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The Social Sciences in India and South Asia

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1. General Trends

The post-war period has witnessed a moderate growth in the number of universities, specialized research institutions, private bodies, governmental and non-governmental organizations conducting Social Science Research (SSR) in South Asia. However social sciences' expansion has followed a different trajectory in the various countries in the region. There are sharp differences in both the nature of the social science institutional structures and the pace at which they have grown. This variation can be explained by a number of factors, ranging from the size of the country, the historical context of both the colonial and post-colonial eras shaping the emergence and development of these countries, the nature of their political regimes and difference in their other socio-economic-religious and cultural factors.

In 1947 there were only a little over 20 universities in South Asia and India being the largest had 18 universities (plus two in Pakistan, and two in Ceylon / Sri Lanka). In 1953, India's Planning Commission set up a Research Programmes Committee to specifically establish schemes for carrying out research pertaining to social, economic and administrative problems relating to national development. This was the first attempt to incorporate social research into policy formulation. In 1969, the Committee eventually established the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to promote academic research into the social sciences.

Over the last 40 years, the ICSSR has played an important role in promoting social science research, particularly up to the 1980s. The ICSSR established 27 public-funded regional institutes of social science research, in order to facilitate research on socio-economic issues in the different regions of India. A large number of these studies helped highlight the prevailing wide disparities in socio-economic and political conditions in Indian society. The setting up of these regional institutes was a pioneering effort in the development of Indian social science research.

Since their creation, panels of experts have evaluated the ICSSR regional institutes' overall performance four times: 1973, 1978, 1986 and 2007.[1] These reports reflect social sciences' status in India. In the context of the changing scenario while the developing countries adapt to new economic systems, the reports identify the problems that social sciences face and also offer remedial suggestions. However, the problem is to induce decision-making bodies to incorporate these suggestions. Experience has shown that most of the recommendations remain on paper. On the other hand, an independent assessment of social science research is still to be implemented in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Until the 1980s, the central Indian government and public institutions were the most important sources of funding for social science research. These were: the ICSSR, University Grants Commission (UGC), government departments and Planning Commission and the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (or CAPART, created in 1986 to promote and coordinate the emerging partnership between voluntary organizations, NGOs and the government for sustainable development of rural areas).[2]

As far as the role of the state is concerned, India – a secular democracy – offers researchers fertile ground for intellectual activity and autonomy. Under military rule for most of its existence, Pakistan does not encourage free discussion of controversial and contentious social issues. As Niaz (2008) observes:

> …although Pakistan is not a hard ideological state like North Korea or Libya, its attempts to patronise and project certain pseudo-scientific and pseudo-religious views in the national discourse on society, history and the role of government, have greatly added to the confusion. Confronted by siege-mentality that prevails, social scientists in Pakistan have long given up efforts to either understand or constructively change reality

[1] The review committee's evaluation report is based on the research output in terms of publications, seminars and conferences organized, scholars' participation in regional, national and international conferences, and the infrastructure facilities and research environment provided.

[2] CAPART is a major promoter of rural development and assists over 12,000 voluntary organizations across the country in implementing a wide range of development activities.

Social scientists in Pakistan have not been involved in researching and understanding the dynamics of their society. Most research on these issues is produced by foreigners or Pakistani abroad, and is removed from the ever-changing complexities of social reality.[3] In Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, social science research is dominated by international organizations and donor agencies. Government sources have only weakly supported funding and foreign funding bodies finance the bulk of social science research.

Since the mid-1990s, the role of NGOs, private trusts and foreign bodies in funding social science research has also increased in India. This predominance of foreign funding in the South Asian region has provided social science research with a new dimension, as it is now linked to these bodies' interests. International funding comes primarily from UN agencies, international lending institutions, foreign public agencies and non-governmental foundations. This funding favours studies on poverty, employment, education and health.

Despite the increasing numbers of publications (Gupta 2008), there is a wide knowledge gap between India and the smaller countries in the region. With its large pool of intellectual capital, institutional structures and governmental support of social sciences, India has produced empirical knowledge that has contributed to a better understanding of Indian society and culture. The bulk of the research on the region's other countries is not done by local scholars, nor in local institutions. It comes from universities abroad and is published in foreign journals. There are hardly any local journals of repute. As most of the research is sponsored by international funding bodies, the research findings are seldom available in the public domain.

There are serious concerns about the quality of the research at South Asian universities. In Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, social scientists merely teach and do not undertake any research. The situation is slightly different in India, as reflected by Indian social scientists' increasing number of published articles and by the extent of completed PhDs. However, there are strong dissimilarities across Indian universities when it comes to research: only about 20% of some 400 universities produce research.

There is widespread fear that the quality of social science teaching and research is declining. The 2007 ICSSR Report (p. 20) observes that "While the scale and range of social science research in the country have been expanding, the nature, scope and quality of research output, as well as its contribution to a better understanding of socioeconomic processes and shaping public policy is widely perceived to have fallen short of expectations and also not commensurate with the resources spent on them."

Various eminent scholars have also expressed their concerns about the deteriorating state of social science research in India in a number of articles in the *Economic and Political Weekly* and social science journals. India has a tradition of eminent Indian intellectuals offering public judgments on the state of social science research. Such judgements can help improve the quality of research, provided their voices find an echo in the country's political debates.

Apart from a few centres of excellence, the social sciences are not regarded as having high social value and relevance in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. With the exception of economics, wages in the other disciplines are relatively low. The demand for higher education in disciplines like history and political science is declining throughout the region, due to their limited career opportunities. Sociology, a relatively new discipline compared to the others, offers better opportunities thanks to NGO-sponsored research.

[3] Our understanding of social science research in Pakistan is based on the writings of their leading scholars like Inayatullah et al. (2005), Haque (2007), and Niaz (2008).

2. Actors and Agencies in Social Sciences

India

In comparison to the 18 universities in India at the time of independence in 1947, there are currently 190 universities with more than 500 social science departments (tables 1 and 2). Between 2005 and 2006, 45.13% of the total of 11.028 million students in India enrolled in institutions of higher learning were studying arts and social sciences. If we add those studying commerce and education, the share reaches 64.60%. The total faculty strength was 4.88 million working at the 400 universities and their 18,000 affiliated colleges. Approximately half this number taught at arts and social science faculties. A somewhat similar trend is visible in the proportion of social science doctorates, who accounted for 42% of the total of 17,989 new doctorates in 2005-06. Again, if we include commerce and education doctorates, the percentages increases to 50%.[4]

Initially, universities were the main centres of research and played a key role in exploring a wide range of social, political, cultural and developmental issues with a critical perspective. Although the number of university social science departments are now manifold, they are unable to carry out the range of research activities required to generate reliable data on developmental issues. This is because university departments are primarily devoted to teaching, which leaves little time and few resources to carry out research. Broadly, there are four types of institutions that conduct social science research in India.

Table1: Types of Social Science Research Institutes in South Asia

Country	Universities with social science departments	Research institutes set up by government departments	Autonomous research institutions	No. of private foundations/ institutions	Total
India	190	67	154 (27*+127**)	6	417(79%)
Pakistan	15	9	8	8	40 (8%)
Sri Lanka	10	8	2	15	35 (6%)
Bangladesh	5	7	15	10	37 (7%)
Total	220	91	179	39	529

Note: a) Only research-based institutions are presented in the table; b) * indicates ICSSR institutes; and c) ** indicates other institutions.

a) Social science departments at universities and post-graduate colleges under universities.

