



## From Movement to Government: The Transformation of the Muslim League after the Creation of Pakistan (1947–1956)

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### Abstract

Political struggle led by All-India Muslim League under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah culminated in the creation of Pakistan in 1947. But the shift of the Muslim League from a mass nationalism party to a party in power posed great political, administrative and institutional problems. The present paper will deal with the change in the Muslim League in the formative years of Pakistan (1947-1956) in relation to four broad facets of its role: governance, constitution making, Centre–province relations and democratic institutionalization. The study claims that the Muslim League was effective in mobilizing the Indian Muslims for the creation of Pakistan but failed to reform itself into the demands of state-building and parliamentary governance after independence. With Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan's deaths, the leadership void led to a weakening of the unity and growth of factionalism within the party. At the same time, new political institutions were weakened, and parliamentary traditions were eroded by increasing influence of bureaucracy and military. The paper also examines the constitutional issues of the time such as the Objectives Resolution, provincial complaints and issues relating to Islamic identity and democratic governance. Although the first constitution was promulgated by 1956, the Muslim League had greatly diminished in its effectiveness as an effective representative political force. This study is analytical and historical in nature which throws light on the structural weaknesses of Muslim League and its far-reaching effect on the political development of Pakistan in the long haul.

**Keywords:** Muslim League; Constitutional Development; Political History; State Formation, Bureaucracy; Pakistan.

### 1. Introduction

The formation of Pakistan on 14 August 1947 was one of the greatest political events in the history of South Asia (Talbot, 1998). The new state came into existence after decades of political mobilization which was mostly done by All India Muslim League under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Jalal, 1994). The Muslim League had matured from an elite political group to a mass movement which demanded an independent Muslim nation for the Muslims of

Indian subcontinent (Sayeed, 1960). However, post-independence Pakistan's problems turned out to be much more difficult than the anti-colonial politics of the pre-partition era, despite the League's great success in the fight for Pakistan. The Muslim League took over the responsibility of ruling a new state which was suffering from a lot of political, economic and administrative problems after the partition of British India. Pakistan suffered from institutional instability, inadequate financial resources, lack of trained administrative staffs, and lack of constitutional clarity (Talbot, 2009). Millions of refugees crossed borders, communal violence shook.

In the region, and the political leadership had to frame constitution and the consolidate state authority as well. In such challenging times, the Muslim League had to evolve from a political organization based on the demand for Pakistan to a credible political party that could lead the government and run the state in a democratic framework with developing institutions.

But this move revealed significant flaws in the party. By the time of the Independence movement, the Muslim League's attention had been solely on the creation of Pakistan, and it had not paid much attention to preparing for governance once it became independent. Thus, following 1947, the party found it difficult to form an organized discipline, democratic internal structures, and a coherent political program. During the early period, in 1948 the death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and in 1951 of Liaquat Ali Khan deprived the state and the party of their leadership. There was growing factionalism within the government, rising tensions between the provinces and the growing power of the civil-service and military. The period from 1947 to 1956 was thus a crucial time for Pakistan's future political course (Jalal, 1995; Khan, 2001). In these years the Muslim League had the upper hand in the affairs of the state, controlled the constitutional discussions leading to the Constitution of 1956 and tried to cope with the complicated provincial and ideological problems. But the party's popularity waned and it did not establish democratic governance. By the mid-1950s, the Muslim League had lost a great deal of strength, creating the conditions for political instability and bureaucratic domination.

The present paper explores the factors that helped the Muslim League to shift from the nationalist movement to a ruling political party of the Muslim League between 1947 and 1956. It also examines the political, constitutional and institutional problems which the League encountered and examines the reasons for led to the collapse of the League. The paper concludes that while the Muslim League did manage to mobilize Muslims to establish Pakistan, it neither became a stable democratic governing body after independence. The consequences were far reaching of this failure in terms of political development of Pakistan and the long-term institutional instability in the country.

