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STATE MAKING, WEAK STATES AND FOREIGN POLICIES: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN

State formation in most Third World countries continues to be an incomplete process, both in terms of territorial consolidation and institution building. Besieged as they are with their internal and external insecurities, these states have been characterized as the 'weak states'. Although in the present literature this phenomenon is primarily used to analyze the state-society relations in Third World countries, this paper will argue that it is also a critical variable in shaping their foreign policies.

This paper is divided into two parts. The first part outlines the conceptual parameters of the term 'weak state' and the second part discusses its implications for the foreign policies of Pakistan and India in a comparative perspective.

STATE FORMATION AND 'WEAK STATES'

In theoretical terms, there is no single understanding of the 'weak state' concept. A range of scholars have attributed divergent meanings and conceptions to this phenomenon. For example, Caroline Thomas associates state strength/weakness with institutional capacities of the state. She distinguishes two forms of state power - despotic power and infrastructural power, and argues that weakness of the state hinges upon the paradox that the more the regime attempts or needs to exercise coercive machinery of the state (despotic power), the more

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directly repressive the regime's actions against its competitors in the internal security arena, the more obvious is its "weakness".¹

Joel Migdal views the state-society relations from a "weak state-strong society" perspective, in which the state ends up using substantial coercive force largely to protect the existence and privileges of the elite holding office at the expense of the bulk of the society.² For Barry Buzan, the "institutional expression of the state" is only one of the three components of the state, the other two being the "idea of the state" and "the physical base of the state".³ While emphasizing the critical minimum requirements of size and population and of institutional capacity for an entity to qualify as a state in the system, Buzan considers the 'idea of a state' as the most important factor, in the sense, how and why people identify with the idea of the state articulated and represented by those in power. A distinguishing feature of the weak states, therefore, is "their high level of concern with domestically generated threats to the security of the government".⁴

Although none of these definitions gives a complete picture of the weak state concept particularly from the point of view of analyzing its external policies, we can identify some broad characteristics of a 'weak state' that will have a bearing upon its foreign policy making enterprise.

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1. Caroline Thomas, "Southern Instability, Security and Western Concepts: On an Unhappy Marriage and the Need for Divorce" in Caroline Thomas and Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu (eds.), *The State and Instability in the South*, New York St. Martin Press, 1989, p. 182.
 2. Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 207.
 3. Barry Buzan, *Peoples, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd edition, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991, p. 65.
 4. Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983, p. 67.

Firstly, such states are marked by weak institutional capacities. State formation in most Third World countries is signified by a consistent pattern of increasing centralization and concentration of powers in the hands of the top leadership - mostly the executive - resulting in delegitimizing and weakening the state institutions to perform effectively. This is also true for the foreign policy making institutions, which are either not developed enough or not assertive enough to influence the behaviour of those at the helm of affairs. And that is why, foreign policies of these states are often designed to serve the narrow interests of a particular ruler or the regime in power as distinct from national interests of the state in question.

Secondly, the institutional balance of power in the weak states is tilted in favour of the non-elective *vis-a-vis* the elective institutions, or bureaucratic *vis-a-vis* the political institutions of the state apparatus. These processes of state making are characterized by growing bureaucratization and militarization of the state structures that weaken the political arm of the state and undermine its democratic institutions. These growing trends of authoritarianism have a paradoxical effect of weakening the state capacities and increasing the political vulnerability of the power wielders.

The third characteristic of weak states refers to their problems of national identity and social cohesion. The processes of national integration in most Third World states often assume the necessity of forging new loyalties to the centralizing state through formulation of a 'national culture' or identity and erosion of 'parochial' ethnic identities. But in multi-ethnic societies, this is often matched by a counter-tendency, reinforcing the ethnic identities precisely because the highly centralized political structures reduce the opportunity for a sense of community to develop among the ethnic groups, especially if they perceive themselves to be dominated by a single group of the society. In other words, the harder the ruling regimes try to inculcate a 'national identity' among their populace from above, the more it is likely to result in different ethnic identities asserting from below their

social distinctiveness and demands ranging from regional autonomy to an outright secession. This results in weakening of the state structures and constraining their options for conflict management in the ethnic sphere. A weak state, thus, feels threatened and vulnerable from both within and without.