Table 2 below shows the different categories of social science institutions specialized in different social science sub-disciplines. The ICSSR Report 2007 identified 72 specialized universities with more than 500 social science departments carrying out social science research. In addition to these, there are 17 agricultural universities, 62 management institutes and 32 institutes of engineering and technology.

[4] In India, business management and commerce are not included in the arts and social sciences, although psychology is. The data are from the University Grants Commission, India, *Annual Report 2005-06*, http://www.ugc.ac.in/pub/index.html#annual (website accessed 12 May 2009).

Table 2: Categories and Scope of Social Science Research Institutions in India

	Universities	ICSSR institutes	Government	Others	Total
General/Specialized	72	27	2	38	139
Agriculture/development	17		37	9	63
Minorities (SCs, STs)				14	14
Population				4	4
Education & Manpower			3	2	5
Health & related subjects				9	9
Women				15	15
Urban			2	3	5
Finance				6	6
Labour			1	3	4
History				7	7
Environment	1			1	2
Foreign Trade			1	1	2
International Relations			1	6	7
Management/Admn.	62		13		75
Law	6				6
Engineering & Technology	32				32
Others			6	16	22
Total	190	27	67	133	417

Source: ICSSR Report 2007

b) Research institutes set up by government departments.

Different ministries have established a number of research institutes at both the central and state levels, including the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Institutes for Rural and Urban Development. According to the 2007 ICSSR Report, these number 67 and undertake sector-specific research. Their primary objective is to generate data to help policy-makers. Some also carry out research and training programmes for personnel involved in the decision-making process at the governmental level. Of these institutions, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) deserves special mention. It was primarily set up to develop technologies and to coordinate agricultural research and development programmes to increase the farming community's productivity and enhance their quality of life. ICAR acts as a repository of information and provides consultancy on agriculture, horticulture, resource management, animal sciences, agricultural engineering, fisheries, agricultural extension, agricultural education, home science and agricultural communication.

ICAR has been instrumental in setting up several agricultural universities and research centres in the country, which have all contributed immensely to the development of human resources in the

agricultural sciences. In addition, ICAR is actively engaged in setting up Krishi Vigyan Kendras (agricultural science centres), of which there are currently 415. These centres are responsible for training, research and the demonstration of improved technologies.

c) Government-funded, but legally autonomous, specialized research institutes. As the 2007 ICSSR Report points out, there are no authenticated data on the number of autonomous institutions. The ICSSR has established 27 such institutions but this number must be much higher.

d) Research units set up by private consultancy firms and NGOs.
No data are available on the number of NGOs, agencies and consultancy firms doing social science research. There is, however, a large and growing number.

Pakistan.

Until the early 1980s, social science research was not a state priority in Pakistan. The authorities did not recognize the relevance of disciplines like history, political science, sociology and philosophy, which they regarded as unproductive and without a direct impact on society (unlike engineering, medicine and natural sciences). Economics was accorded a relatively higher status, since the government tried to foster rapid economic growth. There are, nonetheless, different actors undertaking social science research in Pakistan today.

a) Social science departments at universities

At the time of independence, Pakistan had just one centre of higher education: the University of Punjab at Lahore. At first, only history, economics, political science and philosophy were taught. From the 1950s on, universities were progressively established, and today there are 18 that offer social sciences courses.

The development of social sciences in the country is related to the American influence on Pakistan and to its political proximity to the US during the Cold War. Disciplines such as public administration (1950s), sociology, social work, applied psychology (1960s), anthropology, area studies, strategic studies (1970s), peace and conflict studies, and women studies (1990s) were established with American assistance. The role of universities has been mainly confined to teaching and they have not contributed to social science research in Pakistan. Anis Alam (2007) comments on various observers who "have noted that, despite impressive growth in the numbers of teachers and institutions, the state of social science in Pakistan is very unsatisfactory. Hardly any significant research has emerged from these institutions despite a large number of theses churned out by post-graduates."

b) **Autonomous research institutes funded by government and non-government sources**: Autonomous institutes have made some substantial contribution to social science knowledge. Some of these institutes are:

Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE): established with the cooperation of Ford Foundation in Karachi in 1957, its aim is primarily to carry out theoretical and empirical research in development economics and demography in Pakistan.

Applied Economics Research Centre (AERC): established in 1973 at the University of Karachi with financial support from Ford Foundation and the Provincial Government of Sindh, AERC carries out research on issues related to applied economics, agriculture, human resource development and public finance.

Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, Islamabad (PARC): PARC is the main national research organization in agriculture. Its main objective is to strengthen Pakistan's agricultural research system at both the federal and provincial levels. Social sciences are included in the various levels' teaching and research programmes.

Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad (SDPI): This institute conducts policy-oriented research and advocacy from a broad multi-disciplinary perspective and promotes the implementation of policies, programmes, laws and regulations based on sustainable development.

The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS): Established in 1982, the IRS is considered one of Pakistan's leading think-tanks. Its research focuses on regional and inner affairs, economy and industry, science and technology, socio-cultural and security-related issues. It thus provides in-depth understanding and objective analyses of regional and global issues.

Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI): Founded in 1999, the IPRI analyzes national and international politico-strategic issues and developments.

Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies: This research organization was created on the initiative of leading Pakistani scholars, researchers and journalists. It conducts wide-ranging research and analyses of political, social and religious conflicts that have a bearing on both national and international security.

c) **Research units and institutes set up or funded by private agencies, foundations and NGOs**: There are hundreds of private organizations doing social science research in Pakistan and their number is growing. However, doubts have been cast on the value of many of these NGOs' research.

The Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre is an important think-tank and policy research institute based in Islamabad. It presents annual reports on human resource development in South Asia for policy-makers and academics. Unlike in India, where the ICSSR has evaluated and promoted social sciences since 1969, a council of social sciences was not established in Pakistan until 2000. Previous attempts by the Centre of Social Sciences and Humanities (COSH) in the 1990s failed, as social scientists did not support a state-dependent council. The Council of Social Sciences (COSS) was established as an independent professional body and already plays a role in the development and growth of social science research in Pakistan. Social science research also benefited from the appointment of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), which replaced the University Grants Commission in 2001, and from the Collective for Social Science Research, a small private organization – also founded in 2001 – with a small core staff of innovative researchers in the social sciences.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh came into existence as a nation state in 1971, after attaining independence from Pakistan. The major actors conducting social science research here are:

a) Social science departments at universities: The University Grants Commission (UGC) was established in 1973 as the apex body of all of Bangladesh universities with the objective of coordinating university education, monitoring and maintaining the standards of university education, assessing the funding needs, and advising the government on various issues relating to universities. Six universities funded by the UGC undertake social science research.

b) Bangladesh Social Science Research Council: Realizing the importance of social sciences for an understanding of the prevailing socio-economic conditions, for shaping policies and evaluating them, Bangladesh established its Social Science Research Council (BSSRC) in 1976. It is an apex body responsible for promoting and developing social science research, and for coordinating the activities and programmes of the institutions doing social science research.

c) Autonomous institutions set up by the government: The following are some of the important autonomous institutions:

The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS): BIDS is a multi-disciplinary organization which conducts policy-oriented research on development issues. It is mandated to function as an agency for undertaking and promoting study, research and the dissemination of knowledge in the field of development economics, demography, and other social sciences related to national development and social welfare planning. The aim is to collect information and generate data, conduct investigations, and undertake research projects for the planning and formulating of policies, the implementing of plans and policies and to provide information and offer advice on modern research techniques and methodology in economics, demography, and other social sciences.

Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD): BARD is responsible for the training of governmental officials on rural development and for conducting research in the rural sector to evolve suitable models for rural development.

Other autonomous organizations doing social science research include the Institute of Management (1961), the Institute of International and Strategic Studies (1978), the Centre for Policy Dialogue (1993), the Centre for Social Science Research (1996), and the Rural Development Academy.

d) **Research units set up or funded by private agencies, foundations and NGOs**: Of the large number of NGOs doing social science research in Bangladesh, the following are worth mentioning: the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), CARITAS Development Institute (CDI), and the Institute for Development Policy Analysis and Advocacy.

Sri Lanka

Similar to Pakistan and Bangladesh, social science research failed to be a priority for the Sri Lankan government for a long time. The major social science actors include:

a) University Grants Commission (UGC): The UGC was established in 1978. Its primary functions are the planning and coordinating of higher education institutions. Nine Sri Lankan universities have social sciences departments funded by the UGC: Colombo, Peradeniya, Ruhuna, Kelaniya, Sri Jayawardenapura, Jaffna, Sabaragamuwa, the Moratuwa, Eastern University and the Open University of Sri Lanka. These universities are primarily teaching universities with very limited research output in terms of both quantity and quality.

b) **Government Agencies:** Among the state agencies doing social science research, there are: the Agricultural Research and Training Institute (ARTI), the Department of Census and Statistics, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the Centre for Development Information (CDI), the National Institute of Education, People's Bank, Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka and the National Science Foundation (NSF).

c) **Research units set up or funded by private agencies, foundations and NGOs**: the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), co-funded by the Netherlands and Sri Lanka, is one of the most significant autonomous institutions engaged in social science research. It is a think-tank working on various socio-economic and policy issues. Furthermore, since the 1970s and 1980s, Sri Lanka has witnessed the emergence of many NGOs undertaking some social science research (although there are no data available as to their number). A few important NGOs are: the American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies, the Asia Foundation, the Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Centre for Society and Religion, the Centre for Women's Research, the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, the Law and Trust Society, the Marga Institute, Women's Education and Research Centre, and the Social Scientists Association.

3. Structure and Mode of Knowledge Production

An important and noticeable trend with broad ramifications for social science research in South Asia and elsewhere, is the fact that the universities are gradually losing their monopoly of knowledge production. New actors and networks are emerging at both the local and global levels. These actors and networks complement the research carried out by universities, but also provide them with stiff competition by offering better opportunities and weaning social scientists away from the higher education system. This is the competition between Mode 1 and 2 of knowledge production, as defined by Gibbons et al. In a nutshell, Mode 1 refers to the 'traditional knowledge' generated within a specific disciplinary, cognitive, and academic context, while Mode 2 represents knowledge generated outside academic institutions in trans-disciplinary settings and collaborations, and turned towards the search for solutions to specific local or global problems.

In India, universities and public-funded research organizations remain significant producers of knowledge, as this is where the bulk of the social science research is undertaken. However, a large share of the research produced at Indian universities is of very low quality level. Hence, most PhDs completed at Indian universities cannot be published due to their poor quality. Only about 15% to 20% of the 400 universities have achieved an international standard in teaching and research. Jawaharlal Nehru University is one of the best known research-oriented universities, with a strong focus on the social sciences.

It is also important to look at the changes in the modes of knowledge production in a number of autonomous research institutions, established in different parts of the country with the hope that they would become centres of high quality research. The 2007 ICSSR report regards this as unlikely. Besides a few exceptions, it notes that the research programmes in these research institutions lack direction and focus, they are not developed over time, and the research results are of low quality.

There are, however, exceptions, and some research institutes manage to produce high quality research over time. They are usually engaged in international collaborations, sponsored by foreign funding bodies, and unite teams of researchers from many disciplines. The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi has, for instance, encouraged interdisciplinary and collaborative research and analysis. The faculty is comprized of scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds who often collaborate on various projects. As the Centre grants scholars total autonomy to determine their area and mode of research, a number of projects that the faculty members have undertaken, involve interaction with other Indian and foreign scholars.

Similarly, the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences (CSSS) in Calcutta, the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) in Trivandrum and the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) are increasingly undertaking research projects funded by foreign bodies such as state departments, NGOs, the World Bank, ILO, UNESCO and UNDP. Most of these research projects concern development themes and generate quantitative data that are useful for policy-makers.

Recognizing the importance of collaborative research in the globalized world, the ICSSR has instituted several international collaborations and joint research programmes to promote research collaborations. Most of these international collaborative research projects pertain to Mode 2 knowledge production.

International collaborative programmes instituted by the ICSSR include cultural exchange programmes and international collaborations with foreign organizations. The cultural exchange programmes usually involve scholar exchanges, joint seminars, joint research projects and joint publications. These activities are just a modest beginning and have to date yielded only limited results in terms of collaborative research at the international level.

Furthermore, the ICSSR initiated long-term collaborations with a number of international agencies and institutions, and has become a member of international federations and councils. The Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development (IDPAD) – set up in 1981 in collaboration with the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO) – is regarded as the most

successful of all in terms of exchanges, collaborations and publications.[5] The programme emerged from the need to explore 'alternatives in development', and has presided over important research on industrialization, dairy development, recent trends in ecology and development, women's participation, rural transformation in Asia, structural adjustment and poverty in India, economic order, and state and society for 25 years. Another successful collaboration is the South Asia Network of Economic Research (SANEI). SANEI was created in 1998 as a collaborative regional network of South Asian economic research institutes. Its goal is to create social science knowledge relevant for development policy.

International collaboration, which is already the exception rather than the rule in India, is very rare in other South Asian countries. In Pakistan, the state's long disinterest thwarted the establishment of strong bases for social sciences research (Niaz, 2008). Many observers regret the poor quality of the research there (Inayatullah et al., 2005; Haque, 2007). However, the social sciences only appeared in Pakistani universities in the early 1980s.

The establishment of the Council of Social Sciences (COSS) can be regarded as an important milestone in the development and growth of social science research in Pakistan. Since its emergence, COSS has provided a platform on which social scientists from diverse disciplines can interact with one another and adopt interdisciplinary approaches to understand Pakistani society's socio-cultural problems. COSS has produced a number of publications, including books, articles, as well as bulletins, that provide important information about social science developments in Pakistan. In addition, COSS has developed contacts with a number of international and regional organizations such as UNESCO, Action Aid, the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and the American Social Science Research Council (SSRC). COSS is also a founding member of the South Asian Sociological Society (SASS).

The Collective for Social Science Research, a small private organization was established in 2001 with a small core staff of innovative researchers in the social sciences to carry out high quality and innovative research in a number of areas. These areas of interest include economics, education, development policy, gender studies, health, labour, migration, poverty and urban governance. The Collective collaborates with a number of local and international academic organizations, the Pakistani government and international development organizations to conduct this research. It has completed a number of research projects and has produced high quality academic research papers and reports on social, political and economic issues and policies.

A similar situation is prevalent in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka – countries in which the social sciences were not a priority for many years.

