

**CHALLENGES OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN
NEOLIBERAL ERA IN WEAK THIRD WORLD STATES:
REVISITING PAKISTAN**

Koktiba Sangtam*

Abstract: Neoliberalism has become dominant contemporary ideology affecting the lives worldwide. Despite the need for an effective state intervention in basic human needs, many states are trapped into the contemporary global setting of neoliberal ideas thereby, fail to fulfil the aspirations of their citizens. Within the states, there is growing fragmentation between the state and its larger populace over these agenda. Therefore, this article is an attempt to highlight the issue of human development in a neoliberal era by arguing that state welfare function assumes prime importance in the Third World states. Secondly, the cut back of welfare functions as neoliberals suggest in order to promote more economic growth could possibly do more harm to the states. Therefore, the underlying question is how neoliberalism going to address these diverse issues of human development in the Third World? As I explore these specific issues, I will make linkages of how neoliberalism is complicating those issues thereby producing some of the security challenges in recent times focussing on Pakistan, a classic example as a 'weak state' where state face a formidable challenge in all fronts and withdrawing of state from many of its welfare and social provisions in already struggling state like Pakistan will enabled the various sub-state actors to assume state responsibility thereby, filling the vacuum created by the state which will be serious challenge for her stability in the long run.

Key Words: Neoliberalism, Human Development, Welfare State, Education and Pakistan.

Background

* Ph.D. (Research Scholar), Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi-110025.

Introduction

Despite achieving freedom, many of the Third World states today continues to struggle in terms of achieving acceptable level of human development. With the emergence of new global forces such as global neoliberalism, achieving basic human need becomes extremely difficult for many marginalised sections. In the need for rapid economic growth, neoliberals would often suggest market as the most efficient way to allocate resources and in achieve human development. Government intervention is on the other hand is considered undesirable as it transgresses both efficiency and individual freedom.¹ Under such condition, the state in the future for them has fewer roles to play except assist in protecting the market system through maintaining law and order and upholding the rights of private property.²

While, the prospect of transforming the Third World states has become extremely complex. Ironically, their engagement with global neoliberalism turns out to be a costly affair and have caused series of crises internally. Despite many Third World states reluctance over neoliberal economic policies, their continuing reliance and need of aid, development and military support from the West and other multilateral institutions, compelled them to endorsed this policies even if, it cost them much.³ Moreover, with globalisation, the idea of isolation becomes extremely difficult. As a result of this, many weak Third World states faces a formidable challenge within. Though not all the policies are considered threatening but the outcomes of some of its policies have greater negative implications. Evidence suggests under neoliberal globalisation, some of its challenges are not only faced by the Third World states but even within the developed nations.

Human Development: Welfare state and Neoliberalism

Achieving human development an important agenda for any state. It constitutes access to employment, education, social services, healthcare, ending poverty, inequality of income and sustainable development.⁴ It also included in broader notion of development. For instance, Amartya Sen went beyond the narrow definition of development by adopting that broader notion of development which he considers a process of expanding real freedom which people enjoys. As opposite to the narrower views of development emphasising on GDP growth, increase personal incomes, industrialisation, technological advancement and social modernisation, freedom according to him also depends on other determinants, such as social-economic, education, health care, civil and political rights.⁵ Moreover, for Sen, development also requires the removal of major source of unfreedom such as poverty, oppression, poor economic

opportunities, systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities, and intolerance and repressive states.⁶ Lately, these issues redefined the meaning of development which essentially denotes not merely focussing on aggregate country's economic growth. These issues as so basic for human advancement but has become deficient especially in many Third World states. Therefore, it is important to examine how the role of the state in addressing human development under liberalism.

