CIVIL SOCIETY IN PAKISTAN: FUNCTIONING AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

In Pakistan, Civil Society is considered as an umbrella phrase for a range of non-state and non-market citizen organisations and initiatives, network and unions operating in a expansive gamut of social, economic and cultural fields. Contrasting the west, where Civil Society conjures up the reflection of liberals and others challenging the state, in Pakistan Civil Society is comprised of an assorted set of actors. Since independence in 1947, the progress of Civil Society in Pakistan has been marred by the structural dynamics of state configuration, legitimization, and consolidation. In current years, nevertheless, CSOs have proven to be stronger and more dedicated than ever before. The last few years have witnessed a change in Civil Society movement in Pakistan. As a carved 'Nation', Pakistan is still at a embryonic stage, and needs firm level of political maturity to support and also provide working space for CSOs. Civil Society need to emphasize its voice as sustainable organization and not as a protest machine orchestrating intermittent political and social events.

Key Words:

Civil Society, CSOs, Human Rights, NGOs, Pakistan.

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INTRODUCTION
The idea of Civil Society has ancient roots in human civilization, in the basic necessity of man to survive and cohabit. From the initial days, human communities required cooperative behavior for survival and progression. Civil Society often therefore, was organized where a need for improvement occurred and as a result, people with varied background and interests combined as a particular organization to achieve their universal goal. The phrase ‘Civil Society’ has also been defined in numerous ways: the most common understanding is of civil society as an intermediate sphere between individual/family and state, though the exact ingredients of this sphere vary.\(^1\)

The term 'Civil Society' can be traced through the works of ancient Greek philosophers to Marcus Tullius Cicero and other Roman thinkers. Cicero did believe that human have the capacity to come together willingly to work towards a good society. With the fall of Roman Empire, Civil Society also went out of the fame, until the Renaissance. However, the modern idea of Civil Society appeared in the Scottish and Continental Enlightenment of the late 18th century. A host of political theorists, from Thomas Paine to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, developed the notion of Civil Society as a domain parallel to but separate from the state--a realm where citizens associate according to their own interests and wishes.\(^2\)

The Scottish Enlightenment thinker Adam Ferguson saw Civil Society as a socially sought-after substitute both to the state of nature and the heightened individualism of growing capitalism. Hegel argued that self-organised civil society needed to be evenhanded and ordered by the state, or else it would become self-interested and would not add to the common good. Moving from the social and political field to a narrower organisational focus, the work of Alexis de Tocqueville has been prominent and used to support arguments ‘in favour of’ civil society. His positive account of 19th century associationalism in the United States stressed volunteerism, community spirit and autonomous associational life as protections against the command of society by the state, and indeed as a counterbalance which helped to keep the state responsible and effective.\(^3\)

One of the simplest (and perhaps most often-quoted) contemporary definitions of ‘something called civil society’ was stated by Ernest Gellner as: ‘Civil society, in the relevant sense, is first of all that part of society which is not the state. It is a residue.’\(^4\)

Historically, people working as Civil Society have organised themselves into group for mutual safety and self help. First, there were farmer’s organizations in Japan in 1868; such organisations played a vital role in agricultural movement. In Africa and Asia the conventional self-help associations also have an widespread history. During the 18th and 17th centuries in particular there has been a sudden increase in the number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working outside the purview of government and an increase for the pragmatic answers to

problem over abandoned issues related to ecological deprivation, rights of people, wellbeing, safety, gender and justice. The institutional forms to such organizations sustained in late 19th and early 20th centuries particularly in western world where the history of social organizations seems to have been largely inclined by 'laissez fair' movement based on a more designed manner. 

The existence of current Civil Society is due to crossing point of seven strands of understanding. Each of the seven strands in this narrative is complex in its own right and has its own theoretical justification. Four reveal institutional structures that have developed through the course of Western history to shape the structural outline of contemporary civil society. Out of the four, two organizational structures: legal and philanthropic institutions have existed throughout the past two millennia, while the other two: private associations and a system of free expression, developed in shortly. The other three strands echo social norms: vow to the common good, to individual rights, and to clemency, that appeared successively through a long developmental route. 

