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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Student politics has been pivotal to the public visibility of political forces in Pakistan, and a mass communication tool for many mainstream and fringe social movements. Its promise for recruitment and injection of fresh entrants into politics has been a hallmark contribution to the weak political parties and unstable democratic system. It has also provided cases of resource building for individuals and groups outside the domain of traditional sources of political power based on kinship, caste and creed. The political Islamist movements were especially the key beneficiaries with connivance of the martial law regimes to capitalize upon opportunities of the cold war and a proxy war between Soviet Russia and the USA. The rise of campus violence and subsequent ban on student unions, however, broke the link between student organizations and their outside the campus mentors. Now that the lifting on ban on student union is in discussion and principally declared by the government, the student politics faces a huge challenge of justifying its existence not only due to its violent past and the changing political and ideological contexts but because of visible shifts in academic environment and growth of education sector, societal changes, access to new technologies having advances in political communication and the ever-expanding incentives for alternative sources of resource building and activism within the campuses.

After its strong presence in the struggle for independence and other national movements, student politics over time fell prey to a militarist discourse and was blamed for diluting primary mandate of campuses – the quality education.

The nexus of campus-political forces has drastically bettered now. In the current times, there have been socio-political changes and shifts in higher education sector in the recent history of the country that would compel the student politics to revisit its historical course. These are (i) drastic increase of female students, (ii) emerging private universities and higher competition for career placement, (iv) more universities and lesser polarization of students on identity and class divisions, (iii) greater urbanization and media exposure,

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and (iv) the end of cold war and weakening of ideological affiliations.

One highlighted factor is the number of female students in campuses. It is envisaged that with enabling environment in representative structures of the universities a great reservoir for peacebuilding and women leadership development is in the making and can be capitalized for peaceful youth action in Pakistan.

*STUDENT POLITICS: HISTORICAL CASE OF PAKISTAN*

The student politics can be understood through its four milestone movements and the changes that have occurred in between. These are:

- i. The Pakistan movement
- ii. The uprising of 1968-69
- iii. The Afghan war, and
- iv. The movement against imposition of emergency by President General Musharraf.

The history of student politics is informed by the fact that the student organizations have largely extended aspirations of the political parties and remained dependent on these outside campus forces for their operations.

Adventurism of progressive student movement eventually evaporated over time and the political Islamists radicalized the politics to an extent that they have become out of touch with the contemporary ordinary students.

*STUDENT POLITICS: ANALYTICAL CASE OF PAKISTAN*

Key changes in the following structures have occurred for the student politics:

- i. The Political Context
- ii. The Academic Environment
- iii. Legacy of the Ideologies and cold war

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- iv. The Societal Settings
- v. Resources and Motivation

It is argued that student politics has flourished in absence of effective networks of political parties and under pressure from totalitarian regimes. The international trends also support this contention. This political factor remains relatively same as the past. However the national and international support for consolidating democracy in Pakistan has definitely increased.

It is the academic environment that has phenomenally changed since 1947. These changes can be summarized as :the growth and mushrooming of the universities, the privatization of social services like the education under the Structural Adjustment Programme and the emergence of private institutions, greater autonomy of the institutions, higher competition in job placement, rise in fee structure, changes in examination structures, geographic dispersion of universities, demographic change in youth population, open political communication, female bulge in the universities, higher education reforms and the heavy investment on higher education in Pakistan.

Student politics and its greater allies outside the campuses have yet to realize and adjust to the extent of all these changes in the academic sphere and it may be possible that an unprecedented transition towards independent student politics may occur. We may observe the incubation of campus-based activism that affects the larger society, rather than always emanating from political society to the campuses.

Moreover, contemporary students have ceased to solely depend upon holistic and totalitarian ideologies to motivate their activism; rather a new tendency for issue-based action has emerged.

Growing living standards, education, urbanization and industrialization and changes in demography can also have modernizing effects to provide new social foundations for the participation to student politics in Pakistan.

Student politics has been a traditional source of providing resources to the ordinary students for greater social mobility and personal and

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professional development. However, there are now various other forms of associational training and incentives, which offer the students alternative structures for resource building and opportunities for upward social mobility.

### *TESTIMONIES ON STUDENT POLITICS*

The present study also contains interviews of 24 past and a few contemporary student activists alongwith one famed journalist commenting upon his student times. The aim is not just to give historical accounts on student politics but to reflect upon the nature of times. The emphasis is upon actual practice of student politics rather than the avowed rhetoric used to entice students then. These interviews can sometimes be confessional. They may also make room for reconciliation among practitioners coming from different ideological strands of the student politics.

Each interviewee has been selected on individual merit, the courage to be open and candid, willingness to question the past, a strong sense of reflection and flexibility to self-criticism. They provide unique information in each example. We hear about intolerance and narrowness of political colleagues, transformation from violent past to peaceful and independent activism, aerial firing by a female student leader, Afghan war, children's political party, success of a third non-aligned force, writer-leaders, founding of a campus-based independent group, unimagined election victory, confessions of extracting booty, staunch agitators, challenging the hegemony, social roots of authoritarianism, inception of private institutions by the student leaders, the influx of funding coming from Afghan jihad, high achievers in student politics and many other anecdotes, testimonies, eye-witness accounts and experience-based analysis that would peep through working of inner circles of student activists and their mentors outside the campuses.

Enough material has also been produced in a series of interviews that would build in-depth case study of once an enterprising student organization, the Nationalist Students Organization (NSO), and its eventual demise.

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*MATRIX ON CHRONOLOGY OF STUDENT POLITICS IN PAKISTAN*

A two-part comprehensive and detailed matrix has also been exclusively compiled by the study to minutely record happenings of the student politics in Pakistan. This matrix produces two chronologies of events presenting perspectives of the progressive student movements and the IJT independently.

*CONCLUSION*

The present study suggests that given diverse factors and changing variables the need to institute representative forums within the governance structures of the universities cannot be set aside. All stakeholders – students, student organizations, political parties, researchers, civil society practitioners and public interest leaders, university administrators, education planners, policy makers and the government functionaries - will have to carefully view the fundamental transition in student politics and also benefit from a developmental perspective, whereby student politics is part of emerging governance issues pertaining to the universities and education administration. An inclusive regulatory mechanism for the student politics would do for transparent and accountable university system, not just the restrictive government orders.