



Crisis and its Beyond: A Review of Recent Critical Inquiry into Pakistan

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Humeira Iqtidar and David Gilmartin, eds. 2011. Secularism and the State in Pakistan, *Modern Asian Studies* 45, (3), pp. 491-757, ISSN 0026749X.

Humeira Iqtidar, *Secularizing Islamists Jama'at-e-Islami and Jama'at-ud-Da'wa in Urban Pakistan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, 232 pages, ISBN 9780226384689, Price \$40.00.

Naveeda Khan, ed. *Beyond Crisis. Re-evaluating Pakistan*. [=Critical Asian Studies]. London and New Delhi: Routledge, 2010, 544 pages, ISBN 9780415480635, Price £75.00.

Taylor C. Sherman, Sarah Ansari and William Gould, eds. 2011. Special Issue: From Subjects to Citizens: Society and the Everyday State in India and Pakistan, 1947-1970, *Modern Asian Studies*, 45 (1), pp. 1-224, ISSN 0026749X.

Saadia Toor, *The State of Islam. Culture and Cold War Politics in Pakistan*. London: Pluto Press, 2011, 264 pages, ISBN 9780745329901, Price £16.00.

1. 'Beyond Crisis'

'Can Pakistan Survive?' seems to be the question dominating public discourse on Pakistan in the international media today. It has in particular framed the inquiries into Pakistan that had their impetus in the security concerns emerging from the events of September 11th, 2001. Of course, the tropes of the 'crisis state' and 'failed state' are not limited to Pakistan but have been increasingly informing academic as well



as journalistic engagement with states across the world. In the case of Pakistan, the specific international concern with its survival peaked at the end of the Cold War and was boosted after 9/11. Domestically, however the concern for the state's survival has a longer historiographical tradition that can be traced back to the very inception of Pakistan, and that really came into its own following the break-up of the state in 1971.

In his purposely polemical book *Can Pakistan Survive?* (1983) with the provocative subtitle *The Death of State*, Tariq Ali prominently articulated this concern. Almost 30 years on, the state of Pakistan is still 'alive' but the question is still being asked and one is moved to wonder whether it is even the right one or at least the only one to be asking. Questions after all are not objective, they are bound by their context and they frame the space in which answers can be given. When a question is posed in a manner that limits the answers in such a way that they do not conflict with the premise of the question, it is no longer merely operating as a query but rather functions as the manifestation of a discourse (Sardar 2011). The question "can Pakistan survive?" is premised on a discourse that views Pakistan as a problem, as a state in perpetual crisis: crisis of state, of identity, of sovereignty (Khan 2010). The discourse of 'crisis' has shaped inquiry into the history of Pakistan since its inception and has only recently begun to be increasingly scrutinised.

This article takes a look at the recent contributions to historiography on Pakistan that consciously break with the crisis discourse and in moving beyond it call for a framework that allows for the study of those phenomenon in society and politics that do not fit neatly into the said discourse. A seminal contribution representing this new trend in studies on Pakistan is the edited volume by Naveeda Khan *Beyond Crisis. Re-evaluating Pakistan* (2010). It holds a collection of articles that contributes to reappraising Pakistan's history by "examining how crisis is framed, sensed, registered and refused in different ways by different constituencies" in particular emphasising the value of viewing crisis through its effects on and manifestation in the everyday (Ibid.: 26). These are studies that go the extra mile past the well-meaning publications that stem from nostalgia for Pakistan and seek to promote an image of Pakistan that in the face of crisis is surprisingly stable, resilient and home to many "unsung successes" (Siddiqi 2011). Maleeha Lodhi's edited volume *Pakistan. Beyond the 'Crisis State'* (2011) and Anatol Lieven's *Pakistan. A Hard Country* (2011) are examples of this trend of 'optimistic' literature on Pakistan.



While it is both commendable and refreshing to see evaluations of Pakistan that underscore the “strength and stability of its underlying social structure which enable the country to weather national and regional storms and rebound from disasters - natural and manmade [sic]” (Lodhi 2011: 2), these do not actually question the premise of the crisis discourse. Rather they look to “explore the path to a post-crisis state” (Ibid.) and thus approach contemporary Pakistan and its history as a problem to be solved. The ‘problem-solving’ approach and the post-crisis visions for Pakistan, are just as embedded in the crisis discourse as are those studies that take a more ‘pessimistic’ view or go as far as to predict the doom of Pakistan, calling ‘failed state’ and ‘balkanisation’ at every bend in the road. They are merely two sides of the same coin, both diagnosing Pakistan’s complaints and prescribing remedies, the one optimistic of recovery, while the other less hopeful.

There is of course no doubt that Pakistan has faced more than its share of crises and that these studies contribute to understanding and addressing the ups and downs of its history. However, the question needs to be posed whether the predominance of this perspective is not foreclosing a more diverse and multilayered inquiry into Pakistan’s state and society? The lens of crisis has to an extent threatened “to overwhelm, and in the process, trivialise, the study of Pakistan” and the tropes of failure end up obscuring more than they reveal (Gilmartin 2010: 521; Khan 2010). Furthermore, narratives shaped by the perceived inevitability of crisis, turn crisis into the conclusion of a history whose trajectory must be traced retrospectively, barring the possibility of alternative paths, ignoring moments of dissent and opposition, and overlooking the everyday mediation of crisis in directing the course (Ahmad 2012: §3; Das 2010: xvi).

At the forefront of the crisis discourse, giving Pakistan a “status of exceptionalism” (Khan 2010: 2) while decrying the failure of nationalism, of the state and of sovereignty and security (domestic but also international) are the disciplines of security studies, economics, international relations, peace studies, political science and the like. The overrepresentation of disciplines such as these in the corpus of academic studies on Pakistan is historically rooted in Cold War considerations of Realpolitik of the U.S. and in Europe. The imperatives of the Cold War order shaped funding strategies and motivated the establishment of research institutions that catered to specific agendas. In turn this led to the establishment of area studies as well as over time of certain visions



of regions such as Af-Pak. An example of such an institution is Foreign Policy at Brookings, a hub for research on Pakistan. Stephen P. Cohen, a political scientist is a senior fellow at Brookings and focuses on security issues in his books on Pakistan which are explicitly written with the intention to advise U.S. foreign policy but are read by a much wider and more general readership, giving his books seminal status and surpassing in popularity more historical and comprehensive studies such as Ian Talbot's¹ *Pakistan: A Modern History* (1998).

Cohen's most recent book is an edited volume called *The Future of Pakistan* (2011) in which he along with other experts approaches the existential dilemma of Pakistan, identifying problems, proposing solutions that could bring about a kind of Pakistan that would be in the interest of a stable world order and more so in the interest of the USA. Most of the contributions study Pakistan with an emphasis on the implications of its crises on other states and on international stability. The following list of its crises, as identified by Cohen in the preface, illustrates the dominance of the focus on international security: the rise of violence against core state institutions, its nuclear security, its policies towards Afghanistan, its inability to tackle home-grown and foreign terrorism, and its poor human and economic development. In the afterword, Cohen gives an excellent historiographical overview² of studies from the security perspective (many stemming from US based policy institutes), in particular focusing on the recent contributions which he sees as being "deeply divided along the optimism/pessimism spectrum" (Cohen 2011: xii).