## 2. Research Questions

1. After the formation of Pakistan, how did the Muslim League change from a nationalist party to becoming a government party?
2. What political and institutional problems posed a threat to the Muslim League from 1947 to 1956?
3. What were the impact of policies and organizational shortcomings of the Muslim League on constitutional and democratic development of Pakistan?

## 3. Research Objectives

1. To analyze the change of Muslim League from a political organization to a ruling party after independence.
2. To examine the factors, internal and external, that caused the Muslim League to lose its strength from 1947-56.

3. To analyze the effect of the Muslim League government on the constitutional development and democratic institutions in Pakistan.

#### **4. Methodology**

The methodology used in this study is qualitative, which is both descriptive and analytical based so as to have a complete perspective regarding the political development of Pakistan. It uses primary sources like official speeches, statements by members of the constitutional assembly, government records, policy documents and key political statements from leaders and state institutions. The resources used here are designed to help capture the original political intent, ideologies, and decision-making processes at various historical periods. Further, secondary materials like scholarly books, peer-reviewed articles in journals, and academic studies on the political history of Pakistan are also used.

The research is presented in a chronological order to follow the political changes over time, and to provide a structured understanding of continuity and change over time. The study, however, is not just a historical description, but it also interprets the events in an analytical way, looking for possible political tendencies, institutional relationships and socio-economic factors that have influenced the development of events. The study tries to reflect on the political history of Pakistan with a critical lens and not only to explain why and how things went wrong the way they went, but also the implications for governance, political stability and state formation in Pakistan.

#### **5. The Muslim League as a National Movement up to 1947**

In 1906, at Dacca, the All-India Muslim League was formed to defend the political rights and interests of the Muslims in British India. The League at first was an elite political group representing the interests of the Muslim landlords, the aristocrats and the educated classes. But the political landscape shifted and with communal politics developing, the League over time became a mass political movement. The strengthening of the League was due to the political changes of the 1930s (Sayeed, 1960). Muslims political clout in Hindu-dominated provinces was limited due to the introduction of provincial autonomy and elections suggested in the Government of India Act of 1935. The ministries established by the Congress after the 1937 elections created a general sense of concern for Muslims about political marginalization and cultural domination. Muhammad Ali Jinnah took advantage of these and reshaped the Muslim League and its popularity among different social groups. In the political history of the Muslim League, (ML) the Lahore Resolution of 1940 was a turning point (Aziz, 2001). The demand for independent states for Muslims of the Northwest and the East demanded by the resolution paved the way for the establishment of Pakistan on the ideological platform. From 1940 to 1947, the League organized the support of Muslims in a political campaign, through religious symbolism and appeals to Muslim identity. By the elections of 1945-46, the Muslim League had become the political representative of the Muslim masses (Jalal, 1994).

This success was largely due to the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Jinnah converted the League into a disciplined political organization which could deal with the Indian National Congress as well as with the British government. His political approach focused on a constitutional approach, political unity and Muslim nationalism (Wolpert, 1984). Finally, the League pushed for Pakistan and, in August 1947, Pakistan was born. Notwithstanding its political accomplishments, the Muslim League was handicapped in terms of its organizational strength when it came into the fold of independence. The main purpose of the party was to create Pakistan, and all the people were united around this single purpose.

## 6. Transition from Movement to Ruling Party after Partition

One of the toughest problems for the Muslim League after the establishment of Pakistan was to cope with the shift from the nationalist movement to the governing party (Callard, 1957). The party took over a state facing massive economic, social and political problems. Pakistan did not have any administrative structure, industrial resources or financial strength like India. The issues of governance proved to be immediate challenges that severely put the organizational strength of the Muslim League to the test and demonstrated its institutional weakness. The refugee crisis was one of the first and most significant issues (Talbot, 2009). After Pakistan, millions of Muslims moved from India to Pakistan, especially to Punjab and Sindh. Communal violence, economic disruption and humanitarian catastrophe abounded with the migration. The government had to set up refugee camps, supply food and shelter, and restore administrative order in very challenging conditions. The significant issue was that the Muslim League leadership was largely focused on crisis management, with little scope for long-term political organization (Talbot, 1998; Malik, 1997).

