

Welfare in Pakistan: A Sui Generis Case of State-Society Strife and Military Oligarchy

Qudsia Naz

Heidelberg University, Germany

Yaqoob Khan Bangash

Information Technology University, Pakistan

Welfare provision has become a state concern in the world beginning from the 19th century. This paper argues that in the case of Pakistan the welfare model is Sui Generis, largely due to the existence of a Military-Bureaucratic oligarchy. It also argues that state policies towards welfare have been inconsistent due to political and social instability. This, as a result, has led to a deepening of social strife in the country.

Keywords: welfare state, Pakistan, Military-Bureaucratic oligarchy, strife.

The concern over delivering welfare and social rights began to substantially rise in the world at the turn of the twentieth century, especially after the realization that the people had 'social rights' along with political and civil. This categorization of citizenship rights by T. H. Marshall, into three different kinds, explains the prevalence of the concern over the lack of safeguards available for the social rights of people. The conduit and evolution of the phenomenon of citizenship unraveled the rise of a unique kind of citizenship, which was essentially neither political nor civil, but social. Social rights took some time to be woven into the fabric of citizenship, and their recognition was lacking or very trivial for a long time. It was only in the late 19th century that these issues began to be articulated and pondered upon (Marshall, 1950). The shift from the civil and political rights to social inclusiveness and curbing of class based inequalities caused the re-building of the superstructure, which was the state, since no social change could have been possible if the superstructure was not supportive of it.

This very ontogenesis led to the establishment of developmental welfare states all across the globe, with the liberal market economy at its heart, but being controlled and guarded by a strong state, which was autonomous and capable of shaping policies and implementing them. According to Meredith Woo-Cummings, a developmental state is one that lies between the free market capitalistic economy and centrally controlled economic system, and is thus, called 'Plan-rational capitalist system' (Woo-Cummings, 1999, p. 2). It promotes the deliverance of social rights and attempts to equalize social inequalities, which are created as the product of accumulation of wealth and tyranny of the economic elite. This is done primarily by boosting the welfare structure of the state and enabling it in terms of capacity, to be able to deliver rightful services to citizens.

The East Asian states, including Japan and Singapore, are known to be the first of the social welfare kind, while shaping the prototype of such a model. The 'Japan Miracle', was possible because of the policies brought into form by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) (Johnson, 1982). The story of Japanese growth seems to be unintelligible if the MITI is not considered to be the driving force behind bridging the gap between the government and the private industrial sector. The cooperation imparted by MITI was such that it resulted in the multiplication of the steel production with the convergence of the national production goals with the capitalistic industrial interests.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century many states have exhibited the aspiration and will to adopt the developmental model. Some also managed to successfully adhere to the developmental-welfare values, by bringing a noticeable change in the nexus of the state, economy and society. South Asia for that matter is no exception, as the states more or less, adapted to the paradigm and shifted from having a purely liberal economy to sponsoring fairly interventionist policies. Nonetheless, Koehler goes too far in treating the subject under the umbrella of 'welfare geography of South Asia', and tracing commonalities among the states in the region. The states are unique and typical in their policies despite their sharing a common history and heritage; they have emerged with an indigenous model of development and welfare. For instance, India has its own policy that suits its predicament best, while Bangladesh and Pakistan have their distinct forms of welfare. Notably, the goals of the states have been the same, namely to eradicate poverty, deliver social justice, generate employment, and to develop a welfare character within the state apparatus (Koehler, 2014). However, the means and the mechanisms to achieve the stated ends are conspicuously varied, just like the economic performance of all the countries. The commonalities traced by Kohler include similar institutional framework, common colonial history, commitment to the rhetoric of participation and rights, and fundamental structural similarities (Koehler, 2014). However, the stark differences and deviations are not explicitly brought into account.

This paper aims to study the welfare model of Pakistan, which we argue is *Sui Generes* because of several reasons. First, in the words of Hamza, the state is guided by the '*Military-Bureaucratic oligarchy*', and thus, the policies are at their discretion to a great extent, unlike in the other South Asian states. Secondly, state policies and the welfare preferences in the country have been discrepant and inconsistent throughout history, as political stability has been by and large absent, if not non-existent. The military and civil governments had alternatively been taking office of the chief executive, every ten years, making short-term strategies for the purpose of political score making and not devising long-term policies for welfare and development. Interestingly, the welfare seen in the last few decades was hard earned, and continued uninterrupted because the changing executive authorities immensely feared a backlash from the civil society. The paper further intends to look into the state-society strife created by the demand of the society to acquire its social rights and entitlements, and the incapacity and unwillingness on the part of the state to deliver. At the same time, electoral bargains, and the politics of patronage appear to be persistent at the margins. It is from this vantage point that the society seems to negotiate with the state through political parties and non-state actors. Electoral politics therefore remains significant for the matter.

