

Pakistan Military Ethnic Balance in the Armed Forces and Problems of Federalism

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Pakistan Military Ethnic Balance in the Armed Forces and Problems of Federalism

Since its birth in 1947, the Pakistani state does not seem to have emerged from the spell of being considered a weak state. Over the years, it has earned several titles such as 'failed' state or 'failing' state. A major reason for such reputation pertains to the problematic nature of the federation. Given the tendency of the leadership to create a state with a strong Centre, the state undermined the significance of the federating units and multiple identities. The state was designed to have a strong Centre, which imposed uniformity through force and on the basis of a rigid national ideology. Such politics, however, never allowed the state to consolidate as it totally negated the identities of the federating units. The imbalance of power and skewed distribution of resources are major reasons why the state continues to appear weak.

Historically, the state, especially the centrifugal forces, have tried resolving the identity crisis or difference in the idea of Pakistan through the use of force, particularly military force. Multiple identities, recognition of ethnicity as a framework for consolidation of the state, or devolving powers to the provinces was always considered as detrimental to the 'idea of Pakistan.' This attitude resulted in an increasing imbalance between the Centre and the federating units and, on the other hand, fed internal strife and violence. However, the political government elected in 2008 seems to have made an effort to bring a balance amongst the different regions of the state. This was done through introducing provincial autonomy which was built into the 18th Amendment to the 1973 Constitution. Will the new formula work? It all depends on the effort put in by the civilian leadership in ensuring a smooth transition of power from the Centre to the provinces. However, the success of transfer of power or decentralisation under the 18th Amendment also depends on the military's perception of the constitutional change. Indeed,

Pakistan's armed forces are a major player in the country's power politics. They depend for their resources on the state which means that the military favours concentration of power that includes the power to manipulate financial resources. Historically, the military has collaborated with the civilian forces to ensure a powerful Centre. However, in the face of internal pressure to change the distribution of power, the military has also begun to use other methodologies to dilute the impact of power shifting from the Centre to the provinces by increasing its stake in the federating units. The military, as this paper argues, is likely to engage in a two-pronged approach in its response to the 18th Amendment: a short to medium-term, and a medium to long-term. The first one refers to the military benefiting from the overall bureaucratic inertia to devolve power to the provinces, which means that the power to manipulate resources will remain with the Centre for a fairly longer time. Second, the military has begun to address its internal ethnic bias, which may have an impact on strengthening the federation in the long to longer term. The military seems to reshape the federation to bring greater harmony and centralisation. This also means that the defence establishment is enhancing its capacity to accommodate diversity. However, what is important to note is that a plan to redefine the Army's relationship with the federation has been a process that predates the 18th Amendment.

This paper aims to analyse the military's perspective on the future shape of the federation and issue of federalism in Pakistan.

The 'Idea of Pakistan'

The issues of federalism in Pakistan pertain to the peculiar history of its birth. Forced into abandoning the concept of Indian nationalism, the founding father Mohammad Ali Jinnah embraced the idea of forming the state on the basis of communal identity. As argued by Jaswant Singh, considering the friction between Jinnah and Nehru and the unaccommodating attitude of the latter, Mohammad Ali Jinnah moved away from an Indian-nationalist paradigm to establishing a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent.¹ Then onwards, Jinnah's total focus on creating a separate homeland for Muslims made him cut deals with the local leadership in areas that were to become Pakistan. While the strategy was meant to turn him into the 'sole spokesman' for the Muslims, especially the Muslim elite, it also established a

centralised and linear paradigm for the new state. Jinnah may not have wanted a theocratic state² but the fact of the matter is that religion was fundamentally part of the state narrative, especially for a leadership that earnestly wanted to create a modern nation-state. Since the pre-partition Indian leadership was inspired by the colonial legacy, which included the idea of a nation-state, Pakistan's leaders tried to create a coherent and homogenous nation-state by using religion as glue. The formula has not worked but despite that, the country's establishment continues to use religion as a foundation to create an ideal nation-state.

