Police & Law Enforcement Reform in Pakistan:

Crucial for Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Success

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Introduction

It is a globally recognized fact that a state's police and law enforcement agencies play a critical role as the first line of defense against the threats of terrorism and insurgencies. An informative RAND study titled *How Terrorist Groups End* provides evidence that effective police and intelligence work, rather than the use of military force, deliver better counterterrorism results.² Based on this conclusion, the report suggested to U.S. policymakers that they stop using the phrase "war on terrorism," because there is no battlefield solution to defeating terrorists. Another valuable study analyzing the police role in counterinsurgency campaigns in Malaya and Cyprus concluded that nearly all major twentieth-century counterinsurgency campaigns relied heavily on indigenous police as well as military forces.³

Both studies are very relevant to the terrorism and insurgency crisis faced by Pakistan today.⁴ Many security experts rightfully contend that both Pakistan and Afghanistan are facing a growing Taliban insurgency in the Pak-Afghan tribal belt – some even call it a *Pashtun* insurgency.⁵ According to Kelev I. Sepp's *Best Practices in Counterinsurgency*, which closely studied seventeen insurgencies, the role of the police is always central to any successful counterinsurgency measures.⁶ His recommended measures for insurgency hit areas emphasize "police in the lead" with the military providing backup support and strengthening the police with diversified training capabilities to help meet the security needs of the at-risk population.

Since 9/11 and the consequent US/NATO military action in Afghanistan, Pakistan's troubled northwestern frontier has come under increasing pressure from militant and terrorist organizations operating in the area. Pakistan's deficient and flawed law enforcement capacity in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the adjacent North West Frontier Province (NWFP) have helped Pakistani Taliban and other terrorist groups expand their influence and strongly challenge the state's writ. Outgunned and outfinanced, on average 400 police officers have been killed every year in terrorist attacks since 2005. Controversial and haphazard Pakistani military action in the area has led to more instability, and limited resistance in FATA has now become a growing ethnic insurgency. As is clear from the turmoil in the NWFP's Swat district, any army action can provide no more than a breathing space to the state; only police and law enforcement actions can help the state reestablish its writ and stabilize the area. A timely police action can be more effective in quelling emergent insurgencies. My research into the 2007 Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) crisis in Islamabad, where a strong military operation led to hundreds of deaths and dozens of retaliatory suicide attacks, also indicates that: (a) an effective police action in time (2004-05) could have avoided the later bloody clash and (b) the police lacked authority and the permission of the state

and its important institutions to legally pursue the rebel clerics in the mosque (during the 2004-07 timeframe).8

The police infrastructure is one of Pakistan's most poorly managed organizations. It is aptly described as ill-equipped, poorly trained, deeply politicized, and chronically corrupt. It has performed well in certain operations; overall, however, that is a rare phenomenon. Arguably, the primary reason for this state of affairs is the government's persistent failure to invest in law enforcement reform and modernization. It is ironic that despite frequent internal crises since its inception in 1947, ranging

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Evidently, from 2002-2008, only the thinest slice of US funds for Pakistan went to policing.



from ethnic confrontations and sectarian battles to a sharp rise in criminal activity and growing insurgencies, both political and military policymakers have never given this sector top priority. Hence, poor police performance in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency is not surprising. The fact that the police successfully challenged some militant religious groups in Punjab and tackled an insurgency-like situation in Karachi in the late 1990s shows that they do have the potential to deliver the desired results when political support is present and resources are provided. Clearly, better policing standards and performance will add to the government's credibility and establish its writ more effectively in areas that are currently slipping out of its hands. Learning lessons from what transpired in the NWFP in recent years especially in order to plan for any preemptive law enforcement actions in South Punjab, where banned local militant groups like Sipah-e-Sahaba and Jaish-e-Mohammad are resurgent, is the need of the hour.

