

Power Dynamics In Ethnic Politics And Federalism In Pakistan

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Abstract:

The paper examines that how ethnic politics shaped and dominated the power dynamics of federalism in Pakistan. Federalism was implanted in Pakistan, which was considered a best possible solution for ethnic diversified country. However, it can be argued that the alternate outcome was totally opposite which was in the form of imbalance as power saturation at one ethnicity can destabilize the true essence of federalism. The discrimination in the term of language or political representation created the sense of marginalization of the specific ethnic group, for instance Bengalis, which in itself shows the notion of power dynamics too. Even though Bengalis were in majority ethnic group but the power dynamics does not just rely only on the number of people belonging to certain group. The concept of power has been adopted from the power theory of Foucault. The Power in any form resides in every ethnic politics whether it is in the form of language, political representation or economic. Moreover, the economic powers always overlap the politics which strengthens the whole concept of federalism. Due to central power dominating tendencies, before the 18th amendment, mirrored the power disparity in the ethnic politics.

Keywords: Ethnic politics, Federalism, Power dynamics, Ethnic diversification, Imbalance ethnicity.

I. Introduction

Pakistan has always remained the experimental grounds for politics since its inception. As a case study of Pakistan, a varied society divided into a variety of ethnic and linguistic groupings and federalism was considered as an essential method of achieving political unity in the country. Pakistan is considered as “world’s most ethnically and linguistically complex states” (Cohen, 2005, p.201), which makes her more vulnerable towards conflict. The ethnic composition comprises of ethnicities like Sindhis, Punjabis, Baloch, Pakhtoons and other minor populated ethnicities e.g Harazawals and Sairiki

Pakistan which was created under the slogan of Two-Nation theory showed the distinctive and complex perspective of the concept of nation-state when the cumulative rhetoric of Muslim nationalism during pre-partition transited to ethnic oriented power dynamics. This evidently shattered when Bangladesh became separate country in 1971. However, it indicates towards the clash between ethnic diversity power and political institutions. Pakistan's powerful governing class has been resistant to accepting society's pluralism (Kukreja, 2020). They refused to share authority with any minority groups or, in the case of Bengal, majority communities. It subsequently remained the first post-colonial state to have a successful separatist movement,

which resulted in the establishment of Bangladesh in 1971 (Mushtaq, 2009).

When British rule was ended in sub-continent and Pakistan and India became independent states in 1947. Pakistan continued the legacy of British rule in selecting governance structure and adopted federalism as a form of government which was introduced under British rule in India in the form of government of India act 1935. The reason for selecting the federal form of government in Pakistan was to hold together a diverse population that was linguistically, culturally, and ethnically fragmented among numerous groupings. It is frequently asserted that federalism is essential for maintaining unity in a varied community (Arora, 2010; Imran et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2021).

From Pakistan's inception to the present, the issue of federalism has been central to all constitutional debates. The dilemma of federalism appeared as a foremost demand on the political arena from the early stages in Pakistan. Under the federalism the provincial autonomy has been guaranteed to the provinces, due to which those provinces which do not have larger population could also get the right to administer themselves. In the context of Pakistan, Punjab is the most populous province due to which it has more seats in the national Assembly. Hence, any decision that need to be taken at the central government, Punjab has more say in decision making than the other provinces like Sindh, Balochistan, and KP, Therefore, the minor provinces requested sufficient constitutional reforms in the administration and management of their administrative and economic concerns (Khan, 2014).

The degree of dissatisfaction, nevertheless, did not cease with the dismantling of the Eastern Pakistan. The dissatisfaction among the minor provinces is still an ongoing challenge in Pakistan, and the Pakistani federation may be on the verge of greater collapse (Tariq et al., 2018). However, the aim of the paper is to evaluate the

how ethnic politics shaped and dominated the power dynamics of federalism in Pakistan.

For this purpose, the paper has been divided into three portions namely: evolution of federalism in Pakistan, conceptualizing power dynamic of ethnic diversity in federation; and ethnic politics and federalism in Pakistan.

2. Evolution of Federalism in Pakistan

Federalism as a form of government is much suited to those regions where the population is multi-national, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic (Seymour and Gagnon, 2012). To bring the diverse set of population under one government the ideal system proposed by different political scientists is Federalism. This is because under the federal form of government the provinces and the states have their own government, as opposed to the unitary form of government in which there is only one set of government that is central government. When the provinces and the states have their own government then they could have autonomy in administering themselves (Selassie, 2003).