As mentioned above, Anatol Lieven's *A Hard Country* (2011) and Maleeha Lodh's *Beyond the 'Crisis State'* (2011) are two recent publications that tend towards the optimists' end of the spectrum. In Lodhi's edited volume, for example, seventeen contributors present the bright side of the country, dealing with themes such as the importance of a critical engagement with Pakistan's history (Jalal) and of alternative narratives (Haider), debates on civil military relations (Nawaz; Shafqat), questions of technical issues of governance and economic and human development as well as considerations of military-strategic issues (Rashid; Akram). In general, all the authors end their chapters on a hopeful note and as Ayesha Siddiqa writes in her review, the volume is "an expression of the desire of many Pakistanis to emerge as a successful country" (Siddiqa 2011).

In his book *The Idea of Pakistan* (2004), that is a political history of



the country, Cohen argues for taking a “nuanced” view of failure, making the point that even the most stable states can fail in some area or the other from time to time, identifying at least five types of failure:

1. The failure to live up to past expectation
2. The failure of vision
3. Economic failure
4. Failure of leadership; and last but not least.
5. Catastrophic failure, i.e. failure that can affect other states.

With the “failure to live up to past expectation” argument Cohen takes up a point that many seminal historians of Pakistan have made, that is, on the gap between aspirations and reality in Pakistan. This is a very potent question that points to a tension in society that can and has led to crisis.

Ayesha Jalal talks about this in her book on Jinnah, *The Sole Spokesman* (1985), in which she makes an ‘instrumentalist’ argument of the “accidental state” (Dhulipala 2011: 403) and secular nationalism pointing to the role of religion i.e. Islam in the political struggle as nothing more than a rallying cry, a fuzzy emotive symbol without any real substance. Hamza Alavi (1983; 1988) makes a similar argument that Islam had nothing to do with the entire affair. He has coined the term “salariat” to describe the “auxiliary” class that was at the forefront of the political movement for Muslim representation. Revisionist historians like Jalal emphasise that the Muslim League was a conglomeration of elite interest groups representing varying regional, social and economic factions that following partition disintegrated into its constituting parts. Thus, the party’s lack of rootedness in the new territory as well as the insufficiency of its national vision led to the ascendancy of the military in alliance with the bureaucracy.

Historians such as Jalal thus point to the gap between an “idealised Muslim unity” (Gilmartin 2010: 522) and the patchy reality of the political movement for Pakistan, they point to the crisis of nationalism and of the state. David Gilmartin, in his afterword to Khan’s volume makes the point that merely identifying this gap is not enough to explain Pakistan’s history, as such gaps exist in most ‘nation-states’ in some form or another. Rather, new avenues for thinking about these gaps, tensions, and crises can be opened up by talking about that which surrounds them. Thus, for Gilmartin inquiry into the history of Pakistan



needs to link “high politics” with everyday life but in doing so must also do more than merely point out the incongruity and tension between the two. In the case of studying Pakistan’s origins for example it must explore the *meaning* of “Muslim community” or the “sole spokesman” at various levels, in various contexts, at various points in time. This would mean examining the substance of concepts, ideas, evaluations, narratives through their contestations, inner debates and fissures, their negotiation in everyday life of society and the state. A good example of a study that does exactly this on the topic of language policies and identity formation is Alyssa Ayres’ *Speaking Like a State: Language and Nationalism in Pakistan* (2009). Ayres, for example, takes up the case study of Punjabi to understand how language is discursively constructed as a field where the substance of identity is formed as well as contested.

Above Cohen also points to the “failure of vision” in Pakistan indicating the insufficiency of the national vision to shape the state as opposed to the military-bureaucratic state moulding the nation vision as it suits it (Cohen 2004: 3). Historian Farzana Shaikh also talks about this in her book *Making Sense of Pakistan* (2009) in which she propounds that at the heart of Pakistan’s many crises lies one national identity crisis that is rooted in a historical lack of consensus on the role of Islam in the state. Thus, this interpretation understands Pakistan, to use Salman Rushdie’s words, as a “place insufficiently imagined” (Rushdie 2000) with its problems rooted in an ideological “lack of consensus” (Shakih 2009). Shaikh takes into account ideological debates in society and politics, pointing out how diversely the Muslim community or nation in India was imagined. Also picking up on Rushdie’s famous phrase, Philip Oldenburg’s journal article “A Place Insufficiently Imagined. Language, Belief and the Pakistan Crisis of 1971” (1985), one of the few academic inquires into the events of 1971, makes a similar argument in trying to explain the secession of East Pakistan. Both Shaikh and Oldenburg attribute the problems that Pakistan faces to a *crisis of nationalism*.

While highlighting the multiple imaginings of the nation, by ascribing explanatory value to the crisis of nationalism, Shaikh and Oldenburg run the danger of erroneously naturalising the nation-state as something ‘authentic’ which ought to have a clear understanding of its identity. Saadia Toor in her recent book *The State of Islam. Culture and Cold War Politics in Pakistan* (2011) argues that in doing so such interpretations discount nationalism as being a legitimacy ideology that is essentially a discourse of power and therefore always under contestation. Such



contestations, says Toor, can rather be seen as a sign of a lively public political field than of ideological uncertainty. The crisis of vision, the crisis of nationalism can therefore also be studied from an angle that allows one to ask about the 'creative' potential of moments of crisis.

The point is not to negate the value of understanding why crisis comes about but rather to plead for an enrichment of scholarly studies of Pakistan through inquiries into how crisis is lived, interpreted, overcome, forgotten, re-imagined, especially in the everyday context of state and society. Naveeda Khan (2010) does precisely this by asking how the crises of state, of nationalism and of sovereignty can potentially be studied through the ways in which social actors navigate through these events and their aftermaths in the everyday (Das 2010: xvi). In contrast to the body of literature that deals with Pakistan as a 'crisis state' whether explicitly or implicitly, Khan proposes to "move beyond the language of crisis" (Khan 2010: xvii) as it has dominated historiography and to take crisis as a starting point to understand that which exceeds it. She asks how the crisis discourse and its "obdurate evaluations" of failed state, failed nationalism and failed sovereignty have influenced thinking about Pakistan. It is not just that the crisis discourse has marginalised more nuanced studies about Pakistan or for that matter as Lodhi has argued obscured the resilient and stable sides of the story. The discursive evaluations of crisis carry ontological weight and must be treated as a "serious statement on life in Pakistan" (Khan 2010: Endnote 1).

Reading the evaluations of crisis (three dominant tropes being the failure of state, of nationalism, and of sovereignty) against the grain tell us something about how the affect of failure, of "not getting it right", informs a sense of belongingness to Pakistan. Thus we see how the sense of belonging to a nation-state need not be about common origins, language, or territory but may also be about sharing a sense of alienation from it. Drawing on Cavell (1989) Khan describes this as the condition of "human immigrancy" that stems from varying modes of displacement; displacement of the self (Khan 2010: 26) that goes hand-in-hand with the constant re-imagining of the Other.

Treating the tropes of crisis as discursive formations with ontological weight opens up the field of inquiry into that which exceeds crisis. What does the failure of the state say about how the state operates in relation to society and how it is experienced in the everyday? What does the failure of nationalism say about the alternate visions for society? What



does the failure of sovereignty say about the existence of foreignness within the self and the nation? Thus, Khan puts forward three themes (also the organising principle of the book) that could allow for a fresh perspective 'beyond crisis' and beyond its tropes of failure. These are:

1. Artificiality of the modern state
(beyond the failure of the state)
2. Difficulty of committing to one vision of things
(beyond failure of nationalism)
3. The foreignness within
(beyond failure of sovereignty)

Through these themes Khan and the scholars contributing to the volume aim to examine how "crisis, devolved into its various evaluations as failed state/artificiality of the state, failed nationalism/difficulties of committing to a single vision, compromised sovereignty and security/foreignness within, is lived and prevailed over at various times and different settings within Pakistan." 'Lived crisis', the dimension of the everyday experience of crisis (which forms the fourth theme of the book), is what allows crisis and its beyond to "constitute a simultaneous experience for Pakistanis." (Khan 2010: 24-25) Crisis and its beyond lie at the heart of the Pakistani condition of immigrancy.