In order to achieve basic human development, the concept of the welfare state is crucial. In a welfare state, the state plays a key role in protection and promotion of economic and social well-being to all its citizens based on equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth, and ensures public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provision for a good life. A welfare state provides education, housing, sustenance and healthcare for its citizens. It also provides benefits such as pensions and unemployment insurances and it provides equal wages through price and wage controls. The government also provides public transportation, child care, social amenities such as public parks and libraries as well as many other goods and services. Some of these things are paid for through government insurance programmes and others are paid for by taxes.⁷

As opposed to the concept of a welfare state, the neoliberal state suggests human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. These are the institutional arrangements considered essential to guarantee individual freedoms. The legal framework is freely negotiated contractual obligations between individuals in the market place. The sanctity of contracts and the individual right to freedom of action, expression and choice must be protected. The state must therefore use its monopoly of violence to preserve these freedoms at all costs. By extension, the freedom of business and corporations (legally regarded as individuals) to operate within this institutional framework of free markets and free trade is regarded as a fundamental good. Private enterprise and entrepreneurial initiative are seen as the key to innovation and wealth creation. Intellectual property rights are protected so as to encourage technological changes. Continuous increases in productivity should then deliver higher living standards to everyone. The neoliberals hold that the elimination of poverty (both domestically and globally) can best be secured through free markets and free trade.⁸

The rise of the global market under neoliberalism has thus reduced the role of the state and its capacity in many areas such as the provision of human development. The ideology of the market and private interest of neoliberalism compels the state to act not in the interest of the

majority population but for the few groups. This ultimately has resulted to the questioning of legitimacy in many states. With the intensification of neoliberal ideas, the state today provides less welfare provisions. On account of these new developments, analysts often referred it as “retreat of the state” from a range of social and welfare to security services⁹ or “decline of the authority of states.”¹⁰

For the Third World states, welfare of its citizens assumes prime importance. With neoliberalism taking root, many states have either become fragile as there is neither effective institutional capacity nor mechanism to be dealt their delicate issues.¹¹ It is observe that challenges to legitimacy of many states have been emerged from within due to the incapacity of the state to do many welfare functions and security needs of the people. Some analysts therefore, argued that, legitimacy deficits are likely where exist a major gap between the state promises and its performance in fulfilling the security of its citizens. On the basis of the state’s inability to perform its traditional security functions that a number of analysts have claimed to discern a growing legitimacy deficit.¹²

Pakistan as Weak State

Pakistan provides a classic example of a weak state.¹³ Though her military expenditure has been increased dramatically over a years (\$700.3 billion for the year 2014-15),¹⁴ it has continued to decline its spending on social sectors where education as one is one prime example. Pakistan state is facing a tough crisis within as its inability to perform welfare provision in one hand and growing resistance by the people over the state on other and how these will place a difficult position as a state to survive become important. These developments are not only a threat for her internal stability but also affecting the neighbouring countries as well.

In common terminology, weak state has been defined as a state low in capacity in terms of its ability to carry out its objectives with adequate societal support. Robert Rotberg defines weak state as those states that suffer from deficiencies in the areas of security, political participation and physical infrastructure. Also a weak state according to K. J. Holsti, suffers from low levels or the absence of ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ legitimacy. The former implies that ‘substantial segments of the population do not accord the state or its ruler loyalty’.¹⁵ The result is that the decisions and decrees of state rulers do not elicit ‘habitual compliance’. An absence of horizontal legitimacy refers to the definition and political role of the community; that is, there is ‘no single community whose members, metaphorically speaking, have signed a social contract

among themselves. Instead, there are numerous communities and categories that shape the nature of politics and authority structures.¹⁶

Thus, a weak state by its very nature is unable to provide sufficient levels of protection to all its citizens. Sometimes political or military elites have the wherewithal to acquire wealth and develop capacity in some kinds of coercive instruments. But the ruling elite often lacks legitimate authority and control in much of the country and frequently will have to engage in brute force to suppress dissidence among disenchanting ethnic or political groups. Possessing some capacity distinguishes this kind of situation from one in which the central government has no coercive resources at all. But this suppression neither creates peace nor increases the support base of the regime. The absence of legitimacy and the full allegiance of population are major chronic challenges that a weak state would face.¹⁷