From an overall perspective, there is a relative stagnation in the Mode 1 knowledge production in academic-based university settings in the South Asian region, and a slow growth in Mode 2 knowledge production. Over the last decade, the bulk of social science research, focussing on poverty and development, has been carried out by either foreign bodies or at British and American universities. This raises the issue of the extent to which the knowledge thus produced meets local needs rather than the sponsoring body's R&D interests.

4 Social Science R&D Policies

Social science R&D funding in South Asia is quite marginal compared to that for the science and technology fields. In India, social science R&D funding is a mere 8% of that of science and technology in recent years. The 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2012) is committed to increasing the education budget by four times that of the 10th Plan, but it is still too early to assess the effects of this commitment on social science research.

While the Department of Science and Technology (DST) disposed of 5,720 million rupees for R&D projects in 2005-06, the ICSSR total budget per year works out around 410 million rupees for social science research.[6] Social science research is also relatively absent from the numerous reports and recommendations by the advisory National Knowledge Commission of India. A cursory look into this Commission's reports and recommendations shows a strong predilection for science and technology, as the only social sciences mentioned are management and education. Between 1999 and 2004 there was a relative stagnation in the ICSSR's number of fellowships: senior fellowships granted to faculties stagnated and doctoral fellowships increased only marginally. The total number of fellowships also remained very low: only 50 senior, 59 post-doctoral, 262 full-time and 402 part-time PhD fellowships were granted.[7]

The status of social sciences in other countries of the South Asian region is even worse than in India.

5. Social Science Research Funding

In the 60 years since India's independence, science and technology institutions in India have acquired global recognition, with some comparable with the very best in the world. On the other hand, Indian social science institutions are struggling to make a mark although a number of Indian social scientists have achieved eminence in the international social science community. Among other factors, this anomaly can be partially explained by the enormous differences in state funding in the two types of institutions. Whereas science and technology (S&T) institutions are funded by a number of state ministries and departments, social science research is exclusively funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development through the ICSSR. Although 74,440 million rupees were allocated for research and development in S&T in India in 2005-06, only 8% of that sum was allocated to the social sciences.

Nearly half of the total social science research budget is spent on collecting, processing and publishing the basic socio-economic data that researchers and policy-makers use. Approximately 1,320 million rupees are allocated to specialized research institutions set up by different government departments (ICSSR 2007, p. 13). An amount of 1,750 million rupees is allocated as grants to non-government research institutions.

The ICSSR allocates regular maintenance and development grants to all the research institutes, irrespective of their research output. The ICSSR's permanent administrative staff has increased significantly over the last two decades and a substantial percentage of the budget is allocated to running research institutes. However, the share of the budget allocated to research and fellowships is decreasing. Over the last two decades, between the 7th (1984-89) and 10th Plans (2002-2007), the share of ICSSR funds dedicated to running its institutes rose from 73% to 81%, while that to fund research and fellowships declined from 13% to 8%.

Among the government sources of funding, we should also mention the role of the University Grant Commission. UGC funds the Centres of Advanced Studies and the Special Assistance Programmes at various universities, and offers individual researchers fellowships and scholarships. Owing to the increase in its funds in the 11th Plan, UGC recently decided to offer all PhD candidates a scholarship.

Government and public agencies are no longer the primary source of social science research funding. Since the early 1990s, various private foundations and trusts have started to fund research projects and programmes in social sciences. Beside the Tata and Birla Trusts, and the Ford Foundation, which funded social science research in the past, corporate firms have established new foundations,

[6] The DST figure is taken from R&D statistics issued by the DST in 2007. The figure for the ICSSR is given as 2045.9 million rupees in the 10th Plan in the ICSSR Report 2007, p. 167.

[7] The University Grants Commission also offers PhD and post-doctoral fellowships, which are not taken into consideration here.

such as the Infosys Foundation, the Premji Foundation, the Observer Research Foundation, and the New India Foundation, to do likewise.

All South Asian countries have witnessed an increased flow of funds from international bodies like the World Bank, the Ford Foundation, the Asian Development Bank, the European Union and private agencies, foundations and NGOs. International funding has proven very lucrative for both local research institutions and individual researchers. Research institutions and universities are thus becoming increasingly dependent on such projects, as domestic funds are inadequate to meet the infrastructure requirements and growing costs of conducting research. This is gradually impacting the autonomy of the research agenda, which obviously reflects the donors' interests.

The 2007 ICSSR report addresses this issue in India, and proposes a drastic increase in the public funds allocated to social science research. It notably recommends a tenfold increase in its budget (to 4 billion rupees).

6. Themes in Social Science Research in South Asia

From the 1960s to the early 1970s, the Delhi School of Economics (DSE) and the Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS) were centres of active research on economics. Eminent names, such as V.K.R.V. Rao, Jagdish Bhagwati, Sukhamoy Chakravarty, Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri, K.L. Krishna, Dharma Kumar, A.L. Nagar, K. Naqvi, K.N. Raj, Tapan Raychaudhuri, Amartya Sen, Manmohan Singh, Arjun Sengupta and S. Sivasubramonian are associated with them. One could even include Montek Singh Alhuwalia, as he graduated from DSE and along with others, like Dr Manmohan Singh, played an important part in academia as well as in policies to foster liberal economics, which continue to this day. And one should not omit the Bombay and Calcutta groups, particularly Mahanalobis, who played a significant role in the Planning Commission and India's 2nd Plan. This "golden era" of Indian economics vanished when many of these academics left the country in the 1980s.

During the late 1970s and the 1980s, two important currents developed among left-inclined economists and historians of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and in the Calcutta-based institutions. Whilst Prabhat Patnaik, Utsa Patnaik, Deepak Nayyar, Amit Bhaduri, G. Bhalla and G.K. Chadha, among others, published influential economic writings from a left-wing perspective, the JNU historians may be credited with having developed Marxist approaches to studying Indian history. The most prominent of them are: Romila Thapar, Bipin Chandra, Harbans Mukhia, and K.N. Panniker. One can include Irfan Habib and his collaborators from the Aligarh Muslim University in the JNU group. They created a school that is still very active to this day.

In sociology, there were three prominent groups in the period up before the 1990s. The first group emerged during the 1960s and 1970s and is known as the Lucknow school. It includes scholars such as Radhakamal Mukherjee, D.P. Mukherjee, D.N. Majumdar, and S.C. Dube. Mainly located at Lucknow University, the group developed critical perspectives on the sociology of development and planning. Nevertheless, the interest generated by the early proponents vanished relatively rapidly. The second group consisted of scholars like M.N. Srinivas, Louis Dumont, Jit Singh Uberoi, T.N. Madan, Andre Beteille, Veena Das, who were active at the Delhi School of Economics. They are known for their critical and psychological approaches to the sociology of science. The third group was located at JNU. Represented by Yogendra Singh, T.K. Oomen, Deepankar Gupta and Partha Mukherjee, the group published studies on modernization, social structure, social movements and social change during the 1980s and 1990s.

