

# THE CONSEQUENCES OF PROVINCIAL-FEDERATION CONFLICT

Focus on proper deconstruction of the topic

Rest is fine

## 1. Introduction

Thesis statement:

Various factors can contribute to rise of provincial-federation conflict. The consequences can be detrimental to peace, progress and prosperity of a federal country. Through constitutional and tolerant measures, ramifications of provincial-federation conflict can be alleviated, ~~however~~.

## 2. The Nature of a Federal System

## 3. Factors Leading to Rise of Provincial Federation Conflict

a) Intolerance towards political opposition

As it is not asked in the topic, just build one paragraph for it

b) Attempt at monopolization of power by center

c) Denial of provincial share

d) Government of different political parties in center and province

e) ~~Building of sense of alienation in province~~

4. The Consequences can be Detrimental for Peace, Progress, and Prosperity of the Country

a) Rise of political polarization

b) Negative impact on economic program

c) Rise of poor governance in

d) Lack of consensus on policies

e) Deterioration of trust in federation

f) Emergence of provincialism

g) Wastage of time and resources

h) Breakdown of constitutional machinery

## 5. The Consequences of Provincial-Federation Conflict can be Mitigated Through Constitutional and Tolerant Measures

- a) Adherence to constitutionalism
- b) Practice of cooperative federalism
- c) Accommodation of political opposition

## 6. Conclusion

The conflict between East-Pakistan and center culminated in breakdown of Pakistan on 16 December, 1971. Among many reasons, there were questions of ensuring people of East-Pakistan their fundamental constitutional rights, as well as due regard to their provincial interests. Therefore, in a federal setup, a delicate balance has to be maintained to make federation functional. With time issues arise between center and province, which demand conscientious solutions.

Many factors can lead to emergence of conflict between center and a province. These include culture of intolerance for political opposition, appropriation of more power by center, and denial of legitimate provincial

state. Furthermore, the conflict can be the outcome of government of different political parties in center and provinces, as well as building of sense of alienation in the province. The renification of such conflict can be detrimental for proper functioning of the federation. There can be rise <sup>in</sup> of acute political polarization, economic instability, and poor governance. In addition, there may arise lack of consensus between center and province on major policy issues. Besides, there can be rise of provincial tendencies among the provincial ruling elite, as well as the populace. Moreover, substantial time and resources may be consumed by the conflict, rendering the constitutional edifice of the country dysfunctional.

However, through constitutional and tolerant measures, the negative impacts of provincial-federation conflict can be alleviated.

These measures include adherence to constitutional values and norms, practice of cooperative federalism and respect for political opposition. Thus, various factors can contribute to rise of provincial-federation conflict. The consequences can be detrimental to peace, progress and prosperity of a federal state. Through constitutional and tolerant measures, mitigation of provincial-federation conflict can be alleviated, ~~however~~.

A federal system refers to a political system where power is decentralized. The center and the provinces, or

units, have constitutionally delineated powers. After 18th Constitutional Amendment in Pakistan, financial, administrative and legislative powers were divided between federal and provincial lists. Similarly, in the United States, Article I, Section 8; Article I, Section 10; Article IV; and Tenth Amendment in the constitution specify powers of states and the federal government. However, even when constitutionally granted, in practice ensuring delicate balance of exercising division of powers can be challenging, giving rise of number of difficulties. Besides, there can be various reasons leading to rise of conflict between center and provinces in a federal setup.

One of the major reasons may be the intolerance towards political opposition. It can give rise to hostility among the ruling elite in center and a province. In a federal setup, nothing is of more value than compromise. In case there is lack of compromise, there cannot be political tranquility; in center and province would be at loggerheads with each other. Therefore, lack of tolerance for opposition can hamper the proper functioning of the federation. In post-partition time period, the ruling elite at center manifested little tolerance for the indigenous government in East-Bengal. Accordingly, within months after partition, government of A.K. Fazlul Haq, was abolished, resulting in build up of



grievances among East-Bengal's political elite, as well as the populace. This led to the rise of series of conflicts between center and East-Bengal. Thus, inability to tolerate political opposition can give rise to provincial-federation conflict.

Moreover, attempts at monopolization of power by center can give impetus to provincial - federation conflict. Province may perceive it is being deprived of its constitutional powers. As in a federal setup powers of provinces and center are constitutionally delineated, any adventure on part of the center would only lead to hostile outcome. For instance, during 1980s, the central government, led

by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, dismissed the Akali Dal-led government in Punjab, under Article 356. This dismissal was part of a broader centralization effort during the period of Sikh separatism and demand for greater autonomy. This dismissal, along with Operation Blue Star, led to long-term resentment in the state. Thus, provincial-federation conflict can be seen as a corollary of monopolization of power by center.