2. The Everyday and the Artificiality of the State

The concept of the 'everyday' central to this framework treats everyday life as being agential in nature with its own structures of temporality and interaction. Rather than being a passive derivative sphere that is dominated by the structures of economic and political orders (See Lefebvre 1991) or even a dynamic realm where structural inequalities are opposed and undermined (See de Certeau 1984), here everyday life is understood as being an all-permeating dimension of human society that cannot be separated from the realms of politics or economics (See Ewing 1997 and Ring 2006). As Khan puts it: "these lives are equally that of state institutions and artefacts, of political parties and religious traditions," as they are of individuals, in this case, of the Pakistanis (2010: 22).

Thus everyday life is not some realm where crisis is overcome by



the force of “daily-ness” and habit, as if what is normal and usual can offset the negativity of crisis that has existed through the history of Pakistan up until the present. No, the point is that by looking for the everyday experience of crisis we can move towards a more holistic and differentiated picture of what informs the conditions of Pakistani subjectivities. It gives us an insight into how Pakistanis are subject to the human condition of constantly re-defining themselves in relation to an ever-changing Other (Das 2010: xviii), whether this is about the experience of foreignness within the self in the form of non-Muslim minorities or about the fragility of the national imaginary as manifested through ethno-nationalism. The everyday dimension opens up the field and allows the scholar to see the range of possible trajectories at every turn, thus moving away from any teleological analysis that results from treating outcomes through the retrospective lens.

Furthermore, it is not only about shifting the focus away from the state, the nation or the international towards a concentration on locally ‘lived Pakistan’. There is a sizable corpus of literature that has focused on these areas away from questions of the state, nation and sovereignty, and many have also employed the concept of the everyday in focusing on ‘low politics’ instead of ‘high politics’, taking the ‘subaltern’ seriously, or studying the countless social, economic, religious or literary facets of life in Pakistan (See Marsden 2010). In contrast to these contributions, the novelty of the recent historiography is that it has used the concept of the everyday to think about precisely topics to do with the state, nation and questions of sovereignty which have till recently been squarely within the purview of the crisis discourse and ‘high politics’ (Gilmartin 2010: 521).

Thus, the everyday framework flips the evaluations made through the crisis discourse, transforming the failure of the state and its institutions into a question of the nature of state and the artificiality of its separation from society. In the first instance, this ‘flip’ is about ‘bridging’ the gap between ‘high’ and ‘low’ politics and about looking for examples of how the state functions in the everyday in lower levels that are ‘closer’ to the ‘lived worlds’. For example, Vazira Zamindar (2007) in her work on *The Long Partition* looks at the gap between ‘high’ and ‘low’ politics by “examining low-level state programmes such as refugee rehabilitation and the recovery of abducted women” (Sherman et al. 2011: 2).

But it is also about more than this. It is about understanding the



state as a continuum in society, thus overcoming the conceptual *divide* between 'high' and 'low' politics. Veena Das, in her foreword to Khan's volume cites Giorgio Agamben who argues that the "state of exception encompasses life" in a way that "both binds and abandons the subject to the law" (p. xiv) adding that this duality of experience must take the specificities of Pakistan's crisis into account. The anthropological application of the concept of the everyday to the study of the state and its relation to society is helpful here. The "everyday state"³ highlights the rickety foundation of the conceptual separation between state and society, and shows us that the boundaries between the two 'realms' are fluid, complex and ambiguous (Sherman et al. 2011: 2). The everyday as an entry point is one way in which, as Khan argues, the artificiality of the modern construct that is the state becomes apparent. In addition to the contributions to Khan's volume that illustrate this argument (e.g. Hull 2010) recently two special issues have appeared in the *Modern Asian Studies* (MAS) journal that augment this trend in historiography on Pakistan. Going beyond of the 'failure of the state' evaluations, the contributions to these MAS issues are studies in the 'artificiality of the state'. That is, the experience of the state as simultaneously remote from and pervasive in everyday life, and as a force that unifies at the same time as it divides.

The two issues are entitled *Secularism and the State in Pakistan* edited by Humeira Iqtidar and David Gilmartin (2011) and *From Subjects to Citizens: Society and the Everyday State in India and Pakistan, 1947-1970* (Sherman et al. 2011). The first makes the point that any study of secularism must begin with an inquiry into the nature of the state and its relationship with society. In setting up the conceptual framework for the issues, Iqtidar and Gilmartin put forward in their Introduction that "[i]f secularism defines some form of institutional or conceptual separation of religion from the state, then, such a separation can only be understood within the larger framework of the state's conceptual, if paradoxical, separation from society, both in imagination and in institutional form" (2011: 494). The paradox of the state's conceptual distinction from society is that it is on the one hand *imagined* as a unitary self-contained entity that externally manages society but on the other hand acts as an authoritative force that penetrates society through its "congeries of fluid institutional structures" and is entangled in daily life (Ibid.: 494). Thus, states must be understood as "simultaneously imagined unitary entities, and as fragmented, fluid, always-incomplete pro-



jects"⁴ (Ibid.).

In the case of Pakistan, as Iqtidar considers in her paper on "Secularism Beyond the State: the 'State' and the 'Market' in Islamist Imagination", the distinction between state and society is part of a national imaginary that believes the state to be the embodiment of the community (nation) and thus the legitimate regulator of religion in society. To apply Khan's framework here, Iqtidar, in her study of secularism illustrates the *artificiality* of the state-society dichotomy, while taking the dichotomy itself as an indicator of how the state functions and legitimates itself in the everyday.

In relation to the question of religion and secularism, it is interesting how the state's claim to standing above society is the foundation of its legitimacy to manage religion but at the same time its institutional permeability makes it vulnerable to 'influence' and steering by ever-changing social forces. The role of the state is thus not static but in continuous process of being re-imagined and re-negotiated at times leading to an undermining of its "moral claims to legitimacy" (Ibid.: 495). A state is thus imagined, not in a vacuum, but in a situation of "pervasive tension with the fragmented operation of the state and with the expectations of society" (Ibid.: 499). Kamran Asdar Ali's paper in his issue "Communists in a Muslim Land" considers this dynamic in the context of the early phase of Pakistan's existence noting that this was a period of transition where the state was still in an ideologically undefined amorphous form, with various groups vying for power to control and define its role in the new country. Not only was the state institutionally weak but ideologically too it had yet to delineate its frontiers.

That is not to propose that the project of a nation-state can be completed, but in this period the room for negotiation was far more generous than in later phases of Pakistan's history, thus making this phase a particularly interesting one to examine. As Sherman (2011) and his co-editors argue in the introduction of their MAS special issue, the history of Pakistan has been 'periodised' as beginning with 1947, whereas it would make more sense to "regard the interval between the 1930s and the 1960s as a distinct stage in South Asian history" (Ibid.: 3) Firstly, till the 1960s the nation-building project was more flexible in nature than becomes the case thenceforth. The tensions of the nation-building project though prevalent do not 'erupt' until the late 1960s culminating in 1971 with the secession of East Pakistan. Secondly, considering the legacy of colonial institutions, practices and structures as well as of the



discourses of the nationalist movements across the perceived temporal 'break' of 1947 it makes sense to extend the period to a decade or more before the event. The 'artificiality' of this break becomes evident in that for example "the rhetorical underpinnings of the postcolonial states were often not so novel" (Ibid.) and there is in fact continuity in the modus operandi of the state across this temporal divide. Also, the discourses of development or citizenship, for example, which influence policies of independent states and the demands and expectations of its postcolonial citizens are rooted in the early twentieth century colonial context.

