

# Is Colonial Mentality Impeding Pakistan?

## OUTLINE

### 1) INTRODUCTION

Thesis Statement: Colonial mentality is represented by the institutions of bureaucracy, police, judiciary, and feudalism hindering progress on social, political, and economic structures.

### 2) MAIN BODY

Sectors Affected by Colonial Mentality

#### 2.1- Bureaucracy

- a) Bureaucracy, an inherited colonial structure
- b) Flawed bureaucratic structure
- c) Corruption, Red-tapism, Lack of responsiveness
- d) Culture of privilege, elitism

#### 2.2- Judiciary

- a) Exploration of the legal framework in colonial era
- b) Failure of the legal system to adapt to the modern world.

#### 2.3- Police

- a) Police during colonial times
- b) Continuation of colonial-era attitudes within the police
- c) Politicization of Police in Pakistan

#### 2.4- Feudalism

- a) Historical roots of feudalism
- b) Political patronage of feudal lords
- c) Resistance to Agrarian Reforms impeding progress.

### 3) CONCLUSION



Pakistan's history is intrinsically linked to its colonial past, as it was part of British India until gaining independence in 1947. The British colonial administration left an indelible mark on the societal, political, and economic structures of the region. The colonial mentality refers to the adoption of attitudes, values, and practices that were instilled during the colonial era, often to the detriment of a nation's growth and development. The British were considered as rulers and Indians, subject. In simple words, it was a master slave relationship. Today the same colonial mentality is represented by the institutions that Pakistan is carrying as her legacy. The list includes bureaucracy, judiciary, police, and feudalism which are hindering societal, political and economic progress.



First comes bureaucracy that represents the colonial mentality which ultimately hinders Pakistan's progress. The bureaucratic structure inherited from colonial era, Indian Civil Service, is a crucial element in understanding the persistence of colonial mentality in Pakistan. The British introduced a hierarchical and centralized administrative system designed to serve imperial interests. This is the same structure that Pakistan is still carrying with her and which, indeed, represents colonial mentality and hinders development.

The structural foundation of Pakistan's bureaucracy is outdated and has no parallel in any modern democratic state elsewhere. Today, in almost all of the developed countries, bureaucrats run the designated government institutions or departments instead of managing cities, municipalities, or towns. Whereas, in Pakistan, bureaucracy is still functioning on the 19th century system of civil services introduced by the English colonial masters. This system has been criticized for being manipulative as it is said to only serve those few individuals, who are in power. Thus, the country's outdated bureaucratic structure is a hurdle in the way of development.

The bureaucratic machinery, characterized by red tape, corruption, and a lack of responsiveness, has endured in post-colonial Pakistan. The bureaucratic system was designed by British Raj to extract revenue from the land whilst at the same time maintaining political control over the rural masses. This same colonial mentality is still



working in Pakistan's bureaucracy, and it has been corrupted year after year. This continuity has led to a resistance to change and a perpetuation of hierarchical and autocratic decision-making processes. For instance, in 2023 when the Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif decided to reduce the perks of Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), the PAS bureaucrats, in opposition, stocked wheat and prevented its movement. This move caused inflation in the country and deficiency of wheat. The government, then, had to import wheat, deciding not to reduce the perks. Besides this, the bureaucrats, outside their official duties, keep themselves busy with either district level projects or international ones. For instance, in a recent Sanghar Land Scam in Sindh, a staggering 202 acres of land has been illegally grabbed in connivance with Revenue Department officials, to construct a petrol pump and a residential project, according to the findings of Anti-Corruption Establishment Inquiry.

In addition to autocratic decision making and corruption, red-tapism is at its peak in bureaucracy. Files are being transferred from high <sup>low</sup> level to high level. If a piece of work is from a person of designation, it gets done fastly, but if it belongs to a common person, it <sup>keeps</sup> gets delayed until it is red-taped in the end. A similar scenario has been portrayed by Qudratullah Shahab in his Shahab Nama. where he describes how a plea submitted by a commoner to a civil servant got back to the commoner after a few day without bringing any results. Hence, these rotten practices - corruption, red-tapism, autocratic decision making are damaging the country to the core.



The colonial-era bureaucracy was built upon the culture of privilege and elitism, with a clear distinction between the rulers and the ruled. There was a rule of white Sahab in colonial times.

Similarly, the culture of Sahab/Afsar in government offices is still present, even, today that somehow entailing the continuation of master and slave analogy of the colonial era. Furthermore, either it is unemployment, poverty or inflation in the country, the bureaucracy being unconcerned about anything, keeps receiving hefty protocol and enjoying manifold perks and privileges. The lifestyle of bureaucrats is entirely different from that of the common citizens. In short, colonial mentality is visible in every aspect of bureaucracy.

Second comes judiciary. The judiciary, as a cornerstone of any democratic system, plays a crucial role in shaping the legal landscape of a nation. However, the impact of colonial mentality on the judiciary in Pakistan has been a subject of ongoing debate. The colonial-era judiciary often served the interests of the ruling elite. In post-colonial Pakistan, there are concerns about the judiciary's ability to dispense impartial justice, with allegations of bias towards powerful individuals and institutions. For instance, Maulvi Tamizuddin Case (1955) was the first case that brought the judicial system of Pakistan into disrepute. The young Pakistani nation faced a constitutional crisis when Governor General Ghulam Mohammad dissolved its Constitutional Assembly.



maulvi Tamizuddin, President of the Constitutional<sup>en</sup> Assembly, challenged the dissolution. Although, the Sindh High Court ruled in his favour, Pakistan's Federal Court upheld the act of dissolving the

Assembly, sending democracy to the gallows.