Notwithstanding references to Jinnah's desire to create a secular-liberal-democratic state for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, the fact is that the structure of the state was determined by the circumstances that created Pakistan. Given the fact that state-making is never a static process, the direct and indirect negotiations amongst different stakeholders resulted in deepening the state's commitment to religion. The Objectives Resolution of 1949, which is now the preamble of the 1973 Constitution, defined the Islamic-religious character of the Pakistani state. Furthermore, the earlier leadership, starting with Jinnah's political successor, Liaquat Ali Khan, negotiated a compromise with the religious right, which was obvious in the above mentioned resolution as well as the state's lame response to growing anti-Ahmedism which started during 1951, finally leading to the anti-Ahmedi riots in Lahore in 1953. Politically, this meant that Pakistan had embarked upon defining itself as an Islamic state or what some call the fortress of Islam where, as Farzana Sheikh argues, citizenship was accorded based on an individual's putative relationship to religion.³ Then onwards, every leader compromised with the religious right. Though it is immaterial after 63 years what Jinnah exactly wanted, the fact is that had he been alive, he might have found it problematic to deal with the religious discourse that was central to Pakistan's identity but on which the liberal segment of the ruling elite had no control. The religious clergy soon began to dominate the religio-political discourse as they were the only ones with the expertise to do so. It is quite immaterial whether the majority of people vote for the religious parties or not but it is important to note that over the years, religious ideology has become inextricably linked with the core state ideology. There was never any real opposition to this particular development as the liberal-secular elite,

which ran the affairs of the state, was dependent on the religious paradigm due to that being the basis of the country's origin.

The religious paradigm was central to the thinking of the leadership because, as mentioned earlier, this was considered as the only credible formula for gelling different communities together. In any case, religion being the basis for the formation of this particular state, it was not possible for the ruling elite to exclude faith from the social contract. Moreover, religion was the key rallying point for the defence establishment, which motivated its manpower on the basis of the religious ideology. The state had to emphasise the significance of religion. Hence, the religious identity could not be extricated from the nature of the state. More importantly, a fixation on a particular religious identity and the military acquiring the role of the guardian of that ideology made the armed forces central to the idea of Pakistan.

Another dimension of the 'idea of Pakistan' is that the founding leadership struggled with creating a centralised identity through the use of force and authority. The controversial accession of the princely state of Kalat, which formed the southwestern province of Baluchistan, or the dismissal of the opposition government in the former Frontier Province (renamed after 2010 as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa – KPK), indicated the impatience of the central state with the concept of multiple identities of the Pakistani state as it, in their mind, negated the need for the partition of India into two separate states. According to renowned historian, Ayesha Jalal, a top-down method using coercive means was necessary for state formation and consolidation.⁴ One of the preoccupations of the founding leadership was to create a socio-culturally and socio-politically coherent nation-state, especially to prove that Pakistan was a successful experiment in nation-building. This meant creating a single and dominant state narrative. Mohammad Ali Jinnah's strategy, therefore, was to use a combination of politics and force. However, such transformation had a high political price, which no one seems to have calculated at that time. Moreover, an authoritarian character was also inherited from the leadership, which supported the creation of Pakistan. The Muslim elite comprising mainly feudal landowners, who occupied territories that eventually became Pakistan, tried to establish their authority especially vis-à-vis other religious communities. Islam and authoritarianism were their key drivers. This tone has been followed throughout the country's history.

In the ensuing years, the centralised character of the state became even more problematic due to the bureaucratisation of the polity. The strengthening of civil and military bureaucracies meant that political contestation had a secondary place in the political scheme of things. As Mohammad Waseem argues, what we saw was the birth of a bureaucratic-polity in which the political class was used for reasons of political legitimacy rather than serious politics.⁵ One of the features of this 'overdeveloped' state was that it had little appreciation of the multiple identities of the society or sensitivity towards the functioning of federalism. The state bureaucracy combined forces with the political leadership, especially those that wanted to play a significant role at the national level, in subduing the significance of the federating units. Historically, regional politics or multiple ethnic identities were emphasised only during a crisis between the political elite and the state bureaucracy. For instance, the present co-chair of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari evokes his Sindhi identity and makes an appeal to regional politics to stave off a political onslaught by the establishment.⁶ Conversely, parties which aim at a greater share of power, abandon their ethnic identity.

The natural beneficiary of the over-centralisation of the state is the bureaucracy, primarily the military which was used consistently by the centrifugal political forces to ward off regional influences on the state. The following table gives an idea of the use of brute force by the state in addressing political tensions within the federation.