State formation, however, is a continuous process and weak states are not an end product, but only reflect the nature of the state in a given historical context. Further, as much as they shape the foreign policies of these states, the processes involved in state making are themselves influenced by a host of external factors. The following section will examine the linkages between these two processes in cases of Pakistan and India.

STATE MAKING AND FOREIGN POLICY

Pakistan

The first and foremost question that arises is whether Pakistan and India fit the description of a weak state. For Pakistan, the answer is 'yes'. While scholars differ as to how the military-bureaucratic axis had usurped the state power in Pakistan, there is no doubt that since the early years of independence, they have completely dominated the state apparatus, leaving little space for its political institutions.⁵

5. Hamza Alavi argues that because of the colonial development, the institutions of army and bureaucracy were "overdeveloped" relative to the ruling classes and they, therefore, controlled the state power right from its inception and have assumed a "relatively autonomous role" within the state apparatus. See, Hamza Alavi, "The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh", in H.P. Sharma and Kathleen Gough, (eds.), *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia*, New York, Monthly Press Review, 1973, pp. 152-153. Ayesha Jalal, on the other hand, argues that there was nothing pre-ordained about the dominance of military and bureaucracy over the state structures, and explains the shift in the institutional balance of power in their favour in terms of an interplay of domestic, regional and international factors. See, the chapter on "Constructing the State", in Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence*, Cambridge, University Press, 1990.

Right from the outset, Pakistan had started its state formation on a weak footing, faced as it was with the daunting task of constructing a new and viable central government from the scratch, coupled with problems of asserting the state authority over its far-flung provinces geographically separated by a thousand miles of Indian territory. However, it was the external threat from Afghanistan over 'Pakhtunistan' and, more significantly, the initiation of hostilities with India over Kashmir that played a critical role in shaping its state structures in such a way that the institutional balance of power gradually shifted towards its military-bureaucratic elite.⁶ On the one hand, the defence imperatives of the newly created state, besieged by external and internal threats, persuaded its leadership to invest the state's meagre resources in building and modernizing its armed forces at the expense of its political institutions, such as Parliament and political parties. On the other hand, its acute defence needs drove the leadership in the lap of the U.S.A, both for financial assistance to stabilize the internal political situation and in its search for modern arms and external military ties to counter-balance India. As a *quid pro quo*, it was too willing to barter away its external independence by agreeing to toe the U.S. line in its external and defence policy.

This, in turn, would have serious consequences for the institutional balance of power within Pakistan. In its fight against Soviet communism, the U.S.A. was also wooing Pakistan as a potential ally and, having pinned its hopes on the Pakistani army, it fully supported the latter's moves to assert its authority *vis-a-vis* the political forces within the power structure of that state.⁷ There is a

6. Jalal, *ibid.*

7. Jalal discloses that in July 1951, a U.S. State Department policy brief had stated explicitly that "the kingpin of the U.S. interests in Pakistan was its army". *ibid.* p. 181. It may be noted that it was Pakistan's Army Chief, General Ayub Khan, who had negotiated the military package with the US authorities with a firm backing from Iskander Mirza, and Ghulam Mohammad, the Governor-general. Mushahid Hussain also cites a number of instances where American Ambassadors or State Department officials were

widely shared belief among the Pakistani scholars that, time and again, the U.S. has subsidized the military rule in Pakistan. Right from Ayub's days when Americans openly talked of 'strengthening his position', to Yahya Khan's period when U.S. Ambassador Horace Hildreth was referred to as the 'real Prime Minister of Pakistan', and to more recent times when Robert Oakley was labelled with the title of 'Viceroy',⁸ the U.S. involvement in Pakistan's domestic politics has been all pervasive and somewhat intrusive.

Given a weak domestic base, regimes in Pakistan have also relied on intimacy with America to bolster their domestic confidence and signal to their political opponents that the U.S. is lined up behind them. In other words, the road to Islamabad lies through Washington. Events following Benazir Bhutto's victory in November 1988 parliamentary elections bear witness to this. Pakistani establishment's reluctance to accept Benazir into the fold of its power structure was apparently overcome only after two important American visitors, Assistant Secretary of Defence, Richard Armitage, and Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Murphy, had visited Pakistan. It was under their auspices that a 'deal' was brokered between Benazir Bhutto and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan. Further, as Mushahid points out, on both occasions - 29 May 1988 and 6 August 1990 when two different Presidents sacked two different Prime Ministers by dissolving the National Assembly - the last visitor to see them was the American Ambassador.⁹ Arnold Raphael met with General Zia-ul-Haq

consulted on crucial domestic and foreign policy issues. See, Mushahid Hussain and Akmal Hussain, *Pakistan: Problems of Governance*, New Delhi, Konark, 1993, pp. 29-36 and 110-114.

