

What is federalism? Critically evaluate / examine the federal system of Pakistan?

1. Definition of Federalism

What is federalism?

Federalism is a system of government in which powers are divided between a central (federal) government and provincial (state) governments under a constitution.

Key Features of Federalism

- * Division of powers
- * Written Constitution
- * Supremacy of Constitution
- * Independent Judiciary
- * Bicameral legislature (in most cases)

2. Federalism in Pakistan

Constitution Basis

- * Pakistan follows a federal system under a constitution of 1973
- * Power is distributed between:
 - Federal Government
 - provincial Government

Structure of Government

- Federal level: parliament (National Assembly + senate + president)
- provincial level: provincial Assemblies
- Judiciary: independent (Supreme Court ensures balance)

3. Evolution of Federalism in Pakistan

Early phase (1947-1971)

- Strong centralized system
- One unit scheme reduced provincial autonomy

Post-1973 Constitution

- Recognized provincial autonomy
- Introduced federal structure formally
- 18th Amendment (2010)
- Landmark reform
- Abolished Concurrent List
- Gave more power to provinces

4 Critical Evaluation of Federalism in Pakistan

Strengths

provincial autonomy

- provinces have greater control after the 18th Amendment.

- Decentralization improved governance in theory

Representation of units

- Senate ensure equal representation of provinces
- Smaller provinces get a voice

Cultural Diversity

- Federalism accommodates ethnic and regional diversity
- Promotes unity with diversity

Weaknesses

central dominance

- Federal government still dominates key areas (defense, finance)

- provinces often dependent on federal ^{Funds} unit

Financial imbalance

- provinces rely heavily on NFC Award
- Weak revenue generation at provincial level

political instability

- Military intervention weakened federalism
- Democratic continuity disrupted

Administrative Issues

- Lack of capacity in provinces
- Poor coordination between federal and provincial governments

5 Key challenges

Resource Distribution

- conflict over water (e.g. Indus River)
- Dispute over revenue sharing

provincial inequality

- Punjab vs smaller provinces imbalance perception
- weak local governments
- True federalism incomplete without strong local bodies

6 Comparative perspective

Compared to USA / India

- Pakistan is less decentralized than the USA
- Comparison with Indian federal system

7 Conclusion

Federalism in Pakistan is a work in progress. While the 18th Amendment strengthened provincial autonomy, challenges like financial dependency, political instability and administrative weaknesses still limit its effectiveness.

For true federalism Pakistan needs

- Strong provincial institutions
- Better fiscal independence
- Effective coordination mechanism