Historically, US support for Pakistan has always been skewed in favor of country's defense needs – heavy guns, tanks, officers' training and fighter aircrafts, etc. It made some sense given the nature of external threats and regional instability – ranging from Soviet expansionist designs to Indian hegemonic tendencies – but now its all together a different ball game. The internal threat to Pakistan today from extremists is more severe than anything Pakistan has witnessed in 60 years of its existence (perhaps with the exception of civil war in East Pakistan 1969-1971, now Bangladesh). Bush administration as well as Musharraf regime failed to understand what this really meant – through there was no shortage of rhetoric on the subject. Evidently, from 2002-2008, only the thinnest slice of US funds for Pakistan went to policing. More specifically, in 2007 for instance, the US allocated \$731 million to help the country's military and only \$4.9 million for its police. In

This policy paper makes the case for international support for police reform in Pakistan to enhance its law enforcement and counterinsurgency capacities. The Obama administration's proposed \$1.5 billion annual aid package for Pakistan for the next five years must also include sufficient resources for this sector. To build schools and hospitals, create jobs and spur economic development, security environment in Pakistan has to improve significantly. Police and civilian law enforcement agencies are the most appropriate institutions to spearhead that effort countrywide. Rule of law besides

requiring an effective criminal justice system and independent judiciary also needs a competent law enforcement infrastructure. If U.S. funds will make all that happen, it will correspondingly lead to its better image in Pakistan. Democratic institutions in turn will also benefit as their dependence on military for internal law and order duties will lessen.

I briefly look at the major problems faced by the police to analyze the dynamics influencing its overall performance, draw some lessons from a few effective counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations and finally make recommendations for police reform and modernization.

WHAT HINDERS EFFECTIVE POLICING IN PAKISTAN

HISTORICAL FACTORS: OUTDATED POLICE LAW

Groomed as an imperial force tasked with coercing (rather than protecting) citizens in the aftermath of the 1857 uprising against the British, Pakistan inherited a police infrastructure founded on the

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Police Act of 1861. This framework provided for an authoritarian, unaccountable, and oppressive police force. A mere glance at its provisions shows that it is out of touch with the requirements of a modern and democratic state. Pakistan followed these laws until 2002, when a new reform-oriented police order was finally promulgated; however, frequent amending has damaged the new order's original intent and spirit. Over a sixty-year period, around two dozen commissioned reports on police reform were produced, but it was very rare for any of their recommendations to be implemented. Interestingly, India still uses the 1861 Police Act in many areas amid demands for change and reform.

POLICE ACT 2002

Halfhearted Implementation: Prepared by leading police officials and legal experts under Musharraf's National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB), the Police Act of 2002 emulated the Japanese National Safety Commission system, to ensure oversight of police by both elected and nominated members at local

(district), provincial and national levels. Secondly, an independent prosecution service was provided for to place additional checks on the police. Police complaints authorities at the provincial and federal levels were also planned for. However, police was given relative operational autonomy in administrative as well as investigative spheres which was long overdue. Various responsibilities and tasks (ranging from investigations, intelligence, watch and ward, and guard duties) were divided among separate police departments to improve efficiency of the system. However, bureaucratic as well as political hurdles came in the way and President Musharraf and his political allies introduced many amendments in the Police Act in 2004 taking away powers of the neutral and independent safety commissions (in the sphere of recommending promotions and transfers) and awarding these

back to politicians providing them immense relief.¹⁷ A police officer in Islamabad aptly explains the consequences of such developments by saying that: "Most police officers feel that, in order to secure their career prospects, they have no choice but to do the bidding of their political masters."¹⁸



POLITICAL MANIPULATION

Since Pakistan's early days, its political and military rulers have used the police to suppress dissent and marginalize opposition politicians. Policing standards further deteriorated in the 1990s, when many senior police officials became known for their affiliations with one of the two major political parties (viz., the Pakistan Peoples Party and the Muslim League) and their transfers and promotions became dependent upon political changes in the country (or the provinces). In the most recent case, within hours of the removal of Mr. Shahbaz Sharif as chief minister of Punjab on February 25, 2009, due to a controversial court judgment, the top layer of the police leadership in Punjab was relieved of its duties and officers close to Mr. Salman Taseer, the governor of Punjab, were appointed hurriedly. During this massive police overhaul, a major terrorist act occurred in Lahore against the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team. Although a few junior police officials died saving the cricketers, a dozen or so terrorists escaped unscathed, thereby exposing police incompetence and confusion. When Shahbaz Sharif was reinstated as CM in late March 2009 through reversal of the earlier court decision, he also reversed all the transfers in the police department made by the governor (benefitting many competent police officers in this case).

STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

The primary law and order responsibilities in Pakistan's four provinces are vested in their provincial governments. In the realm of criminal law and procedure, however, both central (federal) and provincial legislatures can make laws (central law takes precedence over provincial law). The capital police (Islamabad) and the four provincial police forces act largely independent of each other. The senior command positions are filled from the ranks of the Police Service of Pakistan (PSP) cadre, a central career service organization that can station officers in any part of the country. A disconnect between senior police leadership and junior officers (who belong to provincial police services) has developed over time as officers who rise through ranks seldom get senior command positions. Critics contend that the PSP is an elitist group that has been superimposed on the police structure and often resists change. In addition, there is no standardized system of hiring, transferring, and promoting in the four provincial police departments, which creates various disparities.

THE THANA CULTURE AND THE DISREGARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Police conduct toward ordinary citizens is aptly illustrated in the *thana* culture, the local Urdu term used for a police station, for it signifies the abuses committed during interrogations in police cells, police corruption, and the above-the-law status of the powerful and influential segments of society.²⁰ Newspapers are frequently filled with stories of police high-handedness and faked "encounters" (extra-judicial killings) that eliminate "undesirable" elements.²¹ The phenomenon of unlawful search, seizure, and arrest is also quite widespread.²² This arrogant attitude, which is rapidly becoming the norm, has transformed the police's image from one of providing safety to one that creates fear and insecurity among the public. Another view is that the high crime rate has motivated an ill-equipped police force to resort to killing as an easier way to get rid of criminals than undertaking the arduous task of prosecution and sentencing. ²³

INADEQUATE TRAINING AND INVESTIGATION FACILITIES

The police often use torture to elicit confessions because they lack other, more sophisticated means of investigation. For instance, Pakistan's forensics capabilities are rudimentary. Until the late 1990s, the country had only one major laboratory (located in Rawalpindi) with a handful of experts. In the last few years, four additional laboratories have been established (one in each provincial capital). Even though this is a significant improvement, they still cannot meet the demand. Surprisingly, due to the economic crisis and budgetary limitations, the new government recently decided

to discontinue funding for the envisioned National Forensic Science Agency (NFSA) headquarters and its main laboratory in Islamabad.²⁴ A new police academy in Islamabad for PSP officers became operational in 2005-06, while all provinces maintain and run their separate training schools for the junior ranks.²⁵ It is instructive to look at the conditions in one of these training schools in Punjab. In the Manawan Police Training School, where 800 recruits are currently undergoing a four-month course in basic training, there are no beds or heating arrangements, only twelve toilets, and no provisions for showers. Even worse, no medical facilities are available and, according to a media report, 30 percent of the recruits routinely miss their training schedules due to illness.26 This is the same training centre that has been attacked by terrorists on March 29, 2009 leading to killing of dozens of police recruits.



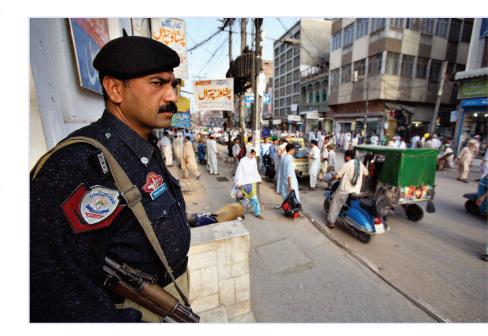
The police often use torture to elicit confessions because they lack other, more sophisticated means of investigation.