A vacuum was created in the administration at the time of Independence, which brought great difficulties to the newly established state of Pakistan. After Partition a large number of experienced Hindu civil servants, officials and professionals joined India leaving Pakistan with a shortage of trained administrative personnel (Callard, 1957; Ahmad, 1967). The sudden loss was felt on the institutional strength of the government as it became difficult to ensure effective governance, policy implementation and continuity of administrative functions. This necessitated the need to build the bureaucratic framework quickly in Pakistan with very limited human resources. The gradual development of the civil bureaucracy as an axis of the state structure makes this point. In this context, the civil bureaucracy slowly became a key component of the state structure (Gardezi & Rashid 1983). With weak political leadership and unstable institutions, the role of the bureaucrats became unduly significant not only in the process of policy making but also in the administrative decision making. Bureaucracy also had a direct impact on the balance of power within the State and administrative centralization in early political history of Pakistan in many cases where it overpowered elected political leadership.

The Muslim League also had trouble forming itself as a political party representing all parts of Pakistan. The party had weak organizational base in certain provinces, especially in East Bengal. Moreover, most local political leaders had been members of the League for the last few years of the Pakistan movement but were split by personal conflict and regional interest. Consequently, after independence, the League was plagued by growing internal schisms. The lack of an explicit ideology and a constitutional framework for nation building and governance was another serious challenge that the fledgling nation faced (Binder, 1961; Choudhury, 1963). The Muslim League had been effective in mobilizing the nation behind the establishment of Pakistan based on the concept of 'Two Nations' but it had failed to establish a clear and accepted framework regarding the character and ideology of the new state. Thus, upon attaining independence, questions of Pakistan's identity were left unanswered. The question of how Pakistan should move forward as an Islamic state run on Islamic laws, a secular democratic republic inspired by Western parliamentary systems or an Islamic republic with a secular democratic system soon led to intense arguments among the religious scholars, political elites, and policy makers. State ideology was confused and it was hard to establish a common constitutional direction due to competing visions. Ideological conflict thus hampered the constitution-making process and added to political instability, as various groups were competing to establish the basic nature of the state and its decision-making processes.

The shift in the Muslim League from being a mass political organization to a ruling party affected the composition of the party internally and in terms of its social cross-section (Ahmad,

1967). In the fight for the establishment of Pakistan, the League had been relying on the popular mobilization, emotionalism, and intense nationalism to bring Muslims together around a single political agenda. During this time, it had its strength in claiming to represent the Muslim community of British India.

But the role of party changed significantly. With the role of governance emerging in place of mass mobilization, the leadership began to be filled in by the landed aristocrats, large landlords, bureaucratic elites, and influential provincial power brokers. It was a result of the lack of a grassroots organizational structure and because old power holders dominated the political arena of the new state. As a result, the party's disciplining and mass movements started to decline. This change gradually eroded the Muslim League's relationship with the masses and its ability to represent and conduct itself as a democratic and democratic-based party. Instead, it slowly transformed into a more characterized by the centralization of decision making in a small number of influential figures, which reduced the internal participation, and undermined the wider popular foundation. The Muslim League was thus structurally weak. at the time of partition. It dominated the political scene in the country but was limited in organization, leadership, and reliance on bureaucracy, making it difficult to form stable democratic organizations.

### **7. Leadership Crisis and Internal Weaknesses of the Muslim League**

When Jinnah died in September 1948 and Liaquat Ali Khan in October 1951, the leadership void in Pakistan was significant as was the lack of leadership in the Muslim League, as well (Wolpert, 1984). Both of these had played a pivotal role in ideology, politics and stability in the Pakistan movement and the immediate post-independence period. The first Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, was more responsible for the coordination of political factions and managing the business of the government while Jinnah, as the founder and first Governor-General, lent symbolic authority and national unity. The unexpected departure of these two most influential and unifying leaders of the early political set-up in Pakistan have left the backbone of the state's leadership weak. Replacing the Muslim League in the fray were no strong and accepted alternative organizations and the Muslim League started to see the beginning of the competition for power, internal rivalries and factionalism among the new political elites. This leadership vacuum not only undermined party discipline but also caused disruptions in the continuity of administration at a very early stage of the development of the state. This led to greater political instability and a more disjointed institutional consolidation, which led to enduring problems in the development of democratic governance. Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the most powerful figure in the Muslim League. As the Governor-General and founder of Pakistan, he represented unity and political legitimacy of the nation. His passing left the nation without a leader who could handle discrepancies among political parties and settle factional differences. There was an attempt to carry on Jinnah's policies by Liaquat Ali Khan, but he did not have the authority and influence of Jinnah.