Thus, keeping in mind the complexity of the state-society conceptual dichotomy, the papers in the MAS issue *From Subjects to Citizens* addresses the question of continuities across 1947 by looking at the state as it functions in everyday life. In her article on "Everyday expectations of the state during Pakistan's early years: Letters to the Editor, Dawn (Karachi), 1950–1953" Sarah Ansari juxtaposes the expectations of citizens that everyday life would get better with independence against the disappointment of citizens with the state in dealing with issues of everyday life. Some papers in the issue also undertake a historical examination of the "popular, public cultures surrounding the state" (Sherman et al. 2011: 2). For instance, Michael Daechsel and Daniel Haines examine the public displays and enacting of state power in their respective papers on "Sovereignty, Governmentality and Development in Ayub's Pakistan: the Case of Korangi Township" and "Concrete 'Progress': Irrigation, Development and Modernity in Mid-twentieth Century Sind". They show how large development projects were often primarily designed and executed with the aim of demonstrating power in ways that would symbolise the capacity of the state to tame nature, shape the environment and discipline the inhabitants, thus discounting actual pragmatic considerations about the use and consequences of such project for the populations (Sherman et al. 2011: 4).

These studies of the everyday state in Pakistan are in the same vein as the contributions in Khan's volume. They demonstrate the artificiality of the state in the sense of its remoteness from everyday individual contexts and expectations and self-definitions, while at the same time highlight its pervasiveness in everyday life, "actualized and naturalized through material artefacts such as decrees and documents". Thus, there are two levels to the paradoxes through which the state is experienced.

Firstly, there is the paradox of its everyday remoteness in the face of its all-pervasive presence and penetration into society. As Khan points



out, this is what Veena Das and Debbie Poole (2004) term as the “duality of the state.” For them the “legibility and illegibility” of the state are “mutually constitutive” and simultaneously characterise the everyday life of the state and citizens’ experience of it (Khan 2010: 9). Secondly, there is an experience of paradox/duality in the sense that it is imagined as a unitary entity that *naturally* embodies the nation or community within it while at the same time individual and collective selves and experiences do not always correspond to the boundaries set by the state, be these physical or discursive. Thus, the state appears as artificial to the citizen through its distance from and incongruity with individual self-understanding. It is this distance that in turn is the foundation of an imagined unity of the state as naturally standing for the nation. Furthermore, the duality of the state, its imagined unity/experienced remoteness vs. its all-pervasiveness, is as Humeira Iqtidar has argued an artificial dichotomy that forms the legitimacy basis of the state’s authority ‘over’ society.

Aamir R. Mufti’s essay “Towards a Lyric History of India” in Khan (2010) deals with reflections on the artificiality of the state by looking at the lyric poetry of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the progressive Urdu poet, leftist journalist and the in-official poet-laureate of Pakistan. Mufti asserts that Faiz’s love lyric with its theme of separation and union with the beloved best represent his engagement with questions of identity. He argues that Faiz’s lyric poetry, that is structurally centred on the separation of the own self from the beloved, best expresses his sense of separation from the collective Indian self. It is lyric poetry, more than even the explicitly political poetry (such as *Subh-e azadi*), that “give expression to the self in partition.” Through the subject of the ‘I’ in his poetry Faiz highlights the “dialectic of a collective selfhood at the disjunctures of language, culture, nation and community” (Mufti 2011: 32). Drawing on Adorno (1991), Mufti understands lyric poetry as a site inscribed with social meaning. To give an example, Mufti cites the opening lines of Faiz’s *Paun se lahu ko dho dalo* (Wash the Blood of your Feet) from the 1950s as a poem which echoes the emotions of separation, of partition.

What could I [lit., we] have done, gone where?
 My feet were bare
 and every road was covered with thorns -
 of ruined friendships, of loves left behind,
 of eras of loyalty that finished, one by one.



(translated by Agha Shahid Ali 1995: 85)

Thus, he engages with Faiz's lyric poetry as statements on identity that show the dilemmas associated with the partition and displacement. This displacement goes hand in hand with the thinking about the simultaneous artificiality and naturalness of the national boundaries that Faiz suddenly finds himself bound within. On the one hand, with the inception of the political and territorial form of the nation, the nation-state becomes the naturalised frame of reference. The Pakistani state is expected to embody the Pakistani nation, and yet on the other hand, the Pakistani state is also separating the Pakistani subject from its Indian subjecthood (thus also creating a sense of foreignness within). As Mufti argues, Faiz takes "division seriously, refusing to treat it as merely epiphenomenal, as in the unity-in-diversity formula of Indian nationalism." Rather, the division "constitutes the very ground from which union can be contemplated" (Ibid.: 33). Thus, Faiz like other poets and writers struggles to adjust to the categories and boundaries of the nations-state that have been superimposed on the collective selves, whether these are the Urdu community, the Muslim community or simply the Indian self.

Ayesha Jalal in her monograph *Self and Sovereignty. Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* also looks at how many leading leftist poets "rejected the newly demarcated boundary as an imperialist artefact" (2007: 568). She cites poets from both sides of the new border who grapple with the horrors of partition but also with the resultant sense of displacement. She quotes Ahmad Riaz:

The dawn of independence has come,
but still the paths of past and present are in darkness.
We are neither infidels nor Muslims.
Crushed by famine and hunger, we are the rejected ones.
Comrades, hold out your hands, even today we are together.
Who could ever divide the estate of literature?
Cities can be divided, the streets closed
but who can imprison intensity of feeling?
(adapted into English by Jalal 2011: 568)

Aijaz Ahmad (2000) makes the argument that the Urdu community of the sub-continent maintained the integrity of "the estate of its literature" despite the new limits of the state for a number of decades after partition. Urdu literature from Pakistan (and from India) continued to



command an audience across the borders, “the map of its reception seemingly erasing the national boundaries that are the territorial legacy of partition” (Mufti 2010: 31). It was only after the war of 1965 that national allegiances began to supersede the Urdu community’s previous unity. While there was a section of Urdu writers in Pakistan who called for a new literature that was unique to Pakistan, leftist oriented intellectuals like Faiz struggled to separate themselves from what was now supposed to be the a foreign entity, highlighting rather than overcoming the lived artificiality of state borders. Urdu poetry and writing, as Mufti, Jalal and Ahmad demonstrate, embodied the dilemmas of coming to terms with the new political reality of a divided community vs. a putatively united nation.

3. Multiple Visions and Foreignness Within

If we take Faiz’s lyric poetry as well as writings, journalistic or otherwise, as exemplary for everyday engagement with the question of the state and nation we can draw out reflections on the naturalness as well as artificiality of the state but also an engagement with the foreignness that resides with the self. As Naveeda Khan puts it: “An exploration of foreignness [...] suggests just how complicated it is to forge a nationalism premised on sameness or to assume sovereignty as self-contained” (2010: 15). Foreignness is not merely about the influences or for that matter interference from the outside as a ‘crisis of sovereignty’ approach would highlight. It is just as much a question of the legacies of colonial rule influencing everyday life through laws and institutions (see above Haines and Daechsel 2010) but also through discourses of knowing.

Asad Ahmed, for example, examines the “legal construction of Muslim identity Ahmadiyya difference” in his article “From Muslim to Apostates” in Khan’s volume and looks at the colonial legacies that shape Pakistani law and conceptions of citizenship. Similarly, Sherman et al. make the argument that ideas of citizenship were “inscribed with religious and gender norms” that had their origins in the colonial period as well as being shaped by “local level understandings of who was worthy of citizenship” that stemmed from the contingencies and polarisations that accompanied partition (2011: 6). Thus, definitions of foreignness also shaped fundamental ideas about citizenship in the new state.