Pakistan is often described as a state without a fully developed nation and also shows signs of a garrison state. The incongruence between state and nation is very marked in this case. Islam, the original source of Pakistan's identity is not a sufficient unifying force as multiple loyalties based on ethnicity, intra-Islamic divisions, and economic and class affiliations weaken cohesion. The absence of sustained democratic rule, a proper federal structure, and economic integration of the provinces have made Pakistan a weak state. Its own long-standing involvement in neighbouring countries and the elite's willingness to use multiple instruments, including terrorism, for obtaining tactical goals, have made the country a breeding ground for long-standing insecurity for both itself and its neighbours. Pakistan has a weak educational system, with majority of its primary education offered through religious seminaries.¹⁸

Over decades, Pakistan has reduced its spending in social sector while such withdrawal has been more forceful by following the neoliberal policy. Despite huge external assistance and aid, the reduction on welfare and social sector will further alienated the people to make itself to grow as a strong state. Therefore, in the next section we shall try to discuss how Pakistan has reduced its social sector and in following neoliberal economic policy, how the state is going to response these situation.

Less spending on Social sector

Despite huge external assistance in the form of aid, Pakistan's has reduced its spending on social sector over decades. Pakistan economic growth over 5 per cent¹⁹ for decades has been fairly well in contrast to other neighbouring states, despite this scenerio, the human development needs remain extremely low. Thus some observes that, economic performance which is relatively high

with consistent economic growth has not translated to an equal improvement in human development to the extent that one would expect.²⁰ Therefore, the question is why are the responsible factors behind the reduction in social sectors and if how far Pakistan is going to respond these challenges.

Looking from Pakistan brief history of social sector and of human development will enable us to understand why they behave in this way. Pakistan economy had immensely benefitted as a consequences of 9/11. In the aftermath of 9/11, Pakistan debt was cancelled and rescheduled, creating huge fiscal space. Remittances and other wealth from Pakistanis overseas came back to Pakistanis (particularly those in the United States and Dubai). This is evident from the fact that Pakistan's traditional source of remittances between \$2-4 billion was mostly from West Asia has changed after the 9/11 tragedy.²¹ The outside support to Pakistan, particularly from US, IMF and the World Bank grew when the military is in power. Thus, her economy improved as a result of 9/11 which some describe, "had the New York attack not taken place, it is quite improbable that Pakistan would have been able to get out of the post-nuclear test and post-military coup scenario, both of which had been damaging to the economy."²²

High GDP growth rate (since 2002) resulting high and increasing per capita incomes is one positive sign emerged in the past few years. However, from the people's view point, many of these numbers are not translated to improve their living conditions. Even after years of high growth and rising per capita incomes, many people were still waiting these benefits to trickle down. Besides, a growth strategy target on rich and upper middle classes results rising income disparities leading to high resentment in the society.²³

The most important feature of economic performance during the year 1999-2007 is that despite high GDP growth rates there was no major reduction of poverty. The percentage of population living below the poverty line in fact increased from 30 per cent in 1998 to 33.8 per cent in 2007-8.²⁴ Also between 1982 and 2002, the period under consideration, international donors like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank forced the Pakistani government to cap the defence budget so that more could be spent on development.²⁵

Thus, in a market-model of social development where the state is on the retreat, such a slowing down in the economy has an adverse impact on the social and human development. In Pakistan case, one does not see the trend where improved human development improved economic growth as East Asian model suggest. As in Pakistan context, its external, regional and global security issues that determine human development outcomes through the linkages created

by donor money and aid.²⁶ Thus, the overall reduction on social sector where education is one as such which has deliberately neglected in Pakistan will be discussed in the following section.

Less Spending on Education: The Rise of Madrassah Institution

In the Third World states, education assumes primary importance as it is the gate way for more promising future.²⁷ Despite its salience, educational sector in the Third World do not have particularly impressive records of achievement. This has been due to a variety of factors differ from state to state. In Pakistan, education is under concurrent lists in the constitution. As such, the responsibility for education has been divided between the federal government and four provincial governments namely, Punjab, Sindh, North West Frontier Province, and Baluchistan. The retention of curriculum is finance by the federal government.²⁸ At the time of Pakistan's independence, 85 per cent of its population was illiterate. In the backward regions of the country, the literacy rate was even lower, with rural women virtually at lowest percent literacy. Ever since, successive governments have declared the attainment of universal primary education as an important goal. Although considerable resources have been allocated in creating new infrastructure and facilities till date, the literacy rate in Pakistan remain low. According to published government statistics, 2001/02 literacy rate was 45 per cent, 55.6 per cent in 2009 and in 2010, the literacy rate in Pakistan stand at 56.2 per cent. The government has set a literacy rate target of 85 per cent by the year 2015.²⁹ Therefore, looking from Pakistan's low literacy rate could be the neglected factor of education policy which also raises such question that could it be due to lack of resources or other factors?