Liaquat Ali Khan was the first Prime Minister of Pakistan and one of the few prominent leaders who enjoyed a political presence across the country. His death in 1951 exacerbated political turmoil and further weakened the Muslim League. When he died nobody else rose to a position of authority able to bring the party together. Instead, local warring groups and rivalries became more prominent in politics. One of the most serious and disruptive problem faced by Muslim League in the early years of Pakistan was the issue of internal factionalism (Waseem, 1989). As institutional discipline was lacking and there was no strict party succession in place, political competition within the party shifted to the allocation of ministerial portfolios, administrative authority and the influence within the provinces. Many politicians, instead of uniting the party on its ideology or in strengthening

its governance mechanisms, were more interested in getting ahead and building up patronage networks, which only further entrenched divisions within the party. Tensions were not confined to the central leadership but spread to provincial politics as well. In Punjab, Sindh and in East Bengal and elsewhere, there were influential local leaders and factions that started operating semi-autonomously, often within the party's larger fabric, with their own factions. This fragmentation reduced the unity of the organization, and the Muslim League could no longer be seen as a single national political party. As a result, the rivalry intramurally not only undermined administrative effectiveness, but also played a role in the overall political instability that made it difficult to take policy action that was consistent and coordinated in the early years of the state's development.

Another major weakness in the Muslim League was its failure to have any sort of internal democracy, a situation that had a negative impact on the growth of the organization after Pakistan was established (Waseem, 1989). Party decision making was largely one man or a few men dominated and lacked consultation, internal elections, or meaningful involvement by lower-level party members. This centralization of power often led to decisions being taken in political and organizational matters without a wider representational input, thus diminishing transparency and accountability within the party structure. In addition, the League had a weak grassroots organizational structure that would not allow the mass political participation to continue after independence. Its local and district structures continued to be unwell developed, and it did not develop effective mechanisms to mobilize, train, and enlist the participation of ordinary party members in decision making processes. This organizational weakness caused a rift between the leadership of the party and the people over the years. As the popularity of the Muslim League declined and its organizational strength weakened, it turned to access to the state institutions and administrative power to sustain its political dominance over the sustained mass political participation and democratic legitimacy. The party's reputation continued to suffer from corruption, opportunism and political defections (Noman, 1988). Politicians were not members of the Muslim League for ideological reasons but mainly because they wanted to access state power. This undermined party discipline and hence political instability.

The Muslim League's weakening was not only apparent in East Pakistan, but the regional political scene was also developing in divergent directions to the central political leadership in West Pakistan (Malik, 1997; Talbot, 2009). A sense of discontent over what Bengalis felt was systematic neglect of the economic, cultural and political interests of East Pakistan, began to be voiced by political leaders and intellectuals in the Bengali community. They also condemned the assimilation of administrative and political power in West Pakistan and the relationship of it with the feelings of marginalization and unequal representation within the federation. The language issue of 1948, when Urdu was declared as the sole national language of the country, while Bengali was the majority language, only added to these grievances. This was met with widespread protests and raised suspicion on the part of East Bengal and the central government. As a result of these linguistic and political conflict and tension over the years, there was growing discontent among the people and the Muslim League support base in the eastern wing weakened. The party's failure to seriously consider Bengali aspirations for linguistic recognition, regional autonomy and equitable representation led to its electoral and political downfall in East Pakistan. At the same time, the increasing influence of the bureaucracy eroded the power of the elected political leadership at the national level (Rizvi, 2000). Senior civil servants took on more and more prominent roles in policy making and administration, seeing politicians as either inefficient or inexperienced or corrupt. This perception and the absence of a viable political party system enabled the bureaucratic elites to gain power in the governance system. This transformation over time helped to create a civil service-based decision-making process, where

civil servants had a greater influence than elected representatives, significantly diminishing the role of elected officials and further undermining the construction of a solid democratic political system.