The theme of foreignness also brings up questions about ideas, memories, and shared pasts that can simultaneously be lived as intimate and foreign. The “foreignness within” can be about tensions between political categories and contextual subjectivities, as in the case of Faiz, or about the existence of the ‘Other’ within the ‘Self’ as is the case of religious minorities, in particular Hindus, within the Pakistani body polity (Khan 2010: 19). In addition to its physical presence as a minority, the Hindu ‘Other’ is also very much present as the foreign within the self in the form of its influences on the everyday cultural and religious traditions and practice in Pakistan (See Rozeznal 2010).

In her book *State of Islam* (2011) Saadia Toor examines in depth the discourses that the Establishment (the Pakistani state and its organic elite) employed to marginalise East Bengal that embodied the fundamental ambiguities and tensions of the nascent nation-state of Pakistan; i.e. the tension of a non-representative government in power vs. the demographic majority of East Bengal, the tension of a Muslim nationalism vs. the reality of religious minorities, and the tension between an undefined national culture linked to the language Urdu vs. regionally well-defined cultural identities linked to regional languages. Toor looks at the constitutional debates as well as at editorials and opinion pieces in newspapers to identify the dynamics of the discourses as they formed and were perpetuated. One discourse illustrates the theme of foreignness within excellently. It firstly characterised Bengal “as a veritable hotbed of seditious elements such as Hindus and communists that were bent on destroying Pakistan” (Ibid.: 19) and secondly, portrayed East Bengali culture and language as not Islamic enough, that is, as excessively influenced by Hinduism. This was a discourse that decried infringements on the sovereignty of Pakistan. The Hindu Bengali and the Hindu-influenced Bengali culture represented a foreign element within the Pakistani body polity. A study like Toor’s contributes to unpacking the “dense symbolic system within the Muslim imaginary in Pakistan” of the Hindu and Indian Other (Khan 2010: 19).

Toor in her article “A national culture for Pakistan: The political economy of a debate” (2005) analyses Faiz’s writings, radio debates and public speeches in the 1950s and 1960s on the topic of Pakistan’s national culture. Her analysis again points to a tussle with the artifice of Pakistan’s national boundaries along with a constant struggle to separate Pakistan’s national Self from the Indian foreign Other. His is an example of a citizen identifying what is Pakistani culture and what is not.



In a report he wrote in his capacity as the chair of the government Commission on Culture and Art (1968)⁵ Faiz defined culture as having material as well as ideological aspects along with territorial and historical bases. For him “its ideological component may include extra-territorial and supra-temporal elements” (Faiz 1968 quoted in Toor 2005: 331). Obviously this was an attempt to reconcile the extra-territorial nature of the Muslim community (in South Asia beyond the Pakistani borders as well as pan-Islamically defined) with the spatial reality of a territorially bound nation-state. This understanding of culture meant that India and Pakistan shared some cultural history and that cultural traditions belonging to the areas making up Pakistan were ‘national’ even if they were unrelated to the Islamicate high culture related to Muslim rule in India. Thus, Faiz saw the Pakistani nation as a cultural project, and not as a primordial entity that had been moving through history since time immemorial towards self-realisation:

Before the inception of Pakistan, there was, understandably, no such entity as a Pakistani nation. [...there was political community, but no ethnic and geographic unity...]. Understandably, therefore, the culture of the new Pakistani nation when it emerged was not a finished, readymade unified entity [...] but a composite of diversified patterns. (Faiz 1968: 15 quoted in Ibid.)

Central to his view was that Pakistan’s national culture could only be national if it was unique to Pakistan, and thus, even if Islam was a central element, it was not the defining one:

[...] Pakistani culture is only limited to Pakistan, and Islam is not limited by nationalism [...] but is universal [...] thus that which is Pakistani culture will be Islamic, not non-Islamic. In fact, you can call it Pakistani Islamic culture. You cannot just call it Islamic culture because you don’t have a monopoly on Islam. (Faiz n.d.: 21 quoted in Ibid.: 336)

By sidelining Islam as the foundation of Pakistani nation Faiz runs into problems on how to situate East Bengal within such a conception. Here he walks an argumentative tightrope and states that religion, i.e. Islam is one big but not the only reason for the national link between the two wings. The other one was the historical connection of colonial rule and



other common governments and finally the cultural connection: “our mosques and tombs look the same, our learned men and their learned men have gone back and forth [...] So we have lots of connections with them that we don’t have with other Muslim countries” (Faiz n.d.: 49 quoted in *Ibid.*: 337). But this of course had the corollary that such culture is also shared with India making East Bengal seem as having arbitrarily become Pakistan and highlighting the difficulty of justifying Pakistan solely on a cultural basis.

The examples above illustrate the perpetual foreignness within that points to the multiple axes of difference with any community but also “within any imaginary or even within the individual” (Khan 2010: 14). Khan asks what these divergent tendencies mean for the assumption of “sovereignty of the self as of the state”? Do the multiple and contradictory imaginaries undermine the success of nationalism? Foreignness within is a sign for the difficulty of forging and sustaining a national vision premised on some conception of sameness. Studying the substance of its discourses opens up questions about the multiple imaginings of nation and community. It leads to questions about exploring the diversity of visions in Pakistan as opposed to focusing on the failure of nationalism that such a diversity implies.

This is what Naveeda Khan terms as the “difficulty of committing to a single vision” and the ensuing multiplicity of visions. Thus Faiz’s writing and poetry as shown here by Toor and above by Mufti are, on the one hand, exemplary of attempts to disengage literature and other forms of expression from the cultural project of nation-building in post-colonial Pakistan. These emerged from and in turn perpetuated ‘cultural publics’⁶ that maintained their malleable boundaries and could not be “subsumed within the cultural logic of the nation-state system” (Mufti 2010: 31). On the other hand, we see that there is an active engagement with an emerging nation-building project in which the effort is made to participate in the moulding of the national identity. These seemingly contradictory roles as embodied in the person of Faiz point to the above mentioned artificiality of the state-society dichotomy as well as to the value of viewing the crisis of nationalism through the debates its generates in various contexts and different moments.

As has been shown previously, the crisis of nationalism that the multiplicity of visions has generated has been studied abundantly, where as the “flowering of imagination” (Khan 2010: 15) in the face of a weak official nationalism has been mostly ignored.⁷ Rather than focusing on



the dead end of a successful nationalism in Pakistan, it is also possible to study the possibilities and diversity in selfhood or collective imaginaries that these multiplicities of visions have produced and how these are based on shifting boundaries between the intimate and the foreign, between the Self and the Other.

Saadia Toor's *State of Islam* (2011) shows how the multiple national visions in circulation in Pakistan since its inception have been negotiated discursively in domestic as well as international politics. In particular she focuses on those sides of the story that make visible the 'alternative' visions and politics that have been sidelined by the official nationalist narrative. She especially looks at the progressive discourses on national culture in Pakistan and argues that it is by examining 'alternatives' such as the Left that one can begin to grasp the full scope of debates over the defining of national culture of and vision for Pakistan. But why are these debates relevant? Saadia Toor views 'national culture' as one of the sites of struggle for hegemony. In the modern age, state power is legitimated in the framework of the nation and thus national culture becomes the "field of contestation where struggles over hegemony between various classes and social blocs are played out" (2005: 318). Also, the nation becomes the premise or the 'natural' object to be filled with cultural content. She makes the point that "ideological confusion" (Ibid. 2011: 2) or in other words the crisis of nationalism (as for example represented in Farzana Shaikh, Ayesha Jalal and Oldenburg's arguments examined above) especially in the early phase of Pakistan's history provided an initial space for discussions on the nation-state project which were actively contributed to and shaped by progressive intellectuals as well as the religious Right and regionally rooted discourses.