A modern polity constitutes of three apparatus: one, the state and its institutions; two, the political society encompassing political parties and their acquaintances; and three, a Civil Society which includes self-sufficient and charitable organisations that are unique from state institutions and political organizations. The hypothesis is that, if all three work according to the conventions of game, they harmonize with each other and, thus, institute a democratic dispensation where power is not determined especially with single element. Furthermore, due to its wide appreciation as the 'third sector', the vigor of Civil Society can have a encouraging influence on the state and the market. Civil Society is therefore, seen as an ever extra vital agent for promoting brilliant governance like transparency, effectiveness, honesty, responsiveness and answerability. Civil Society ought to as a result, work evidently to provide poise and reliance to the common people, who require access to justice and have slightest or no role to play in the political power-game. The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are becoming voice of the marginalised at miscellaneous levels. More often, in the developing societies, the CSOs are not only political and economic predecessor of Justice and Equality, but they have a greater function to play in the social area. As disparity is very much relentless in social facet and deep-rooted in nature with heavy dosage of cultural ethos and convention. Therefore, the CSOs need to work as an agent of social alter and justice. The job of CSOs in such nations are to propose economic opportunities, political partaking and social reception of the citizens.

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Over the last two decades, Civil Society has markedly evolved and gained a key position in political discourse. Viewed at an international level, Civil Society is successful. Technology, geopolitics and the markets have formed prospects and pressures, spurring the formation of millions of CSOs around the globe. An explosion in the number of registrations of CSOs has been eminent, including a foremost increase in activity in developing and emerging economies. Civil Society today is acknowledged as a varied and ever-wider ecosystem of individuals, communities and organizations. The CSOs are hence, functioning in dissimilar fields ranging from bio-diversity and sustainable development to infant inoculation and gender justice etc. at both global and local stages.

BACKGROUND OF CSOS IN PAKISTAN:

In Pakistan, the scholastic discussions tend to use Civil Society as an umbrella idiom for a range of non-state and non-market citizen organisations and initiatives, groups and alliances working in a wide scale of social, economic and cultural fields. It includes a vast display of organizations and associations. Civil Society tries to create forum where citizens can actively work to meet their own requirements, whether in terms of freedom of expression or in providing services for their own population or members. It is potentially a pitch in which state or market activities that negatively distress the deprived people can be challenged through groups that give voice to their needs. In Pakistan, historically, there was a predecessor to Civil Society during pre-British era. It was localised and made up of biradari (kinship union), panchayat (village level local self-government) and jirga (tribal assembly) comprising religious leaders, village landlords and town notables. These arrangements articulated, expressed and mobilised public outlook. Moreover, the activities in the area comprising modern-day Pakistan were motivated principally by religious beliefs and political strategy. Hindu concepts, such as daana (philanthropy) and seva (service) and the Islamic practices of zakat (offering to the deprived) and khairat (endowment) and haqooq-ul-bad (human rights), laid the edifice for charitable activities. During the Colonial Period, the British Rule also introduced corporate structures, official institutions and codified legislative and administrative practices, laying the basics of city based associations and organizations. Philanthropists established educational and healthcare charities that were open to all despite of colour, caste and creed. They left behind a legacy that was to direct and encourage man. The above mentioned CSOs, acted antagonistically with the British Rule, and often

13 Qadeer, 746.
provided support to the revolutionaries and freedom fighters. At such time, the blossoming CSOs were much concerned with uprooting of the British Empire.

Since independence in 1947, the evolution of Civil Society in Pakistan has been flawed by the structural dynamics of state formation, legitimization, and consolidation. With national security concerns dictating political decision making from the start, the state has conventionally adopted centralized, authoritarian systems of power. When Pakistan came into being, it was a nation occupied in the process of becoming unified. Though the fervor of the freedom movement did produce a feeling of unity. Regrettably, nation building was sacrificed at the altar of state building under the pretext of pressing problems and state insecurities. Hence, right from its source the state was strengthened with the support of bureaucratic authority at the cost of civil society.

The years shortly after independence, CSOs were formed to help migrants from India. In the later years they expanded to include family, wellbeing, poverty and social welfare services. General disappointment of state interventions and policies in plummeting rural poverty and improving livelihoods as well as in delivering vital services (such as health, education, water and sanitation etc.) to the society resulted in the developing of CSOs. Civil Society has in many ways filled the space formed due to gloomy performance and apathy of government towards a range of developmental activities.

And at the same time, during this stage, the idea of Civil Society also met its evolutionary phase in Pakistan. The budding dominant factions comprised the pastoral feudal and urban bourgeoisie who in some way managed to conserve a political supremacy and came to wield their political authority. The flaw of the state was however visible as there was very brittle economic and political infrastructure. The political uncertainty was also a factor that could not create a strong civil society. Therefore, the purpose of Civil Society was mostly limited to an oppositional role. In the cities, it was centered around groups of lawyers, reporters, professionals, students associations, and well-known families. In villages and in tribal areas, clans led by landlords and chieftains were its support. The Civil Society in Pakistan is like two corresponding universes, one made of the urban; modern; liberal/secular; cultured and image conscious while the other

20 Qadeer, 747.
consists of ethnic, sectarian, tribal and clan based organisations that promote traditional religious values.\textsuperscript{21}

Pakistan’s high level of self-discipline is to some extent alleviated by a successful Civil Society in all major cities. The level of participation in public debate is fairly soaring in urban areas, and it extends to all age groups. In rural areas, the situation is however dismal. Here, a lack of education, the limited reach of mass media and general social constrictions hold back the increase of CSOs public sphere.\textsuperscript{22} The working of CSOs thus, become very distressing in such fragmented and dissonant society, as manifested in the case of Pakistan. The pulls and pushes of autocratic convention and democracy don’t go hand-in-hand and deviating organizational background with countering philosophies cause further scuffle.