All these developments in totality undermined the Muslim League as a political movement. This organization that had successfully mobilized Muslims for independence gradually lost its organizational unity, ideological leadership and democracy.

### **8. The Muslim League and Constitution Making (1947-1956)**

The establishment of a constitution for Pakistan was one of the biggest challenges faced by the Muslim League after the inception of Pakistan. The constitutional discussions of 1947-1956 exposed profound ideational divisions, regional differences and institutional uncertainties in the state system (Khan, 2001). The failure to balance or mediate the conflicting interests of these groups added to the political volatility and lag time in establishing a democratic government. After achieving independence, the responsibility of framing Pakistan's constitution was given to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. But the process soon got complicated as there was conflicting viewpoints among the political elites about the basic nature of the state. The main concerns were issues of ideology of Pakistan, distribution of powers between the central government and the province and the role of Islam in the affairs of the state. Some leaders called for establishing a more Islamic structure in the Constitution, others for parliamentary democracy and provincial autonomy. In this context, the leadership of the Muslim League made a conscious attempt to direct itself between these conflicting points of view so as to maintain unity in the nation; however, it never managed to achieve the consensus it had sought. The Objectives Resolution of 1949 was one of the significant events in this constitutional journey, which found its root in Pakistan's constitutional development (Khan, 2001). The Resolution was introduced by the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, and it read that sovereignty belongs to Allah and authority rests with the people of Pakistan through their duly elected leaders within the framework laid down by Islam. It aimed to combine Islamic principles with democratic ideals of liberty, equality, tolerance and justice and to ensure the rights of minorities. The resolution was seen as a rather guiding constitutional framework, but it also showed the still existing ideological conflict within the state over the question of identity and the form of government.

The Objectives Resolution was considered a basic attempt to balance the ideological objectives of Pakistan, namely, to embrace Islam, with the need for democratic governance, and offered a constitutional framework that was able to integrate the people's religious values and new political institutions (Mahmood, 1998). They believed that the resolution did not violate democracy, but it was a foundation of moral and spiritual principles that would provide justice, equality and social well-being to the nation. On the other hand, critics argued that the resolution resulted in a blurring of religious authority and popular sovereignty within the Pakistani Constitution, which would lead to future ambiguities (Binder, 1961; Jalal, 1995). They also noted that this uncertainty could have potential to create difficulties for legislative control and judicial interpretation, especially in relation to balancing Islamic calls with democratic rights. There was also concern by non-Muslims in the Constituent Assembly about the status of minorities; they wondered how guarantees of equal rights would be applied in a state that declared its sovereignty on the basis of a specifically Islamic definition. Apart from the differences of opinion on ideology one of the most controversial issues in the constitution was representation between East and West Pakistan. East Bengal having the majority population of the country, demanded its representation in the legislature based on population size, and had strong demand for this on its name of democratic fairness and political inclusion. But leaders from West Pakistan were against it, saying it would result in political domination of one wing over the other and instead called for equality between the two regions "principle of parity". The failure to

evolve a formula acceptable to the Muslims, as a result of which the Muslim league's position made political equality seem even more elusive, further undermined the process of national integration, and contributed to regional distrust. The political disruptions, unstable political climate and frequent shifts in leadership in the early years of the state further exacerbated these constitutional issues (Choudhury, 1963). After Liaquat Ali Khan's death, disunity within the government was accentuated by the lack of a firm and consistent political leadership while the weaknesses of institutions were increasingly becoming apparent. In this context, the Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad started to exert increasing pressure on parliamentary affairs, sometimes directly on the parliamentarians and placing all executive power in the hands of the Governor-General. This transfer of power was a blow to the system of parliamentary democracy and culminated in the dismissal of the Constituent Assembly in 1954 which led to a major constitutional crisis as well as established a precedent for the dominance of executive power over the legislative bodies in the early political history of Pakistan.