The study is primarily qualitative in nature, based on primary and secondary literature on the subject. The questions it will undertake are: Does Pakistan have a welfare model of its own? How is the discord between the state and the society over delivering welfare pronounced in the framework of the model it has, and how is welfare within the bounds of its paradigm negotiated from the margins primarily through the process of electoral patronage? The paper thus unfolds the tale of welfare in Pakistan which is an under-studied subject in the academic discourse.

Welfare in Pakistan

Pakistan, just like any other South Asian country, constitutionally guarantees the provision of social rights to its citizens. Article 38, Clauses (c) and (d) of the Constitution of Pakistan (2010) clearly state on the social and economic wellbeing of the people:

The state shall provide for all persons employed in the service of Pakistan or otherwise, social security by compulsory social insurance or other means; and provide basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all such citizens, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, as are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, sickness or unemployment.

Whether this is being delivered in practice or not, and how human development indicators reflect on this, is beyond the scope of this paper. Ideally however, the state is committed to the social rights of citizens and their wellbeing. Various welfare initiatives therefore have been launched time and again to boost human development and provide an impetus for furthering policies for the eradication of poverty, provision of health and education facilities, and offering a helping hand to people during natural disasters, etc.

In early 1950's Pakistan sought with the help of United Nations to design a social welfare programme for the first time. United Nations' Social Welfare consultants arrived in Karachi in 1952 to collaborate with the government of Pakistan ("In 1951 when the," 2015). Initial steps were then taken to train the people in social work and the nuances of rural and urban community development. However, in 1956, an independent National Council of Social Work was established, leading to the formulation of a specific department taking up this job. After 1971, with the vivisection of Pakistan and the abolishment of the One Unit, the directorate was decentralized into four provinces with four respective councils ("After the dismemberment," 2015). Thereafter, in the 1990's, the department of Women Development, and the department of Bait-ul Maal (Public Funds), came out as off shoots. Since then, social welfare has been recognized as a significant area of concern by the state.

The most prominent of all the social safety net programmes in the last decade has been the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), initiated in 2008, by the Pakistan People's party, in the name of its former chairperson, Benazir Bhutto. However, this programme is only a successful social safety net, with limited area of influence, and does not define the general idea of welfare adopted by the state, as it is limited in its nature and goals. It is limited to providing a social safety net to only married women of the country, when the rest of the population is excluded from this welfare scheme by the mere criterion to avail it. Thus, it is a qualified social security net, which is not indiscriminately available to everybody. This very fact exhibits that Benazir Bhutto was predominantly concerned with the welfare of women, but than it was to eventually shape a broader welfare model that could be adopted by the country at large.

The BISP was launched by the Government of Pakistan with the purpose of ameliorating the impact of inflation and rising food prices (Durre & Farooq, 2012). It promised married women of Pakistan cash transfers to their accounts every three months. This direct cash transfer was to raise the living standards of the people living below the poverty line. It promised them a specific amount of money which would unconditionally be given to these women, so that they could use it for their families or themselves. However, only married women were entitled to receive the money, meaning that the purpose was to benefit the family through these women, the assumption being that they were more likely to spend it on their children and food than on themselves. It turned out to be the largest safety net programme by 2011/12, with almost 4 million beneficiaries, and an annual budget of Rs.122 billion. (Durre & Farooq, 2012) This meant that almost 7% of the total households were benefitting from the programme.

It is noteworthy that this programme came to fruition right after a change of regime, just as Pervez Musharraf, a military general left the office, and a democratically elected president, Asif Ali Zardari, replaced him. The later was from Pakistan People's party, which is known for its leftist inclinations, and pro-poor tendencies, with adherence to the slogan of 'Roti, Kapra, or Makan' (Bread, Clothing, and Shelter). Therefore, this paradigm shift, marking state preference for social welfare needs to be looked at as reversible if political actors change or if military generals take the strings of the state in their hands again directly. Haris Gazdar rightly marks the vulnerability of the programme, by expressing his reservations over the notion that social protection has finally turned a corner in Pakistan. He deems it to be assailable to political turbulence and instability (Gazdar, 2011). Moreover, there has only been a second democratic government after 2008, which has come in office with elections in 2013, and the future of BISP is yet to be seen in relevance to regime change. It has to be deduced whether the commitment to social protection by the state is genuine and long-term, or is based on the politics of delivery and clientelism, and is thus, short-term.