Such an understanding would enrich the usual argument that the ambiguity in agenda and ideology of the national elite allowed for the entrenchment of the religious Right. Rather, it was this very ambiguity of the nationalist project that along with its revolutionary and liberatory anti-colonial rhetoric lent it to appropriation by the opposing Left with its aim to mould Pakistan in accordance with a more democratic, progressive vision (Ibid.: 17). Thus, it can be argued, that to more fully understand the dynamics behind state-formation in Pakistan's context, the debates on national culture that are intrinsically linked to this process must be seen as taking place in a space that multiple actors from varying ideological backgrounds had access to.

For example, Toor examines the Constituent Assembly debates on



the One-Unit proposal which stemmed from the efforts of the establishment to maintain power. The proposal involved the administrative unification of the four provinces of the western wing into one unit that would hold a position of parity in relation to the other unit of East Bengal, thus neutralising the latter's demographic majority. Mian Mumtaz Daulatana, then chief minister of Punjab, on behalf of the government of Pakistan argued for the unification of the provinces of West Pakistan on the basis of a territorially framed argument of historical and civilisational antiquity: "the integration of West Pakistan is a natural culmination, a natural fruition, a natural realization" of the history of the region. (CAD 1995: 337 cited in *Ibid.*: 47) This was identical to the view propounded by many leftists that what made Pakistan a nation was not Islam but the historical unity of the territory (this for example is prominently represented by Faiz Ahmed Faiz as mentioned above). Mian Iftikharuddin⁸ also present at these constitutional debates, in fact replied to Daulatana's speech by sarcastically stating that "his brilliant friend from Punjab" was "guilty of plagiarism by stealing all the arguments that I have been giving for the last four years." He also pointed to the irony that Daulatana had earlier represented quite opposed views by signing the Basic Principles Committee Report that stood for the religious basis of Pakistan (Toor 2011: 49).

This not only shows that the nationalist political elite was flexible in its delineation of Pakistan's national culture and history depending on the political project in question but also that as Toor argues "cultural projects are rarely progressive or reactionary in and of themselves – what ultimately determines their political effect is the political project they are harnessed to" (*Ibid.*: 50). On the one hand Iftikharuddin had presented the argument of a shared political and cultural history to call for a democratic and federal state structure while on the other hand, the same ideas of a shared cultural past were appropriated for an opposed political project of centralisation through the One Unit plan.

The literary sphere is another space where political and ideological battles over defining the direction of the nation-state project played themselves out. Both Toor (2011) and Kamran Asdar Ali in his above mentioned MAS journal article "Communists in a Muslim Land" (2011) have recently examined the debates and tensions between the leftists (in particular from the Progressive Writers Association) and the liberal 'anti-communist' nationalists.⁹ Ali and Toor question the dominant teleological narrative that sees Pakistan as the culmination of Muslim na-



tionalism by examining the alternate and opposing visions in circulation in the early years. Toor argues that “[f]ar from being peripheral to national politics and issues of state, the polemical debates between these two camps were a crucial part of the ideological struggle within Pakistan at this time. At the discursive level, these coalesced around a struggle between the definitions and visions of both ‘nation’ and ‘state’” (Toor 2011: 53). In the early years, the religious Right had not yet consolidated as a serious political force (See Iqtidar 2011) which meant that the main challenge to ‘progressive’ vision for Pakistan came from the liberal ‘non-progressives’ camp. Furthermore, the correspondence between the stance of the liberal ‘non-progressives’ and that of the international liberal camp in the Cold War context was a sign that the significance of debate was not just limited to domestic politics and interests but also had an international dimension (Toor 2011: 57).

What Asdar Ali terms as the ‘non-progressives’ camp, Toor labels as nationalist anti-communist liberals. It is difficult to bracket the former considering that while the progressives were closely aligned to a communist political party or at least bound together by leftist ideals (even if they did not always agree), what bound together the non-progressives was not any common ideological or intellectual agenda but rather their rejection of the progressive’s agenda of writing literature for the purposes of addressing social and political issues. They were against literature being used for what they termed as “sloganeering” (Taseer 1949: 296 quoted in Toor 2011: 62). In return, the progressives explicitly targeted the art-for-art’s sake principle followed by the liberal non-progressives, arguing for literature as a medium for changing life rather than functioning as a mere “mirror of life” (APPWA Manifesto 1949 quoted in Toor 2011: 62)

But, while criticising explicitly leftist political literature and poetry, many of the non-progressive writers were engaged in a political project of a different kind: the project of nation-building – of creating an uniquely Pakistani Urdu literature. Thus, the non-progressives defined the socialist and anti-imperialist motivations of the progressives as irreconcilable with nationalism and patriotism. For example, prominent intellectuals Muhammad Hassan Askari and M.D. Taseer openly questioned the loyalty of the progressives to the state of Pakistan. The discourse of (dis)loyalty as Toor argues was instrumental in the efforts by the state to discredit and marginalise socialist visions for society that had in fact been dominant in the 1940s within the anti-colonial



discourse of (Muslim) nationalism and had even been part of the political rhetoric of the Muslim League (See Talat Ahmad 2008 for a detailed account of the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case of 1951 that became the cornerstone of a national memory constructed around the 'enemy of the state' discourse).¹⁰

Asdar Ali as well as Toor review Muhammad Hassan Askari's writing in detail. Askari advocates the role of intellectuals in addressing the non-material and spiritual needs of the masses and not just the economic ones as the progressives do. This spiritual need was about a sense of fulfilling the Muslim nation's desire for freedom as embodied in the new homeland. It was about creating a society where Muslims could live their lives in accordance with their own cultural heritage and where literature further emphasised this cultural heritage (Ali 2011: 523). For him the progressives were sacrificing culture at the altar of progress; culture and literature needed to be rooted in their own history and traditions (Askari, 2000. *Majmu'a: 1132-1133* quoted in Ali 2011: 525). The progressive critique of the liberal nationalists was that their concern was not with the Pakistani people, with "the real Pakistan which lay gasping on the ground", but with the "selfish politics of the ruling class" that dominated the Pakistani state (APPWA Manifesto 1949 quoted in Toor 2011: 68). The difference in the political philosophies between the two camps is evident in the terms they use to talk about Pakistani people, the progressives describing them as the *awam* (the people) while the nationalists talk of the *qaum*¹¹ (the nation) (Toor 2011: 69).

Asdar Ali also examines the diverging views on Islam within the Left wing by looking at the exchange between Sajjad Zaheer and Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, who wrote to each other¹² on the topic of an essay called "Ihtijaj aur Ihtiat" (Protest and Prudence) that Qasmi had published in 1948 in *Imroze* (a *Progressive Papers* newspaper). Zaheer radically criticised Qasmi for arguing that Islam had the potential for being a revolutionary force that could bring about social and economic justice. Zaheer cites historical examples for why in his view Islam could not eradicate class and thus could not establish a truly egalitarian society (and never had done so as Qasmi had asserted). Islam was not, as Qasmi had argued, some form of "middle ground" between capitalism and communism. Zaheer also stated that as far as loyalty to Pakistan was concerned, the CPP owed its loyalty to the people of Pakistan and not to the landlord infested Muslim League which employed religion, nationalism and language to undermine the unity of the oppressed classes. Also



for Zaheer the only way forward was to work for social transformation under the banner of the Communist Party as otherwise intellectual efforts would only be of a fragmented nature without force to transform.