Over the last two decades, knowledge of different aspects of South Asia's underdeveloped region has grown at an unprecedented rate. This is reflected in the explosion in the number of publications, reports and databanks created by various organizations (Gupta 2009). Development has remained a constant theme in a number of Indian universities and research institutions' research. However, in the last two decades, the development issue has acquired a new dimension in the context of

globalization's impact on society.[8] Globalization and development with a focus on social aspects (particularly education and health)[9] constitute a research thrust area in a number of research organizations like the Institute of Economic Growth (New Delhi), the Centre for Development Studies (Trivandrum), the Madras Institute of Development Studies, and the Centre for Policy Research (New Delhi). Since the trickle-down theory of globalization and liberalization has failed and has – as is evident from a number of studies – instead reinforced the existing patterns of inequality and injustice, India's government focus has shifted from 'development' to 'development with a human face'. A discourse on 'inclusive development' has emerged as an important theme of social science research.[10]

Development has resulted in huge challenges like slums in urban areas due to the rapid migration of labour from rural areas to cities, displacement of people and their dispossession from the land. Besides displacement and migration, problems relating to demands on natural resources like land, water and forest resources have come into sharp focus in the last decade. These issues are driving millions of poor people towards dire poverty.

Consequently, solutions are sought that will ensure sustainable, just and equitable development. Sustainable development, environmental degradation and related health and gender issues have thus emerged as new areas of social science research and analysis for a number of activists, NGOs and research organizations.[11] Anil Agarwal's pioneering work at the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) drew attention to environmental and developmental issues. Indian universities, R&D institutions and nongovernmental organizations have undertaken a large number of research projects on the environment.[12] The Ministry of Environment and Forests is also engaged in promoting environmental research. Although industrial development and its related concerns constitute an important area of research, agriculture and rural development remains a very serious matter for both researchers and policy-makers.[13]

In India, castes have always been a central category in social science discourses on, among others, economic, political and social inequalities. Numerous empirical studies in sociology suggest that there are strong correlations between social, educational and economic backwardness and membership of certain lower castes. The issue of reservation for these historically disadvantageous castes in higher educational institutions and government jobs at the central and state levels has lead to major upheavals and unrest between the pro and anti-reservation movements over the last decade.[14]

Women studies are another thrust research area, especially in sociology, and a large number of universities, research institutes and NGOs are engaged in research on the empowerment of women, gender relations, gender inequality, the role of women in participatory democracy, etc.[15] In the last two decades, the leaders and governments of South Asian countries, particularly India, have time and again reiterated the need to develop knowledge-based economies and create knowledge societies by investing in human resource development.[16]

With the emergence of cultural studies, a specifically Indian school, known as *subaltern studies*, developed. Represented by post-colonial and social historians Ranajit Guha, Shahid Amin, Amitav Ghosh, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Partha Charrerjee, subaltern studies contested the strong elitist bias that characterized the writing of modern Indian history, and provided an alternative framework.[17]

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[8] See Chadha (1994), Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen (1996), and Nayyar (1996).
[9] See Dreze and Sen (2005).
[10] See Chopra and Gulati (2001), Mahendra Dev (2006) and Majumdar (2007).
[11] Baviskar (2004), Banerjee and Marjit (2005), Kundu (1993), Vasudevean (2001), Majumdar (2007), Bina Agarwal (1994), and Baru (1998).
[12] Guha (1989), and Shiva (2006).
[13] Kalpagram and Arunachalam (2008).
[14] Gupta, (2004), Pai (2002), and Bhattacharya et al. (2009).
[15] Beena Agarwal (1994), and Ghadially (2007)
[16] See the publications of India's National Knowledge Commission: http://www.knowledgecommission.gov.in/
[17] Ludden (2001) and Vinayak Chaturved (2000)

In contrast to India, Pakistan has had a weak social science tradition, thus resulting in its universities producing very little significant research in this field (e.g., Zaman, 2008, Haque, 2007, Inayatullah et al., 2005). The state's Islamic ideology has impacted the research content, perspectives and research methodology. Most of the research work carried out by historians tends to glorify the two-nation theory, and refers to the Pakistan founder Jinnah, the Muslim league and Islamic studies rather than to social and cultural history. Since Islamic views are easily recognized by the authorities, researchers tend to toe this line. Rubina Saigol (2005) notes that an "overwhelming ideological orientation of teachers across the disciplinary spectrum revolves around religious and nationalist thinking…..so deeply rooted are the teachers and students in the hegemonic version of state and society that even the social sciences, which are tasked to produce alternative visions, fail to do so."

During the reign of General Musharraf, who was regarded as relatively moderate and liberal, Pakistan witnessed more objective and critical academic discussions on socio-economic issues. This trend was reflected by the establishment of autonomous organizations like the Collective for Social Science Research and the Council of Social Sciences (COSS).

COSS, established in 2001 with a small core staff of innovative researchers, is a small private organization engaged in the production of academic social science research. Its areas of research interest include economics, education, development policy, gender studies, health, labour, migration, poverty and urban governance. For its research, COSS collaborates with a number of local and international academic organizations, the Pakistani government and international development organizations. It is recognized for its research in three main areas of applied social sciences: a) the recourse to political economic perspectives when dealing with macro and micro level topics; b) the attention to informal collective action and social networks; c) the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Since its inception, COSS has published about 90 reports and articles on the above-mentioned themes. Research projects of various sizes constitute its main activity. While most of the research projects are consulting assignments for development organizations or collaborative partnerships with local and international academic organizations, some are self-generated in pursuit of the Council's own research agenda.[18]

As a result of Pakistan's close ties with the USA, most of the country's social science research, particularly on economics, has been funded by the US and donors like the World Bank and the Ford Foundation. In the absence of a favourable environment for academic research, the research agenda is driven by the donor agencies' demands. Nadeem ul Haque writes: "Research and knowledge are not at a premium in our society, and academic economics in Pakistan has become an extension of donor consulting where there are no standards other than pleasing the lower echelons of donor and local bureaucracies. Often, these reports are contracted to retired official with little transparency and professional standards. A number of reports garnished with lots of irrelevant data and a lot of wishful thinking, but little serious economics, are put out by the donor; and the government every year. Much to my surprise, these reports are being taught in main places as 'Pakistan economics'."[19]

Immediately after the establishment of Bangladesh in 1971, the important research themes in public-funded universities were agrarian reforms, Bengali culture and Bengal nationalism. Owing to a number of factors and problems, the state has withdrawn from social science research and development. This has led to the proliferation of NGOs and international agencies sponsoring and undertaking development-related research programmes.

Development economics is an important area of research in Bangladesh.[20] Poverty, rural development, health issues and civil society groups' participation in developmental activities have emerged as important areas of research. The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies is engaged in a huge research programme on chronic poverty in Bangladesh. Its major research themes are a) trends

[18] http://www.researchcollective.org/index.php.
[19] *Daily Times* 29 December, 2008.
[20] See, for example, the journal *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, launched by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Dhaka; see also various BIDS reports such as http://www.bids-bd.org/prp/images/prpwp1.pdf.

in poverty and social indicators, b) women's health, c) financial services for the marginalized, d) environmental issues, and e) education. Social and economic development from below has become an important area of social science research since the success of the micro-credit Grameen Bank, which won the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize with its founder Muhammad Yunus.

In Sri Lanka, the social science research agenda is also determined by international funding bodies. There has been a phenomenal growth in NGOs working on poverty and developmental issues, which attracts social scientists as they are much more lucrative than universities and research organizations. Public sector institutes continue working on traditional themes like agrarian structure, social and economic infrastructure, health policy, gender issues, poverty alleviation, energy policy and government reforms.