It is also notable that at the time of its initiation, the political opposition to the centre had formed the government in the Punjab and had offered very little consensus on this programme. Therefore, they began their own programme on the same principle of distributing cash, which was called the Food Support Programme. The two parties, Pakistan People's Party at the centre and Muslim league Nawaz in the Punjab, saw each other as rivals and seemed determined to successfully lead their respective programmes for seeking a political edge over their counterparts. Despite political motivations and competition, it was obvious that something substantial was in the pipeline (Gazdar, 2011). Nonetheless, welfare in Pakistan has undergone an unstable, non-uniform, and jolty journey since its inception. A major portion of the welfare and development outlay is made possible by the

military–bureaucratic oligarchy and the practice of clientelism used by politicians for securing an electoral vote bank.

The Political Economy of Welfare and Development

It is fascinating how political parties and their ideologies do not matter much in the politics of Pakistan (especially at the ballot box) and largely the influence of individuals is sufficient to gather votes. The party names are mere tags whereas real politics on the ground takes place in a completely different realm, with an entirely unique dynamics on a non-ideological basis. In 2008 elections for the parliament, a Baloch tribal leader went from village to village in Dera Ghazi Khan (a small city in South Punjab), with his caravan of motor vehicles and supporters to distribute turbans among the males of every family living in the area. This was of significance as the distribution of turbans is a very distinguishable kind of patronage. This means that honour is being shared and the one who accepts the turban is bound to stay loyal to the leader because he is now a part of the clan which is normally an identity by birth. This makes the people feel powerful and honoured as they feel more connected to the leader now. The feeling of being excluded from the power structure vanishes at once at the time of elections and these people suddenly begin to 'exist' in the realm of politics. This is however only possible if the masses are poor and underprivileged, so that they can be won over by incentives and patronage. The Baloch leader did manage to win a sweeping victory in the elections following the distributions of the turbans and other material benefits in 2008.

It must not be forgotten that poverty is a variable which directly affects the politics of a region, as people are greatly vulnerable and can easily be manipulated over their deprivations by being offered trivial material incentives. Welfare then becomes a way of patronising the masses for the purpose of electoral success. This is also a colonial legacy since the British also used to gain support from the elite by obliging and patronizing them with various things so that they could play as intermediaries between them and the masses. Land of course was one of these but many a times a gilded chair was gifted to Saints and Sufis to show honour being bestowed upon a person by giving him a seat of authority (Ansari, 1992). Ansari's work on Sufi Saints and state power is a reflection on the client-patron relationship the British had established with the Sufis and *Pirs* of Sindh. Thus, the idea of political patronage is an old one, but its relation with democracy, poverty and welfare is indeed novel.

Pakistani Punjab is still dominated by the rich landed elite which in colonial times used to work on the principle of mutual benefit. The landed gentry still lives in the past and tries to reinforce its values of authority and tries to channelize state power and institutional legitimacy through themselves to the poor (Javid, 2012). The path-dependent institutional development that Pakistan has undergone is mainly accredited to the landed gentry and the military. However, the landed elite is responsible for shaping society and the political trends as they are today while the military and bureaucracy are responsible for defining the authoritative and dictatorial values of governance (at the same time curbing democracy). Nonetheless, the landed elite and the 'Military-Bureaucratic oligarchy' can be held responsible for reinforcing the idea of patronage in the name of welfare to secure their own seat of authority and influence in post-colonial Pakistan.

In Pakistan, the irony has also been that development indicators have declined during democratic governments in power, contradicting expectations. The country saw a regression in social development, especially basic education, from 1988-99 when there was the longest span of democracy (Zahid, 2008). This is primarily because the welfare policies were clientelistic and not aimed to deliver social entitlements or rights.

The client and the patron volunteer for respective roles and reciprocate favours given by one another making the process of patronage work for political causes. Patronage is by and large the same as clientelism but only that while the former sheds light on the art of patronizing the latter looks at it in a unique way to mainly focus on the client and not the patron (Lyon, 2002). The relationship is one of mutual trust and advantage but the patron tends to stay in semi-urban and rural areas of Pakistan because of his established and unshakable dominant position as a benefactor. These roles of patron and client favour respective people enabling them to achieve their ends through whatever means available and possible. Thus, the sustainability of the functional equilibrium of the political society falls in the favour of both the camps, making the status quo prevail for various socio-political reasons.