8. Mushahid Hussain, "Profiles of Washington's Viceroys", *The Nation*, 6 August 1989. Hussain also reports that Robert Oakley had the rare distinction of personally sitting in the meetings of the Afghan cell which took all policy decisions on the Afghan question.
9. See, Mushahid Hussain, "May 29 Mini Coup: The Foreign Policy Dimension", *Frontier Post*, 5 June 1988; and "The Dissolution: An Inside Story", *The Nation*, 8 August 1990.

on 29 May 1988 an hour before the latter dismissed Prime Minister M.K. Junejo, and Ambassador Robert Oakley met with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan about five hours before the latter announced his decision. Both the Ambassadors, of course, later proclaimed their innocence in this regard.

The U.S. factor has, therefore, augmented the weakness of the state by strengthening its military *vis-a-vis* the political forces and widening the gap between the popular public opinion, generally anti-American in nature¹⁰, and its ruling elites which closely identify themselves with Washington.

Pakistan's India policy or rather its enmity and antipathy towards India had also played an important role in its state formation as it was used by the military-bureaucratic elite to weaken, undermine and dislodge the political leadership from the state's power structure. Ashwini K. Ray lists a number of examples in Pakistan's history when any particular political leader or political party took a sympathetic stand towards India or signed any bilateral agreement which was unacceptable to the powers that be at home, they had to pay a heavy price mostly by losing their office of power.¹¹ In 1951, even before the stranglehold of army was firmly established in Pakistani politics, as a prelude to the emergence of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy and within a few weeks of the Nehru-Liaquat Agreement of 1950, first there was an abortive army coup followed soon after by the assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan. Both were mysteries whose official explanations have remained unconvincing till now.

10. This has been reflected in occasional spontaneous anti-American public demonstrations. For instance, in November 1979, the Mecca Mosque takeover by the U.S. forces prompted an attack on the U.S. embassy in Islamabad and in March 1989, the publication in the U.S. of Salman Rushdie's book provoked a similar reaction. The most recent manifestation of Pakistani public's anti-American sentiments was the public demonstrations against the U.S. during the Gulf War in 1991.

11. Ashwini K. Ray, "Pakistan's Post-Colonial Democracy: Implications for India and Pakistan", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 April 1989, p. 867.

In 1954, the United Front government in then East Pakistan, elected with overwhelming majority in the only elections held in the country until then, was dismissed within a month of its election. The Chief Minister, Fazlul Haque, and his cabinet colleagues were arrested as 'self-confessed traitors' by the Governor-General, Iskander Mirza, shortly after the Chief Minister pleaded for improved India-Pakistan relations and greater cultural and economic exchange between the two Bengals at an enthusiastic reception accorded to him in Calcutta. In 1955, the Prime Minister, Mohammad Ali Bogra, was eased out of office within a few days of his talk of a "new 1955-approach" to India-Pakistan relations. In 1957, Prime Minister Suhrawardy's government fell even while his emissary, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was on his way to Moscow to explore the possibilities of resolving Indo-Pakistan imbroglio over Kashmir. The last of the civilian Prime Ministers before the army coup in 1958 was dismissed and direct military rule imposed on the country within a few days of the Nehru-Noon Agreement and the Prime Minister's speeches threatening to 'shake hands with the enemies'. The military coup finally aborted the twice postponed general elections in the country in which the general consensus among the contesting political parties centered on two principal demands, both on foreign policy issues: withdrawal from the military alliances and bilateral negotiations with India on Kashmir.