As a result of the civil war between the state and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam, ethnic and conflict studies are an important theme of social science research in the country. The International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), established in 1982, is engaged in theoretical and empirical research on ethnicity, human rights and related social and political processes. NGOs, like the Social Scientists' Association, carry out research on issues pertaining to peace, democracy, pluralism, gender, equity, ethnic conflict resolution, social transformation, labour and human rights.

7. Status of Researchers and Career Paths

In the South Asian region as a whole, the social sciences occupy the lowest place in terms of status and career opportunities in the hierarchy of disciplines. The social sciences are not thought to be as productive and lucrative as marketing, business and administration. Traditionally, engineering and medicine attracted the best students, as these professions were at the top of the occupational hierarchy and offered the best career prospects. Currently, the best students are encouraged to acquire MBAs and computer science degrees (Vaidyanathan, 2008), as a plethora of career opportunities have emerged in sectors like communication, banking, leisure and entertainment, real estate, media and finances over the last two decades. In the region, disciplines like history and political science attract even less students than before due to their limited career opportunities. Economics remains by far the most popular and lucrative social science discipline in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The rapid growth in the number of NGOs has had a positive impact on the number of students in sociology.

In India, career opportunities for social scientists are very limited and many are unemployed - a situation which is only worse in the other countries in the region This is primarily due to the poor standard of university education in underdeveloped and backward Indian states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, etc. Quality is a major issue and there is a growing concern about the quality of PhDs in social sciences. Commenting on the state of social science research in India, the 2007 ICSSR Report notes: "While the scale and range of social science research in the country have been expanding, the nature, scope and quality of research output, as well as its contribution to a better understanding of socio-economic processes and shaping of public policy is widely perceived to have fallen short of expectations and also not commensurate with the resources spent on them."

Deficient capacities make finding appropriate jobs as researchers difficult for social scientists. The very high levels of unemployment in some regions only make things worse. Let us briefly explore some possible career paths for social scientists in India.

Teaching: Teaching at universities and colleges remains a popular profession for social scientists. In the metropolitan regions, however, teaching is not popular among young male social scientists because of the low wages and lack of prestige. The proportion of female social scientists pursuing teaching careers is much higher, particularly in urban areas. Women appreciate an opportunity to teach at colleges and universities as it can be combined with familial roles and responsibilities associated with women in South Asia.

Research: The number of social science research institutes in South Asia has grown phenomenally over the last two decades. These institutes undertake major research projects on various socio-economic and

political issues, and need research analysts, fellows and associates. Well-qualified social scientists often join these institutes.

Less than 20 per cent of Indian universities combine teaching and research. This low proportion limits the scope of research opportunities within universities.

State administrations: The different government levels also provide career options for social scientists in administrative services, planning commissions and various government ministries. There has been an increase in the demand for information and research on developmental issues.

Media: There has been a phenomenal growth in print and electronic media in recent years, particularly in India with its hundreds of regional language newspapers, news magazines and TV channels. Further, the international community's interest in South Asia is increasing tremendously due to the region's role in global politics. With major media organizations expanding their coverage of the South Asian region, individuals with a social science research background and good communication skills find ample career opportunities in the media and communication sector, either in the domestic or the international market.

International career paths: Talented and motivated graduates who have the possibility to go to foreign universities and pursue a research career in a foreign country often do so. They certainly find better prospects and a more lucrative and satisfying research environment abroad than at home. Brain drain is therefore a serious problem in India, hindering the development and improvement of social sciences in South Asia. About 100,000 Indian graduates go abroad each year (75,000 to the USA, 5,000 to the UK, 5,000 to Australia, 15,000 to other European countries). By all counts, only a small proportion of students return to India.

International and local NGOs: NGOs working for the improvement and development of the underprivileged strata have generated a good number of jobs for social scientists in South Asia. There is a fair number of NGO professionals in the region researching and managing projects on diverse social issues relating to poverty, education, women and child abuse, drug addiction, HIV, mental depressions, old age problems, environmental issues, etc.

8. Publication, Dissemination and Visibility of Research

Sources of data on and indicators of social science publications, dissemination and visibility in South Asia are scarce. Unlike India's Department of Science and Technology, which publishes statistics on science and technology every second or third year, the Indian Council of Social Science Research does not provide comparable regular national public data, nor do the social science councils in Bangladesh, Pakistan or Sri Lanka. However, two reports published in recent years provide at least some data on social science output in South Asia.

A decade ago, we explored the international visibility of South Asia in the Social Science Citation Index (see table 3). It was clear that India's pole position resulted from her large population. While India dominated in absolute terms, the country lagged behind Sri Lanka in relative terms (followed by Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal). As the American Social Science Research Council's 2002 report on social science research capacity in South Asia observed: "It appears that there was a steep fall in the number of articles from South Asia, attributable largely to the decrease in articles from India in the mid-1980s. The trend picked up again in the early 1990s, but there was a precipitous fall again in the one year between 1996 and 1997. Although it is difficult to draw conclusions from this single piece of evidence, the trends suggest that: 1) there had been a steady rise in research output in Pakistan until 1996; 2) the output in Bangladesh has remained steady; and 3) the output in India would appear to be related to the rise and fall in funding patterns and perhaps UGC policies concerning recruitment and promotions in universities."

Table 3: Articles with South Asian Addresses in Social Sciences Citation Index

Year	Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	Total
1981	38	699	4	13	14	768
1986	42	510	12	22	16	602
1991	35	660	14	27	18	753
1996	34	598	10	51	15	708
Per capita figures	0.261	0.699	0.040	0.351	0.789	

Source: SSRC Report 2002, p. 81. Per capita figures indicate the figures for 2000 divided by the populations in millions for the respective countries.

As far as India is concerned, the 2007 ICSSR report throws some light on the recent situation by surveying about 1,000 books from a selection of eight major academic publishers (including Sage, Oxford University Press, Orient Longman). As shown in Table 4, about 31 per cent of these books were written by economists, 30 per cent by sociologists, 23 per cent by political scientists, 10 per cent by historians and 5 per cent by geographers. About 33 per cent of all authors are non-resident Indians (NRI) and foreign scholars, 28 per cent work at an Indian university, and 20 per cent at a research institute.

Table 4: Disciplines and Institutional Affiliations of Authors of 998 Books on India

Discipline	ICSSR Institutes	Indian Universities	Other Institutes	NRIs and Foreigners	Independent Scholars	International Agencies	All
Economics	29	77	53	94	38	17	308
Sociology	19	96	41	101	43	4	304
Political Science	14	59	35	82	44		234
History	6	26	16	39	17	1	105
Geography	1	24	4	10	8		47
All	69	282	149	326	150	22	998

Source: ICSSR Report 2007

These data are based on a limited sample of books, but confirm the outcome that only a small proportion of institutions and universities in South Asia is active in social science research. A broader study of publications in social sciences between 1996 and 2007 confirms these results. A study by Gupta et al. (2009) shows that only 19 institutions and universities do social science research in India. They accounted for 3,860 papers or 28.39% of the publications by Indian social scientists. The average publication growth rate of these 19 institutions during the period was 62.77%.

