

The Predicament of Ethnicity in Divided Society of Pakistan

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to elaborate the role of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts arise in the diversified societies where Pakistan is taken as an example. Authors have discussed the issues and conflicts arise in Pakhtun, Sindhi and Hazara divisions because of ethnical issues. Authors have also provided the suggestive solution for sectarian and religious issue.

Keywords: Ethnicity, diversified society, sects

1. Introduction

In the presence of competing trends with each others in every field of life, ethnic conflicts are possible in every diversified society¹. But the question is that what are the ways and means that a political system must adopt to pacify the conflicting trends in a society, so that every ethnic group may feel such satisfaction that its particular identity is intact in the state as a whole. Pakistan is a state with great diversification². Many ethnic groups on the basis of language, religion and culture exist in the country³. Pakistan was created as a reaction of Muslim minority against the oppression of Hindu majority in the Subcontinent of India. When it was created in 1947, it was comprised of two wings and there was a distance of 1600 Kilometers between both the wings⁴. Both parts of this newly established state were different from each other except religion. Keeping this reality in view, early leadership of Pakistan decided to adopt federal form of government but stress on Urdu as the only national language created a rift between the two wings. Later on imposition of Martial Law damaged the ethnic harmony in the country⁵. When ethnic crises increased it produced identity crises in the state and East wing of Pakistan separated from rest of the state on the name of identity in 1971. Here are some ethnicity issues which the state is facing in the contemporary period.

2. Democracy and Identity Crises

Early leadership of Pakistan tried to create national identity on religious ground and centralization of powers. They were not sure about the unity of divided people in a newly emerged state.⁶ Pakistan was created on the name of Islam but the idea of separate Muslim Nationality was not much popular in its many areas and more over its many prudent leaders did not belong to these areas which were the part of Pakistan. Therefore the communication gap between the leadership and masses was wide.⁷ In these situation regionalist leaders created a sense of mistrust, disharmony and disunity and ethno nationalist leaders took the charge of movements which were started for democracy and secularization of polity.⁸ A past colonial state with a strong center was struggling to build its national identity on religious and linguistic ground could not bear the sentiments of provincialism on cultural, linguistic and territorial bases.⁹

During the independence movement Urdu was the defining base for religious identity of Muslims but when this Urdu was declared as the national language of Pakistan, regionalist leaders described it as linguistic imperialism, a terminology used for domination of one language over others and which is generally spoken by the privileged class of the society¹⁰

and Urdu became the main cause of discontent among Bengalis when founder of Pakistan declared Urdu as a national language in 1948.¹¹ Bengalis started a movement for recognition of Bengali as a national language along with Urdu which one of the other causes led Pakistan towards disintegration in 1971.

3. Issue of Pakhtun Identity

Pakhtun identity always remained in clash with Pakistan's national identity. Pakhtun nationality movement was started by former All India Congress men. Dr. Khan Sahib and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in 1948 when they demanded renaming of NWFP as

Pakhtonistan¹². The leadership of Pakhton identity movement had their relations with India, Afghanistan and Russia that is why they remained suspect in the eyes of Pakistani establishment. All the above mentioned states supported Pakhton movement which compelled Pakistan towards religious identity. Pakistan built its religious ties with Pakhton religious factors in 1979 due to its strategic considerations. Support for Taliban from Pakistani establishment reflects the strategical and religious consideration of Pakistan.¹³ Afghan government always remained in contact with Pakhton regionalist leaders in Pakistan. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto for the first time adopted strategy of welcoming religious faction of Afghanistan only to counter the policies of Afghanistan. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto welcomed Gulbadin Hikmatyar and Burhanuddin Rabbani in 1973 and supported them against Afghanistan's nationalist president Daud Khan who was in support for Pakhton identity leaders in Pakistan.¹⁴