The political history of Pakistan suggests that the military rule of Ayub Khan provided ground for the Civil Society to breed in Pakistan. Ayub’s controversial victory in the Presidential Election of 1965 against Fatima Jinnah resulted in anti-Ayub marches, strikes and public processions. During this period, new interest groups and social classes also appeared including industrial labour, traders, industrial bourgeoisie and city professionals.\textsuperscript{23} The monetary policies of the rule not only caused jagged divide between rich and poor, but also coming out of industrial units in the vast agrarian sphere of the country. The anti-Ayub movement saw fissure of various professional groups. The most outstanding example was agitation by engineers, doctors, accountants and other ‘technocrats' in public bureaucracy against the reigning Civil Service of Pakistan.\textsuperscript{24} The closing part of this government, consequently saw an extensive range of protests and agitations, but the country was shoved in front of a new military regime of Yahya Khan.

The country experienced intensification of trade unions, professional organisations, students union and women organisation because of populist style of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s electoral manifesto. The mid-1970s and early 1980s saw a unique increase in the size and wealth of the lower and middle strata of Pakistani people, especially in Punjab due to availability of alternative sources of employment outside the state, in the Persian Gulf and in foreign-funded aid activities inside Pakistan. This added with increased use of education as a tool of social mobility, and growing urbanization enhanced public expectations and ambition. Thus, the new economic and social forces were able to articulate their social and political interests through CSOs.\textsuperscript{25} Bhutto being the first elected leader did give support to democratic cause in Pakistan. Moreover, the 'Islamic Socialism' followed by the government applied not only to the religious minded people, but also the farmers and industrial workers. The nationalisation design of Bhutto also helped in providing some sort of 'token' legitimacy to the government. Therefore, the popular support

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\item \textsuperscript{21} Rashid, 159.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Qadeer, 748.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Shah, 365.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
enjoyed by Bhutto was absolutely reflected in the CSO movement, which however, seriously fell out of favour during Zia period.

In the era of Zia-ul-Haq, CSOs faced rigorous repression like all other progressive idea and practices of Pakistan. Zia tried to have an over bearing power on the Pakistani psyche. We can still witness the long-lasting gloomy impact of his rule on the entire nation, whether in terms of Islamization, repression of freedom of thought or even constant sectarian conflicts. Zia's assault on CSOs, targeting the country’s intelligentsia, students, labor and trade unions, lawyers, and other professional associations, represented a methodical campaign to intimidate and co-opt all possible arenas of contestation to military rule.\(^\text{26}\) In the name of religion, rational and just voices were silenced and the purge continued till Zia's demise.

During Zia's time, many domestic and global factors favoured the religious section without doubt, which weakened the secular forces of Civil Society to a vast extent. The Zia period witnessed funding from the Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia, for generating the Wahhabi clique and support groups and gradual culmination of severe religion based groups, as working elements of the CSOs. Moreover, the Afghan condition also gave rise to such organizations. Pakistan received colossal sum of money from the US and other international aid agencies for refugee rehabilitation and essential health-care units, in return for Pakistan's support to the US war stratagem in Afghanistan.

The 1990s also saw the ascend of the 'third-generation' CSOs that seek to distinguish themselves from more conventional non-profits by combining development activities with planned policy advocacy for broad socio-economic amend.\(^\text{27}\) Although, the press remained quite free during the democratic years, labour unions, student associations and chambers of commerce remained alienated into ethnic, ideological and political factions. The CSOs suffered disintegration as a result of ascendancy of sectarian, ethnic and clan based organizations at local and regional levels. During this time, the NGOs became the torch-bearer of the people’s demands in terms of political, economic and cultural rights.\(^\text{28}\)

Mutual co-ordination among Pakistani NGOs has been feeble in the past. Nonetheless, following government measures to organize the scope and space available to NGOs, in 1995-96, a large number of organisations across the nation joined hands to form the Pakistan NGO Forum (PNF).\(^\text{29}\) In 1998-99, the then government launched a movement against CSOs, de-registering as many as 2,500 of them in Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The act came in the wake of the protests staged by NGOs not in favor of a proposed religious legislation (Shariat Bill) and the nuclear tests conducted in May 1998. Many CSOs, mainly in Punjab, also

\(^{26}\) Shah, 362.
\(^{27}\) Shah, 367.
\(^{28}\) Rehman, 61.
\(^{29}\) Sattar and Baig, 10.
complained of being frightened by the personnel of intelligence agencies. During democratic period, urban based CSOs were engaged in development projects, advocating human rights and moderate values. Their rural counterparts on the other hand, were struggling to live on, lacking agency; employment opportunities and fair share in policy making and development agendas.