These examples may well be used to make the reverse argument that a key cause of the antagonistic relationship between India and Pakistan lies in the military and bureaucracy's i.e. the non-elective institutions' dominance of the Pakistani state apparatus, who for their own vested interests have used 'Big Brother' India's threat as a justification for their rule for almost two-thirds of Pakistan's existence. For instance, one critical factor leading to Benazir Bhutto's short-lived government in 1990 was because she had tried to overstep the military's mark in external affairs by giving a new direction to India-Pakistan relations. Benazir Bhutto and her Cabinet colleagues were declared a 'security risk' after the disclosure of some of her

conversations with the former Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, which were monitored by the Army. Thereafter, sensitive matters of national security were handled by the President and Army Chief with the popularly elected Prime Minister taken into confidence only on perfunctory and routine matters.

Further, while the military-bureaucracy combine dominated Pakistan's foreign policy making processes, induction of political forces in the form of a civilian government introduced by General Zia-ul-Haq gave rise to a new struggle between the elective and non-elective institutions within the state apparatus. As Joel Migdal points out, regime holders pre-occupied with their short-term security often engage in a "pathological set of relationships between top leadership and its agencies".¹² Different components of the regime begin to compete within the state, playing off one against the other to avoid being deposed from within. This seems to be the case in Pakistan since the lifting of Martial Law in 1985, which first led to the emergence of a dyarchy and later a troika which had multiple components with often divergent, if not conflicting, perspectives.

Under this new scheme of power-sharing, the Army Chief and the President, representing the 'establishment', would exercise complete control over defence, foreign affairs and national security including intelligence and the nuclear programme; the political forces, represented by a popularly elected Prime Minister, remained outside this loop of decision-making. Although the first Prime Minister, M. K. Junejo, was handpicked by General Zia-ul-Haq to head the government after March 1985 elections, a constant and inherent tussle of power between the political and military-bureaucratic forces would have serious implications for Pakistan's foreign policy where the two seemed to be working at cross-purposes with each other. The first serious problem surfaced in February 1986 over ties with India. Presi-

12. Joel Migdal, *op.cit.*, p. 207.

dent Zia-ul-Haq had initiated a process of normalization of relations in 1985, and an important component of it was discussions on trade and economic cooperation. The incumbent Finance Minister, Mahbubul Haq, pursued the trade talks actively, perhaps directly under the Presidential orders, bypassing the Prime Minister. But Junejo managed to reverse the process by divesting Haq of his finance portfolio in his Cabinet.

President Zia-ul-Haq and Prime Minister Junejo had divergent perspectives on the question of Afghanistan as well. Junejo's government wanted to resolve the Afghan problem, and accordingly he called for an all-party conference, ignoring the President in order to arrive at a consensus opinion, and later signed the Geneva Accord. Since General Zia was unhappy with the Accord, he scuttled the process by continuing to arm the Afghan Mujahideen via the ISI (Inter Services Intelligence) network which was directly under his control.

After Zia's death, the situation became more complicated with the power-sharing now taking place between a troika of the Army Chief, General Mirza Aslam Beg, the President, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, and the Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, with the elected Premier being the junior most partner. Since Benazir was considered to be an "outsider" by the establishment, she was only given power devoid of its foreign affairs component. The 'deal' brokered between Benazir Bhutto and the establishment included two significant provisions-continuation of Foreign Minister, Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, the 'establishment's man' in her Cabinet and no compromise or change in the nuclear programme as well as in Pakistan's foreign policy *vis-a-vis* India and Afghanistan.

Once again, the 'establishment' and Prime Minister's divergent foreign policy perspectives *vis-a-vis* India became the biggest hurdle in improving India-Pakistan ties. For instance, on Kashmir, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan first reintroduced the "unfinished agenda of

partition" as early as 1989,¹³ while Benazir Bhutto's government, until February 1990, was talking of resolving that issue in light of the Simla Agreement with no mention of the plebiscite option which was to come later.¹⁴ At a press conference in February 1990, Ms. Bhutto also said that Pakistan was not interested in internationalizing the issue and was prepared to settle it through bilateral negotiations. But it was not before long when her government - under pressure from the establishment - adopted a policy of internationalizing the issue vigorously in the United Nations as well as in other international fora, such as NAM, OIC and the Commonwealth.