Qasmi's response to Zaheer's critique reiterated his view that Islam could complement communism and the other way round. According to him, communism which strived for economic welfare could benefit from the attachment of a moral code such as Islam to it. He cautioned that it was not prudent of the communist party workers to reject Islam and criticize its principles as this would only alienate them from the masses. A much more effective strategy would be to emphasise the commonalities between the two. Thus, we see that leftist was not equal to leftist and that even closely related organisations such as the CPP and PWA often had fundamental differences in opinion (Ali 2011: 517-520).¹³

Thus both Toor and Asdar Ali highlight the 'alternative' visions of the nation proposed by leftist intellectuals arguing that this intellectual engagement with the question of national culture stemmed from a sense of contingency related in particular to the state's ambiguous boundaries (institutional, cultural as well as ideological). In the same way, Humeira Iqtidar in her book *Secularizing Islamists* (2011) seeks to disrupt the teleology that sees Islamism in Pakistan as a logical progression of Muslim nationalism. She argues that by linking up Pakistan, Islam and fundamentalism, a trinity is constructed that denies any insights into the diversity and fissures with each of its parts. Her aim is to rehabilitate the importance of the debate on secularism as a part of Pakistan's intellectual and political history. Iqtidar argues that it is possible "even with a scratch beneath the surface of popular portrayals and official narratives, to see it as a history pregnant with possibilities and debates" (2011: 1).

Her study contributes to a more nuanced picture of Pakistan's socio-political history, for example, by pointing to the interaction and opposition between the Left and the religious Right. She argues that to understand the Jamaat-i-Islami today it is necessary to "understand the dynamics of its opposition to the 'left' in Pakistan" (Ibid.: 2010: 247).¹⁴ In particular it was the confrontational encounters with the Left during the late 1960s that influenced the JI's strategies, constituencies and even its position on issues such as those related to, for example, 'feudalism' that it engaged with by coming into contact with sections of Pakistani society that it otherwise would not have. It is also during this time that categories such as 'secular Left' and 'religious Right' begin to



crystallise.

Kamran Asdar Ali's contribution to Khan's edited volume "Strength of the State meets Strength of the Street" (2010) continues in the same vein by writing the history of 'alternatives' that official narratives have obscured if not entirely expelled from the history of Pakistan. Specifically, this is the history of alternative politics based on class solidarity and ethnicity. He looks at the 1972 labour struggle in Karachi that "marked the beginning of the end of a protracted labour movement that started in the late 1960s" and had been a major force in ending Ayub Khan's military rule and ushering in the first democratic government in the history of Pakistan, that of Z.A. Bhutto and the Pakistan People's Party. The PPP came to power on the wave of support from the working class, students and radical leftist groups, however, under its seven-year rule the worker's struggle was systematically suppressed.

In the context of the workers' reaction to this suppression, Asdar Ali examines the internal fissures and particularistic identities at play within the labour movement that he argues counters "the teleological assumptions which begin with the expectation that the capitalist factory, in its ideal construction, acts as a powerful agent of social change" binding workers "into new universalistic ties of class solidarity" (Ali 2010: 212). Thus, he focuses on the relationship between workers, trade union leadership and the state of Pakistan to analyse the role the ethnic and sectarian politics played as forms of solidarity in the unfolding of the labour movement of 1972. Within his analysis, Asdar Ali also highlights one paradox of the labour movement, that is, that the labour union leaders while representing the poor workers also stood in a hierarchical relationship to them and view them as "bodies that needed to be tamed and organized" (Ali 2010: 230). Asdar Ali's interviews with workers and Left wing student leaders of the 1972 struggle confirm Hamza Alavi's characterisation of the trade union leaders as middlemen or "labour lawyers" (Ibid.).

Thus, while the rhetoric of the leadership called for radical change, their actual demands never exceeded those for liberal democratic rights of association and expression and general welfare policies (Ibid.: 232). Asdar Ali quotes the argument that Dipesh Chakrabarty's (1989) makes in his work on Bengali working class politics in the early 20th century, which is that "class-based solidarities and alliances are created in specific moments of struggle for certain immediate goals and may coexist with other solidarities that may encompass differences in language, re-



gion and ethnicity" (Ali 2010: 237). He further argues that labour history too has tended to be teleological in nature as it assumes a dichotomy between positive class solidarity vs. negative parochial alliances, where the former must give way to the latter. Rather, struggle takes varied forms depending on the contingencies of the moment.

The production of solidarities as a result of political contingencies is also an argument that Matthew Nelson makes in his MAS paper "Embracing the Ummah: Student Politics beyond State Power in Pakistan" (2011) which is a study of 'ideas about Islam' and nationalism expressed by student groups in Pakistan. In particular, he examines the shift in these ideas from visions that were bound by national boundaries to ones that rejected the notion of compatibility between Islam and territorial, in this case, Pakistani nationalism. The paper describes the conflict ridden interaction between and amongst the various leftist, regional and religious student groups that culminated by the 1960s in a violent stalemate which "produced a certain disenchantment with exclusionary efforts to control the 'state-based Muslim nationalism'" (Nelson 2011: 565). He draws on Talal Asad's (1983) argument that ideas about religion and religious solidarity are the 'product' of political quests for power. Religious ideas are always "a work in progress", historically contingent. Thus, in their quest for power, student unions in Pakistan produced alternative ideas about Islam and Muslim solidarity that were transnational and "counter-nationalist" in nature (Nelson 2011: 570)

His main argument is that the increasing clout of transnational ideas of Muslim solidarity had to do with the very *structure* of domestic and specifically student political competition motivated by the political aim to acquire "monolithic 'territorialized' control" (Ibid.: 580). This competition was characterised by "an increasingly violent religious-cum-political impasse" (Ibid.). Thus, over the years, the high levels of campus-based violence drove students away from 'nationalist' groups and led to the swelling of the ranks of counter-nationalist student groups such as the Tablighi-Jama'at in the 1950s and 60s and the Da'wat-e-Islami in the 1980s that propagated *ummah*-based visions for a global Muslim community. This push from nationalist to transnationalist was also often, at least up until the 1970s linked to complex patterns of support by the state for transnational alternatives that seemed the least harmful to its own interests.

Nelson's study contributes to the understanding of the state, of nationalism and of sovereignty in a number of ways that resonate with



Naveeda Khan's framework. In demonstrating the political dynamics of power behind the emergence of transnational ideas that reject the territorialisation of Islam in Pakistan, Nelson demonstrates how the state's claim to standing above society and thus being the legitimate manager of religion is ultimately undermined by visions of the Muslim *ummah* as an alternative to the territorial state. Ironically, this vision is the product of the struggle for power over that very territorial state, highlighting the tension between the experience of the state as artificial and illegitimate as a regulator of religion on the one hand and its *imagined* character as a unitary self-contained entity that *does* stand for the nation and Islam.

Furthermore, Nelson's student groups and their visions not only highlight the multiplicity of political visions in Pakistan but also the role of shifting international regimes of power in shaping domestic ideological debates. This is an issue that Toor also highlights when pointing to how the international liberal Cold-War consensus against communism influenced the domestic debates on visions for Pakistan's future. Similarly, Kamran Asdar Ali examines the circulation of ideas about the Pakistani nation beyond the borders of the 'sovereign' state. He shows how intellectuals in the early years after independence "sought to define the legitimate boundaries of Pakistan's sovereignty within the contexts of both Islamic history and an emerging Cold War order" (Iqtidar and Gilmartin 2011: 497).

