In 1947, when Pakistan came into being, there were only two university departments of social sciences: one in history and one in economics. More departments were established in the 1960s to foster research in sociology and social work. Although the growth of social sciences was slow until 1983 there were only 34 social science departments in all the Pakistani universities – the range of social sciences expanded to include (apart from economics and history) departments of political science, psychology, international relations, social work, and anthropology. The state began employing social scientists in its activities of planning and finance. The government also established institutions in the fields of economics, foreign affairs, administration, and development economics. In 1983, there were approximately 16,000 graduates in the social sciences in the country, mostly (97%) employed in the public sector. Very few were working in Pakistan, and the indigenization of the social sciences was not yet an issue for most Pakistani social scientists in this period.

Development of social sciences departments accelerated between 1983 and 2001. The number of departments in this period rose from 34 to 110 and the number of teachers from 191 to 851. In this growth, economics still figured prominently.

**Underdevelopment**

Most Pakistani social scientists are dissatisfied with the development of social sciences in the country. In their view, the underdevelopment of this field has to do with the methodological contingencies in which the Pakistani state and society were to be defined in ideological terms. Since the first decade of the existence of the Pakistani state, finance, defence and the constitution comprised the list of priorities. Continual migration of the Muslim population from India to Pakistan, the constant state of war with India, and formidable economic challenges did not allow education and research the attention they deserved. Military regimes, which came to be known as Nazriyya Pakistan (the ideology of Pakistan), was the constant duty of the state, particularly of the Pakistani military and bureaucracy, to defend not only the geographical but also the ideological frontiers of the state.

As an ideological state, regardless of whether it was defined in secular or Islamist terms, Pakistan’s authorities developed a general fear that freedom of expression and inquiry might lead to disunity and anarchy. They distrusted independent and critical thinking. The solidarity of the state, thus, required submission to an official version of history, society, and religion, which came to be known as Nazriyya Pakistan (the ideology of Pakistan). It was considered the duty of the state, particularly of the Pakistani military and bureaucracy, to defend not only the geographical but also the ideological frontiers of the state.

The politically powerful conservative groups within the state structure of Pakistan also pose themselves as the sole guardians of Pakistan’s tradition and its values. They dogmatize culture and religion in their conservative traditional values. Consequently, they support and influence state institutions to discourage scientific outlook, critical thinking, reasoning, questioning of the status quo, challenging traditions and authority. These groups determine the direction of scientific and the allocation of resources to various disciplines and sub-disciplines in the social sciences.

Consequently, throughout Pakistan’s more than 54 years of existence, education and manpower development in social sciences has remained a low priority. They have been given in other newly independent countries. It is only since the 1990s that literacy, health, nutrition, and so on have been included in the Human Development Index. Defence-related sciences, however, are still on the priority list in the state sector.

Analyzing this state of affairs, Hassan Nawaz Gardezi, a Pakistani social scientist, remarked that “the power structure, which exerts low priority to social indicators and indicators to priority to building atomic bombs and missiles, is seriously flawed. They should not human development be the primary value to guide scientific activity in Pakistan?”

**The state of social sciences**

In 1988, social scientists at the Quaid-i-Azam University (Islamabad), the Center for the Study of Central Asian Civilization (Islamabad), and the University Grants Commission, organized a joint conference in Islamabad to discuss the state of social sciences in Pakistan. The conference recommended the establishment of the Pakistan Social Science Research Council to promote research in the social sciences. The conference was very critical of the state of social sciences in Pakistan and following lines reflect the general tenor of this criticism. 

Pakistani social sciences have not made any significant contribution to the cumulative growth of social scientific knowledge. Generally, the social sciences in Pakistan lack theoretical orientation and a theoretical framework. The latter, when indeed used, is not subjected to a critical assessment. A superficial, speculative, journalistic or interpretative style of analysis of political events (political science, foreign policy, international relations), chronicle, and history, and the rationalization of events on the basis of charisma and individual attributes of political personalities, remain standard traits of Pakistan’s social scientists. While some of the speculative, historical and legal-formal analyses has come to dominate the social sciences from the indigenous intellectual tradition, abstracted empiricism or hyper-factualism has found its way into the social sciences. The import of abstracted empiricism has been accompanied by the import of research techniques developed in the social sciences in the West, which are often not appropriate for gathering facts in a illiterate society.

Social sciences in Pakistan largely suffer from the twin ills of xenophilia and ethnocentrism: the former emerging from Pakistan’s society’s quest for modelling education on Anglo Saxon intellectual and cultural traditions, and the latter from its indigenous intellectual culture and special circumstances of its emergence as a separate country from India. The latter is particularly manifest in the teaching and research in the fields of Islamic history and Pakistani and Pakistan social sciences.

Some Pakistani social scientists have called for an Islamicization of the social sciences, which in some sense could be seen as an attempt to Pakistan is deviant social sciences; but in another sense they also reflect a particular Pakistani ethnocentrism. Islamic social scientists argue that the social sciences are on their priority list in the state sector. And their fundamental epistemology are Western innovations and alien to Islamic culture. Pakistan has not achieved modern social sciences as structured and classified in the West. However, the value context in which they operate limits their full acceptance and application. In the research environment. Nevertheless, among the Islamsocial sciences, only Islamic economics has achieved some advancement; while other fields like Islamic anthropology and Islamic sociology have not progressed further than a change of labels. The proposed approaches have raised serious methodological questions, because they are developed in normative and prescriptive terms. They do not aim to explain social realities, but to construct a norm of society. Hence, the Pakistani social scientists should not have human development be the primary value to guide scientific activity in Pakistan?

The State of Social Sciences in Pakistan

Notes


**The Council of Social Sciences**

The Council of Social Sciences (COSS) formally came into existence in January 2001 as a registered charitable organization with the objective of building a critical mass of social scientists in Pakistan. The Council aims to contribute to the building and strengthening of an autonomous community of social scientists and to enhance the engagement of their knowledge and skills. The Council promotes a scientific way of analysing problems among the citizens of Pakistan. It aims to advance a pluralistic approach in the social sciences while remaining committed to objectivity, rationality and creativity. More than one hundred social scientists in Pakistan and abroad have registered themselves as members of the Council. The Council offers the following publications:

- The State of Social Sciences in Pakistan, edited by Dr Inayatullah (Islamabad: Council of Social Sciences, Pakistan, 2001). It is in fact a reprint edition of the 1998 conference on the state of social sciences in Pakistan. In addition to general essays on the state of social sciences, the book also contains footnotes, a list of respondents and an index.

**The Bulletin of the Council of Social Sciences**, Pakistan, edited by Dr Inayatullah, Dr Zarina Salamat and Zafarullah Khan. This quarterly bulletin contains reports on the activities of the COSS and of the social sciences in Pakistan. More significantly it reports on the developments in social sciences in Pakistan, listing recent programmes, published books and periodical literature. The bulletin is also available on the COSS website.

**Further information contact:**

COSS  P.O. Box 2002 Islamabad, Pakistan E-mail: cosspakistan@yahoo.com Fax: +9251271583  www.cosss.org.pk

Prof. Muhammad Khalid Masud is ISIM Academic Director and ISIM Chair at Leiden University.