Benazir Bhutto also failed to deliver the goods when it came to making any allowances for improving India-Pakistan relations. She could not stop the Pakistani armed support to Sikh militants in Indian Punjab, because the entire operation was being carried out by the ISI, on which she had no control. And by her own account, she was kept in the dark by the establishment about the status of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme. Hence, it was futile for India to start serious negotiations with her government on the nuclear issues.

The story was not much different during Nawaz Sharif's government. Although Sharif was a protege of the establishment, the inherent contradiction in the scheme of power sharing led to differences between him and the Army Chief, General Beg, and later with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan as well. Sharif's major differences with General Beg came to the fore during the Gulf War. Although General Beg was a party to the decision to send 10,000 strong contingent of Pakistani forces to Saudi Arabia, he changed his position with the public opinion and later condemned the coalition attack on Iraq. Beg adopted a stringently anti-American position whereas Sharif's government opposed Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and stood by the U.S.A. and Saudi Arabia.

13. See, Benazir Bhutto's statement at the joint press conference with the French President Mitterrand in Islamabad on 29 February 1990, as quoted in Yearbook, *ibid.*, p. 170.

14. *Pakistan Times*, 22 July 1991.

With regard to Pakistan's policy toward India, there were still no signs of a consensus within the troika. For instance, in April 1990 when General Beg issued a statement about the threats to the country's security and the possibility of an attack by India,¹⁵ the Foreign Office issued a speedy contradiction saying there was no cause for alarm.¹⁶ On 2 February 1992, Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, and Indian Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao, met briefly at Davos in Switzerland in early 1992 where Sharif told reporters that 1992 was "the year of reconciliation" between India and Pakistan. On the same day, an Indian daily, *Pioneer*, published an interview with Pakistan's High Commissioner in Delhi, Abdus Sattar, who accused India of "unleashing repression on the people of Kashmir and bludgeoning them into submission", and strongly criticized the Indian army action in the valley.¹⁷ This double-speak by Pakistan baffled most Indian political analysts and was explained in terms of an internal strife with the ruling troika of Pakistan. This was reflected in the statement of the official spokesman of the External Affairs Ministry in India,

We are somewhat curious as to *which body of opinion within Pakistan, the High Commissioner has sought to represent in making such statements.*(He added that).....given the inner contradictions in Pakistan's polity, there are several elements within the country who are vehemently opposed to normalization of relations between India and Pakistan.¹⁸

Since Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan were falling out, Sattar might have acted directly on Presidential orders despite the fact that the Prime Minister of the government he represented was talking of reconciliation with India on the Kashmir

15. *The Nation*, 25 July 1991.

16. *Pioneer*, 2 February 1992.

17. *Pioneer*, 4 February 1992.

18. Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 1-9.

issue on the same day. Thus, a continuous conflict between the political forces and military-bureaucratic elite within Pakistani state apparatus has often affected adversely the evolution of a mature foreign policy approach towards India.

India

As compared to Pakistan, the elective institutions in India have clearly established their political supremacy over the non-elective institutions - the military and bureaucracy. However, the 'weakness' of the Indian state arises from de-institutionalization of the Congress party, growing centralization of powers in the centre *vis-a-vis* the states, the executive *vis-a-vis* the legislative branch of the government, politicization of the bureaucracy and military, and a "new religious fundamentalism exacerbating hitherto latent or low level social cleavages making difficult for the state to accommodate them".¹⁹

Over the last four decades, growing concentration of powers in the Prime Minister's office and most often in his/her person has in particular considerably weakened the institutional capacities of its foreign policy making apparatus. It has rendered Parliament ineffective and constrained the autonomy of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in shaping India's foreign policy. While the Constitution makers had provided for various special Standing Committees, notably the Estimates Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, the Committee on Public Undertakings and the Consultative Committees for the Ministries of External Affairs, Defence and Home Affairs, where the political Opposition was given an opportunity to influence the government's policies more directly and substantially than during the general debates in Parliament. But the Guidelines formulated in 1969 by Mrs. Gandhi's government have reduced them to a mere

19. The fluctuating statement by Prime Minister Desai on India's Nuclear Policy are reported in *The Hindu*, 12 June 1978, *The Statesman*, 18 June 1978 and *Times of India*, 27 July 1978.