Federalism is a political system in whereby the central government's authority is shared amongst provinces/sub-states. If people are dispersed for many and apparent motives, there will be a fragile national framework that might crumble at any time. Slogans that are redundant and unnecessary will not stop a country from being racially divided. The federal government structure is important in every country (Shah, 2012). It functions as a mother figure for the province ruling structure. The latter functions under the prior's supervision. The federal government and its officials are to help the temporary administrations in carrying out their tasks effectively.

Hence, the federal form of government was considered suitable by the Pakistani administration to run the affairs of the country. However, the degree of provincial autonomy

became the major bone of contention in the early constitutional debates of Pakistan. Since Pakistan was nascent state, and it was not possible to grant the provincial autonomy to the states because it was considered as threat to the national integration (Baxter, 1975). The constituent assembly of Pakistan considered that it necessary to introduce a federal structure of government in which the provinces should not have much autonomy. In this manner, they suggested a centralized form of federalism in Pakistan in the early years after independence (Callard 1986:156).

In the early debates of the constituent assembly, the constitutional crisis became an apparent issue when the questions of the nature of federal structure of government in Pakistan was surfaced. The federal structure was adopted by the legacy of the British rule in Pakistan. The government of Pakistan adopted government of India act 1935 as an interim constitution for running the administration of the country. Under the 1935 act the government was highly tilted in favor of the central government due to which the provincial autonomy was not given under this setup of government. The central government was empowered of changing the interim constitution in any way it saw fit (Callard, 1986).

3. Conceptualizing power dynamics of ethnic diversity in federation

The Power, which is defined as influence, is invariably a social condition: Power has no meaning in isolation; it requires an object to work on, and anything (or anyone) wields power must have some form of relationship to the object on which it acts. Power usually involves relationships and at the political level, it is more institutional based (Kaswan, 2015). The theory of power by Foucault is relevant which defines that power is every way and it manifests itself both explicitly in power structures and implicitly in the patterns of social connections itself (Foucault in

Rainbow, 1991). We refer to authority as power exerted in accordance with established norms.

This presupposes the existence of a formal institutional framework that regulates and restricts power in certain ways. Domination is a term used to describe power wielded informally. Domination, like authority, is often exercised from inside an institutional structure, although an informal one. This informal institution may equally condition and restrict dominance, however violation of those limitations will be simpler in general since informal institutions' norms aren't officially stated. Domination can also take on more subtle forms, as identified by Foucault as working through different disciplinary or capillary mechanisms (Kaswan, 2015). In the case of present paper, the purpose is to imply the power dynamics present in the ethnic politics which became trouble for federation in Pakistan. However, it can be argued that power in any form reside in every ethnic politics whether it is in the form of language, political representation or economic.

According to Dicey, under the federalism there should be an adequate distribution of power between the central and the provincial or states government (Dicey 1973: 151). Across the globe, under the federalism there is very few examples in which the provinces are more autonomous. In major of the cases found in the world the center is more powerful than the provinces or the states under the federalism. The federal government may have retained legislative supremacy above the units on issues of national concern, but the system provides enough powers to the units.

In Pakistan, the Centre has always had a hegemonic position over the provinces. Notwithstanding having a majority in its Assembly, the denunciation of Khan Shaib's Ministry in the NWFP on 22 August 1947, M. A. Khuhro's Ministry in Sindh on April 20, 1948, Mamdoth's Ministry in East Pakistan on January 25, 1949, and Fazal-ul-Ministry Haq's in East

Pakistan in 1954 (under section 92-A of the 1935 Act) reflected the country's federal precepts. They were not only viewed as undemocratic rules, but also established a precedent that later prompted the federal government to recover their reserve rights to remove provincial governments (Malik, 2017).

There are two factors that has made the central government more strong in Pakistan and depriving the provinces of their autonomy. Firstly, there has been absence of the constitution in Pakistan in the early years of its independence for almost 9 years. As a result of which the distribution of the power between the center and province was not guaranteed constitutionally. Hence, during the early years of its independence, the central government ruled Pakistan under a unitary form of government. Secondly, although the constitution of Pakistan has been formed under the ideas of federalism but the essence of federalism that is the provincial autonomy was not taken into due consideration. Rather the power was highly concentrated in the central government in Pakistan. In this manner, the provinces like Sindh, KP and Baluchistan who have less population and less representation in the national government were pushed to the margins whereas the province of Punjab which has more population and hence more representation in the central government became the power wielder in central government and determined the fate of those provinces which were having less representation in the central government (Ali et al., 2021).