4. Conclusion

Crisis has been ever-present in Pakistan's history and has accordingly been studied in all its aspects and manifestations. The main concern has been and continues to be explaining why these crises exist and what can be done to change Pakistan's trajectory onto a more prosperous course. These are important concerns and must be taken seriously but must also not be allowed to obscure that which lies 'beyond crisis'. This does not merely mean taking a more optimistic approach and focusing on the good rather than the bad, or on the bright rather than the dark side of the story. The beyond is a place where the tensions and the crises they can potentially lead to are re-examined as the very frameworks within which "never-ending negotiations that sustain community" take place (Gilmartin 2010: 523). It is through tensions between the ideal and reality, between the nation and the subject in the everyday, that



collective life, social and political, is lived (See Ring 2006). By focusing on the operation of tensions it becomes possible to begin to unpack the oppositions that they are based on. The works reviewed here do exactly this and are contributing to a growing corpus of literature that off-sets the focus on Pakistan through tropes of crisis, by unpacking specifically the oppositions between the nation, as the ideal embodying the higher self, and the everyday, as lived individually and collectively. Crisis and tension are taken as the starting points of inquiry, and not as moments of failure that needs to be explicated.

Taking crisis as a moment of mediation, and understanding tension in general as structuring social interaction, opens up new avenues of inquiry into Pakistani life. The three tropes of crisis (crisis of state, nationalism and sovereignty) thus can be taken as entry points into questions about the construction of the self, the community and the nation in relation to each other as well as to the foreign and intimate Other. The crisis of the state opens up questions about the way that the state is experienced as artificial in the everyday and in discourse. The crisis of nationalism makes one ask about the alternative visions that bloom in such moments and the crisis sovereignty brings up questions about the fluidity and artificiality of Self-Other dichotomies pointing to the perpetual foreignness within. Furthermore, such a focus also takes into account the substance of these constructions and visions.

This trend in historiography of Pakistan reflects a larger trend in the field of scholarly inquiry: that is the increasing adoption of an interdisciplinarity of the kind that Bernard Cohn (1962) talked about in his essay "An Anthropologist among the Historians". In the case of Pakistan, a common concern with the still understudied relationship of the Self to the nation and the state has led to a conversation between historians, anthropologists and literary theorists as well as to a combining of methods. This has only enriched Pakistan as a subject of critical scholarly study.

Endnotes

- 1 Ian Talbot's newest publication on Pakistan was published in October 2012, shortly after the submission of this article: Pakistan: A New History. Columbia University Press.



- 2 A few examples of policy oriented publications are: National Intelligence Council, Dec. 2000. *Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue about the future with nongovernment experts, NIC 2000-02*. Washington Intelligence Council, pp. 64ff; Schaffer, T.C. 2004. *Pakistan's Future and U.S. Policy Options*. Washington: CSIS Press; Henderson, S. 2009. *Pakistan on the Brink: Implications for U.S. Policies*. Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Abbas, H. 2009. *Pakistan can Defy the Odds. How to Rescue a Failing State*. Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. Michigan: SPU; Paris, J. 2010. *Prospects for Pakistan*. London: Legatum Institute; Rashid, A. 2008. *Descent into Chaos. How the war against Islamic extremism is being lost in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia*. London: Allen Lane.
- 3 See Fuller, C. J. & Benei, V. eds. 2000. *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India*. New Delhi: Social Science Press; Hansen, T.B. & Stepputat, F. eds. 2001. *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- 4 As Iqtidar and Gilmartin argue: "The dominance that the idea of the state exercises in defining the terms of political debates and discussions goes hand in hand with a certain amount of inflexibility of vocabulary (fn. 7).
- 5 This report was written at the time when Ayub Khan was facing major popular opposition and was thus initially shelved but later it served as the basis for Z.A. Bhutto's cultural policy in the 1970s.
- 6 I have borrowed this term from Razak Khan's discussion of his paper *Minority Pasts: The Other Histories of a Muslim Locality* which he presented at the BGS MCS Workshop "On Reading and Writing about 'Muslim Cultures' of South Asia", July 2012, Berlin. Rather than using the term "counter-public" (Warner 1992) I prefer "cultural public" as it does not imply the *opposition* of two publics or an unequal relationship of power between them. The term "cultural public sphere" is established in the field of media research: "The concept of a cultural public sphere refers to the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective (aesthetic and emotional) modes of communication." McGuigan, J. 2005, *The Cultural Public Sphere. European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 8 (4), pp. 427-43.
- 7 For more on the contested construction of a narrative that would



serve the purposes of an official history for Muslim Pakistan see Jalal, A. 1994. Conjuring Paksitan. History as official imagining. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 8 (4), pp. 73-89 and Gilmartin, D. 1998. Partition, Pakistan and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative. *Journal of Asian Studies*, 57 (4), pp. 1068-1095.

- 8 Mian Iftikharuddin, a Muslim Leaguer with a socialist bent of mind and an active patron of the Left in Pakistan. He had joined the Indian National Congress in 1936 and in 1946 it for the Muslim League. Of course, he did not make himself popular in the Muslim League after independence due to his anti-feudal and pro-socialist standpoint, which led to his expulsion from the Muslim League in 1951 in the wake of which he founded his own Azad Pakistan Party (later integrated into the left-leaning Awami National Party). Importantly, Mian Iftikharuddin was the founder of the Progressive Papers Ltd which became a platform for (and provided much needed employment to) the intellectuals of the cultural left. Its publications included the popular English daily, *The Pakistan Times*, the Urdu daily, *Imroz*, and weekly, *Lail o Nihar*, all of which became forums for anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and leftist views. Their popularity and significance is evidenced by the fact that when General Ayub took over in 1959, the *PT* and sister *PPL* publications were the first newspapers to be brought under state control.
- 9 In examining the debates, Toor and Asdar Ali focus on the intellectuals of the All Pakistan Progressive Writers Association (AP-PWA) such as Sajjad Zaheer, Ahmad Naddem Qasmi and Urdu newspapers such as the *Pakistan Times* and literary magazines such as the *Savera*, *Naqush*, *Sang-i-Meel* and *Adab-i Latif*, on the one hand, and writers like Muhammad Hassan Askari, Samad Shaheen, M.D. Taseer, and N.M. Rashid, on the other hand. Many of the latter were affiliated or at least aligned with the literary group *Halqa Arbab-e-Zauq* that stood for the principle of art-for-art's-sake and in general followed a more nationalist line.
- 10 Toor is careful not to assume any conscious complicity between the establishment and the liberal nationalist intellectuals, but in view of their anti-communist fervor that was clearly in the interest of the state she does not hesitate to term them as "organic intellectuals of the ruling class" (Toor 2011: 58). The margin-



- alisation of leftist intellectual and political organisations finally culminated in the 1951 Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case and the ultimate banning in of the Communist party in 1954.
- 11 The term qaum only came to be used as an equivalent for the modern English term 'nation' during the anti-colonial nationalist movement in the late 19th and early 20th century. Prior to that, it had a wide range of connotations. See Bayly, C.A. 1998. *Origins of Nationality in South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
 - 12 Kamran Asdar Ali elaborates the sources saying that the Imroz article complete reference is not available and that the letters of which he speaks were translated and published in Ali, Anwer. *Communist Party*, pp. 311-320. Ali also uses CID internal documents in which at least one part of the correspondence is reproduced.
 - 13 To contextualise the Qasmi-Zaheer debate it is important to mention that Qasmi was secretary general of the PWA when it adopted its 1949 manifesto that aligned the Association more closely to the Party and began purging 'non-progressive' writers and intellectuals from its midst.
 - 14 An earlier version of the chapter is published as an article in Naveeda Khan (2010) and is entitled "Jama'at-e-Islami Pakistan: Learning from the Left".

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