'talking shop', because on any issue concerning security, defence, external affairs or atomic energy, the government is not bound to accept even a unanimous or majority recommendation of the Committee beyond providing reasons for its rejection. Even on the floor of the House, it is only during the weak or minority governments in power that the Opposition has occasionally succeeded in forcing the government to change its stance on foreign policy issues. For instance, on India's nuclear policy, Prime Minister Morarji Desai of Janata Government had declared on 11 June 1978 that India would not engage in nuclear testing for military or peaceful purposes even if others did so. He came under strong attack from both Congress in opposition and his own party members and subsequently retracted his statement saying that nuclear testing for peaceful purposes was not excluded. Barely three days later, in yet another reversal, Desai reiterated that nuclear testing would not take place under his government even for peaceful purposes, but he admitted that he could not bind his successors to this policy.²⁰

Within the foreign policy bureaucracy too, a gradual erosion of the MEA over the years has rendered this institution politically impotent and often irrelevant in the task of foreign policy making. It has faced a very potent challenge from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) which has come to play an informational as well as formulative role in shaping foreign policy and also act as Prime Minister's 'eyes and ears' within the bureaucracy.²¹ In fact, the Indian administration has been characterized as the 'Prime Ministerial' form of government where the PMO has its fingers on every single foreign policy decision being taken by the government.

20. For an excellent account of the evolution of this office and its friction with MEA, see Jeffrey Benner, *The Indian Foreign Policy Bureaucracy*, Boulder and London, Westview Press, 1985, pp. 208-213. Also see "Foreign Office Turbulent Times", *India Today*, 31 July 1986.

21. "Turbulent Times", *ibid.*, p. 89.

This institutional shift away from the MEA had started under Prime Minister Shastri, and during his successor Mrs. Indira Gandhi's tenure. The Prime Minister's Secretariat became highly politicized as the most powerful decision making agency in the country. Under Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister's Office became yet more powerful and was instrumental in taking a number of foreign policy initiatives, mostly at the expense of the MEA. One senior official at the MEA complained that

in no other ministry is there such a high level of intervention, [in this case] everybody else has the voice but not the responsibility, we have the responsibility but not the voice.²²

Lack of coordination between these two institutions, where one does not know what the other is doing, has often resulted in some embarrassing situations for the government. The disclosure of 'secret' London talks between American and Indian officials on the nuclear non-proliferation issue in April 1994 was one such example, where the PMO seems to have organized the talks without keeping the MEA informed.

The erosion of the role and power of the foreign ministry bureaucracy is also due to the successive Prime Ministers, especially under the Congress governments' proclivity to concentrate the foreign policy making powers in their own hands, which is at best shared with a small coterie of close confidantes. During Mrs. Gandhi's first term in office, only very few advisors - L.K. Jha, G. Parthasarathy, B.K. Nehru and D.P. Dhar - were privy to her foreign policy initiatives. Most of the traditional institutions figured nowhere. The decision to finally conclude the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship in 1971 was made by a small group of advisors. The Political Affairs Committee of the Cabinet was not informed of the negotiations until the draft had been finalized and the Cabinet itself was brought into picture only the

22. Harish Kapur, *India's Foreign Policy 1947-1992: Shadows and Substance*, New Delhi, Sage, 1994, p. 187.

day the Treaty was to be signed.²³ The decisions to swiftly help the beleaguered Sri Lankan government against JVP insurgents in 1971, to take military action against Pakistan in the same year, to explode the nuclear device in 1974, to merge the Himalayan state of Sikkim with India in 1975, and to initiate the process of mending fences with China in 1976 were all taken by the Prime Minister personally after consultation with her close advisors.²⁴ Most of the institutions formally concerned with India's foreign policy often came to know of these decisions only after they had been taken.

MEA was also not in the picture with regard to most foreign policy initiatives that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had taken to improve India's relations with Pakistan. For example, just before his death, Rajiv had given an interview to Barbara Crossette of *New York Times*, in which he hinted that he was very close to reaching an agreement with General Zia-ul-Haq on Kashmir. The next day, MEA denied that statement apparently because it was not aware that any such deal was on the anvil.