It may be argued that mostly Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's supported leaders of Afghanistan became the Mujahedeen leaders against Russia and their decedents had Tahreek Taliban against United States of America. Thus Pakistani establishment deliberately changed the ethnic sentiments of Pakhton identity into religious identity. During 1980s Pakistan obtained an opportunity to enhance its influence in Afghanistan when after the Soviet Union's dismemberment, cold war came to an end. In 1990 Pakistan increased its relations with religious forces in Afghanistan which worked as a tool to rebuff the Pakhton clarity in Pakistani areas and turned the ethnic identity into religious identity. That is why initially Pakistan supported Taliban.¹⁵ The 9/11 attacks changed the whole scenario and produced conflict between Islamist militants in Afghanistan and the west that effected Pakistan inadequately, because Pakistan's own planted Taliban having Pakhton wali as their code of conduct with religious identity turned against Pakistan when it decided to become ally of American led war against terrorism.¹⁶ Illiteracy, political and administrative policies of governments, economic deprivation, political barring, lack of good governance, redundancy and lack of developed infrastructure caused unemployment and militancy in Pakhton areas of Pakistan. In 2008 Awami National party won elections in former NWFP on the name of Pakhton identity. After the elections newly elected democratic federal government of Yousaf Raza Galani introduced 18th amendment to the constitution in which NWFP was renamed as Khyber pakhton Khawa on the demands of ANP with consensus of all political parties to appease the pakhton identity.¹⁷

4. Issue of Sindhi Identity

Sindhi nationalist movement started with the birth of Pakistan. It gained impetus in 1960 during the Ayub Khan's regime when many Pakhton and other ethnic groups migrated to big cities in Sindh, After partition in initial years mahajirs had migrated to Karachi. This was an alarming situation for native Sindhis who felt the danger of becoming minority in their own provinces.¹⁸

Sindh witnessed wide spread riots between Sindhis and non Sindhis in 1970 when government of Pakistan Peoples Party introduced Sindhi as compulsory language in government schools.¹⁹ The language controversy gave rise to another identity concern, this

time for Mohajirs (Refuges from India) and by the 1980 the Urdu speaking mohajirs started their identity movement in the form of Mohajir Qaumi Movement which turned into Motahidda Qaumi Movement in the coming years under the leadership of presently exiled Altaf Hussain. Mohajirs has a relation of love and hate with Pakistani establishment. Motahidda Qumi Movement is working for middle class in Pakistan and against the feudal and land lord classes. Mohajirs are in dominant position in urban and industrial centers of Sindh and especially in Karachi and Hyderabad. General Zia-ul-Haq patronized Mohajir Qumi movement to check the influence of Pakistan People's Party in Sindh²⁰. Native Sindhis viewed Mohajir domination in urban areas as a threat to their identity. Their claim is that Mohajirs are living inside the Sindh province and their identity is Sindhi not Mohajir. They observe Sindhi Topi (Cap) and Ajrak day every year to protect their cultural identity.

5. Baloch Identity

The issue of Baloch identity started with the creation of Pakistan. The federal government had used force to stifle insurgency in Balochistan for three times i.e. in 1962, 1973-77 and 2004; Balochistan is vast and rich in natural resources but small in population. It was given the status of a province in 1970.²¹ Before creation of Pakistan it was not a single administrative area.²² Britishers divided it into British Balochistan and princely states. British Balochistan was comprised of Pakhtun speaking districts and Bugti Marri tribal areas which are the centre of past and present insurgencies, while princely states i.e. Kalat, Kharan, Las Bela and Makran remained under the framework of British Indian Empire. After independence these areas were merged into One Unit which was created in 1955 for administrative and political purposes. Baloch leadership reacted strongly against this act of central government.²³ One Unit was dissolved during Yahya Khan Regime and Balochistan got the status of province with a separate provincial government. In first general elections of Pakistan in 1970 ethnic sentiments were used in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtun Khawa for political objectives and in both provinces ethnic groups won the elections and formed their governments with the help of religious groups. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto assumed power in 1972 after the separation of East Pakistan in 1971. He adopted accommodative strategy and gave a unanimous constitution to the country. During Zulfikar Ali Bhutto regime, central government dismissed the provincial government of Sardar Atta Ullah Mengal in Balochistan with provincial governor Ghous Baksh Bizenjo on February 16, 1973 on the charges of conspiracy against federation. NAP led government in Khyber Pakhtun Khawa also registered its sympathy with Baloch leadership and resigned from provincial government of Khyber Pakhtun Khawa. Insurgency started in Balochistan and military was used to suppress the rebellions. When in 1977 General Zia-ul-Haq sacked Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government, secessionist movements came to an end. General Zia-ul-Haq released all political prisoners of Balochistan. Gradually Baloch nationalists started joining main stream politics of Pakistan. After Zia's death in 1988 when political and democratic process started in the country, the ethnic leadership of Balochistan participated in state craft matters during Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharief governments. Military coup of 1999 disturbed the situation and insurgent group Balochistan Liberation Army changed into Balochistan Republican Army (BRA). The history of Pakistan reveals that military governments are mainly responsible for Baloch