Despite tall claims made by each regime, many considers the history of educational policy in Pakistan, a broken promise. While, the successive government accuses the preceding regime of not being serious and committed to the educational cause and promises to raise the level of literacy to a new heights with a promises to put in more money and allocate more resources to education. Further, the successive policy makes tall claims of harmonising education with the principles of Islam. However, in reality, education in Pakistan has remained largely underdeveloped both in quantitative as well as in qualitative terms.³⁰ Moreover, the financial constraints are also considered as a major challenge in development of education in Pakistan.³¹

Traditional explanation of the weakness, failure, and ineffectiveness of the educational system in Pakistan almost without exception agree that it is the politicians, patriarchal land-owning classes, and corrupt self-serving bureaucrats who are the root cause of the dismal state of education in Pakistan. As a corollary of such consensus, some argue that preoccupation with

political intrigues and political short-sightedness has resulted in the low priority accorded to education by successive regimes (both civilian and military) in Pakistan. Some also argue that the intelligentsia in the new state is much to blame for not resisting the ruling elite's apathy toward education. Finally, those not too critical of the past or pessimistic about the future of education in Pakistan point to the political instability, enmity with India, defence problems, etc. for the lack of qualitative and quantitative increase in education and in literacy. The organizational and policy weakness is not the cause of the dismal state of the educational system in Pakistan as is often claimed by scholars and policy-makers rather it is a product of the educational discourse in relation with the discourses of the state, nationalism, and so forth. While the gloomy state of educational system in Pakistan affects all citizens, it relates even more strongly to women.³²

The commitment to education can be known from its percentage of GDP allocated for education. In 1990, the allocation was 2.6 per cent, 1999-2001 was 1.8 per cent and 2002-2003 was 1.7 per cent. This highlights that GDP allocated of educational sector is declining each year. While educational expenditure is vital, effective schooling models will not succeed unless there is strong desire for education.³³ According to UNESCO Institute of Statistics, based on the 2007 figures, the total resources allocation to the education sector is 2.8 per cent of the GDP. For 2013-14 the educational fiscal budget was Rs. 80 billion which was also decreased by over Rs 1 billion. Due to this, the allocation of four per cent of GDP for education remains a distant dream.³⁴

Pakistan educational system is based on the public-private dichotomy. Within each of these tiers are further divisions. In public sector institutions there are multiple tiers of public schools. The top tier are urban-based public schools that impart a better-quality education, are competitive to get in and are prestigious. The second tier is the Urban-based government schools that are funded and managed by the provincial governments. The standards of these schools vary from one place to another. While some are better managed and impart a better standard of education, others are not as good. On the third tier are government schools based in the semi-rural and rural areas of Pakistan. These institutions often lack qualified staff and adequate infrastructure. Some are reported not to even have proper buildings. While, most of the private schools in the top and second tiers are co-educational, public schools at almost all levels are segregated.³⁵

Private schools can also be broadly divided into three categories. In one category, are the elite foreign schools (American and International schools in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad and

franchise schools such as the Chouifat School, Lahore) and second category are schools such as Aitcheson College Lahore, Chand Academy). To get admission in these institutes is tough and the fee structure is higher than rest of the public schools. In the third category, are private school systems such as the City School Network and Beacon House School System. These school have maintained higher standard of education, having fee structures that fall in between the elite and the public schools, are spread all over Pakistan, and in some cases follow their own curriculum. Finally, there are large numbers of private schools that have mushroomed recently. These schools mainly cater to the lower-middle and lower classes and have low fee. The quality of education imparted by these institutions, though not up to the standard, is still better than the government-run schools at the bottom of the public school system.³⁶