LACK OF FUNDS AND CORRUPTION

According to Transparency International's "Global Corruption Barometer 2007," the police are the most corrupt public sector agency in Pakistan.²⁷ It has only 350,000 police for a population of around 172 million, a ratio of 1:477. In the prevailing circumstances, the police frequently perform guard and VIP duties for an increasing number of foreign dignitaries, politicians, and officials, tasks that only further diminish its overall capacity.²⁸ Earning around \$100 per month, low-ranking

officers can hardly make ends meet. In my recent interview with a chief of police in an important and major Punjabi city, the officer stated that around a quarter of his force is directly involved in crime – a claim substantiated by his arrest of many police officials under his command.²⁹ Acknowledging the obvious linkage between very low salaries and corruption, Punjab's law minister of government recently commented that his government would raise the salaries to make them more lucrative and declared that "once handsome salaries are provided, there will be zero tolerance for corruption!"30



Reasons for Police Failure in Pursuing Terrorist and Militant Organizations

- 1. A lack of coordination between police, the civilian-run Intelligence Bureau, and the military-run intelligence agencies (e.g., Inter-Services Intelligence, Military Intelligence, etc). The lack of trust between civil and military agencies also plays a negative role. Even today, to get data from telephone companies (and trace calls made by criminals and terrorists), the police and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) have to request intelligence agencies and, at times, such delays waste crucial time.
- 2. A poor data collection capability as regards crimes and criminals. Many criminals who joined militant religious groups are not traced and tracked efficiently. Even banned militant organizations are not well profiled.³¹ In many instances, such organizations continue their publications and, in some cases, wanted criminals and terrorists simply change their affiliations to those groups that are not under government scrutiny. All the while, the police remain clueless. The police are also handicapped as many militant groups were producing "freedom fighters" for Kashmir and Afghanistan in the 1990s and had working relations with elements in the intelligences services. Hence, many police officials were reluctant to go after them, thinking that they might be held accountable for "harassing" an intelligence agency's assets.³² According to Asif Akhtar Shah, Deputy Inspector General of Police in Mardan (NWFP), his force "lacks the technical expertise, training or equipment to hunt down big-name terrorists or even identify would-be suicide bombers."³³
- 3. In July 2003 the Special Investigations Group (SIG), under the FIA, was created to interrogate terrorists, identify and arrest the most wanted terrorists, detect terrorist financing, and coordinate with the provincial government in investigating major terrorist incidents Its strength, however, is surprisingly low and insufficient: thirty-seven investigators supported by thirteen experts led by a Deputy Inspector General of Police.³⁴ Media reports indicate that the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was expected to train SIG officials on "how-to-locate weapons of mass destruction, take post-blast action, trace terror financing, investigate money-laundering, combat corruption within law

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- enforcing agencies, manage crises and improve techniques for fingerprinting and interviewing."³⁵ Since 2003, on average, only four to five FIA and police officials have visited America every year for short FBI training courses. In other words, such collaboration and cooperation has been quite limited so far.³⁶
- 4. No special security measures or rewards are provided to police officials, investigators, and lower court judges involved in pursuing counterterrorism cases. Consequently, a few of them have been assassinated in targeted killings, which further demoralizes the police and discourages their anti-terrorism efforts. Moreover, the police are increasingly victims of terror attacks, especially in the NWFP, Islamabad, Lahore, and Quetta.³⁷
- 5. The NWFP's police were not provided with adequate resources, despite their persistent requests in 2006-07, when it was apparent to all and sundry that Pakistani Taliban were focused on expanding their influence in the various districts (especially Hangu, Kohat, D.I., Khan and, most importantly, Swat). The Swat case is even more troubling, for according to Mr. Bangash, the district police chief, around 700 out of a total of 1,737 policemen deserted when Swat's Maulana Fazlullah told the local police to give up their jobs or face the Taliban's wrath.³⁸ Neither the provincial nor the federal government offered any countermeasures in terms of special incentives. In the NWFP, the figures speak for themselves: the province's 55,000-member police force (manning 217 police stations) in reality means one police station for every 133 square miles of some of the world's most dangerous terrain.³⁹ In January 2009, the US embassy in Islamabad announced its plan to provide \$4.1 million worth of police equipment to NWFP including troop carriers, motorcycles, ballistic helmets, and bullet proof vests - a bit belated but positive initiative. 40 Earlier, in June 2008, US Consulate in Peshawar had provided some office equipment to the NWFP police as a goodwell gesture.
- 6. Militant groups offer higher incentives to their potential recruits than do the police officers fighting terrorism. For instance, the former pay more than \$20,000 to the families of "successful" suicide bombers; the government gives \$6,000 to a policeman's family if he is killed during a terrorist attack.⁴¹