In recent years, CSOs have verified to be stronger and more dedicated than ever. The last few years have witnessed a change in Civil Society movement in Pakistan. From a focus on poverty alleviation and rural development, the Civil Society is occupied with issues of good governance, accountability, and political and human rights. This shift has come about partially because of the social and political crises and partly as an outcome of the rapid development of the electronic media. A series of rallies lead by the Lawyer’s Movement in support of a disposed Chief Justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and against the martial rule of the then President Pervez Musharraf gathered millions of people during in the summer of 2007. The tens of thousands of lawyers that formed the movement were joined by thousands more from other CSO sectors, including students, women’s groups, journalists, human rights activists, academics, trade unions, and professional groups. The struggle focused on the democratic ideals of an independent judiciary, parliamentary supremacy, a free media, and free and fair elections.

The security and political crises have highlighted the function of other CSOs. While, analyzing the political role of CSOs in Pakistan, it has certainly been discussed that they are reactive in nature. They are periodically energized to oppose state's excesses, but then apart from reactive period, they mainly remain under the shadow of State. Moreover, the task of the media and professional associations in the last few years, has brought into jagged focus, the positive role that this segment of the Civil Society can play in enhancing the responsibility of state institutions.

INVolVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY:

Pakistan being part of the Third World, has several socio-economic setbacks, requiring adequate Government attention. The poor performance of the Pakistani state in delivering vital public goods and services in spheres of education, health care and security is moderately compensated by the flourishing tradition of civil society to a certain extent. Considering that Pakistan's Civil

30 Sattar and Baig, 10.
31 Rashid, 157.
35 Qadeer, 759.
36 Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index (BTI), 20.
Society work in the fields of advocating human rights, including professional groups; trade unions; social welfare organizations and faith based organizations, it would be relevant to examine the role of these organizations and the strategy they apply to reach out and engage with communities and increase awareness among marginal sections of the society.  

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Civil Society and Women: The aspect of patriarchy has caused a total disrespect for women in the Pakistani society. Moreover, the insight that daughter is neither the 'provider' nor the 'protector' of the family further widens the gender gap in the society. Apart from family, the feudal system also cause repugnance towards women. Women do experience social evils under the garb of religion and intermittently as part of local custom. The trend of male supremacy at all levels of society thus, becomes a factor causing deprivation and worse cruelty and sadism to the other gender.

The history of women’s activism in Pakistan can be traced during and after the independence movement, when many women related voluntary organizations not only vigorously participated in the freedom struggle but they were also on the forefront in the nation building process. Women played a key role in Civil Society in the early years of Pakistan’s independence. In 1948, Begum Rana Liaqat Ali Khan established the Women’s Volunteer Service for Refugee Rehabilitation and the All Pakistan Women’s Association, which worked on longer-term issues and even continues to function today as an umbrella organization. Begum Rana also founded the Pakistan Women’s National Guides and the Pakistan Women’s Naval Reserves in 1949. Begum Jehan Ara Shahnawaz established the United Front for Women’s Rights and the Pakistan Family Planning Association in 1953. Post 1947, the surge in the women organizations in Pakistan can be divided in three phases. The first phase started in 1960s due to the demand of family laws by women NGOs and the second phase began in 1970s, against the women related prejudiced laws which particularly affected their social position in the society. The third phase can be traced in

37 Rashid, 151.
38 Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index (BTI), 20.
39 Rashid, 151.
1990 with intensification of women's organizations in Pakistan, due to the wide spread effects of globalization.\footnote{Shehzadi Zamurrad Awan, "Role of Civil Society in Empowering Pakistani Women", \textit{South Asian Studies} 27 (2012): 440-441.}