Educational discourse in post-independence Pakistan drew heavily upon colonial educational discourse. At the same time, the religious discourse contested for and intervened in educational policy-making and manifested itself in the liberal sprinkling of religious metaphors and references to the relevance of religion for the educational system of the new state. Drawing upon colonial educational discourse, the educational discourse in post independence Pakistan aimed at depoliticising the student-citizen. The *Government of Pakistan Report 1959* restricted students participation in politics. The emphasis was on maintaining order rather than creating faculties of critical thinking and citizenship. Other than the brief interlude of 1972-1977, this depoliticisation of the student population has carried on until today. Students unions are banned in the country by the order of the Supreme Court since the time of general Zia-ul-Haq martial law.³⁷

The rapid growth of religious seminaries therefore connects with the decline in basic public education, the rise of sectarian violence, and funding from privates and Gulf countries. In the view of Islamists, a modern secular education is the enemy and it has to be countered by ideologically driven solutions to Pakistan's broad social and economic crisis.³⁸ Consequently, the overall problem of social violence, sectarianism, poverty and dispossession pushes young Pakistanis into enrolling in religious seminaries or adopting a life of violence.³⁹

While, there is a justified fear of austerity measures imposed by structural adjustment is that the social sector, including education, are likely to face the first and major budget cuts. An important outcome was that structural adjustment was associated with the neglect of social sector and the poor, and thus the main recommendation was reversing this neglect. In Pakistan, the World Bank effort to put human face on structural adjustment came in the form of the Social Action Program.⁴⁰ As in the case of Pakistan, shortage of resources cannot be a justification for limited funding in education system. Particularly, education was not given due importance by the

successive state leaders.⁴¹ President Zia for example is partly responsible for weakening of educational system in Pakistan. During his regime, universities and colleges were considered antagonistic and had contempt poets and professors and also in Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif's regime continued to neglect this sector. While in its democracy era, desires for education, health and other social services contested directly with the military's budget. Even those state leaders who recognised the need for improving human development were reluctant to press the issue for fear of confronting with the army.⁴² Therefore, one does not see much change under the successive regimes. Thus due to overall neglect of state educational system by the state, these religious schools fill the vacuum created by the state, while the mushrooming growth of religious institutions has indirect implication for the state her stability which will be discussed in the next section.

Rise of Religious Extremism

Different successive regime in Pakistan some way or other used Islam to establish its power. This has been main factor responsible for the rise of religious extremism. In Ayub regime, the philosophy of modernisation and economic development, Z.A Bhutto regime donned the mantle of redeeming the power through socialism while Zia came to power through military coup sought to institutionalise military rule through coercive means and obscurantist version of Islamic ideology.⁴³ All these shows that the regime that come to power sought to legitimatise itself through islamic ideas.

With lack of legitimacy, the Zia regime used terror tactic as a conscious policy of the government. For this, the abandonment of democratic constitution of 1973 and draconian rule of military courts, arbitrary arrest, amputation of hands and public lashings were introduced. In this way, its democratic aspirations, diversity, religious tolerance and human values was destroyed. This outcomes greatly negated with the ideals of its founding father Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.⁴⁴

In Pakistan, state funds were provided for setting up of religious seminaries in small towns and rural areas thereby laying an institutional foundation of islamic fundamentalism. This leads to an increase growth of belligerent religious organisations. Measures were taken to build a theocratic state, brutalised society and increased isolation of state from the people with more reliance on external funds. It sought political, military and economic support primarily from the US to act as frontline state in Afghan war against the Soviet. By doing such role, it has received \$ 3.2 billion loans and other military war heads. In addition, through US support, its external

debt were rescheduled and increased the flow of foreign private funds. These developments played a significant role in macro-economic growth during those periods.⁴⁵