The powerful elite of Pakistan continue to influence the judiciary. In that case, "Justice delayed, and ultimately denied" happens. The powerful get away with their crimes, while the weak have to face punishments. The elite in Pakistan after having been announced by the court as "culprit" come out of the courts forming victory sign with their hands. Similarly, there is a case of Shahzeb Murder Case. In December 2012,

Shahrukh Jatoi (son of a feudal lord) along with his fellows shot 20-year-old Shahzeb Khan dead in Karachi. The case was heard in the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) where Shahrukh was sentenced to death. Later, Sindh High Court (SHC) converted the death sentence to life imprisonment. In 2022, after the ruling of Supreme Court that the Shahzeb murder case was an outcome of a "personal egoistic approach", Shahrukh Jatoi was released. To conclude, colonial mindset still persists in Pakistan's judiciary, serving the interests of the elite.

The legal system in the country faces criticism not just due to poor implementation, but primarily because it has failed to adapt to the demands of the modern world. The country continues to operate under a set of colonial and imperialist laws, and is burdened by lengthy and outdated procedures. Courts in the country adhere to traditional legal procedures, often



without questioning the rationale behind them. This obsolete approach is largely the result of the legal fraternity's reluctance to challenge the status quo. Several glaring examples illustrate the system's inefficiencies. Video recordings, despite being verified, are still considered weak evidence in the courts. Civil suits cannot commence until the other party physically receives a court notice, adding necessary delays. Even minor typographical errors or jurisdictional issues can lead to the dismissal of a case. The lower judiciary's recruitment process prioritises rote memorisation of legal sections and procedures over a genuine understanding of the law's essence. This outdated approach hampers the development of a more progressive legal system.

Third comes the role of police. The role of the police in Pakistan's post-colonial landscape is pivotal in Pakistani understanding the perpetuation of colonial mentality. The police force, designed to serve imperial interests during the colonial era, has struggled to evolve into a service-oriented institution focused on safeguarding the rights and well-being of citizens. The colonial <sup>police</sup> force was primarily an instrument of control, maintaining order in the interest of the colonial rulers. "Terror", "awe", and "fear" were the weapons with which the British ruled. These weapons are still instilled in police in Pakistan.



The politicization of the police forces, a practice inherited from colonial times, continues to undermine its autonomy. Political interference in law enforcement decisions perpetuates a culture of subservience to political elites rather than adherence to the rule of law. For instance, during British rule, in Jhallianwala Bagh incident, people were doing peaceful protests, meanwhile the police - on the orders of General Dyer - opened fire at the unarmed crowd, as a result of which 379 casualties were reported officially, while other sources tell 1000 deaths were occurred. Similar is the case with Pakistan. Whenever a political party comes to power, it dominates the police. Police in Pakistan still lacks autonomy. Such practices undermine the democratic values of a democratic country and thus hinder the progress of the country.

Fourthly, there comes feudalism. The feudal system, deeply rooted in Pakistan's agrarian society, is a manifestation of colonial-era landownership patterns that continue to influence power dynamics and socio-economic structures.

During colonial era, the British rulers used to give large swathes of land to the nobles who showcased their passionate loyalty with the colonialists. Nobles in return used to exploit the rights of peasants; the same is happening in Pakistan. Feudal lords have adopted the same attitude as the colonizers did in the past. They have domination over local people, and they rule over them. Human rights, ethnic rights, legal rights, and even individual rights have been exploited by feudalism.



in Pakistan. Feudal lords have become so powerful that they are like a state within a state. They have their own system of law and justice based on narrow traditions. The evil practices of karo kari (honour killing), watta satta (exchange marriage) and vanni are rampant among feudal setup. Due to their influence over everything, the masses cannot stand up for their rights. In short, feudalism is the hurdle in the way for the country to progress.

Political patronage feudal lords, often with historical ties to colonial rulers, continue to wield political influence. The practice of political patronage reinforces a power dynamic that mirrors colonial-era hierarchies, where the privileged few control vast resources at the expense of the majority. A large part of political parties of Pakistan consists of these feudal lords, with a large voter bank of their peasants and poor villagers; only these feudal lords get elected in elections. In this whole setup, it becomes increasingly difficult for a common person to contest and win elections. As someone said, "Democracy can survive only through new people with new ideas". With the same feudal faces in assemblies year after year, the country gets the same policies and agendas which serve the interest of this class. To sum up, feudalism gifted to the colonizers<sup>d</sup> from their colonizers can be proved lethal for any democratic state, with total blockage of development and growth.

Resistance to Agrarian Reforms Efforts to reform landownership structures and address issues of land redistribution have faced resistance from entrenched feudal interests. This resistance



reflects a continuation of colonial-era policies that favored the preservation of elite's privileges. In short, to eradicate the feudalism is the need of the hour for the country if it wants to remain democratic country, and move forward.

The persistence of colonial mentality in Pakistan, as exemplified by the roles played by bureaucracy, police, judiciary, and feudalism, poses significant challenges to the nation's progress. While acknowledging the historical context and the complex interplay of factors, it is imperative for Pakistan to critically assess and reform these institutions to better align with the principles of democracy, justice, and equality. Initiatives aimed at modernizing bureaucratic practices, depoliticizing the police force, reforming the judicial system, and addressing feudal power dynamics are crucial steps in breaking free from the shackles of colonial legacy and fostering a more inclusive and progressive society. Only through concerted efforts to dismantle the vestiges of colonial mentality can Pakistan pave the way for a future that reflects the aspirations and diversity of its people.