Table 5: Publication Profile of Productive Social Science Institutions in India 1996-2007

Institution	Papers	Avg. Citation per paper	Papers 1996-97	Papers 2005-07 (growth 1997-06)
University of Delhi	779	0.68	149	248 (66.44%)
Indian Statistical Institute	478	1.46	117	141(20.51%)
IIT, New Delhi	409	130	56	195(248.21%)
Jawaharlal Nehru University	377	0.52	73	111(52.05%)
IIT, Kanpur	239	1.03	31	88(183,87%)
IIT, Kharagpur	216	1.27	47	73(55.32%)
IIT, Chennai	204	1.88	59	59 (0%)
IIT, Bombay	157	0.78	53	52(-1.89%)
Institute of Economic Growth	132	1.39	32	28(-12.50%)
Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad	119	1.21	33	27(-18.18%)
IIM, Bangalore	110	1.39	16	38(137.50%)
Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research	102	1.23	36	14(-61.11%)
IIM, Kolkata	98	1.16	22	35(59.09%)
Tata Institute of Social Sciences	96	0.70	19	29(52.63%)
IIT, Roorkee	81	1.58	2	54(2600%)
Institute of Social & Economic Change	75	0.64	16	26(62.50%)
National Institute of Science, Technology & Development Studies	68	1.72	15	13(-13.33%)
Centre for Policy Research	61	0.62	4	30(650%)
Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum	59	1.68	7	20(185.71%)

Source: Gupta et al. 2009

Let us compare India's performance with that of other countries from the so-called BRIC group (which include Brazil, Russia and China). Table 6 shows the growth of social science publications in India, China and Brazil between 1996 and 2007. While India lead the group in 1997, China rapidly caught up, and now ranks fourth in total production. India achieved a yearly growth rate of 10.9% during the period, but China and Brazil registered rates of 36.75% and 24.79% respectively. Brazil leads in impact factor through citations with 1.66, while India (0.82) surpasses China (0.52) (see Table 7).

Table 6: Publications Growth of China, Brazil and India 1996-2007

Year	**China**	**Brazil**	**India**
1996	606	212	706
1997	701	220	751
1998	847	281	808
1999	1184	296	904
2000	1200	432	992
2001	3023	366	1132
2002	1225	432	1188
2003	1731	456	1281
2004	2861	505	1223
2005	4619	655	1267
2006	5978	1417	1869
2007	5307	1200	1475

Source: Gupta et.al (2009)

Table 7: Global Publication Share and World Rank of Social Science Publications

Country	Total papers 1996-2007	Average Citation Per paper	World Share 1996-2007	World Share 1997	World Share 2002	World Share 2007	World Rank 1996-2007
China	29282	0.52	2.16	0.85	1.09	3.63	7
Brazil	6472	1.66	0.48	0.27	0.38	0.82	21
India	13596	0.52	1.00	0.91	1.05	1.01	13
Japan	21973	Na	1.62	1.73	1.60	1.47	9
South Korea	7895	Na	0.58	0.47	0.53	0.75	19
USA	395829	Na	29.17	36.17	31.16	24.71	1

Source: Gupta et. al (2009)

As shown in Table 7, India ranks 13th in the world ranking, while China and Brazil occupy the 7th and 21st positions. As this table further indicates, China's world share increased from 0.85% (1997) to 3.63% (2007), while India improved only marginally from 0.91% to 1.01%. Brazil has witnessed an impressive surge from 0.27% to 0.82%, over three time periods in a decade. While the USA remains the world's top publisher in social sciences, its world share has witnessed a steady decline from 36.17% in 1997 to 31.16% in 2002 to a further decline of 24.71% in 2007.

9. Knowledge and Decision-Making

Given the importance of economics in planning and finance and development policies, economists have – as elsewhere – assumed important positions in the bureaucracy and planning bodies in most South Asian countries.

The question of the relevance of social science research in South Asia has been a matter of concern for a long time. In developing countries with limited resources for research and development, the challenge is to produce synergies between high quality research and decision-making.

Social research's involvement in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation has had a long history in India: from the DSE's role in economic planning and policy, particularly in the late 1950s and 1960s, to the Planning Commission's Research Programmes Committee, established to produce schemes to carry out research on social, economic and administrative problems relating to national development. The establishment of the ICSSR in 1969 was meant to promote academic as well as applied social science research relevant to policy formulation. Over its 40-year existence, the ICSSR has sponsored a number of large scale research projects on the status of women (by Mazumdar and others), population and social change (by Mitra, Bose and others), rural poverty (by Srinivasa, Bardhan, Rudra and others), Kerala development, etc. All were quite influential in policy design at the central and state levels.[21]

When we consider the links between social sciences and policies in the South Asian region as a whole, and in India in particular, it is clear that economists have been the most influential social scientists. Interdisciplinary institutes like the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) and the Institute of Economic Growth (CSDS) are engaged in a blend of field-oriented empirical research and theorizations, leading to better-informed public policy formulation. Similarly, the databases and quantitative methodologies developed by economists in the *Economic and Political Weekly* and within the Monitoring Indian Economy group have lead to a considerable input in both government and state agencies' decision-making.

[21] This information and insights are from the SSRC Report 2002. It should, however, be pointed out that this reference to social sciences' relevance for decision-making is quite marginal given that 500 social science departments at various universities are engaged in research.

In Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and other countries in the region, there is far less policy-relevant research. Poor research traditions and inadequate research capacities are some of the causes. Commenting on the low impact of social science research in Pakistan, Niaz writes: "The state of Pakistan has paid dearly for its neglect of the social sciences. The cumulative impact of this neglect is felt in terms of the declining quality of the state apparatus. Without a vibrant rational tradition in the social sciences the theoretical perspectives and empirical research upon which sound domestic policy-making ought to rest is woefully inadequate." (*Dawn*, 21 June 2008). In Pakistan and elsewhere, capacity building in social science research is an essential task. This can only be accomplished by developing collaborations between academics, policy-makers, and the public.

On the whole, the impact of social science research on policy-making has been marginal in South Asia and those in power seldom consider social science studies when designing policies for poverty, sectarianism, communalism, terrorism, etc. Social scientists can influence decision-making processes if they are part of the state apparatus. Much of the research produced outside the confines of governmental structures plays no role in public policy and welfare. Policy-makers have an ambivalent attitude towards research findings, which may be critical of their decisions and plans. A number of highly learned and respected civil servants with a strong social sciences perspective were actively engaged in the decision-making process in the early decades of independent India. Once again, this is especially true of economists. Until recently, other fields and streams of social science research have been more or less outside the policy and decision-making ambit. During the last few years, however, certain sociologists and political scientists have developed arguments that have influenced policies relating to castes and ethnic minorities in employment and higher educational institutions.

Despite its limitations, research conducted by NGOs and international donor agencies in South Asia during the last few decades has brought a number of issues relating to poverty, gender, development, inequality, injustice and the plight of the marginalized sections of society in the region into focus. A number of policy initiatives have been instigated on the basis of these findings. Economic data generated by the World Bank, the Ford Foundation and UN agencies are often used to formulate developmental issue policies.

The Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Indian National Commission for Cooperation co-organized the Second Regional Forum of UNESCO's Programme for the Management of Social Transformation (MOST) in 2008. Ministers and representatives from Afghanistan, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan attended the meeting. The theme chosen for this regional dialogue was "Transparency, Right to Information (RTI) and Social Development", which was aimed at building and reinforcing the linkages between social science research and policy-making.