Robert Putman has argued that democratic institutions behave differently in different socio-political settings. He has compared the case of Northern and Southern Italy and conceded that the North is far better in having internalised democratic values in comparison to the South. The reason for this being that the South never had the same state and the civil interaction as the North did. He infers that the better the interaction between the institutions and the civil agents, the better the trajectory of democracy (Putman, 1993). However, his study fails to bring into account or even consider the model of interaction of most of the South Asian States namely their client-patron relationship at the micro-level, shaping macro level political trends. Therefore, civil interaction with the governing bodies is not the only pre-requisite to democracy and good governance. The nature of interaction and dynamics is also complicated and perplexing in itself.

A regular appeal to the poor and the provision of trivial services keeps the poor happy and loyal to landlords. This gives the landlord a constant vote bank to do fairly well at the ballot. Most of what these landlords do such as to secure funds for roads, schools, health clinics and mosques is on the behalf of the state (Putman, 1993). Besides, in the Punjab two of the most significant and informal political meetings are held in weddings and funerals. All the influential political leaders and big landlords are not absent from such instances of socialisation because this is perhaps one of the best ways to align with the poor masses of the area. To have electoral weightage this is usually what is needed to bring the poor on their side. Thus, patronage given by the landed gentry and the political elite to the poor is often material, at times non-material, and at occasions also ceremonial in nature. This makes the weak and poor feel politically significant rather than just being 'the other'. This shift in status and social standing makes a difference for the poor and they establish their loyalties based on such favours granted to them.

Nevertheless, rational choice theory is one of the best explanations to the intriguing political economy of welfare and patronage and the role of state in Pakistan. It sheds light on two very significant issues: the individual agency of the actor and the change it can bring at a macro level from micro level decision-making (Sato, 2013). Rational choice explicates the idea that every individual makes a choice that ideally optimises his/her interests in almost every situation. The optimization of interests is the basic push behind the rational choice that any individual makes. Although this is an individual choice at a micro-level but it does have the potentiality of bringing a macro-level change. The optimisation of interests is often called a 'payoff' to make the idea more tangible. Thus, rational choice is rightly understood as the making of an individual choice to maximize payoffs or utility for one's own self (Sato, 2013). This principle is at work in not only one's day to day dealings but also in the realm of realpolitik. More than anything and everything, it is visible in the tactics adopted for mass mobilisation for electoral purposes and also in the shifting political loyalties at the time of elections. Thus, the political economy of welfare and patronage in Pakistan is very much guided by the rational choice made by various actors, including bureaucrats, military men, landed elite, politicians and the masses.

The Sui Generes Model of Development

The sui generes model of development in Pakistan is based on the politics of delivery and patronage, principally working on clientelistic lines, with the aim to build electoral and political muscle. However, it is also a distinct model of welfare, as it has prevalence of a 'Military-Bureaucratic Oligarchy', as Hamza calls it. The oligarchy is there because of the readjustments and realignments which the institutions have underwent in post-colonial times. The classical Marxist theory of state believes that the state is an instrument to guard the interests of the dominant class and oppress the rest. But Alavi argues that the state in Pakistan is not an instrument to protect the interests of any single class, but that it is fairly autonomous, and plays a role of mediating between the dominant classes, the indigenous bourgeoisie, the metropolitan bourgeoisie, and the landed elite by maintaining order and preserving their interests, which are embedded in the capitalist modes of production and the institutions of private property (Alavi, 1972).

This is true because the welfare model that has come into existence in Pakistan is also driven by the military-bureaucratic forces to serve their own needs and interests, and to preserve the capitalist modes of production which are serving them. The bourgeoisie certainly have an integral part to play as the state keeps on mediating their vested interests from time to time. Pakistan has had military dictatorships quite often, and almost half of the time of its history has been marked by military generals ruling it. Thus the military appears to be very much in control at times of even the civil institutions, not to mention welfare. Likewise, in the post-colonial states,

the bureaucracy also appears to be directing the economic surplus towards activities that are bureaucratically significant in the name of development. In Alavi's view, this dominance of military and bureaucracy, in alliance with the indigenous bourgeoisie, primarily differentiates the classical Marxist state from the post-colonial states of Pakistan and Bangladesh (Alavi, 1972).