Women also played a strong role in anti-Zia movements of 1980s. Zia's Islamization polices took away the few constitutional and civil rights that women had gained in the near past, but these policies turned out to be a blessing in disguise as women's groups, apprehensive of being totally disempowered were catapulted into tangible organizational activities, especially in urban areas.\footnote{Ifikhar H. Malik (a), "The State and Civil Society in Pakistan: From Crisis to Crisis", \textit{Asian Survey} 36 (1996): 679.} Women fought against the \textit{Hudood Ordinance}, arguing that many aspects of the laws were intrinsically misogynistic. In 1981, a group of activists formed the Women’s Action Forum (WAF) in reaction to the harsh penalties under the Ordinance and the sentencing of a Pakistani woman to stoning. WAF’s media storm paved the way for the formation of other women’s initiatives such as the Pakistani Commission on the Status of Women in 1983. Women’s legal activism achieved other successes in subsequent decades, among them a law declaring a mandatory death penalty for perpetrators of gang rape in 1997 and harsher punishments for ‘honor’ killings in the year 2005.\footnote{ICAN, "Reclaiming the Progressive Past: Pakistani women’s struggle against violence & extremism", 2014, <http://www.icanpeacework.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Pakistan-brief-MK-1.9.14.pdf>, accessed May 25, 2015.}

Pakistani women are also playing instrumental roles as Civil Society leaders, promoting common values based on peace, tolerance, and women’s rights. Many women-led organizations work inside communities throughout Pakistan, where they are gradually promoting economic and political empowerment, providing social services for those affected by displacement, and facilitating rehabilitation for both victims and former militants. For example, PAIMAN Alumni Trust is comprised of a network of women leaders throughout Pakistan. PAIMAN conducts research, awareness-raising, and media campaigns, as well as capacity-building for parliamentarians, government officials, members of the judiciary, the media, and other NGOs throughout the country.\footnote{ICAN, 10.} CSOs working for the upliftment of women do face a lot of social opposition and religious dictates. But, Pakistan in recent past has witnessed an upsurge in consciousness among the womenfolk for their rightful position in family and society. Therefore, at rural areas, the women have been working on a community level development program for self reliance and in urban slum areas, there has been a steady growth in women's activism. For instance, the Sughar Empowerment Society operating in rural and tribal areas of Pakistan provides training, resources and opportunities for women to grow as leaders within their communities. Likewise, Color My World is working for women living in slums of Islamabad by developing capacity building for women.
Civil Society and Human Rights: Human Rights abuse is one of the most complex and challenging issues in contemporary Pakistan, as the vast social landscape of the country is blotched with incidents of murders based on blasphemy charges, child abuse, target killing, physical abuses meted out by the landowners, disappearances and abduction etc. Ironically, under such context, Pakistan has, however, ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the sale of children for child prostitution and child pornography, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Alas! all such legalities do not act as deterrent in dealing with human rights crises in Pakistan.

There are many reasons behind such grave violation of Human Rights in the country. Prolonged periods of military rule has obstructed the growth of development in the country. Moreover, the deprivation caused due to gender discrimination, religious sect, economic status, etc. don't allow the common people to defend themselves and fight for their own legitimate rights. The idea of human dignity has not yet percolated into the mind-set of the people, for instance, the age-old practice of inter-generational slavery is still very much prevalent in Pakistan. The role of Civil Society is increasing day-by-day around the world to protect the Human Rights concern and the same in also felt in Pakistan's context. The Civil Society although at an infant stage in Pakistan, has always been a victim of establishment both military and civilian. In spite of many constraints, the Human Rights Movement is going on in Pakistan. The Human Rights activists are working very sincerely, amidst oppression and atrocities meted out on them.

A handful Human Rights groups publicly highlight the state’s Human Rights abuses and widely disseminate information to mobilize public opinion. Prominent among them is the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), which has consistently pushed since it started functioning in 1986 for the protection of civil and political liberties and maintenance of the sanctity of the judicial and electoral machinery. The HRCP highlighted the human rights violations against women and religious minorities, called for abolition of the capital punishment and forced labour, and declared its belief in secular politics. It set the pace for linkages between human rights and democratic development.

In Pakistan, Human Right CSOs, are constantly challenged and sometimes threatened by the dominant religious fundamentalist segments of society which continue to have influence over the state. The disturbing factor is the fact that such violations have not declined, in spite of active functioning of various organizations. Although, the CSOs have registered some success in protecting and upholding human rights, but have had little influence on larger political and economic issues.

**Civil Society and Health:** Pakistan experiences serious health deficit and challenges, in form of lack of basic health care facility; exorbitant pricing of medicines; prevalence and dominance of witch doctors in rural areas; challenges in dealing with communicable diseases. Superstitions and prejudices against the medical practitioners also cause severe medical crisis in Pakistan. To put the situation in right perspective, Pakistan is going through an epidemiological transition where it faces the double yoke of communicable diseases combined with maternal and prenatal conditions, and chronic, non-infectious diseases. The landscape of public health service delivery presents an uneven distribution of resources between the rural and urban.