ethnicity. General Zia-Ul-Haq acted against the interests of Baloch nationalist leaders and General Pervaiz Mushrraf's regime destroyed the peace in Balochistan by joining war against terrorism. In 2002 when general elections held Baloch and Pakhton nationalist groups secured only 21 seats out of 124 in Balochistan Assembly. Baloch leadership thought it as manipulation of General Pervaiz Mushrraf's regime. MMA got majority in Baloch Assembly and formed a coalition government with PMLQ for the coming five years. Baloch ethnic leadership also started demanding provincial autonomy within the federation of Pakistan under 1973 constitution but murder of Nawab Akbar Bugti on August 26, 2006 inflamed Balochistan once again. Baloch leadership also viewed mega projects started in their province like that of Gowadar port, Coastal highway and construction of small dams as against their interests. According to them these projects will increase the influx of population in Blochistan from other provinces and it will be a serious burden on the resources of Balochistan. In 2008 a new democratic era started when in the elections Pakistan Peoples Party won majority of the seats in the National Assembly and formed a coalition government in centre and in Balochistan as well. It started working for peace in Balochistan, offered 15000 jobs for Baloch youngsters on the behalf of central government, presented Aaghaz-e-Haqooq Balochistan Package and provided provincial autonomy by ending concurrent list in 18th Amendment. But unrest in Balochistan is still prevailing in 2012. Now foreign powers are trying to internationalize this conflict. There is a dire need to redress the issues of poverty, unemployment and missing persons and to provide political authority and control over their national resources to Baloch leadership, so that sense of Baloch identity must be preserved along with Pakistani identity.

6. Hazara Identity Crises

Hazara is located in Khyber Pakhton Khawa with rich cultural and linguistic heritage. Pakistan is a Sunni Muslim state, but in Hazara areas Shia sect is dominating. Implementation of Sunni doctrine in courts in Hazara areas, lack of local representation at central level and fear of lost of Hazara culture and language in Pakhton culture are the major causes of ethnic sentiments in this area. After independence Abdul Ghaffar Khan the Congress leader was dominating the scene in Khyber Pakhton Khawa. He was against the creation of Pakistan, but after his initial resistance he announced that he would "accept a loose confederation of the Six Settled districts of the North West Frontier Province with Pakistan which may wish to join the new state of their free will". He wanted that only defense, foreign affairs and communication should be maintained by federal government assigning rest of the powers to federating units. He started Pakhtonistan issue and formed National Awami Party (NAP). But creation of One Unit in 1955 for solving parity issues proved a fatal blow to the NAP's demands. Along with other small provinces many leader of Khyber Pakhton Kahawa also rejected One Unit scheme and continued struggling for greater provincial autonomy and renaming of their province.²⁴ Separation of East Pakistan in 1971 proved a set back to the integration of the country and NAP entered into a coalition government with PPP in remaining Pakistan for strengthening the country.²⁵

Leaders of National Awami also left their stance of renaming their province by knowing about the reality that renaming NWFP as Pakhtonistan will cause severe reaction in Hindko

speaking areas of the province.²⁶ After the dismissal of Balochistan government by Bhutto in 1973 government of NAP in Khyber Pakhton Kahwa also resigned and NAP was banned by federal government on charges of anti state activities and its leadership was arrested²⁷. In the later years remaining leadership of NAP formed National Democratic Alliance (NDP) under the leadership of Sher Baz Mazari. During Zia era, ethnicity was promoted all over the county. In 1986 a new party with the merger of four small parties including National Democratic Party (NDP) was created and it was named as Awami National Party. In 1988 elections ANP secured 12 seats in Provincial Assembly and 2 in the National Assembly in the name of renaming NWF but till 1997 no major effort was made for this purpose. After 1997 election ANP joined Pakistan Muslim League (N) government and passed a resolution in NWFP Assembly for renaming it with a clear majority of 53 to 2 while 45 members did not take part in voting.²⁸ ANP exerted pressure on Nawaz Sharif government for constitutional amendment for renaming of the Province because of the negation of their demands they left the coalition government. Their stance was that when all other provinces are named according to their main ethnic group then why not pakhtons.²⁹ Muslim League could not do so because of its strong support in Hindko speaking areas. Lack of consensus over the issue resulted in the breakup of the coalition. During Pervaize Mushrraf rule ANP supported Mushrraf. In 2002 election the performance of ANP was not well but in 2008 elections they got enough majorities to form a coalition government in NWFP with PPP and also at central level. ANP obtained votes on the issue of renaming the province. In April 2010 PPP led coalition government introduced 18th amendment to the constitution of 1973 by which NWFP was renamed. This act caused conflict of identity in Hindko speaking areas of Hazara division. People of the area started demonstrations and demanded a separate province of their own under the banner of Hazara Qumi Movement a party which was organized in late 1980 for the preservation of rights of Hindko speaking people.³⁰ They also claim that Hindko should be recognized as a separate language as the 40% people of the province speak Hindko. Renaming of NWFP created a disturbance in the plural society of Pakistan.