The dismissing of the Assembly of the Constituent was a major setback to parliamentary democracy (Jalal, 1995). It demonstrated growing strength of institutions other than elected, and the decline of the legitimacy of political institutions. When the judiciary backed the Governor-General's policies, it further strengthened the supremacy of the bureaucracy. Despite all these difficulties, Pakistan finally got itself its first constitution in 1956. Pakistan was made an Islamic Republic under a parliamentary system of government in the constitution. It also introduced federal arrangements and Urdu and Bengali as national languages. The constitutional structure, however, had been delayed and marred by political conflict for several years, and the Muslim League had failed to create a solid consensus.

The ambitions and limitations of Muslim League showed up in the making of the constitution. The party was aspiring to establish a democratic constitutional state, but the party faced several internal divisions, leadership crisis, and weak institutions which hampered the constitutional development democratic structure.

### **9. Provincial Politics and Centre-Province Relations**

The division of Pakistan was met with a host of political and language affairs, which caused a significant challenge for the Muslim League in the form of provincial politics. This was in part because of the geographical spread of the regions within the country and the linguistic, cultural and political differences found within these regions. Such differences had to be managed effectively with the help of powerful federal institutions and an inclusive political framework, but the Muslim League tended to exacerbate rather than resolve provincial grievances by its emphasis on centralized government. The greatest conflicts arose between East and West Pakistan where East Bengal, with the majority of the nation's population, perceived itself as increasingly disenfranchised politically, economically and administratively. In 1948, the central government made Urdu the sole national language, which led to widespread protests and dissatisfaction in East Bengal, further exacerbating these tensions. This movement of the Bengali language would come to be a landmark in the early political history of Pakistan, with students, intellectuals and political parties together demanding the recognition of Bengali as a national language along with Urdu (Talbot, 1998). The reluctance of the government to accede to these demands also further compounded the resentment of the region and seriously undermined the political legitimacy and support base of the Muslim League in East Pakistan, thus adding to the wider issue of national integration crisis.

The economic differences caused discontent in the provinces of the newly created nation of Pakistan (Zaidi, 2005). Many political leaders and intellectuals in East Pakistan believed that the region produced significant share of national revenue from agricultural activity and export-related

activities, but was politically poorly represented, politically underprivileged and developmentally under-favored. This economic exploitation coupled with political marginalization increasingly fostered regional awareness and helped to seed the development of organized political movements for more autonomy and the fairer distribution of resources. Provincial politics were also complex in West Pakistan, with various local interests. In Sindh, however, there were conflicts regarding the mass settlement of refugees after partition; this caused demographic pressures and led to the insecurity of the local population about cultural dilution and political marginalization. In NWFP, there was more ideological and political opposition to the authority and legitimacy of the Muslim League, and opposition groups like the Khudai Khidmatgar continued to test the government's authority. Likewise, Balochistan also raised serious issues of provincial underdevelopment, lack of autonomy and minimal political representation in the federation which again underlined the federalistic disparity in the provincial integration of the province. To meet these various challenges in the province, the central administration of the Muslim League often resorted to administrative and bureaucratic means of control and suppression of opposition rather than to participatory democratic negotiation. The provincial governors and senior civil servants had a great deal of authority over local governments, which allowed the central government to become deeply involved in the province (Rizvi, 2000; Ahmad, 1967). This led to a short-term administrative stability, but it ultimately resulted in a lessening of the true development of a federal system of government, fewer chances for meaningful political participation at the provincial level, and a further escalation of long-term tensions between the center and the provinces. The One Unit scheme introduced in the mid-1950s was another example of the centralizing thrust of the state (Burki, 1980). The plan was to unite the provinces of West Pakistan into a single province so that it will have parity with East Pakistan. While supporters argued that the scheme would promote. In the eyes of critics, it was an effort to undermine the provincial identity and increase the centralization of power.