To effectively address the health problems facing Pakistan, a number of policies emphasize better health care services. These include: Health related Millennium Development Goals; Medium Term Development Framework; Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers; National Health Policy and Vision 2030. In spite of these policies, overcoming the health related problems in Pakistan seems suspicious and distrustful. Moreover, the first Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF), 2005-10 provided guidelines to ensure equitable development in all the regions of Pakistan, and in doing so, MTDF also presented the health system in Pakistan at federal, provincial and district levels (under public health services) and private health services. MTDF envisaged a sound health care system committed to healthy life style, in joint venture with private sector including civil society, which is effectual, efficient and responsive to the health needs of low socio-economic groups particularly women in the reproductive age.

The people involved with diverse health based CSOs, therefore, need to sensitize the local populace regarding *maghribi* 'western' medicines and its benefits. The Family Planning Association of Pakistan, the largest NGOs providing reproductive health services in the nation, has evolved from being primarily a contraceptive examination provider to offering a community-based multi-sectoral approach to women’s improvement with reproductive health services at the centre of its package of services. Similarly, the Leyton-Rahmatullah Benevolent Trust, a public trust, is the major non-profit service provider for eye treatment after the government and

50 Ghaus-Pasha, 7.
54 Akram and Khan, 7 and 9.
provides quality reliable services in contrast to government health services in this sector. In 2009, the private multinational Procter & Gamble Pakistan and the NGO Save the Children came together to construct 100 sanitation facilities in 100 days across Karachi (Sindh), Lahore (Punjab), and Quetta (Balochistan). They targeted 40,000 school-age children in their health and hygiene awareness movement. Such measures could help diminish the burden of communicable disease to a large extent.

The health workers and service providers related with various CSOs have to go through series of socio-religious hindrances, while working at the community level. Mostly, they are considered to be ‘western agents’ trying to defile the psyche of women and children. The strict Purdah system practiced in the family also cause problem in dealing with health related demonstrations. Even so, the lady health workers become victims of society and its strict patriarchal rule. And in many cases, they face public embarrassment and physical beating in the name of safeguarding and protection of the 'Islamic heritage and culture'. Ironically, Pakistan itself, part of the developing section in World community, is neither able to provide for basic health-care opportunities to its citizens, nor improvise the pitiable condition in which the CSOs are trying to make a positive difference at the grass-root levels.

Civil Society and Education: Providing educational capability to its citizens is a fundamental task of any state. The level of education is a vital sign of any country’s progress. A state cannot be called ‘developed’ until it has a viable education policy. Sadly, education sector has been given importance in the sense, many policies were articulated for providing education, but in veracity, the sector has experienced long neglect. Education sector in Pakistan undergo from a chronic lack of spending. However, the more alarming issue is the inefficient use of allocated funds with high proportions remaining unspent and those that are spent contributing little to good quality education. While these public sector problems worsen, there remain 5.1 million Pakistani children of primary school age who are out of school. This is the second highest in the world. Of the poorest 20 per cent a tragic 2 in 3 girls do not go to school; one of the worst gender inequalities in the world. Lack of education or inadequate education is one of the main causes behind social ills like street crime, poverty, joblessness etc. Pakistani education sector, also experiences severe difference among the urban and rural system of education, apart from the disparities caused by private, missionary and cadet schools in comparison to government schools of rural areas and Islamic seminaries.

Educational institutions in Pakistan invariably fit in to one of three systems: public, private and madrasa. The relatively pricey private schooling system is beyond the reach of most families, for whom the madrasas, that put forward free education, is often the only choice. It is for this reason that NGOs are keen to pioneer peace programmes in both English and Urdu medium public

55 Khan and Khan, 8 and 9.
56 Afzal and Yusuf, 242.
sector schools, but this remains a taxing prospect.\textsuperscript{58} The negative socio-economic and political mixture of Pakistan is explicit in the education sector also, as the rural people are often eye-washed with 'Ghost-schools', mostly used as cow-sheds. The administration provide for school buildings, without teachers, instructors and other facilities. Worse in many cases, the schools are only registered in the government files without any real physical existence.

The tussle between CSOs and administration is ever-present in Pakistan. When Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) tried to execute Citizen Report Card in two of the slums in Islamabad to review the quality of education being provided to students in public schools, the Federal Directorate of Education tried to hamper the process by initially not allowing the schoolteachers to collaborate with the organization’s research teams. It has been observed that the confrontation is mainly due to the innate deficiencies, the authorities concerned do not want to be exposed.\textsuperscript{59}

**Civil Society and Terrorism:** The role of Civil Society in the context of terrorism is dual faceted, as there are groups and organizations supporting as well as condemning the terror activities. A sub-set of CSOs encompassing religious seminaries, however, has customarily backed jingoistic and chauvinistic ideologies. Run mostly by religio-political parties, many of these seminaries have served as teaching centres for militants. In addition, a number of Al-Qaida and Taliban supporters and right-wing Islamist religious parties also form part of it and exert a lot of authority. They have their own complex of NGOs for promoting ‘human rights’ and undertaking welfare activities. So much so that even Lashkar-e-Taiba and its front organisation, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, call themselves welfare associations. Even a self confessed associate of Osama bin Laden, Khalid Khawaja, is running a ‘human rights’ organization.\textsuperscript{60}