Lessons from Successful Police Operations

In Pakistan's recent history, two police operations stand out as especially effective: the operation ▲against some militant elements associated with the Muttihada Qaumi Movement (MQM) in Karachi in the mid-1990s, and the anti-sectarian operations in Punjab (largely against Sipah-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi) in 1997-99. The following factors played a crucial role in these successes⁴²:

- 1. **Leadership**. The Karachi operations (1994-96) were led by Shoaib Suddle (currently head of the Intelligence Bureau), and the Lahore/Punjab operations were spearheaded by Tariq Pervez (who till recently was Director General of the FIA). Both of these senior police officers are highly respected for their professionalism, competence, and integrity. Their motivational leadership played a very important role.
- 2. **Political Support.** In both cases, the political leadership (viz., the Benazir Bhutto government in the Karachi operations and the Nawaz Sharif government in the Punjab operations) fully supported the police action. In hindsight, this also led to some human rights violations (especially in the Karachi operation), as officers involved assumed that they were, in the interest of the state, above the law.
- 3. were offered to the officials involved – especially in motivated PSP officers were transferred en bloc.
- Financial Incentives. Special financial packages the Karachi operations, where newly graduated and
- 4. Extra Resources. In both cases, team leaders were provided with extra non-auditable resources for gathering intelligence information and investigations.

National Highways and Motorway Police is another success story. It's a distinct federal traffic police force that has used international standards and has been highly appreciated by public at large for its



National Highways and Motorway Police is another success story.



efficiency, consumer-friendliness and integrity.⁴³ According to an Asian Development Bank report, following factors aided its positive image and success⁴⁴:

- Top level political commitment,
- Effective leadership,
- Better wages and conducive work environment, and
- Emphasis on equality before law 'if you are driving over the speed limit, you will get a ticket irrespective of who you are'.

The Government of Pakistan has recently announced creation of National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) to be developed as a focal institution for coordinating counter terrorism efforts. ⁴⁵ It will also assist the state in developing an effective counterterrorism strategy. The importance of this development can be gauged from the fact that President As if Ali Zardari chose to mention this initiative in his address to the joint session of the parliament on March 28, 2009 where he informed the legislators that government plans to recruit an elite force of 80,000 (20,000 in each province) for NACTA with the help of foreign funding. ⁴⁶⁵ Zardari specifically mentioned that the force will

be provided with "special equipment and special pay package".⁴⁷ Apparently lessons have been learnt in terms of what has worked before but the real question is whether requisite funds will be available soon and if this institution will be genuinely empowered by all the major pillars of the state to take up the gigantic task. Selection of recently retired inspector general of police, Tariq Pervez to organize and lead this institution is an impressive beginning.

Among the country's paramilitary forces, Pakistan Rangers (deployed in Punjab and Sindh provinces under seperate commands) has performed reasonably well in comparison to Frontier Corps NWFP, and Frontier Corps Baluchistan. These forces are often called upon to support police for tackling law and order



situations as well in addition to their routine border duties. All of these forces are led by senior serving army officers. The training facilities and service conditions provided to these forces are better than police. Better coordination and working relationship between police and paramilitary forces is also highly desirable for effective counter-terrorism efforts, and especially better border controls.⁴⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