Table I

Conflict & Violence: Relations Between Centre and Federating Units			
Period	Region	Issue	State Reaction
1948	Baluchistan	Rebellion	Use of military force
1958	Baluchistan	Rebellion	Use of military force
1969-71	East Pakistan	Political emancipation	Use of military force
1969-71	Bahawalpur	Struggle for restoration of province	Use of police force
1973	Baluchistan	Demand for ethnic empowerment	Use of military force
1985	Sindh	Protest against military government	Use of military force
1992	Sindh	Expansion of ethnic influence in urban areas	Use of military force
2005-to date	Baluchistan		Use of military force

Although we will return to this table and analyse the details, suffice it to say at the moment that the military played a crucial role in calibrating relations between the Centre and four main provinces. This peculiar political dynamics was convenient for the state bureaucracy as it strengthened its grip over the state and ensured the flow of a greater percentage of national resources to the bureaucracy, especially the military.

The military is considered a significant player in the country's power politics. Its significant role in politics evolved within a few years after the country's independence in 1947. Despite the fact that the military owes much of its significance to the relative weakness of civilian institutions and Pakistan's evolution as a national security state due to the threat from India, it has expanded its role over the years to include internal security matters as well. In fact, the military does not necessarily differentiate between external and internal threat. The latter is an extension of the former. Since the military provides more than just security against external threat and has evolved to be the guardian of the state's ideology as well, it ensures subordination of all other stakeholders to the centralised idea of Pakistan. The Pakistani armed forces represent the Turkish military in reverse. The military protects the religious identity of the state and ensures through the use of force that all other identities are merged into one or neutralised effectively.

The first war with India in 1947/ 48 was like the military striking a goldmine in terms of its nuisance value for the state and state ideology. Consequently, the civilian government invested 70 percent of the total budget on defence in the first year of the country's existence.⁷ The situation did not change significantly in the ensuing years (see Tables 2 & 3 to understand the significance of military security in the national paradigm).

Table 2

Comparative Expenditure, 1981 – 95				
	Health	Education	Defence	Interest Payment
1981-82	0.6	1.4	5.7	2.4
1982-83	0.6	1.5	6.4	3.1
1983-84	0.6	1.6	6.4	3.4
1984-85	0.7	1.6	6.7	3.5

1985-86	0.7	2.3	6.9	3.8
1986-87	0.8	2.4	7.2	4.2
1987-88	1.0	2.4	7.0	4.9
1988-89	1.0	2.1	6.6	5.0
1989-90	0.9	2.2	6.8	5.4
1990-91	0.8	2.1	6.3	4.9
1991-92	0.7	2.2	6.3	5.3
1992-93	0.7	2.4	6.0	5.6
1993-94	0.7	2.2	5.6	6.3
1994-95	0.7	2.4	5.5	5.7

All figures given as percentage of GNP

Source: Economic Survey of Pakistan in PR Chari and Ayesha Siddiqa-Agha, "Defence Expenditure in South Asia India and Pakistan". RCSS Policy Study 12, (Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, June 2000), p. 39.

Table 3

Comparative Expenditure, 2001-2010

	Current Exp % TE	Dev Exp % TE	Defence Exp % TE	Debt Servicing % TE
2001-02	84.7	15.3	18.1	52.5
2002-03	88.1	14.4	17.8	31.6
2003-04	81.1	16.8	19.3	36.6
2004-05	77.4	20.4	19.0	26.2
2005-06	73.8	26.0	17.2	24.4
2006-07	76.4	24.1	13.9	25.4
2007-08	81.4	19.9	12.2	25.4
2008-09	80.7	19.0	20.5	34.8
2009-10 B	78.6	21.1	17.2	27.1

TE = Total Expenditure

B = Budgeted

Source:

http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter_10/04_Public_Finance.pdf

By defining Pakistan as a national security state, the state bureaucracy and central elite changed the nature of the state and intensified its authoritarian character. The ruling elite was more inclined towards using force to cobble a state together rather than increase the people's stakes in the country through adopting a socio-economic development paradigm. It is today a fact that every time any government is pressed for resources and has to

meet the financial shortfall through reducing some expenditure, it is always development spending that is reduced. The national security apparatus has never allowed any government to reduce non-developmental expenditure, especially on defence. The reduction announced during Pervez Musharraf's rule basically pertained to cosmetic changes. His handpicked and imported Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, mainly superficially subtracted certain expenses such as military pensions from defence estimates and added it to another head. In any case, the defence budget has never been transparent. The military does not consider itself accountable to any civilian dispensation.

