

(ANTI)SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE PRODUCTION OF AN (UN)CIVIL SOCIETY IN PAKISTAN*

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ABSTRACT. Pakistan is home to some of the most widely admired examples of civil-society-based service-delivery and advocacy groups. Pakistan has also spawned some much-maligned nongovernmental actors with violent agendas. This article uses the social capital / civil society conceptual lens to view the modes of (anti)social capital mobilization that contribute to the civil and uncivil spaces of Pakistani society. The case examples of Jamaat-e-Islami, an Islamic revivalist organization, and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan are used to understand the geography of social and antisocial forces in Pakistan. It is argued that the processes that mobilize social capital—whether positive or perverse—are multiscalar and that, in the Pakistani context, no compelling cultural or religious reason exists for the ascendance of one type of social capital over the other. Positive social capital can be mobilized to contribute to a more civil social discourse in Pakistan, given the right policy choices. *Keywords:* civil society, human rights, Islamic revivalism, Pakistan, social capital.

Pakistan is home to some of the most widely admired and emulated examples of nongovernmental-sector-based service-delivery and advocacy groups, such as the Orangi Pilot Project, the Edhi Foundation, and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (Ghafoor 1987; UNDP 2000).¹ Yet the same society that has generated such positive civil-society activism, including legal aid to abused women, free ambulance services, and much else, is also home to a multiplicity of very visible nongovernmental actors espousing religious extremism and violence:² some religious seminaries from which the Taliban movement in Afghanistan emerged, Hizbul Mujahideen, and many others supporting violent activities around the world (Zaman 1998; Rashid 2000).³ These groups challenge some of the fondly held notions by development practitioners about the desirability of the nongovernmental sector taking the lead in the delivery of education, health care, and environmental management services, among others, and playing an advocacy role for human rights, women's rights, environmental justice, and other socially desirable goals (Farrington and Bebbington 1993; GOP 1993; Vetter 1995). This article uses the social-capital/civil-society-based literature as a conceptual lens through which to examine the relative strength, impact, and interplay of democratic and/or developmentalist forces, and antidemocratic and/or violent forces in Pakistani society. Two nongovernmental organizations/movements—Jamaat-e-Islami, an Islamic revivalist organization, and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan—serve as examples to investigate the process of (anti)social capital mobilization in Pakistan.

The literature on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements is often linked to the twin concepts of social capital and civil society. "Social capital"

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