In a similar vein, although the civilian authorities control the military and limit its role in the security policy making process mainly to the operational sphere, over the years the military has started protesting against the excessive bureaucratic controls over their decisions and the limited input and participation of their Service Chiefs at the highest level of security decision-making.⁵⁶ Further, lack of

23. *Ibid.*

24. For a debate on this subject, see S.P. Cohen, "The Military and Indian Democracy", in Atul Kohli, (ed.), *India's Democracy: An Analysis of State-Society Relations*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1988, pp. 115-122; and Lt. General S.K. Sinha, *Higher Defence Organization in India*, New Delhi, United Services Institution of India, 1980.

25. "General Sunderji: Disputed Legacy", *India Today*, 15 May 1988, p. 84. A senior official in Islamabad corroborated this view to this author that this was the picture conveyed to President Zia-ul-Haq by the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi.

coordination between the political leadership and the military top brass has created serious problems for India's security at times of crisis. For instance, during 'Brasstacks' military exercises in winter 1986-87, a communication gap between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his Army Chief, General K.S. Sunderji, has been attributed to as one of the critical factors that nearly brought the country to the brink of war with Pakistan. Operation Brasstacks was ostensibly meant to test Sunderji's defence strategy of a dissuasive posture and deterrent capability, but what it led up to was a serious confrontation with Pakistan, because of the huge forces it involved next to the border. One section in the Indian foreign and defence circles believes that it was Sunderji who "almost led them to war" and complained that "the Prime Minister was not fully briefed".²⁶ Others, however, argue that Sunderji never intended to go to war and it was mainly due to the U.S. pressure on India to pull back its forces that the Foreign Office made Sunderji a scapegoat. They believe that it was due to Pakistan's decision not to withdraw its forces to peacetime locations after their own winter exercise had finished which brought the two countries so close to war. In any case, clearly there was a lack of coordination at the highest levels of policy making, and its consequences, if it would have led to a military confrontation between India and Pakistan, would have been very serious indeed.

Now, let us briefly examine the role, if any, of the external factors in shaping the state apparatus in India. Unlike Pakistan, India under Nehru's leadership had largely retained its state autonomy by keeping away from the two power blocs and pursuing a non-aligned policy. At the same time, however, certain governments in New Delhi, particularly under Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, have often used the external factors for strengthening their party position in domestic power politics. Mrs. Gandhi made frequent references to the 'foreign hand' that threatened India's security by playing on the

26. *Patriot*, 15 August 1981.

internal dissensions in order to make it collapse from within. By the time of the Emergency in 1975, external factors were used by Mrs. Gandhi as an explanation of India's deteriorating position. With the decision of the Reagan administration to provide 40 F-16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan in 1981, Mrs. Gandhi was accused of whipping up a 'war psychosis.'²⁷ At the same time she was charging the Opposition with spreading disunity and threatening national integration. As Gordon points out, "implicit and sometimes explicit in the argument was the view that Congress was the only party capable of maintaining India's integrity against powerful outside forces, and that those parties advocating more autonomy for the regions were anti-national."²⁸

In the early 1980s, many Opposition leaders felt that the external threats to India especially from Pakistan were being exaggerated by the government in order to distract attention from its domestic problems. While A.B. Vajpayee said that talking of war only was a "political necessity" for Mrs. Gandhi,²⁹ Morarji Desai insisted that "there was no danger of war" unless she (Mrs. Gandhi) may make it."³⁰ During the 1989 national elections, Rajiv Gandhi also played heavily on the theme of 'threat to national unity' by outside forces. Extensive newspaper advertising prior to the election portrayed India as a vulnerable, partly dismembered doll.³¹

27. Sandy Gordon, "Domestic Foundations of India's Security Policy", in Ross Babbage and Sandy Gordon, (eds.), *India's Strategic Future*, London, MacMillan, 1992, p. 15.

28. *Indian Express*, 6 December 1983.

29. *Times of India*, 2 October 1983.

30. Gordon, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

31. Jha argues that Islam's failure to create an effective and enduring national identity has led Pakistan to resolve its problems of nationhood in terms of conflict with India. The common geographical and cultural heritage of two countries also makes the creation of a separate Pakistani identity a difficult task, hence, the necessity for an ideology of national survival in which hatred of India has played a major part. See, D.C. Jha, "The Basic Foundations and determinants of Pakistan's Foreign Policy", in Surendra Chopra, (ed.), *Perspectives on Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, Amritsar, G.N.D. University, 1983, pp. 9-10, 16-17.