The convergence of interests of the three aforementioned classes allows them to form a state apparatus that serves their respective class interests in the post-colonial world. In case the indigenous bourgeoisie are not strong enough to subordinate the colonial bourgeoisie, they have to align with the military-bureaucratic system and look for common interests. In such situations, the relation and the status of politicians who come to power through public consent is ambivalent as they compete with the military-bureaucratic oligarchy and also complement them at the same time. At times, political parties and their respective leadership act to legitimise the military-bureaucratic oligarchy in post-colonial societies, as they are internally weak in establishing their own supremacy and countering either the military or bureaucracy. For instance, in Pakistan the military-bureaucratic oligarchy has been so strong that it has been deciding the fate of the country since its inception (Alavi, 1972). Therefore, the path to welfare has also been greatly dependent on military prerogatives. Ayesha Siddiqi believes that the military establishes its authority in Pakistan by manipulating the national narrative, and by controlling both the state and society through reinforcing the national security ideology and using hard or soft coercive means (Siddiqi, 2016). She (2016) explicitly writes:

Pakistan's military has an expanded role in the state and society. It is not only a prominent political player but also a significant economic actor, which does not create monopolies but monopolizes resources along with its larger fraternity. Over the years, the military has also developed the capacity of intellectual engagement with the key stakeholders in the society and significant socio-economic groups and classes (p. 53).

The military has been pursuing economic ventures, in terms of owning and maintaining businesses, firms and factories. Other than the annual defense budget, there is a great flow of cash and resources from the civilian government to the military every year. Siddiqi explicitly talks about the economic endeavours that the military fraternity is a part of. The deliverance of Rs.100 million to the military for distributing the relief fund at the times of floods in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2014 is a case in point (Siddiqi, 2016). This economic independence and supremacy at times, gives the military great autonomy. This transcends its due capacity and further strengthens it politically. Consequently, this economic-political strengthening becomes a cyclical process which the military is enjoying since decades.

The military takeover of the civilian apparatus has brought democratic instability in Pakistan, and this precarious democracy has been detrimental to the welfare structure in general as there has been no long term consistent adherence to welfare goals but only short term policies which have been overthrown with a change of the regime. Hence the political economy of Pakistan is not only shaped by client-patron ties and the politics of delivery, but also the military and bureaucratic oligarchy. Therefore, the model of welfare and development Pakistan has is sui generis and distinct.

However, the model by and large has failed to deliver, as it does not aim to guarantee the social rights of people and does not set a path that the state could embark upon in the long run. The aims and objectives are myopic, with hardly any intention to recognize and guarantee the social rights of the masses, and bringing prosperity to them. The welfare initiatives were for political legitimacy, for establishing a client-patron relationship, for setting up social security nets or at times, with just ensuring that people were happy and the vote bank was intact. Due to all these reasons, the welfare initiatives only began to serve either the bureaucracy or the military, and consequently, crippled the idea of state welfare. This again created a sui generis case of welfare in Pakistan, which is politically controlled and guided, giving a typical example of institutional and elite capture.

Conclusion

The welfare model that Pakistan has is not efficient and satisfactorily delivering but it is certainly unique and distinctive as there is an overwhelming role played by the military and the bureaucracy. Although the

politicians and the political parties' inclination for the politics of delivery is not an exception in Pakistan, and it still makes an unusual combination of forces when aligned with the military or bureaucracy. This is unlike any other country in South Asia. Each one of them uses different means and channels to pursue developmental and economic goals, resulting in state-society strife at various instances. This also causes a unique form of state-society dynamics to come into shape with military, bureaucracy, bourgeoisie, and politicians connecting with one another, preserving and protecting their collective interests and yet engaging in a socio-economic and political competition. Nonetheless, there is a stronger force in the Pakistani society, which is further guiding the process of social welfare, and determining the state prerogative: religion. The paper has not explored the role of religion in the shaping of the welfare model and state inclinations over development, but it is an untapped research area, which can certainly be looked into since it plays a fundamental role in molding the paradigm of social welfare in an Islamic society like Pakistan, where the state itself, time and again, seeks legitimacy through it.

The political economy of welfare in Pakistan, hence, appears to be multi layered, multi-dimensional, and sui generes, as it rests upon the principle of political patronage, clientelism, military-bureaucratic oligarchy, and the interests of the bourgeoisie and landed elite.

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