The failure of the Muslim League to resolve provincial issues effectively was to have long-term repercussions on political stability in Pakistan. The party lost popularity due to regional grievances, and it undermined national integration.

### **10. Bureaucracy, Military influence and the Decline of Parliamentary Politics**

The growth of bureaucracy and military power is one of the most important political changes in the early days of Pakistan, where political institutions were weak, leadership changes were frequent, and administrative problems were ever recurring, enabling the unelected institutions to gradually encroach on the prerogative of parliamentary democracy (Alavi, 1972). Pakistan was left with a moderately powerful and well-established civil bureaucracy by the British colonial rule, which became the backbone of the new state. The Muslim League, on the other hand, lacked administrative experience and institutional strength to function effectively and function that was filled by the bureaucrats. Thus, senior civil servants started to take on leading positions in policy-making and economic planning, and even in the day-to-day administrative coordination, sometimes taking action on policy making and influencing state decisions. As the authority of the bureaucracy continued to increase over time, it also played a part in the marginalization of the elected representatives, thereby paving the way for an unelected institutional framework to take over more and more of political decision making.

However, the impact of the bureaucracy extended beyond its routine administrative role, as elected leaders came to depend on civil servants for their expertise, continuity and governance support, and as many senior civil servants grew to feel that they were lacking in administrative experience, institutional knowledge and ability to govern the newly established and complex state

effectively (Cohen, 2004). This imbalance led to the emergence of centralized and increasingly authoritarian systems of governance, as the bureaucracy became involved in policy making as well as in its implementation. This change was especially noticeable in the early 1950s with the rise of the political power under the rule of Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad who was closely allied with the civil bureaucracy and therefore could act with considerable impunity against the dictates of parliament. In 1953, he replaced Prime Minister Khawaja Nazimuddin, who had supported him in the legislature, even though he was still backed by the parliament, and this event revealed a major breakdown in democratic accountability because of constitutional conventions being overlooked by administrative and extra-parliamentary influence. Things got even worse in 1954, when the Constituent Assembly tried to assert itself and limit discretion of the Governor-General, an act that was justified in the name of "administrative necessity" and "state stability" and essentially violated the principle of parliamentary sovereignty (Khan, 2001). This change was further consolidated in the Maulvi Tamizuddin case when the judiciary itself validated the dissolution, thus establishing a precedent that would be followed for years to come and create a sense of government outside of the judiciary. At the same time, the military also came to play a more dominant role in politics, largely due to Pakistan's ongoing security issues, especially with its strategic competition with India and the Kashmir conflict, which made defense a growing priority in the state system (Rizvi, 2000; Burki, 1980). These, together with the continued political and leadership vacancies, the poor internal party organization and the frequent change of party leadership, led to the gradual increase in the political role of the military which, over time, contributed to the development of a system of government in which the bureaucracy and the military appear to dominate civilian democratic institutions.

These developments reflected a lack of institutionalization of democratic norms on the part of the Muslim League. The internal factionalism, poor party organization, and numerous leadership changes impaired the public trust in civilian government. Bureaucratic and military elites put themselves forward as protectors of the national stability as political institutions declined. Between 1947 and 1956 parliamentary politics took a severe blow. Democratic practices were not consolidated; the constitution was disrupted on various occasions and elected institutions were undermined. During these early years, the predominance of bureaucracy and military influence would have an impact on the political development of Pakistan for decades.

### **11. The Decline of Muslim League by 1956**

The Muslim League started to lose its political influence and legitimacy in the mid-1950s, even though at the time it held great sway in mobilizing Muslims around the demand for Pakistan (Sayeed, 1967; Talbot, 2009). Several structural and organizational weaknesses have come to light after Independence, which have contributed to this decrease. Most importantly, the party has failed to shift from a movement-oriented platform to a settlement mass democratic political party which can work within a post-independence governance system. Its organizational base continued to be weak, with minimal grassroots support, and with poorly developed party structures, it relied more on state institutions to keep it alive than on popular party-mobilization. The League did not become a political organization for participation but grew more focused on elite politics, in which decisions were made by a small group of leaders with little connection to the common people. Moreover, on-going leadership struggles and factionalism hampered the development of a common political vision and direction, making it difficult for it to present a unified national agenda or formulate consistent long-term policies. These internal divisions further undermined the party's authority, opening a political space that allowed the growth of non-elected and bureaucratic institutions that influenced the policy course of the state.

