

The Consequences of Political-Federation Conflict

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The Consequences of Provincial-Federation Conflict 66

In 1971, tensions between the federal government of Pakistan and its eastern wing reached a breaking point, resulting in the separation of East Pakistan and forming an independent state 'Bangladesh'. This highlights the devastating consequences of unresolved provincial-federation conflicts. The little grievances over political representation, resource distribution, governance issues and cultural and ethnic division can have far reaching consequences, impacting national unity, economic development, political stability and overall country's stability, and progress and social trajectory. Even today, Pakistan continues to grapple with similar challenges where call for greater autonomy from Sindh, Balochistan and KPK are met with resistance from the center. Addressing such issues is crucial to ensure the federation's security and stability. This can be done through equitable power sharing, fostering cooperation and inclusive development strategies.

The ~~political~~ Provincial-Federation conflicts broadly refer to the tensions between country's central

government and its regional or provincial authorities. These conflicts causing can result in a weakening of national unity. The mere ethnic divisions or linguistic differences as in the case of east Pakistan can be as devastating as the division of a country into two halves. When the issues of a region or its provincial authority remain unheard and unresolved by the federation it causes a distrust in the hearts of people of that region against the center. The provinces may feel alienated if the center is perceived as favouring one region over the other. A province might turn against the center and call for greater autonomy which weakens the national unity. The decrease in the national unity gives chance to the enemy states to use the distrust among a region as exploitation against the country.

The conflict between a region and the federal government causes governance and administrative challenges for a state. The disagreements between a state and its provincial government can lead to the delays in nationwide policies implementations such as, health, education or infrastructure projects. The educational reforms in the 18th Amendment

had been delayed due to funding and responsibility disagreements between federal and provincial governments. The administrative challenges can also be the conflicts over resources allocations. Such conflicts can lead to mismanagement and degradation of resources. The inefficiency of administration leads to the underdevelopment of state and its people. For example:- Conflicts over Indus river water distribution have led to disputes between Punjab and Sindh resulting in inefficient water management. This leaves people in a trouble to have clean water for the irrigation and they need to install tubewells etc making the cost of production high.

Sometimes the federal government distributes the funds and resources unequally. The center neglects some areas or some provinces as a whole. This causes underdevelopment of those provinces. The economic disparities fuel grievances among the masses. Southern Punjab and rural Balochistan are major examples of remaining underdeveloped compared to the urban centers like Lahore and Karachi. The installment of mega projects like Orange train in Lahore while half of the south Punjab lives in shabby infrastructure, unpaved roads,

and major economic crisis fuel resentment among the local populations.

The provincial-federation conflicts result in major political instability discouraging the domestic as well as foreign investments. The political instability marked by insurgency and conflicts causes the underdevelopment and economic disparities. The constant image of instability and insurgency in Balochistan has led to lack of investments. Even though Balochistan is a province rich in resources but the area remains underdeveloped. The investments in the Reko Diq mining projects in Balochistan were cut short due to the constant ongoing insurgency.

Sometimes the lack of agreeing on a particular matter and the constant disputes might lead to constitutional crisis. Some conflicts lead to the debates of distribution of power and authority. The interpretation and implementation of the 18th Amendment in the constitution of Pakistan often lead to the debates over the distribution of power. Such debates cause more tension among the provincial and federal governments. Often the courts have to intervene in such matters. The judicial overreach further

escalates conflicts and complicates the governance dynamics.

If the conflicts remain unresolved the call of autonomy may lead to major violence and a call for Independence. Long-standing grievances cause insurgencies and separatist movements.

The Baloch insurgency is rooted in the grievances over the resource control and political marginalization.

This conflict has strained Pakistan's security apparatus and hindered the development in the region. The

constant conflict between a province and the federal government weakens the state security. The

state has to spend more and more on maintaining the internal security. This diverts the expenditure

on development and results in underdevelopment and economic crisis.

Persistent conflicts are an erosion of trust in federalism. The constant conflicts lead to calls for restructuring of federal system or even disintegration in extreme cases. The provincial conflicts with the federation also cause political polarization. If there is a centralized control by one political party, it may marginalize

the provinces led by the opposition political parties. The centralized control over Karachi by the federal government sidelined the Sindh's provincial authority until the amendment gave more rights to the provincial governments and weakened the federal influence in the provinces.