Pakistan has long been ruled by a non-democratic and military regime in the dearth of a stable representative democracy. From 1947 to 1956, and again from 1977 to 1985, there was no constitutional participation. The constitution is once again inactive after the army deposed Nawaz Sharif's administration in October 1999. The constitutional crisis that arose throughout the first Constituent Assembly's existence enhanced

the influence of federal institutions towards the provinces (Malik, 2017).

The role of the military in the political affairs of Pakistan have started to become more prominent by the mid-1950s. It is due to the inclusion of Iskander Mirza, army officer, in the rank of President of Pakistan in the 1956 that the ground was paved for the onset of the military rule in Pakistan. When Pakistan got its first constitution the political instability marked the administration of the country. Finally, the military took over the government of Pakistan in 1958.

From 1957 until 1969, President Ayub governed the country with a heavy reliance on the army and bureaucracy. Although Ayub Khan have introduced the constitution of 1962, to administer the country but it was highly centralized because the powers of the President was increased due to which the provincial autonomy was not guaranteed. However, Pakistan saw another military coup when Ayub Khan rule was finished in Pakistan. It is due to this reason that the discontentment among the Pakistani increased, and secessionist movement began in East Pakistan, which resulted in the break up of Pakistan, and independence of East Pakistan (Ahmed, 2020).

However, since the separation of East Pakistan, constitutional progress was recorded under the Z.A Bhutto regime in Pakistan. In 1973, a new constitution was formed with a federal structure of the government. But the constitutional progress was short lived because in 1977 another military coup by General Zia-ul-Haq disrupted the constitutional progress. The restoration of the constitution of 1973 was also done in a manner that reproduced the power of the center over the provinces. In 1985, Zia-ul-Haq introduced the 8th constitutional amendment under which the President was given the power to dissolve the central as well as the provincial assemblies under the article 58-2B. As a result of the increase in the power of the President, the federal structure of

Pakistan was breached. Hence, whenever, the President was not satisfied with the Prime Minister and considered that there is need to dissolve the assembly, the President dissolved the assembly. The constitutionally elected governments in Pakistan were dissolved in 1988, 1990, 1993, and 1996 through the 58-2B. Hence, the federalism in Pakistan was compromised due to the increase in powers of President (Kukreja, 2020).

4. Ethnic Politics and federalism in Pakistan

During the post-Bengal halt period, Pakistan's federalism was endangered by concerns of bilingualism and geographical division of the country's two wings. Federalism has existed in Pakistan since the country's inception on the global stage. The authors of Pakistan's first constitution, drafted in 1956 with Chaudhry Muhammad Ali as Prime Minister, established the parity formula between the country's two wings, assigning 150 seats to each half in a Unicameral legislative House (Younis & Shahzad, 2017).

From the start, the political architecture of the state and nation building approach placed more faith and authority in the federal structure than in the provinces, even disregarding their actual identity, economic, and political concerns. Centralization of authority, far from creating genuine integration, estranged provinces and led in confrontations involving the use of force (Rais, 2012). Consequently, the dominant Pakistani governing class has been hesitant to recognize society's pluralism and has turned it to a law and order issue rather than a component of governability (Malik, 1998).

The religious elite has also been critical of ethnic diversity. Nonetheless, today's Pakistan is beset by internal strife. The Punjabi Muhajir-dominated military and civil bureaucracy elite have long been reluctant to build a pragmatic, participative, and inclusive political framework

capable of accommodating different ethnic groupings (Younis & Shahzad, 2017). All of the minor ethnic groups, such as the Baluchis, Pathans, Sindhis, and Muhajirs (Urdu-speaking Muslim migrants from India), are dissatisfied with the Punjabi ruling elites and feel excluded and betrayed. This indicates towards the Foucauldian power theory which instigates that power does not saturate at one place. The prime example can also be traced out from the history, for instance, The Basic Principle Committee's first draft in 1949, suggested Urdu as a national language which created outcry among the Bengalis of East Pakistan (Khan et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, the Constituent Assembly enacted a language bill in 1955 that proclaimed that Bengali would also be recognized as national language of Pakistan along with Urdu. Hence, the importance of acknowledging the regional languages was also incorporated in to the Basic Principle Committee (BPC) deliberations. In this manner, the process towards incorporating the regional language, culture, and identity was initiated in Pakistan. Though, it was rectified in the second draft by the BPC but it can be argued that the discrimination in the term of language created the sense of marginalization of the specific ethnic group of Bengalis and the notion of power dynamics were evident. Even though Bengalis were in majority ethnic group but the power dynamics does not just rely on the number of people belonging to certain group. It is more dependent on other factors too.