Second, rising provincial discontent marked a major setback for the popularity of the Muslim League, especially in the East Pakistan region, where increasing discontent over provincial concerns including language recognition, political representation and economic distribution diminished the support for the Muslim League. The party's inability to seriously accept the Bengali demands led to growing differences between the center and the eastern wing, which eventually resulted in a high level of anti-League sentiments. This grievance was evident in the provincial election of 1954 in the eastern province of East Bengal where the Muslim League was defeated by the United Front coalition, and its defeat was a turning point that showed the league's hasty decline of mass election support and political legitimacy. Third, the constant delay in the constitutional process and the continued political instability further undermined the confidence of the public in the party as they did not trust the party on the constitutional course taken by the state in the future (Khan, 2001; Choudhury, 1963). Frequent government dismissals and multiple cases of executive interference further undermined democratic norms and fostered a sense of political disarray and elite manipulation. Fourth, the growing bureaucratic power also diminished the importance of political institutions by making elected officials more and more dependent on civil servants for running the affairs of government, administration, and policy continuity. This dependence diminished not only the institutional independence of the Muslim League, but it also made it a less effective political party, more and more power being delegated to unelected party officials.

Economic problems were also a factor in dissatisfaction. Social tensions were caused by refugee reconstruction, inflation and unemployment as well as unequal regional development, and they were not adequately responded to by the government. The Muslim League's symbolic role in Pakistani politics was not seriously affected despite these failures. The party continued to be united with Pakistan and the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. But symbolic legitimacy was not enough to deal with the organizational weakness and political decline.

The Constitution of 1956 was a success, but also a failure. Pakistan had finally come up with a constitution, but Muslim League had lost a significant portion of its political power. The political instability of the early years eventually paved the way for the falling of parliamentary democracy and the rise of authoritarian politics in the decades that followed.

## 12. Conclusion

One of the most important events in the early political life of Pakistan was the shift in the Muslim League from a nationalist group to a political party at the time of the formation of Pakistan. During the struggle for Pakistan, the party was able to organize the Muslims, and it was the party which also played a crucial role in the success of the struggle for independence. But the problems of governance that arose following 1947 revealed significant organizational and institutional weaknesses in the League. The Muslim League took over a state facing administrative, economic and political problems. The new government faced tremendous challenges from refugee rehabilitation, constitutional issues, provincial problems, and poor institutional capacity.

The League tried to cope with these problems but had difficulty in evolving from a political goal-oriented organization into a democratic governing party. When Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan died, the party lost its disciplined national leadership, and factionalism began to flourish in the party. Political divisions and a lack of internal democracy and reliance on the support of the bureaucracy undermined the League's political unity. At the same time, the grievances of the provinces especially East Pakistan endangered national unity and people's trust in the party. The Muslim League's restrictions were also evident in the debates of the Constitution between 1947 and 1956. The party saw a number of events, including the Objectives Resolution and the eventual

adoption of the Constitution of 1956, however these were delayed and there seemed to be lacking in political consensus. The rise of bureaucracy and the military institutions reduced the power of parliament and the elected leaders. In the long run, the Muslim League never succeeded in establishing democratic governance in Pakistan.

By the mid-1950s, it had waned, paving the way for the political instability and authoritarian rule that would dominate Pakistani politics in the future. This history of the Muslim League thus exemplifies the general problems of the state-building in post-colonial societies. The success of the Muslim League is a case in point of the fact that one does not necessarily lead to the other. The party managed to provide Pakistan but did not establish sound political institutions which can maintain constitutional democracy after the independence. This paradox is at the heart of the political developments in Pakistan in its early years.

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