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Identity Crises and Politics of Ethnicity: A Case Study of Hazara Nationalist Movement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract

The Pakistani Federation has vested more autonomy to the provinces through the 18th constitutional amendment. This autonomy has evidenced impetus for the continuing demands of sub-national sets and provincial minorities for the creation of new provinces in Pakistan. The identity crisis and politics of ethnicity have been reawakened after the 18th constitutional amendment. The Hazarawal (various ethnolinguistic groups inhabited in Hazara) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province have been striving for a separate province since the 1950s, and the voice for separate identity re-emerged as a full-fledged movement after the 18th amendment. This analytical study proposes that the movement seems quite fruitful in attaining some of its essential objectives. Nevertheless, the movement is still far away from achieving its prime and chief political terminus, i.e., the creation of a separate Hazara province. In this context, this paper tries to explore the identity crisis and politics of ethnicity in the Hazara region. The paper contends that without adopting some more effective and substantial measures, the movement could not attain its goalmouth in the near future. However, a more flexible, inclusive and accommodative approach would boost the chance of its ultimate success.

Key Words: Hazara, Province, Autonomy, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ethnicity, Identity, Ethnic Nationalism

Introduction

A loosely knitted federal polity of Pakistan could not accommodate its multiplicity of identities on an equal basis which can be gauged in the current scenario. However, in order to get a better understanding of the current tribulations of the Pakistani ethnic problem widespread in all provinces, it is required to have a retrospective

glimpse of these ethnic identities. ([Veena Kokreja, 2020, 1](#))

According to Saeed,

“Pakistan is also a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious state with the social configuration of diverse identities and cultures. As a result of independence in 1947, multiple ethnic identities

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with lingual and racial differences settled into a federal state of the South Asian region. Different people from different geographical locations and socio-economic backgrounds were epistemologically united on the name of Islam. But ontological analysis of the pre-partition situation reveals that the desire to safeguard the societal, political, and economic rights of downtrodden common masses and power-grabbing aspiration of political elites led them towards resistance but with unifying force of Islam which galvanized their cultural diversities." (Saeed, 1980, 23).

The case of the creation of new provinces in Pakistan after the 18th amendment created a new debate about the formation of new provinces. The issue of Hazarawall is considered the most viable issue along with the other administrative units. The autonomous units in Pakistan, in accordance with the lingual lines in comparison with India, created intentions among the ethnic communities. The present study will focus on the Hazara issue post 18th amendment in Pakistan.

The division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is required in order to overcome the socio-cultural and politico-economic deprivation of the people of the Hazara region. Their demand for the separate Hazara province sought great importance due to the existence of the Hindko speaker around 30% of the total population of the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is therefore the people of the Hazara region are demanding for the territorial division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This demand in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has pursued larger significance when the eighteenth constitutional amendment has been proclaimed into the state constitution. (Asma, 2019, 2)

"The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly demanded of the federal government to implement its earlier resolution, which had called for the creation of four provinces in the country, especially Hazara province. MPA of the opposition Awami National Party from Swat district Waqar Khan was the only member in the house, who opposed the resolution by voice vote."

Considerably, the Awami National Party naming lawmaker Laiq Khan, who belongs to the Torghar district of Hazara division has signed on the

resolution. The prominent member of the governing political parties from the Hazara division has moved the resolution, including (PTI) Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and opposition (PMLN) Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz.

The resolution was read out by Sardar Mohammad Yousuf of the PML-N. He further stated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial Assembly had passed a Resolution in March 2014, which clearly indicated that the constitution did not disallow the formation of additional confederating units in the country. The resolution also acclaimed that the central government for the formation of new confederating units containing Hazara province should table a constitutional amendment bill in the parliament of Pakistan. ([Sana Ullah, Ijaz., 2017, 164](#))

Stephen. P. Cohen stated "that, Pakistan is plural and the highly diverse society in terms of language, ethnic and religiously. He further remarked that 'Pakistan is one of the world's most linguistically and ethnically complex states' ([Cohen, 2005, 201](#))."

Identity politics, politics of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism in Pakistan has involved a significant academic devotion in recent years. Certain types of literature available that extend the analysis of Sindhi, Pashtun, Baloch, and Mohajir Nationalist Movements. (Amin, 1988, Ahmed, 1998, Laif & Hamza, 2000, Siddiqi, 2012, Ahmar, 2013, Khan, 2014).