Apart from the direct terror connections of these organizations, there are few bodies which work for the counter-radicalization. Pakistan hosts six known de-radicalization series: the Sabaoon Center for Rehabilitation, Mishal, Sparley, Rastoon, Pythom, and Heila. Over a hundred CSOs also carry out on-site projects in Pakistan that add towards counter-radicalization.\textsuperscript{61} CSOs across Pakistan are also developing responsiveness towards terrorism through a large number of platforms and mediums including the media, public rallies, conferences, poster campaigns and


\textsuperscript{60} IDSA, *Whither Pakistan? Growing Instability and Implications for India* (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2010).

online petitions. The potency of these grassroots, locally-driven efforts lies in their context-specific approaches and capability to offer a rightful counter-narrative to violent extremism.\(^{62}\)

In tandem with public awareness campaigns, CSOs organize initiatives to oppose extremism on numerous levels. Some programs condemn violence from a religious perspective. Others center on countering radicalism by denouncing intolerance, advocating for social consistency and promoting inter-ethnic and inter-cultural accord. Some groups also run at the individual level, focusing on developing positive personal characteristics (e.g. anger management and conflict mediation skills).\(^{63}\) CSOs are also using social media to create peace and awareness.

But, at the same time, sadly, in Pakistan, one finds hundreds of people who, in private, will agree with a progressive point of view but in public forum they will stand with the extremists. Therefore, after any terrorist attack barely more than a few dozen people come out on the roads for nonviolent protest against the barbaric act and this activity is limited to only three cities i.e, Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad.\(^{64}\) For example, a peaceful rally was physically attacked in Lahore during a commemoration for the assassinated governor of Punjab province, Salman Taseer, who was killed on January 4, 2011. A number of unidentified militans used batons to charge a cluster of Civil Society activists and some workers of the Awami Workers Party. After the attack, when CSO members moved to register an FIR against the assailants, police refused to act in agreement. Lack of security and scant money and resources prevent CSOs from creating a sustained country wide group. While remonstrating against the terror attack CSOs have not been able to articulate their grievance, create an uproar or even demand justice, because of harassment fear or worse target assassination.

**Civil Society and Poverty:** Poverty in Pakistan is comprehensive and is the direct effect of the lack of awareness and willingness to expand the country as an agrarian economy, supported by industrialization and investment in human resource development. One of the major reasons for omnipresent poverty in rural areas is the continued domination of the feudal families. The landowners not only exploit the peasantry economically, but also get pleasure from a tremendous amount of impunity within the Pakistani culture. Many feudal have even landed up in Parliament and assemblies and rule among the upper echelons of politicians and the group termed the 'elite' of Pakistani society.\(^{65}\) The migration from rural to urban centres have also been a result of rural poverty as well cause for urban poverty. The enhancement in urban slum dwellers, especially in Karachi with poor living conditions and lack of basic amenities is only adding up to the large chunk of populace living below the poverty line. Moreover, poor governance is another key fundamental cause of poverty in Pakistan. Poor governance has not only enhanced susceptibility,

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\(^{63}\) Mirahmadi et al, 27.


\(^{65}\) Sattar, 18.
but is the chief cause of low business confidence, which in turn translates into lower investment levels. Environmental degradation is also caused due to poverty in Pakistan. The environment-poverty nexus manifests itself most predominantly in health effects.  

As poverty is on the increase, strategy and programme planners are looking for answers. Among these, working with the private sector to allocate the burden of health and education services, and closer alliance with NGOs have been advocated and partially implemented for the last few years. This plan began with the Social Action Programme (SAP) scheme during the 1990s, an effort to manage and integrate social sector activities. Yet, without much accomplishment, or possibly due to insufficient study of such efforts, it remains uncertain just how successful civil society is in poverty improvement in Pakistan.

The Government has also institutionalized support to NGOs through a variety of government ministries including the Ministry of Women Development, Social Welfare and Special Education. It also provides monetary support through the National Council for Social Welfare and the National Zakat Foundation and alike bodies in Provincial Governments. The Poverty Reduction Strategy recognizes the noteworthy role that NGOs can play in social service delivery, sponsorship, and empowerment.