The above inter-sectoral imbalance in spending acquires a more critical dimension when compounded with the problem of ethnic imbalance in the armed forces. Historically, the military has been dominated by people from Punjab which is the largest province in terms of population. The larger issue, however, is that the military does not select on the basis of an ethnic quota. *(The government does hire on provincial basis which does not necessarily mean from a particular ethnicity. People can be domiciled from a province but not belong to a peculiar ethnicity as one may find to a certain extent in the case of the civil bureaucracy).* The armed forces traditionally have a bias for Punjabis and Pushtuns and that too from select areas. Historically, the bulk of the Army was drawn from Punjab. (Punjabi: 71-75 percent, Pushtun: 15-21 percent, Mohajir and Sindhi: 3-5 percent, and Baluch: about 0.3 percent).⁸ Given the military's tremendous political power, the less-powerful ethnic groups felt left out from the main corridors of power. It may be true that the federal government or a ruling party/coalition partnered with the local provincial elite. However, it still did not give them or the people the same influence and significance in state affairs as they would have got by being part of the security establishment. Consequently, leaders from minority provinces such as Baluchistan regard the military "not as a national military but a Punjabi force with a mercenary and exploitative character".⁹

For a long time now, the military has maintained its control over exit and entry into the institution. This is because the dominant ethnicities in the military benefit from the myth that was built by the British colonial power regarding the presence of a martial race in the Indian subcontinent. According to the popular military mythology, certain races in the subcontinent have a greater propensity to fight. Their physique and mindset is more suited to

combat. Such a myth was deliberately constructed to find alternative sources of manpower recruitment after the 1857 war of independence. At that time, Indian forces were recruited from other parts of the subcontinent and were stationed in the military cantonments in Madras, Bengal and Bombay. As they did not show a long-lasting and firm allegiance to the colonial rulers, the latter wanted to create a more loyal force. Towards that end, the British government started a system of distributing land and creating communities through such bribes to ensure loyalty. The bulk of the Indian forces so recruited were primarily from Punjab and what was then the North-West Frontier Province. It was to bolster the reputation of this new force that the myth of martial races¹⁰ was created and spread.

The Pakistan military continued to benefit from such a myth. This was for two reasons. First, the bulk of the military inherited at the time of partition was drawn from the areas that had initially benefitted from the myth of the martial races under the British. The Punjabis, Mohajirs (the migrants from India) and the Pushtuns dominated the armed forces. It was in their interest to sustain this peculiar ethnic balance. Second, the dominant ethnicities wanted to maintain their control over the military because of the financial benefits attached to it. For instance, the Pakistani military and its officers continued to benefit from the perks and privileges that were accorded to them under the British rule.¹¹ The colonial power had, as mentioned earlier, initiated a system of distributing lands to loyal tribes and communities that were also inducted into the armed forces. The Pakistani military continued with the system of rewards. Resultantly, the dominant tribes wanted benefits to remain confined to their areas. It is to retain such benefits that the Punjabis are seen as perpetuating their control over the armed forces.¹²

The Military and the Federation

Whatever the reason for the above bias, the fact of the matter is that the dominance of Punjab in the armed forces led to the military's increased involvement in internal problems with dire consequences for the state. Though Pakistan continues to be a single state, the reality is that the relations amongst the federating units remain far from normal. There is a deepset resentment against Punjab mainly due to the ascendancy of the civil and military bureaucracy. The military itself suffers from a certain arrogance,

which it acquired over a long time due to its dominance of power politics. The predominance of Punjabis also gives the Army a sense of ethnic homogeneity, which is considered detrimental to democracy in Pakistan and one of the causes of ethnic strife.¹³ More importantly, it breeds insensitivity towards other ethnic groups.

Not surprisingly, Pakistan has had a series of internal wars in which the state has exhibited insensitivity towards the federating units. One of the prime reasons for these internal wars or conflicts was also due to the condition of Punjabi and Mohajir nationalism versus the rest of the ethnic communities. Despite being the dominant community, the Punjabis sacrificed their ethnic identity and traded it for a more centralised version imported from the Muslim minority areas in India where the Pakistan movement started. The Sindhis, Baluchis and Pashtuns have a greater sense of their own ethnic identity as well. However, the crux is that the Punjabi insensitivity towards sub-nationalism resulted in the military's propensity of interpreting the lack of consensus in accepting a singular and centralised national identity or state narrative as disloyalty and treason.

