

GUL AWAR KHAN

University of Westminster, London , United Kingdom

FAILURE OF FEDERALISM CAUSES NATIONALISM/SEPARATISM: THE CASE OF BALOCHISTAN IN PAKISTAN

Abstract:

Pakistan is a federal state consisting of four federating units namely, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh. In essence federalism is a system of government under which diverse population can be accommodated in a way where each group would be able to maintain its distinct identity and control over its affairs and resources. Federalism is basically stands for unity in diversity wherein the principle of self-rule and shared rule plays an important role in keeping unite the diverse society intact. Federalism provides opportunities to all the constituent regions for greater economic prosperity and safeguards each unit from external and internal military threats. It is dynamic and flexibly democratic in character. Furthermore, federalism works under certain principles such as: 1) Two-fold sovereignty [or sharing of powers between the constituent unit(s) and the central/federal government]; 2) a supreme written and rigid constitution which cannot be amended unilaterally; 3) distribution of powers [each set of government enjoys constitutionally delegated powers in the sphere of legislation and execution under the constitution]; 4) allocation of genuine autonomy [the constitution ensures allocation of revenue resources between the two levels of governments and also some areas of genuine autonomy for each other]; and 5) an umpire, who could avoid the clash between the federal and constituent governments. However, when federalism deviates from its basic principles, it gives way to ethno-nationalism, conflicts, and separatism. The emergence of ethno-nationalist movements, conflicts, and separatism are attached to the structures and composition, policies and attitudes of the federations towards the regionally based identity groups as well as the democratization of the polity. If a federation is structurally imbalanced in its demographic composition than there are chances where majority or tiny skilled groups would override the smaller groups in the central institutions such as parliament, Armed forces, developmental projects, and policy making at home as well as abroad. In return, the smaller identity groups would feel that they are deprived and denied equal opportunities in the in the state structure.

This paper is looking into the ways which cause the emergence of Baloch nationalism and separatism within Pakistan and argues that the Baloch nationalism and the sentiments of separatism are the results of the lack of federal character and principles of the Pakistani federation. The main argument of the paper is that; whether it is the failure of the principle(s) of federation to keep intact the diverse society or the practices of the federation which forced the smaller ethno-national groups to ask for more autonomy and separatism. Should we see the present crisis within the Pakistani state as resulting significantly from a failure of democratic federalism?

Keywords:

Pakistan, Balochistan, Nationalism, Federalism, and Separatism