The government under Zia engaged a proxy war in Afghanistan with the supported of religious extremist groups. During this period, *Madrassah* were official funded, trained and supplied arms to carry guerrilla warfare. As the war was taking place, the militant groups widen the political space within society, intelligence and security apparatus in Pakistan. In late 1970s, the gradual flow of refugees from Afghanistan to Pakistan and the arms in Afghan War developed two trends. First, huge weapons for Afghan war entered into the illegal arms market in Pakistan; and second, increased the growth of opium trade.⁴⁶

Stephen Philip Cohen work *The Idea of Pakistan* accounts that “at the time of partition, there were about 250 religious schools in Pakistan, by the 1987, there may have increased to 3000. By 2004 the estimates range from 10,000 to 45000 of which some 10 to 15 per cent preach a particularly virulent kind of hatred or provide military training. (There is no exact number of madrassas in Pakistan but some estimates that in 2015, it is around 10,000). Here they provide food, housing and a religious education to students from around country. The Madaris range in size from a few students to several thousands. As a result of state’s official support of traditional institutions, the number of scholars, Arabic teachers, students and clerics far exceeds Pakistan’s requirements. Moreover, they are ill-adapted to find job in the modern world. This has created a class of religious lumpen proletariat, unemployable and practically uneducated young men who see religious education as a vehicle for social mobility, but who find traditional avenues clogged and modern ones blocked.”⁴⁷

From 1987 and thereafter, sectarian violence has increased in province of Punjab and spread all over the country. The increases of *Madrassah* were linked with large-scale sectarian violence carried out by well-armed and trained cadres. As per some sources, a many *Madrassah* were not merely providing religious education as it was observed that nearly 42 per cent were actively support sectarian violence through a well-conceived indoctrination process. The students were largely from poor families, given free food and lodging at the *Madrassah*. When poverty was increased in 1990s, the growing *Madrassah* provided unemployed and improvised youths with the food, shelter and their identity to be established through violence.⁴⁸

Pakistan as one of the South Asian state shows that though it is militarily strong but over all scenarios in Pakistan suggests it is not only a weak state but also a failing state. Such state like Pakistan does not sufficiently able to develop as a strong state and is on the process of nation-building and due to internal dynamics like issue of religious extremism, ethnic issues and

insufficiently paid attention by state in many of its social sectors and welfare provision, the conflicts still continued. Under such state, its security and the security of people is at danger. Furthermore, by following the neoliberal policy, the state had to withdraw from many of its welfare function in already neglected areas is ultimately create a vacuum whereby, this are filled up by other non-state actors for example in area such as education. Education as one of backbone for future, with the government continuous neglect lead the other non-state actors' to play in these areas, further creates alienation of the common people towards state. It also suggests that religious indoctrination in these educational sectors is often a harbinger to religious extremism and militancy which will further creates danger to the state itself. Here the argument is that impact on weak state like Pakistan, which is struggling almost in all fronts, will further weaken the state. It is not to say all the state of Third World which shows similar characteristic like Pakistan where there problems might be different that define their weakness, but in some issues the shows similar characteristic. Therefore, impact of neoliberalism might worsen their security issues rather than solving it. Thus, all these developments shows that the leaders of the Pakistan state has repeatedly failed its citizen in improving the basic needs not only creates a formidable challenge to here security but also to the neighbours as well.

Conclusion

Despite the need for an effective state intervention, many states are trapped into the global setting of neoliberal ideas and thereby failed to fulfil the aspirations of their citizens. Thus, within states, there is growing fragmentation between the state and its larger populace over these agenda. They demand more and more state intervention in various economic activities. Instead of addressing these legitimate grievances, states are now siding with corporate agendas and using various coercive mechanisms to contain the legitimate demand of their citizens. Consequently, this squeezes the democratic space for politics and ultimately impacts upon the inclusive notion of citizenship which has become more and more exclusive. The weakness of the Third World states coupled with their inability and decline in their social sectors spending such as education which is an important channel for social mobility in modernising societies creates a vacuum where non-state actors do fill the gap. In Pakistan, the overall decline in social sector spending on public education has allowed the institution of the Madrassa schools to fill the gap and also gain legitimacy within society.⁴⁹ Though the problems in the Third World vary from one another but above cases clearly suggests there are many weak Third World states which show similar sign. This has become a serious challenge to the state itself.

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