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND FOREIGN POLICY

This brings us to the issues of national identity and social cohesion in these countries and their impact on the foreign policies. In case of Pakistan, its search for national identity in an Islamic ideology has proved to be a critical factor in shaping its foreign policy *vis-a-vis* India. The Partition had ended the unity of Indian Muslims and it was not easy to define who a Pakistani was. The identity that Pakistan had sought rested on twin foundations of its inhabitants being Muslims and Indians. It is this Indo-Muslim consciousness which had sustained the unity of Pakistan. India, thus, remained a major element in the separate nationhood of Pakistan. As a result, the Pakistani leaders constantly stressed the religious differences between India and Pakistan which only exacerbated their bilateral problems. Some scholars argue that it is partly because of Pakistan's constant harping on its Islamic nationalism *vis-a-vis* Hindu nationalism of India and partly because of its failure to evolve a national identity on something more than anti-Indianism, that the Indo-Pak disputes have seemed so intractable.³²

Further at home, the institutional dominance of a predominantly Punjabi military and federal bureaucracy has at each step heightened the alienation on the part of non-Punjabi provinces and significant linguistic minorities within them. This was a key factor leading to secession of East Pakistan in 1971. However, even after that, Punjabi dominance continues to be resented by the Sindhis, Pathans and Baluch. This is because the very dynamics of the authoritarian state structures in Pakistan has been such as to leave little leeway for protest and dissent. Besides, instead of accommodating these demands, the Muslim League leadership from Jinnah downwards labelled most criticisms of the centre's policies as "Indian inspired". More specifically, the Pakistani leadership used the Indian threat for suppressing

32. S.D. Muni, "South Asia", in Mohammad Ayoob, (ed.), *Conflict and Intervention in the Third World*, New Delhi: Vikas, 1980, p. 42.

the rebellion in Baluchistan and the North-Western Frontier Province (NWFP) in West Pakistan as well as dissidence in East Pakistan. As argued earlier, the Indian leadership also blames Pakistan for fomenting trouble and supporting such secessionist movements in Punjab and Kashmir. Thus, the ruling elites of both countries have used their bilateral conflict to suppress, avert or deal with a particular domestic crisis of integration.³³

With regard to India's national identity, the Congress leadership led by Pandit Nehru developed a secular nationalism for India which could encompass all Indian cultures and religions. While this was viewed as antithetical to Pakistan's Islamic identity, the latter has been more worried about the rise of Hindu nationalism in India in the last decade. Its chief proponent, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), developed a Hindu ideology arguing that India's national identity is rooted in the Hindu culture for the obvious reason that Hindus are the dominant majority in the country and nations are built on the basis of common culture and ideology. Thus in order to forge a strong sense of Indian national identity, it must be culturally rooted in Hinduism and Hindu civilization.

This has profound implications for India's domestic politics and foreign relations, which became evident from the Babri Masjid episode. Since the mid-1980s, BJP had been demanding construction of a Ram Janambhumi Temple on the site of the 16th century built Babri Masjid in its attempts to forcibly resolve the issue outside the given institutional framework of parliamentary methods and judiciary. When it finally demolished the Masjid by sheer brute force in December 1992, its repercussions were felt all over the sub-continent, especially in Pakistan and Bangladesh where communal riots resulted in many deaths of Hindus and desecration and demolition of a number of Hindu temples. This demonstrated, as M.B. Naqvi says, that "promoting antagonistic passions in India are bound to spill over into

33. M. B. Naqvi, "Significance of Indian Polls", *Dawn*, 20 December 1989.

Pakistan and Bangladesh since the societies in South Asia are so intertwined that the rise of communal legacy in one country generates its minor images elsewhere, indeed everywhere".³⁴

CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, both Pakistan and India do exhibit some characteristics of a weak state, although in varying degrees and forms. While the state apparatus evolved in such a way in Pakistan that before long the task of foreign policy making was being undertaken by their GHQ (General Headquarters) instead of Foreign Office. In India, which started its independent existence with a fairly high level of institution building, de-institutionalization and centralization of powers in the past two decades has contributed towards the 'weakness' of the state. The antithetical national identities and respective problems of nation-building in the two countries have also served to reinforce their bilateral differences.

34. *Ibid.*