Moreover, provincial-federation conflict may arise when the center deprive province of its legitimate share. It would be perceived as direct assault on the fundamental interests of the

province. The center acts as  
overarching head in federal  
political system. It usually has  
powers to disburse resources  
among provinces as their  
due share. In Pakistan, under  
NFC (National Finance Commission)  
Award, financial share of  
provinces has been determined.  
However, repeatedly provinces  
manifest grievances in form  
of assault on center, which  
is depriving provinces of their  
due financial share. Resultantly,  
lingering tension exists between  
aggrieved provinces at and the  
center. Thus, denial of due  
provincial resources can give  
rise to tension between center  
and province.

Accordingly, another major  
cause for rift between center

and the province can be government of two oppositional political parties. Having contested elections, on hostile grounds, the dissension can linger on even after the formation of government. Mainly, the political party in province play victim card, alleging center of injustices upon it. For example, the present PTI's government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is consistently doggers drawn with the central government, led by coalition of PML-N and PPP, among other partners. There have been repeated allegation on part of the KPK's provincial government towards the central government, giving rise to acute political deadlock. Thus, governments of mutually hostile political parties in center and province can lead

to provincial-federation conflict.

Besides, lingering tension can develop a sense of alienation, especially among people of the province. They perceive central government as an entity bent on depriving them their due rights. When repeatedly faced in the mantra of central injustices, people become alienated. They <sup>come to</sup> believe that central government is the culprit for all the worse happenings to them. For instance, people in Balochistan have become considerably alienated. They attribute all sufferings on the machinations of the central government. Thus, sense of alienation may persist among the populace of the province which suffers from persistent injustices.

The above pages contain irrelevant details

Therefore, the consequences of provincial-federal conflict may be harmful for the peace, progress, and prosperity of the state. The following paragraphs discuss impacts of such development, or predicament.

One of the major ramifications of provincial-federation conflict can be witnessed in form of acute political polarization. The ruling elite of a province perceives central ruling elite as its arch rival. In such a predicament, people too would become disillusioned by the center. Resultantly, on minor instigation, they would be ready to unleash political agitation, which could exacerbate into violent political actions.

A more prominent example is of PTI led ruling elite instigation populace of the province to hold political rallies and protests. These protest have led to deaths and vandalism. Thus, political deadlock has emerged, where the problems have become unresolvable. Hence, acute political polarization can be the outcome of provincial-federation conflict.

Furthermore, economic progress of the country is affected negatively by such conflict. Lingering protests and hartals bring the economy activity to a halt, discouraging investors from investment. It is an understood fact that economic progress is

not possible in a politically unstable milieu. According to Federal Finance Ministry, a two days protest in capital incurs loss of 190 billion to the economy. Similarly, potential investors seem worried about their investment and property in an environment of political unrest that could transform into violent acts and vandalism. Thus, economic progress suffers badly as outcome of political unrest, stimulated by provincial-federation conflicts.

Besides, poor governance is the natural corollary of political unrest and halted economic growth. The government cannot ensure effective and efficient service delivery when resources are same.



Deprived of investment, as well as taxes in case the businesses flourish, the government is left with meagre resources for allocation. In Pakistan, the budget deficit is already 5.9% of the GDP. Therefore, as tax-to-GDP ratio hovers around 9pc, the government cannot allocate much, especially to services of fundamental importance like education. Total allocation of central and provincial governments do not surpass 2pc of GDP for education against the international minimum of 4 to 6%. Resultantly, governments' efficiency and effectiveness in the public education sector is poor. Thus, poor governance can be the outcome of provincial-federation conflict, fueled by halted economic

program and political instability.

In addition to these consequences, one major ramification is lack of consensus on policies of importance due to provincial-federation conflicts.

Dagger drawn on each other, the province and center may fail to exhibit coherent response to a policy issues.

Through 18th constitutional Amendment, provinces have attained significant autonomy.

Many major decision making powers have been delegated to them. In such constitutional arrangement, repeated conflicts emerge between center and province on various policies.

For instance, in 2022, the federal government announced implementation of Single National

curriculum across Pakistan. However, the province of Sindh dissented, as it was ruled by PPP, a party in opposition that time. Resultantly, the policy could not get across the board approval <sup>or</sup> consensus. Thus, important policy issues may face implementation problems due to conflict between center and the province.

Another probable consequence of deep-rooted provincial-federation conflict can manifest itself in form of deterioration of trust in federation. When the ruling provincial elite and the populace of the province become convinced that center has become indifferent to their demands their trust erodes in the federation.

in a federal political system, bond of mutual trust and understanding is crucial for the proper functioning of federation, even for its survival. In case of eroding trust, people may begin clamouring for rights, which can exacerbate even into violent acts and resort to militancy. For example, when the political leadership and populace of East-Pakistan became disillusioned with center, they went for uncompromising stance, epitomised in Mujeeb ur Rahman's 'Six points'. When concerns failed to materialize, it led to violent acts, which gave birth to Mukti Bahini. Thus, militant tactics and violent acts can emerge as a consequence of attrition of trust on federation, prompted by

confounding provincial-federation  
conflict.