- 1. The Police Order of 2002 should be implemented in letter and spirit, and the controversial amendments made in and around 2004 should be discarded to reorganize the police into an efficient, professional, and politically neutral force. Most importantly, police safety commissions (already provided for under the new law) should be empowered to monitor police performance.⁴⁹
- 2. Increased salaries and better service conditions are a must for overall improvement in policing standards. As shown by the better performance of National Highways and Motorway Police (NH &MP), incentives make a significant difference in output.
- **3.** A separate force for VIP security, on the pattern of U.S. Secret Service, will lessen the burden on regular police work.⁵⁰
- 4. The Citizens-Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) in Karachi, a nonpolitical statutory institution that was the brainchild of Justice (ret.) Fakhruddin G. Ibrahim, should be followed as a model across Pakistan. Its website, www.cplc.org.pk, amply explains its utility and value for facilitating community policing. Developing public trust is considered critical for reducing crime and sustaining any reform agenda.
- 5. Islamabad's National Police Bureau (www.npb.gov.pk) should be upgraded to a resourceful think tank for ideas and research for improving counterterrorism and the police's counterinsurgency capacity. Its valuable work in developing the 2008 anti-terrorism manual is a case in point.⁵¹
- 6. For effective counterinsurgency measures in the NWFP, Pakistan's police can benefit from a modern policing model, namely, "intelligence led policing." In this method, the police interface with the civilian population to gain intelligence to head off criminal (and terrorist) events. This requires more undercover work than other policing models and the establishment of informant networks. The Local police force (with the same ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background) is best suited to develop such networks in insurgency-infected regions. Better coordination between the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the police also can pay dividends in this context. As done by the current political government, IB leadership should always be given to career police officers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE U.S.

- 1. At the least, half of all U.S. funds allocated for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency support in Pakistan should be given to the police and other civilian law enforcement agencies and be closely monitored.
- 2. There should be strong oversight and accountability of the disbursed funds and all the four provinces of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir (which for all practical purposes is country's fifth province) should receive equal importance in the allocation of funds through a transparent process.
- 3. The FBI should be encouraged to develop partnerships with Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in scientific investigations, forensic capabilities and fighting cybercrime as well as with Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and nascent NACTA. For this to happen, U.S. must also reform its internal workings in this sphere. The U.S. departments of Defense, Justice, State, and Homeland Security, as well as the USAID, all have police training and assistance programs that operate independently and without coordination.⁵³
- 4. Specialized counterinsurgency training for selected junior and middle-ranking police officers in reputed international law enforcement training institutions is highly recommended. This can also lead to the creation of a new component of the police force trained to move in and control the regained territory in the NWFP/FATA.
- 5. Push for more regional cooperation for fighting crime in South Asia. There also needs to be better coordination between the US and EU efforts in supporting Pakistan's law enforcement capacity building.
- **6.** Emphasize adherence to international human rights norms as a condition of continued support for police reform in Pakistan.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Most of this policy brief's contents were presented at the "Mastering Counterinsurgency: Pakistan and the US" seminar organized by the *Brookings Institution* on March 10-11, 2009. The author greatly benefitted from the feedback of the U.S. and Pakistani officials and scholars attending the event and is especially thankful to Dr. Stephen P. Cohen of Brookings for his guidance. An earlier version of this article is being released as part of *Brookings*' conference report in April 2009.
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- 3 James S. Corum, "Training Indigenous Forces in Counterinsurgency: A Tale of Two Insurgencies" (Strategic Studies Institute: March 2006). Available at: www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB648.pdf.
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- 13 For an overall assessment of old law and new challenges, see, Mushtaq Ahmed Sukhera, Syed Mubashir Raza, Huma Chughtai, Muhammad Aslam Tareen, and Syed Tassaduq Hussain Bokhari, "Police Reforms: Emerging Issues and Challenges," Syndicate Research Paper, 84, Advanced Course in Public Sector Management, *National Institute of Public Administration* (Lahore: December 2003).
- 14 These included the Police Commission headed by Mr. Justice J. B. Constantine (1961-62), the Police Commission led by Maj. General A. O. Mitha (1968-70), the one-man committee of Mr. G. Ahmed (1972), the Foreign Experts Committee composed of Romanian police experts (1976), the Police Reforms Committee chaired by Mr. Rafi Raza (1976), the Police Committee headed by Mr. Aslam Hayat (1985), and, finally, the Police Reforms Implementation Committee under M. A. K. Chaudhry (1990). Not one of the major recommendations put forward by these committees was put in place until 2002. For further details, see "Feudal Forces: Democratic Nations: Police Accountability in Commonwealth South Asia," Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (2007). Available at: www.humanrightsinitiative.org/publications/police/feudal_forces_democratic_nations police acctability in cw south asia.pdf.
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