7. Religion as a Tool for National Identity

Religion was used by the leaders of independence movement as a tool for producing a separate Muslim identity and Pakistan was created in the name of Muslim ideology. After the creation of Pakistan Quaid –e- Azam presented the idea of modernized Islamic state. Religion was also used as a tool in dealing relations with India and Afghanistan and to curtail the influence of ethno - national identities³¹. Moreover religious identity of Pakistan provided her an opportunity of being the leader of Islamic world. That is why Pakistani leadership has great say in the Muslim world's issues stretching from Kashmir to Palestine.³²

Pakistan is serving as beacon light for the oppressed Muslim nations of the world and some faction of society wanted to change Pakistan into truly Islamic state guided by Islamic principles.³³ Zia-ul-Haq used Islam as state's policy and strategy during his regime to control Soviet Union in Afghanistan.³⁴ This Islamic identity was also used by the state for Kashmir. Pakistan never supported secular leadership of Kashmiri separatists.³⁵ In reply India always used ethnic identity as a weapon to counterfeit Pakistan policy. Pakistan's reaction towards India is based on the independence movement during which Muslim League had

confrontation with secular Congress on religious issues and after partition when occupied Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagarh were captured by India, a general census developed in Pakistan, that it had not accepted the birth of Pakistan.³⁶ Domestically religious elements always remained in contact with Pakistani military and establishment. Pakistan's character as an Islamic state developed in 1949 when Objectives Resolution was passed by the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan which increased the influence of Islam in state matters.³⁷ It was ulemas religious chauvinism which resulted in first martial in Lahore in 1953 when they demonstrated against Ahmidis. Islamic provisions were included in all the constitutions of Pakistan. In 1977 Tehreek-e- Nizam-e-Mustafa weakened Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's government and Zia came into power who produced religious rifts within the Pakistani society in the name of religious identity. This act of Zia Gave rise to sectarianism in the country that was controlled by another military General Pervaiz Musharaf when he banned sectarian organizations.

8. Sectarianism

Sectarianism started in Pakistan under the aegis of Zia-ul-Haq when he tried to enforce Sunni doctrine negating Shia's demands in the state. Actually it is a conflict between shias and deobandis supported by Ahle-Hadith. Tehreek-e-Jafaria Pakistan(TJP)formed in 1979 to protect the shia cause against General Zia's policies. In retaliation Deobandis organized Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) under the leadership of Haq Nawaz Jhangwi in 1985 at Jhang, an off shot of the jamiat-e-ulma Islam (Jui).³⁸ Organized sectarianism started in Jhang district where 300 hundred Shia's were hilled between 1985 and 1989.³⁹ Over 700 people were killed in Punjab between 1989 and 2001. Total number of human lives affected in sectarianism between 1989 and 2003 was 1468 in all over Pakistan, 3370 people also injured and 1813 sectarian incident happened. Sectarianism also caused damage of 1850 lives in Sindh, only in Karachi 293 people died from 1994 to 2002 and mostly belonging to shia sect. Sectarian violence reached at its peak in Karachi in 1994-95 and 103 Shia's and 28 Sunnies were killed during these years. Off-shot of Sipah Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangwi formed in 1990 and off shoot of Tehreek-e-Jafaria, Sipah-e-Muhammad formed in 1991 were also responsible for infuriating the sectarian clashes in Pakistan. More over two other Deobandi, organizations Tehreek-e-Nafaz Shariat-e-Muahmmadi (TNSM) formed in 1994 and Lashkar-e-Taiba formed in 1997-1998 are also involved in militant activities. Present wave of organized sectarian killings started in 1988 when Tehreek-e- Jafaria,s leader Arif Hussian Al-Hussaini was killed. It started in 1987 when Ahle-Hadith leader Allama Ehsan Elahi Zaheer and Mulana Habib ur Rehman were killed in Lahore along with their six other companions. Haq Nawaz Jhangwi was killed in February 1990 and sectarianism increased over whelmingly, bomb blasting in opposite sect's mosques and gathering target killing, hand grenade and time bomb blasting became the patterns of violence.