Nevertheless, only a few writers have been enthusiastically writing on the politics of identity in the Hazara region (Sher Bahadur Pani, 2004, Azhar Abbasi, 2020, 2021, Tariq Rehman, 2002 & Mushtaq, 2013, Shoaib & Abid Abbasi, 2021, Saman Zulifqar, 2020, Shahid, 2014). Still, fewer to the Hazara Province Movement (Azhar, 2020, 2021, Shoaib, 2019, Munawar, 2020), Henceforth, the current research goes to add an inventive contribution (based on primary data and recent literature) to the existing learning on the Hazara Province Movement.

Delineating the Mythological Framework

For the current research, the major sources for the data collection that have been utilized were primary and secondary. Therefore, the methodical

approach depends on conducting an in-depth study of official documents, research journals, books, newspapers, and essays was conducted.

Moreover, limited nationalist and scholars were interviewed to produce the comprehensive concept of research. The methodological tools used focus group discussions, interviews, data analysis, and review of the document. The current research also focused on quantitative key variables and applied these variables to measure the sources. Few research questions have been generated to analyze the data after going through the review of the literature. Furthermore, the researcher has also utilized the available secondary resources including, Research Articles published in various HEC recognized journals, Books, and other sources.

Literature Review

The sources that have been used in my paper are as follows: Ared Lijphat (1975), (1977), (1994), (1999) and (2008) has examined the concept of consociational democracy with several characteristics in his research. He also plans various covered devices of a plural society. The foremost is the segmental autonomy that has been used that could prove its implications in Pakistan's ethnic community of the Hazara region in the current discussion.

Katherine Adeney (2007) has advocated a rich material with regard to ethnic conflict regulation in India and Pakistan. The focus is on the formation of regional and segmental administrative units. The research also helps to understand the ethnic division in Pakistan and India to realize its current results. The conclusion recommended sufficient power-sharing and administrative management in Pakistan.

George Anderson (2008) and S. P Huntington (1993) have both examined the administrative role in ethnic perspective in democratic regimes into regional and federal institutions. His study is based on theoretical lines. He emphasized on constitutional and economic liberalization to maintain good governance in the state.

Ishtiaq Ahmed (2004) has examined the lingual ethnicity and the territorially regionalist movements in contemporary South Asia ascribed in the formation of a new administrative mechanism. The

study has been keen analysis in a historical and normative way. The book is an interesting tool to consider the management of lingual and regionalist elements in the region, especially with regard to Pakistan, in theory.

Ian Talbot (1996), (2007) and (2010) has comprehensively examined the constitutional and political history of South Asia. Moreover, he has perceived in his research work and focused on administrative autonomy in Pakistan and the creation of new states in the subcontinent. Talbot also observed the regional features with regard to personalities in Pakistan's political history. He concluded in his research that constitutional engineering is the only serious motion to resolve the ethnic problems from Pakistan.

Hamid Khan (2010) and Asghar Khan (2005) have both briefly examined constitutional history. The analysis has examined the policies of several governments in the past to manage the ethnic conflicts in the administrative units. The study helps me to be eloquent in the communal provisions in the provinces.

Muhammad Waseem (2006) (2010), (2011) and (2011) and K. Alqama (2003) are two main scholars in the context of understanding the regional politics in Pakistan. In his study, the writer mostly emphasized on the political and administrative polity. Muhammad Waseem in his mostly analyzed the policy-oriented research with regard to Pakistan's history with prime results.

Muhammad Mushtaq (2009), Maya Chadda (2000) and Mehrunnisa Ali (1996) have examined the ethnic diversity and formation of federalism on regional patterns in Pakistan. He examined that the formation of federalism on consociational principles could be the main pattern for Pakistan to resolve its administrative and communal problems.

Research Questions

1. Why the people of the Hazara region are demanding for the new province?
2. To what extent the 18th constitutional amendment reawaken the Hazara Ethno-Nationalist Movement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?

3. What are the major dynamics and drivers of the Hazara ethnic-nationalist movement?
4. What are the major factors behind the identity crisis in Hazara?

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the demand of the Hazara region as a separate province.
2. To explore the 18th constitutional amendment and its repercussion in Hazara Ethno- Nationalist Movement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
3. To investigate the major dynamics and drivers of the Hazara ethnic- nationalist movement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
4. To explore the major factors behind the identity crisis in the Hazara region.

Theoretical Contextualization of the Theme

Segmental Autonomy

In fact, Segmental Autonomy contains the definite group representation and is usually recommended for dealing with conflict in intensely scattered societies. It is often seen as synonymous with power-sharing.

