but also of the Prime Minister. The interior minister, Isikander Mirza became an acting Governor General in his place and the minister of finance, Choudhary Muhamed Ali became Prime Minister. Hussein Shaheed Suharwardi could be the best choice for this designation but instead of politicians, a civil servant was given priority. The constituent assembly declared West Pakistan as One Unit on 30 September 1955 by passing a bill. This decision was taken by the civil-military Leadership of the country which feared the majority of East Pakistan. They wanted to enforce the supremacy of West Pakistan particularly Punjab.

Pakistan succeeded in enacting its first constitution in 1956 which sworn in Isikander Mirza as president of Pakistan. He formed his new political party by the name of a Republican Party. The inauguration of the new constitution saw a bureaucrat with a military background (Jalal A. , 1995). Iskander Mirza as Governor General chose Choudhary Muhammad Ali, for Premiership and himself became the first president of Pakistan. The purpose behind this act was that the elections of National Assembly were near, and since the bureaucracy had deep roots in the country's administration, they had no intention to abdicate powers in favour of public representatives. As bureaucrats and general called the shots, politicians willing to do their bidding were shunted in and out of the office (Jalal A. , 1995).

Four prime minister had their tenure ended in Iskander Mirza's period. Choudhary Muhammad Ali established Republican Party with the support of Iskander Mirza. Politicians were divided over the issue of strengthening democracy and civil and military bureaucracy took advantages of their internal clashes. Choudhary Mohammad Ali could not tolerate the heated environment and resigned on 8 September (Aziz, 2007). His resignation marked the total eclipse of Muslim League in the country. The party had disappeared from East Pakistan in April 1954, it went into opposition in East Pakistan in early 1956; and now it was rooted out from the Central Government (Aziz, 2007). Hussein Shaheed Suharwardy was the next choice of Iskander Mirza. Suharwardy's Prime Minister ship might appear to be a healthy departure from the norms of 'parliamentary government' in Pakistan (Jalal A. , 2007). He qualified for office only after accepting all three of Mirza's conditions: "(1) that he would not alter Pakistan's pro-western foreign policy (2) that he would not meddle with the Army (3) that he would keep the left wing of the Awami League led by Moulana Bhashani firmly in harness" (Jalal A. , 2007).

Hussein Shaheed Suharwardy soon realized that still the president is the real authority. When ignoring his request to call the session of the assembly, he advised Suharwardi to resign otherwise, he would take action against him. This action of the president was certainly dubious and unconstitutional. The next person having a soft corner for Isikander Mirza and a leading personality among the businessmen of West Pakistan, I. I. Chundrigar, became the sixth Prime Minister of Pakistan. He immediately stopped the grant of ten million rupees announced by Hussein Shaheed



Suharwardy for the National Shipping Corporation of East Pakistan. But despite of his utmost desire he could not perform as Prime Minister more than two months.

Feroz Khan Noon, having the vote of 7 members of Republican Party became the 7<sup>th</sup> Prime minister of Pakistan and formed a coalition government. Isikander Mirza took full advantage of the political inability of the politicians. In October 1957, he abrogated the constitution, dissolved the assemblies, both national and provincial and imposed martial law in the country. This was the forceful act by the army. As Ayub Khan later revealed: "I said to the president: Are you going to act or are you not going to act? It is your responsibility to bring about the change and if you do not which heaven forbid, we shall force a change" (Saeed, 1967).

Pakistan's initial years witnessed the decline of democracy not only at the hands of non-elected members of the state but also politicians.

#### **Law and Order Situation**

Many incidents after the creation of Pakistan exposed the inefficiency of the leadership to handle the law and order situation of the country. Khawaja Nazimuddin did not prove to be a capable leader and did not display any capability to handle the law and order situation in the country. In Punjab, due to the anti-*Qadiani* and anti-*Ahamadi* movement, communal riots, looting and burning of shops and destruction erupted in Lahore. To tackle the situation, martial law was imposed in Lahore. This was the very first time when military directly involved in politics which was an ultra-constitutional and undemocratic act. Economy had also been affected due to the immature politics (Wasti, 1991). By then the issue of National language also became complicated. In East Pakistan, several processions were held in favour of Bengali language to be adopted as National Language. In one of demonstrations, few deaths resulted in 1952 and from that year, politics slipped into the hands of the bureaucrats (Wasti, 1991).

President Iskander Mirza declared martial law on 7 October 1958 with Ayub Khan as the Chief Martial Law Administrator (Ahmed M. , 1970). Ayub Khan was associated with the political issues since Ghulam Muhammad and Iskander Mirza era (Yousuf, 1980). Within three weeks of the imposition of Martial Law in the country, he also kicked out Iskander Mirza and became president of the country.

### **CONCLUSION**

The instinctive power, aptitude, character and charismatic personality of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah encouraged him to take up leadership role of Muslim India. He put all his efforts for making the idea of Pakistan a reality and even after the birth of Pakistan, he by the dint of his personality and leadership tried to provide for a strong basis of the new state amidst of so many problems and issues. His untimely death, however, proved a huge setback and created a gap that his successor leadership was unable to fill. They were not even a pale shadow of him. They soon pursued their vested political interests and showed incompetency not only in solution of the problems but also in the identification of the serious challenges of the newly born state. The non-democratic civil and military bureaucracy being trained by the British Government became powerful in the country and thus, overlapped the political leadership of the country.

During the first decade, the ministers were unable to stay in power for a reasonable period. One of the major reasons was the dominance of bureaucracy in politics of the country after the death of its founder. Bureaucracy was much deep-rooted in the national and political affairs of the country that it literally made politicians handicapped. It took advantage of the inter-personal clashes and incompetency of the politicians by promoting factionalism among them. The civil-military leaderships understood the fact that the tradition of a strong party in the country would certainly challenge their power.

With the passage of time, the military establishment also gained more significance in the face of a serious law and order situation. The military became a major stake holder in the power politics of the country and in partnership with the civil bureaucracy; it captured powers and relied on civil bureaucrats in place of political parties. Political leadership was maligned and accused for being the major source of the sorry affairs in the country.

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