Civil Society and Media: In Pakistan, consecutive governments have remained ignorant of the potential of the media to help people-centred positive agendas. The public’s right to know how the business of the State is conducted is not valued. However, the circumstance has evolved for better during the last 10-15 years. The formerly non-existent sector of private electronic media especially has increased after the state monopoly on broadcasting was lifted in 2002. The visual and print media is also lifting the profile of political debate, cultural articulation and national harmony besides offering a severe rebuke to extremism and authoritarianism. In addition, it has provided a complete echelon of local heroes and heroines with younger populace reporting on various natural and human problems displaying a greater sense of empowerment and civic critique. TV channels not only in Urdu but regional languages have also mushroomed. FM radio stations have come out over the entire social landscape of Pakistan. There are current affair and news channels, entertainment channels, and English language channels offering a range of programmes and opinion. There are conflicting views about the task of Media in protecting civil

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67 Khan and Khan, 5.
70 Marcus Michaeelsen, New Media vs. Old Politics The Internet, Social Media, and Democratisation in Pakistan (Berlin: fesmedia Asia, 2011).
liberties.\textsuperscript{72} An autonomous media system is a healthy marker for the development of democracy and civil society. Consequently, the level of press or media freedom in any social order has relevancy with that society’s political ecology.\textsuperscript{73}

For a sizeable period of time, the Civil Society in Pakistan has been raising accent and concern over freedom of speech and expression, of which media is an fundamental element. It is well understood that there is not much option for free press to function in a vacuum. Freedom can only be observed, if the government support media and agree to democratic ideas. Freedom of information should be recognized and formed part of the democratic model.\textsuperscript{74} Several NGOs like the HRCP, the Consumers Rights Protection and others have been struggling for a freedom of information law. Some international benefactor associations, particularly the Asian Development Bank, link aid to transparency in authority and the right of the citizens to know.\textsuperscript{75}

The voice of media in Pakistan, is still under pressure to imbibe democracy as the foundation of political philosophy and societal value. Many journalists and media associates are getting killed while conducting their duty. Media has been very vigorous in current times, be it the movement for restoration of Chief Justice in Pakistan, fight against brutalization of government, restoration of democracy, women’s issues, domestic violence, answerability of the government and judicial independence. The media channels played a major role in raising citizen’s voice on democratic rights and war on terror. Media is trying to get a hold in the political development of Pakistan being active part of the CSOs. Apart from what media is doing, ordinary people also need to protect the media. Rise in awareness about the risks taken by media to publish true picture is extremely essential.

CONCLUSIONS :

As a carved 'Nation', Pakistan is still at a nascent juncture, and needs a certain level of political maturity to provide a working space for CSOs. The Pakistani society is in dire need of sensitzation about various social evils and the legitimate rights of the poor and deprived community, for better working of CSOs. As we have seen, the staff and workers associated with several organizations, are hardly provided with a conducive working environment in the fields. In addition, it has been observed that the Civil Society has largely operated in the reactive mode in the country. It is energized periodically to react to the state’s excesses and dispose-off corrupt and ineffective governments. For short durations, its divergent groups and components come together to confront a regime that becomes too self-serving and/or unresponsive. The CSOs need to assert their voice as sustainable bodies and not on the basis of sporadic political and social events.


\textsuperscript{73} Naseer Memon, "Insecure aid workers", The Dawn, Lahore, 25 December, 2012.

\textsuperscript{74} Sadruddin, 169.

\textsuperscript{75} Hassan and Sabir, 337.
The workings of CSOs in Pakistan also vary in size and structure of the organization. Smaller CSOs often require adequate management structures, while large CSOs with international funding have stronger management structures. Resultantly, the Civil Society fails to act as a unified and strong force protesting against the state excesses and other violent non-state actors. The CSOs also have little incentive and expertise to invest in training of ground staff. The lack of training and professional outlook of CSO workers towards the subject leave them without expertise in the uncharted territories.

Although, in recent past, the Civil Society movement has been very vocal and in many cases, they have taken over the streets and media circuits, but, CSOs in Pakistan have not yet succeeded in developing a comprehensive strategy to disable the coercive measures of state, and create a society with equal opportunities and legal rights. Being the victims of both state-repression and other violent organizations, the CSOs are unfortunately depicted as battered socio-political weaklings in Pakistan, who can protest but cannot substantially change the system.

At the same time, there is no denying the fact that CSOs have close contact with people, as they work at community level. Likewise, they are better equipped to tap local resources. Therefore, the accountable CSOs should encourage peoples' participation in various community based developmental activities, along with 'expected' Government support and funding. Nevertheless, the CSOs could not transfer themselves to become an agent for change and instead of initiating substantial improvement, they too often fall prey to the system.
Reference:


Michaelsen, Marcus (2011), New Media vs. Old Politics The Internet, Social Media, and Democratisation in Pakistan, Berlin: fesmedia Asia.