Over the past 63 years, the Pakistani state has experienced full-blown internal conflicts vis-à-vis three federating units: Baluchistan, East Bengal and Sindh (refer to Table 1). The central state has used force in all parts of the country, especially wherever it was confronted with disagreement on the federal government's version of nationalism. Although it was always insensitive to the multiple identity discourse, the focus on centralised nationalism became obsessive after the break-up of East Pakistan in 1971. The final nail in the coffin was India's attack to precipitate the chaos in East Pakistan. Then onwards, all demands of sub-regional nationalism were necessarily viewed as hostile to the state. This does not mean that the bias was not always there. In fact, the military and the dominant elite's mindset resulted in deployment and application of maximum force in handling a political crisis in the eastern wing of the state. The military's partnership with forces of the religious right such as the Jamaat-e-Islami and its militant wings came in handy to unleash terror upon the Bengalis.¹⁴ The Army operation "Searchlight," launched on March 15, 1971, cracked down on all dissent in the Eastern Wing. It was Gen Mohammad Yahya Khan's military at its best trying to curb difference of opinion. The operation was a response to the six-point demand of the East Bengali leadership.

The Bengali leadership had protested against the power imbalance between the two wings, which, in any case, had an odd relationship due to the absence of geographical proximity. East and West Pakistan had a thousand miles of enemy territory in between. The military, which was dominated by Pushtun and Punjabi Generals, was resentful towards its Bengali countrymen. The military establishment was uncomfortable with the idea of transferring power to the Bengalis who were considered ethnically inferior. In his book about the 1971 debacle, an Army officer-turned-intellectual, Sadiq Salik quoted another Pakistan Army officer as saying: “Don’t worry...we will not allow these black bastards to rule over us.”¹⁵ Such derogatory remarks expressed the ethnic bias and exclusivity of the Army, the majority of the Punjabi population and the West Pakistani leadership.

To top it all, the manner in which East Pakistan finally drifted apart physically from the Western Wing and made a separate state that is Bangladesh planted resentment in the hearts of the Punjabi establishment against all ethnic contestation. In fact, the powerful establishment stuck closer to the idea of a singular and centralised Islamic identity. All opposition to the establishment’s idea of Pakistan was seen as a foreign conspiracy against the sovereignty of the Pakistani state. The military remains extremely sensitive about sub-regional ethnic politics, especially where it suspects foreign involvement as in the case of Baluchistan. The state has responded with tools of violence in dealing with the Baluch movement. It has fought uprisings on several occasions in history, at times deploying maximum force, as in 1973. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was the Prime Minister then, hailed from a ‘minority’ province himself. Yet, given his personal political ambitions, he was far more sympathetic to the establishment’s perspective and applied force against obscurantist forces in Baluchistan. Bhutto’s reaction was driven by the military, which had used force earlier in 1948 and 1958 to crush a Baluch rebellion. The military under Gen Pervez Musharraf had an even sharper reaction to any disagreement arising from the Baluch leadership. In 2007, Nawab Akbar Bugti was killed as a result of a military operation.

The military establishment is equally resentful of political movements that challenge the General Headquarters’ (GHQ’s) national narrative. The two cases that belong to this category pertain to the movement for the restoration of Bahawalpur province (1969-71) and political resentment

against the military in Sindh during the 1980s. The first case is about the movement of the people of what was once the princely state of Bahawalpur for restoring the status of the province after the dissolution of one-unit.¹⁶ During the early 1950s, the country was divided into two units – the Eastern unit comprising the Eastern Wing and the Western unit comprising territory in the Western Wing. The Bahawalpur state, which had functioned as a province for a couple of years due to an agreement between the founding father Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Nawab of the princely state in which the Pakistani state recognised the status of Bahawalpur as a separate province, was never reverted to this status after the one-unit was dissolved. The people had come out with a protest movement, which was then forcibly crushed through the use of police under the military rule of Gen Yahya Khan. The older generation of Bahawalpur still remembers the mayhem created by the police shooting directly at the mob outside the famous Fared Gate, killing many people.¹⁷

