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## The Consequences of Provincial-Federation Conflict

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"Country wants constitution, nation wants democracy and provinces want autonomy." These were the words of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. These words are still apt today as per current scenario of country's political landscape. There is a conflict between federation and federating units. The pre-requisite of federation is submission of powers of federating units to center. Pakistan seems to be federation but it is not in true sense. The ongoing disagreements between center and provinces are not a good omen for national unity. There are multiple contributory factors such as unequal distribution of resources, overcentralization of power, lack of political consensus and grievances of masses. This conflict has negative consequences for the country in political, economic, social and governance domain. It is blow to national integration, hurdle in implementation of national policies and

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provides vacuum to non-state elements. Moreover, it leads to voices of creation of new provinces, ignites social chaos and civil unrest, leads to political deadlock and impacts negatively on health services. Additionally, it catalyzes economic meltdown and setback to national treasury. However, the abovementioned consequences can be reduced by taking holistic approaches such as addressing grievances of provinces, political consensus on national issues, equal distribution of resources and power among federating units, and put economic house in order. The conflict between provinces and federation leads to slowdown the pace of progress of the country. The factors behind need to be addressed in order to avoid consequences. Therefore, the holistic approaches are needed to fill the gap between federation and federating units.

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Currently, there are many conflicts between provinces and federation in Pakistan. The manifestations of conflicts are Sindh and Center's deadlock on issues, Balochistan's unsatisfactory response to center and KPK-Center's political conflict. All these manifestations are alarming to national unity of the country. After passing of the 18th Amendment, it was assumed that there would be smooth relationships between federation and federating units but it does not seem true today.

There are number of contributing factors behind provincial-federation conflict as follows.

Firstly, the unequal distribution of resources among federating unit fuel conflict. For instance, according to the National Finance Commission, the distribution of resources is base on population. It leads to grievances among masses of Balochistan who are receiving minimum share. Hence, the

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unequal distribution of resources is a contributing factor.

Secondly, the overcentralization of power in center is a pulling factor of center-provinces conflict. The exercising of power by center and not devolution to federating units leads to overshadowing of autonomy of provinces. Ultimately, it is creating rift between federation and provinces.

Thirdly, the lack of political consensus between federating units and center on national issues such as the construction of Kalabagh Dam leads to conflict between center and provinces. The unwillingness to surrender on national issues further aggravates the situation upto conflict.

Lastly, the unequal distribution of resources lead to grievance of masses and create sense of deprivedness among masses. The West Pakistan and East Pakistan had witnessed

Such kind of grievances which ultimately lead to separation of the east wing of Pakistan in 1971. Hence, masses's sentiments are crucial factor in center-provincial conflict.

The rift between center and provinces has detrimental impacts on the country. Following paragraphs shed light on consequences.

Firstly, it is blow to national integration. National integration requires strong and healthy relationship between center and provinces. The conflict between province and center leads to national disintegration. Ayesha Jalal has argued in her book that there are different heroes and villains of each province of Pakistan. The hero of one province is villain of other province. This multiethnicity requires strong center to hold provinces together under the national unity. So, the conflict is blow to national unity of country.

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Secondly, the conflict leads to create hurdles in implementation of national policies across the country.

The case in point is implementation of ~~the~~ Single National Curriculum across the country. The government decided to implement uniform mode of education in a country. The Sindh government has refused to implement it in the province due to language issue. It also announced to design its own provincial curriculum.

Therefore, the conflict is a hurdle in implementation of national policies.

Thirdly, the conflict between provincial - federation conflict provides vacuum to non-state elements such as TTP and Baloch Liberation Army. They infuse sense of deprivation among masses and carry out their activities to harm national fabric of country. The rise of BLA and TTP in marginalized areas are threat to



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the national security of country. Hence; provision of space to non-state elements is another consequence.

Moreover, the conflict between provincial-federation intensify voices of creating new federating units. These are voices of creating new federating units on the basis of language, ethnicity and distribution of resources.

Also, these are separatist movements for separate country. For instance, the demand of Hazarawal, SaraiKistan and Pashtoon belt to become provinces are conceining.

Furthermore, the conflict between provincial - federation ignites social chaos and civil unrest in the country.

The case in point is recent protests of Baloch students and people in Islamabad. Another case in point is protests of political leadership of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa in Islamabad and civil unrest in a result. The

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Closure of the capital due to protests is alarming for the national security of country.

Additionally, the conflict among federation and federating units leads to political deadlock between the

two units. For instance, the recent protest in Islamabad creates intense relations between center and province.

The masses from the KPK to Capital arrived for protests caused political deadlock.

The blame game is harmful to political stability of country. It further fuels political instability in country.

Another consequence is negative impacts on health services. The health is a subject of provinces after the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment. In 2021, the Rabies outbreak in Larkana, Sindh. The unavailability of vaccines lead to loss of lives.

On this unfortunate and

mismanaged condition, the Sindh government accused center for this negligence.

The Drug Regulation Authority (DRA) has been under the center. This conflict further impacted negatively on health services of the country.

In addition to this, another consequence is economic meltdown of the country. The conflict catalyzes economic meltdown of the country. For instance, the protests of Baloch in Gwadar has stopped the CPEC activities. Gwadar is CPEC route. These protests on the grievances of masses are not good omen for economic progress.

Lastly, the conflict between provincial-federation is set back to national exchequer. For instance, there is a divide between the center and Sindh government on the collection of tax revenues in the province. The Sindh government claims of tax collection from

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the province while center claims it as per federal subject. This significant division is setback to national treasury.

The above mentioned consequences can be reduced by taking some approaches as follows.

Firstly, there is a need of addressing grievances of masses in provinces especially in Balochistan. There is a sense of deprivedness among people. They become vulnerable to non-state elements and ultimately use as a tool against country. The government should increase subsidies, job quotas and develop infrastructure these to make people satisfy.

Secondly, there is a high time of political consensus on national issues. The politicians need to put national interests above vested interest. The designing and implementation of National Security Policy was a good step in this regard. The

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consensus of provinces and federation is need of hour to overcome deadlock.

Thirdly, the economic crisis is head of all crisis. There is a dire need of putting economic house in order to avoid conflict. The government should include federating units while making economic policies. It can overcome the conflicts.

Lastly, there is a need of distributing equal resources and devolution of powers among federating units. The over sharing of power leads to conflict between center and province. The equal division of resources creates sense of belongingness and national cohesion. So, equal division of resources and power can fill the gap.

In a nutshell, federation requires integration of federating units to function properly. The submission of powers of federating units

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to federation is pre-requisite of federation. These are pulling factors that create conflict and rift between provincial-federation. These factors can be social, political and economical. It has deteriorating impacts on the country's progress. There are many manifestations of ongoing conflict between center and provinces in Pakistan that needs to be addressed. However, the aforementioned consequences can be reduced by taking measures that can cemented relations among provinces and federation.