Arend Lijphart has defined “segmental autonomy in terms of civil and political liberty of a minority community living in a federating unit. The segmental cleavages in a plural society, according to Lijphart, could be accommodated by homogenizing them in a constitutional way. The segmental portion in developing democracies has been analyzed in terms of consociationalism, which tends to create political competition and cooperation. The decision is made through majority decisions which manage the ethnic conflicts in plural societies.”

In ethnically diverse societies, some explicit conditions such as constitutional engineering, communal distribution, and accommodation of self-government rights to national minorities are transformed so that they do not prefer to indulge in malpractice. There is some identification for this purpose that has been discussed in the following paragraphs—characteristics of Segmental Autonomy.

The following are the characteristics of Segmental autonomy has been described by Arend Lijphart:

Coordination and Administrative Unity

In fact, the unity and coordination of administration is necessary to apprehend the demands of segmental cleavages in multiple republics. The need is constructed on comic trespassing of majority coalition rule and on constitutional principles. If the cleavages have been distributed into sub-groups on a cultural, lingual, racial, and creeds basis, then there are also certain problems to meet the outstanding alliance-run decision making.

Plural Society

The segmental autonomy is valid where there has been living considerable minorities along with major ethnic groups.

“the language and religion have been considered two fundamental characteristics in ethnically diverse societies. Pakistan has also experienced the same case. The constitutional management to accommodate the different lingual groups is still under process. The regional elites are the main machinery that has polarized discussion upon such issues. ¶ Sufficient constitutional privileges The constitutional privileges to minorities provide an extensive impression that they consider more satisfied as compared to the majority area. As the plural developed, states have personified elites who prefer to discuss the issue in parliamentary language rather than packages.”

Territorial unity with diverse economic rights and economic liberalization is also the main formula to promote solidarity at both regional and national levels. The issue will arise when the extra-economic liberty to segmental cleavages results into a small number of issues in the plural societies. The communities are living in odd lines following strict cultural and social heritage will become more challengeable for the state. ([Sayed Mussawar, 2013, 21](#))

Intra-Provincial Agitations

Actually, obliteration of one-unit structure brought the intra-provincial disparities into the limelight, and

all ethnic movements erupted with a natural vigor in the 1970's. On conventional grounds, federation requires a constitutional platform for its effectual functionality but ontologically, its accomplishment depends primarily on political determination. (Hasnat, 2012, p, 2).

“Uneven accommodation of ethnic diversities of federal units originated from over domination of particular racial representation in the establishment of Pakistan such as, overly controlled by Punjabi and Pashtoons at the utter neglect of rest of the racial or lingual representations. But this disparity does not solely exist among provincial entities while it is deep-rooted even within the provinces negating the simple binary prevalence in Pakistan usually named as Punjab versus rest. These intra- provincial ethnic identities are complicatedly interwoven along many lines”

- Linguistic cleavages
- Ethnic differentiation
- Rural-urban divide
- Natives versus settlers

A holistic picture of the provinces of Pakistan presents a scenario of internal diversities in all these provinces. For example, there exists a sharp conflict between migrants and local Sindhis in Sindh, Siriki-Punjabi fissure in Punjab, Hindko speaking Hazaras and Pashtoon's rift in KP and in Balochistan we see that Balochis and Pashtoons are constantly pitting against each other. (Hasnat, 2012) These observational rifts along multiple lines are largely affected by the variable of demography. In Demographic mutations post- partition resettlements of population and dynamics of economic activity, including resource allocations, are largely involved. (Asmat Naz, 2019, 3)

According to Mushtaq,

“The provincial minority groups are concentrated in a particular region of the respective provinces: Siraikis in southern Punjab, Hazarewals in Hazara region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Pashtuns in northern Balochistan, and Mohajirs in the urban Sindh, particularly in Karachi and Hyderabad. The provincial minorities are demanding separate provinces for their groups in the respective provincial regions. The Siraikis have

launched a movement for the creation of Seraiki province comprising of south Punjab. The Hazarewals are demanding the province of Hazara consisting of the six districts of Hazara division of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.” (Muhammad Mushtaq, 2016, 4)

Likewise, the Mohajirs of urban Sindh demanding for Mohajir province comprising of Hyderabad and Karachi. Similarly, the Pashtuns of north Balochistan are demanding the merger of Pashtun Balochistan with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and a separate province. Likewise, the people of the Bahawalpur division have been asserting the reinstatement of the provincial status of the region which is situated in the south Punjab province. Moreover, similar kinds of demand are more or less the same in all the regions of Pakistan. (Muhammad Mushtaq, 2016, 5)