Furthermore, lack of trust on federation can cause rise of provincialism. Sense of deprivation for long plays an important role when sense of alienation and injustice persists for long, provincialism would take roots. People would become more inward, giving more importance to their provincial identity than national identity. They would become indifferent to their national identity, as it remains of no use then. For instance, after partition, the Father of nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, categorically warned people against the growing malaise of provincialism. He

rather emphasized upon taking pride, and having deep commitment, to the national identity. In present day Pakistan, there are plethora of nationalist politics parties, exploiting grievances of people to pursue their parochial motives. This has led to rise in provincialism and consciousness of identity based on ethno-linguistic lines among many people. Even further disturbing is the reality that when a political party of national base sees it imminent defeat in national elections, it resorts to provincialism to preserve its provincial support base. This has led to weakening of the Federation and diminishing of collective consciousness among people. Thus,

parochial politicians may benefit from grievances of people against center, fostering and cementing their provincial identity.

Another aspect of provincial-federation conflict relates to wastage of time and resources. Provincial and federal government would spend significant time countering each other. In such a milieu, the Federal government would spend public money on advertisements and media campaigns, boosting their performance. Similarly, the provincial government would spend money from public excheques to disperse its narrative of injustice through newspaper articles, advertisements, and social media campaigns.

Therefore, in such condition, they both would spend substantial amount from public exchequer to counter each other's narratives. Thus, much time and resources can be wasted due to provincial-federation conflict.

In same vein, there would be constitutional breakdown due to mutual hostility of central and provincial governments. They would not agree on much. When hostilities have taken deep-roots, and are crystallized, the center and province would have little regard for constitutional way of amicable solution. Rather force and polemic would become norm. In such predicament, mutual institutions of provinces



and center would become dysfunctional. Institutions such as CCI (Council of Common Interest) may be of little value then. Thus, constitutional breakdown is imminent in deeply hostile center-province relationship.

However, through certain constitutional and tolerant measures, provincial-federation conflict can be pacified. The following paragraphs would discuss those way forwards.

Therefore, to alleviate provincial-federation conflict, it is important to have regard for constitutionalism. It means neither central nor provincial government should over-step their constitutional boundaries and

restriction. The center needs to ensure that it does not infringe upon the constitutional rights of provinces. Moreover, it had better practice policy of self-restraint, as a guiding example for provinces. Furthermore, more emphasis should be on helping each other to cause out maximum benefits for people, avoiding any prospect of conflict. Thus, religious abiding to constitutional norms and values is sine qua non for smooth functioning of federation.

Moreover, there is need to practice cooperative federalism, which involves mutual assistance instead of conflict. It is the best way to avoid conflict. In case the center

perceive provincial government incompetent, it should help it by enhancing its capacity. Similarly, in case center is in burden, the provinces should try to ameliorate its sufferings. For example, the burden of development, defence, and debt servicing on center can be alleviated if provinces join hands with it. They may ask for cut in their allocation to help center repay its debts. Thus, cooperative federalism has the capacity not only to avert conflict between the center and province but also to help federation grow and prosper.

Last but not least, center should try to accommodate political opposition.

This would strengthen the federation. Being in fatherly role, the center must always lend helping hand to provinces. Besides, it must ensure that provinces remain satisfied. Satisfaction and accommodation of political opposition is important, as democracy is based on the precept of tolerance and mutual understanding. This does not imply that provincial demands, of no matter which nature, should be accepted outrightly. Instead, demands that are constitutionally appropriate must be accepted readily. This would enhance cooperation and build trust among federation and its provinces. Thus, accommodation of opposition from center and provinces is crucial for healthy federalism.

In conclusion, a federal political system is extremely difficult to maintain. There are various problems that may arise to the detriment of federal stability. Issues like lack of tolerance for opposition; centralization of power; and denial of provincial share can instigate provincial-federation conflict. Moreover, when political opposite parties form government in province and center, prospects of conflict exacerbate. Similarly, lingered conflict could give rise to sense of alienation, which may further enhance the conflict. The consequences of such conflicts can be dangerous for properly functional federal structure. The state, as

consequence of provincial-federation conflict, would experience political instability, lack of growth, poor-governance and absence of consensus from polity. Moreover, the consequences could prompt attrition of trust between the center and the provinces, leading to emergence of provincial tendencies. In such predicament substantial resources and time would be wasted to counter each other. The cumulative outcome of all these negative impacts of provincial-federation conflict would be the breakdown of the constitutional edifice. However, measures such as regard for constitutionalism, cooperative federalism, and political opposition could avert these consequences.