The conflicts between the regional and central authorities often marginalize a particular community. The provinces feel left out and suffer from lower access to education, healthcare and basic services. With every allocation of budget, we see indignation among the provinces and the locals over the unequal distribution of funds. This cause grievances over the inequality and unjust behavior of the federal government and the underdevelopment due to lack of funds further fuels the distress in the country.

The central government's conflicts also raise Human Rights concerns. Marginalized communities in conflict zone often face the lack of basic necessities. They have an inadequate access to the resources, and hence a below average way of living. The crackdowns over people with different opinions then

the center or their enforced disappearances lead to significant humanitarian concerns. The lack of inclusive governance fuels the ethnic tensions. The resource exploitation and lack of political representation fueled the Balochistan insurgency. Disputes over the resource allocations led to Sindh-Federation tensions.

The rule of one political party in the federal government and another in majority in a particular provinces causes the political instability. This causes frequent political deadlocks between the provincial and the central government. The provincial government demands more of the resource allocation or the federal government neglects the region all due to their own political agendas ignoring the need of state and the people. Between 2018 and 2022, Karachi has been a center of political deadlock between PPP and PTI, a friction between the Sindh government and the federal government over the governance of Karachi. Such conflicts undermine the actual issues that need to be addressed such as water management or infrastructure development.

The issues between the province and state can exacerbate the resource stress and the environmental issues. The disputes over the water distribution through the Indus River System have led to environmental degradation and water scarcity in Sindh and Balochistan. The presence of such conflicts also delay the efforts to address the critical issues like desertification and water mismanagement.

Prolonged conflicts lead to the deterioration of public trust in institutions, both federal and provincial. The local population views the governments as exploitative and unresponsive to their needs. The conflicts between the federal government and the provincial governments create widespread skepticism among the people regarding the effectiveness and fairness of both levels of governments. The governments seem to be fighting over their own benefits and interests rather than working for the better state and the betterment of its citizens. The lack of trust can lead to national distress and even erupt civil war.

Provincial-Federal disputes are a big challenge to national development. The disputes over resource allocation, tax revenues, often slow down the mega scale development projects. The disrupted development trajectory affects the ongoing economic activities and projects, infrastructure, agriculture and international investment opportunities. The delays that Gawadar Port construction under the CPEC faced might limit its potential benefits.

The continued political unrest between a province and the center government provides a ground for the criticism to international human rights organization and competitor and rival states, weakening Pakistan's global image and diplomatic standing. The internal conflicts draw international attention, creating diplomatic challenges for a state and its reduced international standing. A country that has strong integration internally attracts economic opportunities, diplomatic ties and tourism.

The frequent federal interventions in the provincial governments undermine the autonomy of

provincial governance and erode democratic norms. For example, pertaining to Karachi through tools like Article 149 of the constitution. Along with this, the central government exerting the authoritarian control weakens the democratic structure in a federation. The efforts to undermine the provincial authority can disrupt tensions leading to the disruption of National peace and security.

The biggest consequence of the Political and federal conflict is the disintegration of State sovereignty. The unresolved tensions, ethnic, regional and economic grievances and deep rooted cultural, religious and linguistic differences can lead to the disintegration and breaking up of a state. For example; the creation of Bangladesh, breakup of Yugoslavia.

Provincial-federal conflicts have far-reaching consequences. These challenges can be addressed by equitable governance, inclusive policies and dialogue over disputes between both federal and provincial government entities. These potential solutions are further discussed in detail.

The strengthened federation can ensure equitable resource distribution among provinces with transparency. There should be some institutes that ensure this transparency. There should be devised channels that work in mediating disputes. They should work on resolving even the tiniest disputes and prevent resentment and escalation. The state should equally focus on the development of all its regions with equal resource allocation as per the needs of a particular region. The ^{provincial} state government should see itself as a part of the federal government and vice versa. The two should work together as a state government for the betterment of state and its people rather than unnecessary disputes. The delineation of the federal and provincial government as the powers authorized in the constitution can reduce conflicts and ensure smooth governance.

Provincial and Federation conflicts undermine governance, development and national unity. Addressing of these conflicts is necessary. Unresolved tensions could exacerbate existing divides, threatening the sovereignty and long-term stability of a federation.