This rift was further increased when the representation issue emerged. The Pakistani federation had unequal representation of the component entities in government ministries and provincial departments back then. In terms of economic growth, Pakistan's provinces displayed stark contrasts. The constitutions of (1956, 1962) did not encourage provincial autonomy, resulting in distrust between the central government and the federating units. These discrepancies

persisted for a longer length of time, eventually leading to the collapse of Pakistan's federation in 1971 (Ali et al., 2021).

Other ethnic communities' survival was jeopardized as a result of these inequalities. The dominance of West Pakistan over East Pakistan, and, after 1971, the predominance of Punjab over the lesser divisions, has resulted in Pakistan being a competitive rather than a cooperative federation. The governing class did not recognize diversity. This scenario exacerbated racial, ethnic, and community tensions (Younis & Shahzad, 2017). It is interesting aspects to evaluate that centralization and coercion of power by one ethnic group over another always show reaction as Bengalis in the form of independence which also showed the demonstration of power.

The state's multi-ethnic structure has been viewed as a threat to the stability of democracy. Thus, the greatest significant danger to Pakistan's state and civil society is the armed insurgency in Baluchistan. This presents the ruling elites with an unavoidable quandary: how to weave and weld together various and unique communities into a country.

However, the 18th amendment in the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan acts as "New Constitutional Mechanism," which resulted in changes to half of the 34 provisions dealing with regional autonomy. In fact, it rewrote the federal-provincial accord and was distinct from previous legislative, administrative, and budgetary changes in that it came from inside, as opposed to other donor-pushed reforms (Bengali, 2015). Consequently, Pakistan has been quite weak in terms of building a stronger and more effective federal structure. This is due to a variety of factors. All four provinces and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Gilgit Baltistan (GB), and Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) are connected by various elements including as religion and culture, but not by an influential federal structure. This system has its own identity

and is, in reality, a mash-up of people with varied demographic characteristics.

The dynamic of federalism includes the distribution of fiscal functions, collection of taxes and resource distribution among the center and provinces. The federal government is in control of both regulatory and distributive duties. Allocative tasks, on the other hand, are delegated to the provinces Under the PML and PPP regimes (1991 and 1996), the National Finance Commission Award was reached by compromise. Nawaz Sharif increased the province's portion of national divisible revenue from 28 percent to 45 percent in 1996. Punjab received 57.88 percent, Sindh 23.28 percent, NWFP, now KPK, 13.54 percent, and Baluchistan 5.3 percent. Musharraf's administration was unable to reach the necessary agreement and therefore opted to impose it in 2006 (Khan et al., 2021)

The provincial allocation was retained at the same 45 percent of the divisible pool under that structure, with a 1 percent rise every year until it reached 50 percent in the next five years. The coalition government led by the Pakistan People's Party scored a significant achievement in fiscal federalism. The provinces' portion of the divisible pool within the 7th NFC award which was boosted from 47 percent to 50 percent for 2010-2011, and 57.5 percent for the following four years. The provinces profited greatly from the award's evolving criteria (Ali et al., 2021).

Poverty, revenue generation, and reversed population size were all considered before deciding on an award. The award also modified the province share ratio, with Punjab receiving 51.74 percent, Sindh receiving 24.55 percent, NWFP receiving 14.62 percent, and Baluchistan receiving 9.09 percent. The 18th amendment mandated that a province's portion of the new award cannot be less than what it was previously receiving. There is also a mechanism for annual assessment of the award's implementation. The Monitoring Report must be given to the National

and Provincial legislatures. Loans might be made available to provinces in order to broaden their revenue generation base (Khan et al., 2021)

5. Conclusion:

Federation is about the division of powers between center and provinces. Pakistan being the multi-ethnic country, which is unique in the world, had and has to face the implication of federalism. The post-independence era showed that the power saturation by one ethnic group, namely Punjab, in civil and military bureaucracy, triggered the grievances among the federating units. However, according to Foucault that power is everywhere, so federating units also possess some powers which can be seen from the example of separation of Bangladesh in 1971.

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