In case of Sindh, Gen Zia-ul-Haq dealt with the southern province severely after the military takeover in 1977. Since the Army Chief had overthrown a popular Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who hailed from the province, there was general resentment amongst the population against what they considered a Punjabi Army. The Army cracked down on the people whom they always considered suspect due to a historical movement for the separation of Sindh by another Sindhi nationalist leader G.M. Syed. There were many incidents of the Army using extreme force against ordinary people in order to break down their political resistance against the military government. The military operation in 1992 against the Mohajir community in Karachi also cannot be forgotten. The leaders of the Motahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a party representing migrants from Muslim minority areas in India, view the military's operation as a Punjabi Army crushing an ethnic community due to the sharp tone of ethnic politics.¹⁸

18th Amendment and Military's Imagination of the State

Despite all its efforts, the establishment is not able to wish ethnic politics away. The ethnicity card gained significance, especially when the Army overthrew a popular leader like Bhutto whose party, the Pakistan People's

Party (PPP) had emerged as a national party but with a prominent shade of ethnicity. The increasing discomfort that the smaller provinces feel towards the bigger province tends to surface on various occasions, especially on the issue of distribution of water and other resources. The 1973 Constitution had introduced the concept of provincial autonomy that was further refined through the 18th Amendment. The change in the Constitution is meant to strengthen provincial autonomy that includes fiscal autonomy. Politically, the provision on provincial autonomy presents an alternative vision of Pakistan that is based on the empowerment of the federating units. The PPP government, which came into power in 2008, hoped to create stakeholders in its own political survival against a potential military onslaught. The creation of a new province of Gilgit-Baltistan through a presidential ordinance and renaming North-West Frontier Province as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) to fulfill the wishes of the Pushtun people were actions that were meant to create a lasting partnership between the political parties and forces in these territories and the ruling PPP. In addition, and as mentioned earlier, the ruling PPP was also trying to invoke the 'Sindh' card to muster support in the home province of the founding leader of the PPP, and of the current President, Asif Zardari. On March 11, 2011, the party called for a strike across the Sindh province to protest against a particular judgment of the Supreme Court. The protest, however, was less about indicating displeasure and more about showing its strength through playing the ethnicity card. The strike was meant to send a signal to the military or Punjabi dominated establishment that Sindh looks apart from the Centre and Punjab on certain critical issues.

The military is not oblivious to the threat posed to its own imagination of the state and its organisational power by the political forces and empowerment of the federating units. While it is in no mood to change its formula for Pakistani nationalism, it hopes to expand its outreach to the formerly neglected portions of the federation and synchronise them with the military's imagination of the state. Three measures are being taken in this regard:

- Expand recruitment to areas neglected earlier.
- Silently support the case of the creation of ethnic-neutral provinces.
- Silently support the expansion of the religious right in provinces known for flagging regional identity.

Changing Pattern of Military Recruitment

There is evidence to suggest that the Pakistan military has thought about changing its image of being a Punjabi dominated Army to acquire the character of a national Army. Although the move predates the 18th Amendment, a report published in 2007 and released by the Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR), a public relations agency of the armed forces, revealed a plan by the Army to reduce the number of Punjabis.¹⁹ According to this report, the percentage of Punjabis in the Army, being 71 per cent in 2001, was subsequently reduced and brought down to 57 per cent. Furthermore, the report claimed that the number of Punjabis would be further reduced to around 54 per cent by 2011. The reduction of Punjabis would be accompanied with an increase in human resource intake from other provinces. For example, from 2001-11, the composition of Pushtuns in the Army would increase by one per cent to 14.5 per cent. The recruitment from Sindh would increase from 15 to 17 percent. Recruitment of Baluchis, which stood at 0 percent in 2001 was increased to 3.2 percent, with a further expansion by 2011, bringing the intake to 4 percent. Similarly, recruitment from Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas, which stood at 0 percent in 2001, would be brought to 9 percent by 2011.²⁰ It is important to note that these numbers merely indicate domicile rather than the real ethnicity of a recruit (domicile signifies the city of birth or residence of a citizen which may be different from his/her ethnicity).