10. The Indian Social Science Crisis

Let us sum up some trends highlighted in the previous pages:

In 2005-2006, 45.13% of the 11 million students in India's higher education institutions were studying arts and social sciences. If we include commerce and education, the share reaches 64.60%. The total faculty strength in 2005-06 was 4.88 million working at some 400 universities and 18,000 affiliated colleges. Approximately half this number was employed in arts and social science faculties. A somewhat similar trend is evident in the proportion of social science doctorates, who account for 42% of the total of 17,989 new doctorates who graduated in all fields in 2005-06. Again if we include commerce and education, the proportion increases to 50%.[22]

[22] In India, business management and commerce are not included in the arts and social sciences, although psychology is. The data are from the University Grants Commission, India, *Annual Report 2005-06*, http://www.ugc.ac.in/pub/index.html#annual (Website accessed 12 May 2009).

In terms of research publications, India is the only South Asian country in the Scopus Database, ranking 13th of the top 26 social science producing countries. The USA and UK rank at the top, while China ranks 7th (with a world share of 2.1%) and Japan, 9th (at 1.62%). India had a world share of 1% between 1996 and 2007. This marks a relative stagnating or even declining trend compared to China, which published 606 papers compared to India's 706 in 1996. By 2007, China outpaced India twofold. The available data also reveal that only 19 institutions of higher learning, including universities, published 50 or more papers, which accounts for about 28.39% of the total publications during the period 1996 to 2007.[23]

Hence, it is rather surprising that, despite such a large student, faculty and institutional base in social sciences, only a small number of institutions made their presence felt at the international level through their research publications. This quantitative insight into the status of social science research can be interpreted in several ways, but it suggests that social sciences in India are characterized by a "sea of mediocrity with islands of excellence and visibility."[24] There is a double-bind institutional and intellectual crisis in the social sciences. As the ICSSR Report (2007: 20) observes: "While, the scale and range of social science research in the country have been expanding, the nature, scope and quality of research output, as well as its contribution to a better understanding of socioeconomic processes and shaping public policy is widely perceived to have fallen short of expectations and also not commensurate with the resources spent on them".[25]

An institutional and intellectual crisis

This double-bind crisis has three main features.

I) Since the creation of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and its 27 research institutes, there has been no major expansion of public research institutions for social science research. In recent years, many of these institutions have come under critical public scrutiny and evaluation. As Partha Chatterjee (2008: 39) notes: "Only half a dozen or so ICSSR institutes are today genuinely viable as research and training institutions in the advanced academic disciplines of the social sciences."

When we compare the situation with science and technology, we observe that high priority was given to creating front-ranking, excellent institutions in the areas of biotechnology, cellular and molecular biology, immunology, space research and advanced centres for nanotechnology and material sciences. The University Grants Commission awards funds for infrastructure and centres for advanced social science studies, but the extent of funding is limited and mostly confined to urban-based universities. In 2005-06, social sciences' budget was a mere 8% of the national science and technology research budget in India.[26] However, the 11th Plan substantially increased the funds for higher education and research. The extent of its impact on social science research will have to be assessed in future.

II) The second issue relates to the emergence of a rapidly growing private and business enterprise sector, which has created a new demand for social science research for business management, commerce, marketing, media and other fields. This has had a negative impact on the conventional social science fields. New actors like corporate bodies, industrial associations, NGOs, and private trusts have entered the research field to conduct specific goal and mission-oriented research. They provide social scientists with better research capacities and often wean the best of them away from the university system, thus contributing to an internal brain drain. In other words, Mode 1 knowledge production, which, according to Gibbons et al. (1994), can be defined as traditional knowledge generated within a disciplinary, cognitive, and primarily academic context, is threatened in India by its Mode 2 knowledge

[23] Much of these data are drawn from Gupta et al. (2009).
[24] Not much research is conducted in languages other than English and there is very little published work available in other languages, as there are hardly any journals of repute in non-English languages.
[25] The role of economists is an exception to this general view.
[26] The budget for social sciences in 2005 – as given by the Ministry of Finance Website and quoted in the ICSSR Report 2007 (p. 13) – was 6,000 million rupees. In the same period, the budget for R&D in science and technology was 74,440 million rupees as given in the Department of Science and Technology, R&D Statistics, 2007-08.

production . The latter is knowledge generated outside academic institutions in trans-disciplinary, collaborative settings oriented on problem-solving.

III) The third issue concerns the autonomy of social science research vis-à-vis political interferences. Major research projects and funding for politically loaded subjects such as religion, caste, ethnicity, etc., are subjected to political steering. At present, lead institutions such as the ICSSR are directly governed and administered by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. All key positions are appointed by the Ministry.[27]

Until the early 1980s, social science research in Pakistan was not a priority, and the state authorities did not recognize its importance and relevance (Inayatullah et al., 2005). This image may have changed for a few years, but today social sciences in Pakistan are in a perilous state. Even a known institute such as the Applied Economics Research Centre (AERC) has seen its reputation decrease in recent years. As the Social Science Research Council Report (see Partha Chatterjee et al., 2002: 35) observes: "The decline of the status of the AERC is symbolic of the demise and decline of public sector institutions in the country, and also marks the moment when alternate, private sector and donor-funded opportunities began to emerge outside the public sector."

New, privately funded institutions such as the Sustainable Policy Development Institute (SPDI) and the Mahbubul Haq Institute of Human Development are lively research centres but they mainly work with consultants, thus limiting their contribution to the general condition of Pakistani social science research.[28] Despite quantitative expansion, little research work has emerged from the universities and social science departments in Pakistan.

In Sri Lanka, social science research was never considered a government priority either. The University Grants Commission, which functions as the apex body of the university system, was established in 1978. Its primary function is to plan and coordinate university education and to allocate funds to the institutions of higher education. These universities are primarily teaching universities and their research output, in terms of both quantity and quality, is very limited. As state universities, many of these universities are unable to attract highly-qualified staff, since teaching is done in vernaculars and there is no time to do research.

Bangladesh established its Social Science Research Council (BSSRC) in 1976 to promote and coordinate the activities of all public institutions involved in social science research. Dhaka University's Faculty of Social Sciences is one of the leading social science research centres in Bangladesh. Its Department of Development Studies is well recognized for its research on rural development, gender studies, and environment and development. There are also a few other independent, not-for-profit institutes. Bangladesh currently has about 950 social scientists, mainly at three universities and four specialized research institutes. On the whole, social science research has never been a state priority, and the BSSRC could not change this. Wages are low and research environments are lacking.

There seems to be a general consensus among social scientists that the quality of both teaching and research in social sciences in South Asia is generally declining. There is very little accountability and peer evaluations are weak in state-funded research institutions and universities. This has led to serious concern among social scientists and eminent scholars, and they have been trying to turn the attention of authorities and policy makers to this deplorable state of social science research.

Massive efforts are required to develop social science research capacities. This means infusing adequate funding into social science institutions. In this respect, India could play a leading role in the region. There are signs that the region's governments are slowly acknowledging the situation and the importance of social sciences when dealing with the current socio-economic

[27] A somewhat similar recommendation has been made by the ICSSR Report 2007.
[28] All these specialized institutes are research institutes and attract funding from international sources but only to a lesser extent from government sources.

challenges such as sustainable development, disaster management, rehabilitation, terrorism and violence, etc. In order to adequately respond to these emerging challenges, the autonomy of social science research institutions is vital. Some measures have been taken, such as the recent increase in funds for higher education in India. More needs to be done.

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