Ayoob presents the concept of a Mono-ethnic dominant group that supersedes the political organization and becomes a source of inequality resulting into the cessation of marginalized entity from dominant expression. (Ayoob, 1995). Moreover, synthetic boundaries of Third world countries chopped down many prominent ethnic identities among states hence rendering them to a minority in a particular state. (Asma Akbar, 2019,4) According to the estimation of Theodore P. Wright,

"Inter-ethnic conflicts within the provinces are symbolically presenting the alteration of class structure influenced by demographic shifts. These differences are configured in the form of 'core-periphery relation' hence are subjected to variation in the population size of each ethnic group. (Theodore P. Right, 1991) This factor indicates the existence of a dominant group, exploiting the subjugated or marginalized conditions of a minority or downtrodden groups. Not only does this dominant ethnic expression existing at the national level but also at the provincial level. Here not to mention Ayoob, a proponent of 'Subaltern realism' theory with comprehensive work on third world countries would be quite injustice to the discussing Phenomenon." (Asma Akbar,2019,5)

Hazara Region

Hazara region consisted of Hindko speaking

population that is consisted of eight districts, with a total population exceeds to 7.8 million. In the Hazara region 87 percent are Hindko speaking, and the remaining 13 percent belong to other ethnic communities. Hazara region was the part of Punjab province during the British rule in India until the new province NWFP was formed by separating the western parts of that province. The regions of the Hazara District around Mansehra and Abbottabad are included in Peshawar Division. Similarly, the areas to the north of Hazara became the Kohistan and Hazara Tribal Agencies. ([Asma Akbar, 2019, 5](#))

On July 1, 1970, General Yahya Khan announced the dissolution of the One Unit Plan. He reinstated four federating units with new territories which were previously part of the princely states-Balochistan States Union to Balochistan, Bahawalpur to Punjab, Khairpur was added to Sindh, while Amb, Buner, Swat, and Dir were added to the NWFP. To him and his associates, he solved through this measure. In fact, certain recurring questions are there, why in a land of ethnocultural diversity, only four nationalities were recognized? Why the rest of the ethnic groups in ethnically diverse states were being neglected? "In fact, ethnonationalism is essentially a negative force and needs to be suppressed with the military muscle like we did in the case of East Bengal. In an ethnically diverse society like Pakistan, those who are denied a due share in country's resources are bound to see the affluence of the others with suspicion and mistrust." ([The Dawn News, 2009](#))

When the dissolution of West Pakistan was taken place in 1970, the government of Pakistan merged two tribal agencies and Hazara District to create the new Hazara Division with its capital at Abbottabad. The Hazara division was initially comprised on three districts (Abbottabad, Mansehra, and Kohistan.) after some years,

Batagram District was spun off from Mansehra District, and Haripur district was spun off from Abbottabad District. Hazara continued as a separate district till its conversion into a Division in 1976. Mansehra was given the status of full-fledged District in October 1976, which consisted of Batagram and Mansehra Tehsils. Consequently, Haripur Tehsil was separated from Abbottabad and made into a District in July 1991. Therefore, the old Tehsil of

Abbottabad continued and which was confirmed as Abbottabad District. ([Asma Akbar, 2019, 7](#))

In the General Pervaiz Musharaf regime particularly in 2000, after abolishing administrative divisions, the fourth-tier districts were raised to become the new third-tier government in Pakistan. "It is a major industrial area in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Northern part of the Hazara region has the potential of Marble/granite, cement grade limestone, phosphates, soapstone, nepheline syenite & other industrial minerals besides gemstone and metallic minerals. While the Southern part of the region has extensive potential of industrial rocks and minerals, which include rock salt, gypsum, clay minerals, limestone, silica sand, iron ore and coal etc. Currently, Hazara is a division comprised of eight districts including, Abbottabad, Haripur, Mansehra, Batagram, Torghar, Upper Kohistan, Lower Kohistan, and Kolai Palas". ([Asma Akbar, 2019, 7](#))

The Origin of Hazara Issue

Like the many ethnic-nationalist movements of Pakistan, the people of the Hazara region also raised a voice for the demand of a separate province. Hazara Nationalist Movement was founded in 1957 by Mr, Idrees Ahmed and its second phase started in 1987 which was started by Advocate Asif Malik, which was named as "Hazara Qaumi Mahaz" (HQM). The third phase of Hazara ethnic-nationalist was started after renaming of NWFP as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through the passage of the 18th amendment. The Hazara Nationalist Movement has members across the country freshly rose to importance with leaders again rising a demand for separate Hazara Province. The people of the Hazara community found that their economic, political rights and identity have been oppressed in the past.

