

Topic: The Consequences of Provincial-Federation Conflict

Outline

1. Introduction

Thesis statement:

The deterioration in center province relation results in severe impacts on political and socio-economic landscape of the country. To mitigate these impacts, political consensus is necessary.

2. Consequences of Provincial-Federation Conflict

- a) Persistence of political instability
- b) Increase in Political polarisation
- c) Interference of non-political forces
- d) Imbalance in institutional capacity
- e) Severe economic losses
- f) Rise in ethnic tension
- g) Increase in terror activities

- b) Rise in separatist elements
- i) Fosters tensions in domestic water management
- j) Deterioration in inter-provincial harmony

4. Effective Measures to balance Center-Province relation

- a) Regular convening of Council of Common Interest (CCI)
- b) Review over NFC award
- c) Implementation of 18th Amendment

5. Conclusion

The Essay

With the emergence of nation-state, the challenges arise with regard to ethnic differences between the people living within the same region. To counter these challenges, states opted the model

of decentralization of powers with the introduction of federation. The provinces were to given local powers to control their issues while federation held the powers that require centralization. Pakistan emerged as federation; however, its effective implementation started after the 18th Amendment in 2010. Consequently, the conflict between province and center result in severe impacts starting from political instability and polarization. Moreover, it results in economic decline while further increasing ethnic tensions. In addition, such conflict result in spillover effect in other areas like terrorism and deterioration of interprovincial harmony. Meanwhile, these impacts can be mitigated by effective measures like convening of CCI regularly and implementation of 18th Amendment. Thus, the deterioration

in center-province relation results in severe impacts on social political and socio-economic landscape of the country. To mitigate these impacts, political consensus is necessary.

This essay will discuss about the consequences that emerge due to the deterioration of center-province relation.

One of the most significant consequence of provincial-federation conflict is persistence of political instability. Political instability results in a negative feedback loop that affects other areas of country resulting in emergence of fault lines. The conflicts result in the breakdown of coalitions that are made of different political parties. For instance, throughout the history of Pak-

istan, no Prime ~~Prime~~ Minister has completed five year term due to several reasons. The breakdown of coalition is one of the major reason that cause political instability. According to PILDAT, this coalition is made up of different political parties from different provinces. Hence, centre-province relation results in persistence political instability.

Moreover, conflict between federation and provinces also increases political polarization. It is a severe consequence as it results in democratic backsliding where political forces opt for authoritarian measures to defeat opponents. In 1973, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto dismissed the government of Balochistan and NWFP. This dismissal resulted in exaggeration of political polarisation which

resulted in created an hostile environment between all the political forces. Thus, conflict between province and center increases political polarisation between parties.

Besides political polarisation, such conflicts also result in interference of non-political forces. The imbalance created due to the conflict give an opportunity to other forces to jump in the arena. For instance, in 1977 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto announced sudden election due to the conflict with provincial parties. This resulted in widespread protests and chaos in the country. The Chief of Army Staff, Zia-ul-Haq, declared martial law by removing the government and enforced his authoritarian rule till

elections of 1985. Thus, struggle between center-province relation creates conducive environment for non-political forces to interfere.

Furthermore, provincial-federation conflict creates imbalance in institutional capacity. Such imbalance leaves severe impacts on the development of the country. This imbalance also results in significant divide and creates unequal opportunities among the people of the country. For instance, the persistence of disharmony between the center and the province of Balochistan has resulted in severe inequalities. The persistence of disharmony resulted in weak institutional structure that left the people of the province in alienation. The vicious cycle emerged between both the impacts

created due to the center-province relation. Hence, imbalance of institutional capacity emerged as a consequence.

In addition, provincial-federation conflict has also resulted in severe economic losses. Economic sectors require political consensus and consistent reforms to grow at a good rate. Ineffective policies due to weak relation between center and province results in non-implementation of reforms. According to economic experts, Pakistan has faced \$42 billion losses since no-vote confidence in 2022. The relation between center and NWFP was in complete chaos during this time. Therefore, provincial-federation conflict results in severe economic losses to the country.