Since 1997 and particularly after 9/11 attacks sectarianism got new trends of gun firing without discrimination and suicide bombing became new patterns which are still in use till 2012. There are many reasons of sectarianism. Shia revolution in Iran in 1979, Zia's policy of Sunni Islamizing and Afghan war against Russia which brought Kalashankove and drug culture, militancy in political parties, dictatorship in the country and war against terrorism are

major causes for this monstrous act against humanity in Pakistan. Wildly grown and unregistered madrassas are also factories of sectarianism. After 9/11 attacks Pervaiz Musharraf banned major sectarian groups in Pakistan but their activities remained in practice. Taliban and Al Qaida are also militant Sunni groups which had made their grounds in all over Pakistan.⁴⁰ Shias living in Pakistan are feeling identity crises. They are a minority Muslim sect in Pakistan and sectarian clashes against Shias are also a struggle to control their influence by the Sunnis. In reply Shias are trying to preserve their identity by counter violence. Both shia's and deoband's are being supported by foreign elements to preserve their own interests.⁴¹ Western world views sectarianism in Pakistan in militancy perspectives. Also these militant activities are destabilizing factor for Pakistanis society and Iran which is a Shia state can increase its influence in Pakistan. It is also a matter of concern for western world.⁴²

9. Minorities Concerns

Pakistan is a Muslim state with 98% of its population is Muslim and rest 2 percent belongs to different minority groups. In 2007 it was stated that in total 160 million population of Pakistan only 8 millions are non Muslims and majority of which poor, illiterate are and socially and economically having less importance in society. Pakistan started its functioning as a democratic state but Objectives Resolution changed its character to some extent as theoretic state. All constitution which was introduced in Pakistan recognized minority rights in Pakistan with some limitations. For example according to 1973 constitution a minority member cannot be a president or prime minister of the country. But in other aspects of life they are free to do things according to their fundamental rights and are protected constitutionally. As in every state minority face identity crises, so is in Pakistan, minorities claim that they are facing discrimination in every field of life like that in educational sallybus, educational institutions, jobs in civil and military services and above all forceful conversion of young girls towards islam. Recently in March 2012 conversion of Faryal Shah in Sindh is being highlighted by Pakistan and foreign media.⁴³ but the causes of the conversion of hindu girl is still a big questi

Indo Pakistan wars of 1948, 1965 and 1971 raised hatred against minorities in Pakistan, and again in 1992 following the destruction of Babri Mosque in India many temples were demolished in Pakistan and communal hatred rose to its peak, violence against Behari Muslims in India by the Hindus, communal riots of Indian Gujrats and violence of February to March 2002 in India following the construction of Ram temple also effected minorities in Pakistan. Internally constitutional provisions like that of Objectives Resolution and constitutional amendments made by Zia regime posed an identity threat to the minorities, and they feel sense of inequality. Economic marginalization of minorities especially of Christians and Hindus, low paid and low status jobs are also a matter of concern for them.⁴⁴

According to Pakistan's National Council for Justice and peace in 2001 the average literacy rate in Christians in Punjab is 34% compared to national average of 46.56 percent⁴⁵. While literacy rate among the Jati Hindus (upper cast) is 34% among scheduled casts (sahis) is 19% among and other including (parsis, Buddhists, Sikhs and nomads) is 17% whereas Ahmidis are ahead from majority group and their literacy rate is 51.67 percent⁴⁶. On the part of government of Pakistan it adopted policy of appeasement instead of redressing their problems that caused sense of deprivation and depression among minority groups in particular

10. Conclusion

It is clear from the above discussion that Pakistan is multi ethnic and multi cultural society. All four provinces have distinct nationalities and ethnic balance in the society is very delicate. Marginal nationalities are feeling identity crises in all provinces in the presence of majority groups. Another nature of identity crises is that, Baloch nationality in Blochistan is also feeling the danger to their identity as the balochs are comparatively less in number than the other groups. Presences of sectarian differences are the third dimension in identity crises in Pakistan. Foreign elements for their own interests are also responsible for ethnic controversy in the country. Therefore government of Pakistan needs care consideration to deal with ethnicity crises in the country.

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