The demand was based on lingual identity. The demand of the province is based on peaceful and democratic way. The Hazarawal issue can be resolved through the constitutional basis. India resolved its lingual problems immediately after its establishment as its reformed its administrative units on lingual prime foci; the administrative leadership in Pakistan unfortunately did not take pain as they considered it a most furious problem for its survival

in the past. The regional political groups were organized to achieve this objective. ([Sayed Mussawar, 2013](#)) The political leadership of Hazara ethnic-nationalist movement in NWFP now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has not valued the idea of altering the name of the province to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. ([The Dawn, 2009](#))

Demands of Hazara Community and their Perspectives

The Hazara regionalists want Administrative division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on lingual ties. They reflect that such administration will discover more adequate resources for other communities. The Hindko speaking population wants to disclose the staatsvolk policies of the Pashtun population. They want full administrative and political autonomy in the region without majority ruling rule on normative principles based on real autonomy and identity self-respect. The quota in administrative services in Pakistan is based on Provincial rather than community level as compared to India where management of jobs is considered through state's territories. In Pakistan the minority always voiced for fair quota in jobs. The Hazara case is an important with regard to its language and rich cultural heritage. The regionalists in Pakistan has always demanded Flexibility in the constitution. G. M Syed in Sindh started in the early 1970s a movement of Sindhi nationalism movement to salutation the central government. In later the period the Seraiki and Hazara regionalists also started to compressor the demand of a flexible constitution which accommodate several ethnic communities in the state. ([Sayed Munawar Hussain, 2013](#)).

The people of the Hazara region "Hazarawal" restarted the demand for Hazara Province when in April 2010 when the 18th constitutional amendment has been instated in the constitution of Pakistan. They are mainly appealing to certify balance of power by producing federal-provincial forums between provincial and federal governments. Unlikely, in fact, to change the name of NWFP as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been strong demand of the Pashtun nationalist in order to reflect ethnic identity of Pukhtoon people like the other major ethnic groups as Sindhis, Punjabis and

Balochis. ([Government of Pakistan, 2022](#)) (Liaqatpuri, 2010).

Liaqatpuri has quoted,

"Although the governmental machinery has realized the importance of ethnic identities on the occasion of floods in Hazara region which was badly affected but as far from center of ruling- Regarding the 18th Amendment and Hazara province the ethnic activists and common masses have given varied opinion. Some are of the view that 18th amendment will ensure their struggle for provincial rights while others are of the view that amendment has done nothing for Hazara people rather subjugate them more under Punjabi nationality and it has though acknowledged 'Khyber Pakhtunkhwa' but has arisen resistance from other parts as well like, 'Demand of Hazara province' by 'Hindko' speaking people and other parts of the province ([Sana Ullah, 2017, 3](#))."

As the constitutional structure is concerned at the time of creation of new provinces, the Article 1 of the Constitution, suggesting to add the names of Janubi Punjab, Bahawalpur Sindh, Balochistan, Hazara in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Moreover, some amendments also will be required to amend Article 51 to reserve seats of both National and Provincial assemblies. ([Sana Ullah, 2017, 3](#)).

Conclusion

Pakistan is a multi-ethnic state of South Asia and inhabits people with racial segregation, sectarian divide and lingual diversities. In post-colonial setup, the nascent state of Pakistan faced a crisis of state making and could not reconcile these provincial entities in a strong federation due to different background of each province in colonial setup. Financial burden on Pakistani state and constitutional delay further aggravated the situation and Pakistan became the prey of internal colonialism resulting into its dismemberment in 1971. Major demographic shifts after migration had disturbed the ethnic balance in each province which remained in continuity during uneven industrial development in Pakistan. So the problem of Pakistani federation is not limited to discourse of unevenness among federating units. These ethnic assaults are more or less common in all four provinces of Pakistan, while

the provincial ethnic minorities demand the separate province with existing federating units.

Identity crises and politics of ethnicity have ever continued significant issue causing development of the state and political instability. However, various compulsory actions were initiated in the past, but the unresolved political and socio-economic affairs were not handle with full enthusiasm. In spite of the genuine demand and legitimate rights of the Hazara people for division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into two provinces with Abbottabad as the center of Hazara Province and

whatsoever the position maybe but the truths lie in the fact that deficiencies do exist in the interconnected area which must be spoken in the coming term of the civilian democratic government.

Democracy is the best answer and its commonly believes in sorting out the issues through peaceful means and escaping of any smash which, may distract the politico-economic constancy of the entire state. Public opinion is a very good platform for such issue, it is to be sought from parliament, provincial assemblies, civil society of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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