Economic losses create an

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hostile relation between center and province where center is unable to allocate funds for development projects. This tensions result in the rise of ethnic tensions. The people of different provinces view each other with antagonism. For instance, the people of Balochistan allege that most of their provincial resources are transferred to Punjab. These allegations result in severe impacts on ethnic tensions. Thus, provincial-federation weak relation fosters ethnic tensions.

Besides socio-economic consequences, the deterioration of center-province relation results in rise of terror activities. Terror organization view disharmony between center and province as an opportunity.

to attack on the weak points which further fuel tensions among political forces. These organisations use the common people that are alienated from the political system of the country. For instance TLP and BLA, both terror organisations recruits people who feel no space in the current political structure of the country. (Ali Babakel, Dawn Opinion). Hence, increase in terror activities is a significant consequence of provincial-federation conflict.

Not only terror activities, rise in separatist elements is also a consequence of centre-province relation. When people of the province perceive unequal opportunities they align with separatist elements. Ineffective implementation

of resources and funds alienate people creating an hostile environment between the state and the province. The people tend to join separatist elements as they are further exploited through propoganda. For example, Balochistan Liberation Army, a separatist organization alleges that federation extract out resources from the province and not spend it back. Hence, rise in separatist element is a direct consequence of center-province relation conflict.

Moreover, weak relation between federation and province fosters tension in domestic water conflict. Agricultural states require effective water management throughout the country to fulfill the requirement of each province. However, the

conflict between center and province result in a mistrust that enhances domestic water conflict.

For example, Kalabagh Dam, an important energy power project which can boost hydropower resource of the country is viewed as threat by Sindh and Balochistan. Hence, center-province relation in weak conditions fosters water conflict internally.

Subsequently, water conflict also result in deterioration of inter-provincial harmony resulting as ~~an~~ indirect impact from federation-provincial conflict. The alignment and consistency of reforms throughout the country requires transparency. This accountability requires healthy relation between center and province. The conflict creates an

hostile environment among the provinces and center resulting in mistrust. For example, Sindh government alleges that Irra water body is biased as it has allocated more water to Punjab. IRSA comes under the regulation of center. Thus, conflict between center and province results in deterioration of interprovincial harmony.

Contrarily, to balance the relation between center and province, effective reforms are required to build the trust between them.

First of all, the center should communicate regularly with the provinces by convening of Council of Common Interest (CCI). This body helps in creating a conducive environment between all the

parties to share their grievance. This can help understand both parties ^{about} the solution required for effective reforms that will help in diminishing the grievance. According to Article 154(3) of the constitution, it is mandatory to hold CCI meeting every 90 days. Hence, to counter the consequences of conflict between center and province, regular meeting of CCI is essential.

Furthermore, review over NFC award and effective allocation of shares of government revenue to the provinces can help in balancing the relation. NFC award is a method to allocate funds to respective provinces on the basis of population, poverty, revenue collection and inverse population density. The indicators often

benefit the provinces whose population is higher. For instance, Punjab gets 51.74% of the provincial share while Balochistan gets only 9.09%. This indicator is incentivized as it also cause strain on government revenue due to increase consumption. Effective NFC award can help in minimizing tensions between province and relation.

Furthermore, effective implementation of 18th Amendment can help in improved relation between center and province. This amendment requires dissolution of powers to the provinces. Majority of the provisions are handed over to the province. The remaining decentralization with effective institutional building can help in creation of conducive

environment. Hence, implementation of 18th Amendment can balance relation between center and province.

In conclusion, the fragile relation between center and province result in several negative impacts on the health of the country. Political Unity is the only solution to mitigate these impacts. The conflict result in instable politics with enhanced polarization, interference of non-democratic actors, economic losses, ethnic divisions, terrorism, separatism, and interprovincial disharmony. However, these consequences can be removed if political forces are able to communicate for the public interest. In this way, center and province can collectively work to uplift the socio-economic and political landscape of the country.