This report tends to contradict a claim made in a background note by the Army GHQ regarding a concerted effort to draw in other ethnicities since the 1990s.²¹ Also, in a recent paper by Shuja Nawaz and Christine Fair, the authors present data provided by the GHQ according to which the percentage of Punjabis in the Army had been brought down to 40 percent by 2001.²² There is a possibility that the Army might have mulled over the idea of building a 'national' or a more representative force during the decade of the 1990s, a plan which was put through implementation only in 2001. While the military management was more reluctant to induct a larger number of human resources from East Pakistan,²³ there was a possibility that enhancing recruitment from a unified West Pakistan was seen as critical for national integrity. In fact, a move was made in this regard by setting up a cantonment in Pannu Aqil, Sindh, during the 1980s at a time when the province was politically unstable. According to more recent

reports, the cantonment continues to play a significant role in attracting people to the Army. For instance, in early 2011, 239 out of 700 recruits were locals from Pannu Aqil.²⁴ Given the military's concerns for security of this region and to stave off the threat of a possible Indian incursion into it, the above-mentioned cantonment was established to strengthen the military's control of the area.²⁵ However, one cannot underestimate the social impact of this particular cantonment or other cantonments that the Army planned in Baluchistan and Swat. After all, as is obvious from the Fair-Nawaz study, there seems to be a greater propensity towards joining the armed forces in areas having large cantonments.²⁶ Although the plan for the cantonments at Sui, Baluchistan and Swat (after the military operation) was temporarily shelved, the Army is trying to make headway through a different methodology. For instance, in Baluchistan, which became highly unstable after the mid-2000s, the Army seems to have shelved the idea for setting up a cantonment and replaced it with a plan to open cadet colleges and schools for Baluch children.²⁷ The Army claims to have inducted about 22,786 Baluch children in various military-run schools and colleges.²⁸ A fair amount of publicity regarding setting up of educational projects could bring greater dividends in terms of improving the military's credibility in internal strife-torn regions. These educational institutions, as one development sector expert from Quetta stated, would provide an alternative for the Baluch middle class.²⁹ These institutions, he added, are not for the lower or lower-middle classes as the children from this social stratum will not be able to qualify in the entrance exams. In any case, these institutions are meant for the children of civil and military bureaucrats residing in Baluchistan, and the middle class of the Pushtun and Baluch population.³⁰ Eventually, this may also neutralise resentment towards the state and its armed forces. Even if this scheme does not produce dividends in the short-term, it will help create a partnership between the military establishment and the Baluch middle class.

With respect to the impact of Pannu Aqil cantonment in Sindh, the fact of the matter is that the presence of a couple of huge cantonments compounded with the military's power, which the locals find impressive, seems to have played a role in attracting ethnic Sindhis towards the idea of joining the armed forces. Although intake from Sindh province continues to be less than its

share in the country's population,³¹ the province has experienced a growing tendency of people joining the military. Some Sindhi intellectuals were of the view that there is a realisation in the society that ethnic Sindhis could only contest their case for favourable treatment by collaborating with the most powerful institution of the state.³²

During Pervez Musharraf's ten years, the Army did increase induction from Sindh. Reportedly, around 80,000 men were recruited mostly in the non-officer cadre. Interestingly, a province that had people who traditionally resisted joining professions that may take them away from home, now had people keen to join the Army. One of the major reasons pertains to poverty and lack of job opportunities. Since there was a restriction on civilian jobs during the Musharraf period, people were tempted to join the Army. Although the PPP government removed the restriction during its term from 2008-13, the job shortfall has remained which means that people continue joining the armed forces which are now an additional source of employment. Furthermore, the average Sindhi is attracted to the cleanliness and discipline in the Army, which one can observe through the stark difference between the ordinary life of the people in Sindh and the cantonments and cadet colleges around.³³ The inability of political governments to improve governance in the country is bound to attract more Sindhis to join the Army. Needless to say, an additional benefit is the sense of power, and the perks and privileges that come by being part of the military. In a society where the military is considered a dominant player, joining this institution does give an immediate boost to many from the middle or lower-middle classes.

However, as mentioned earlier, there is limited recruitment in the officer cadre mainly due to the inherent bias of the military establishment towards non-Punjabis, especially Sindhis and Baluchis. The Generals keep a tight control over the process of entry into the institution. This represents their historical bias towards those not considered part of the 'martial' races. Just as the Army was suspicious of the quality of Bengali soldiers and officers, there appears to be a discomfort with the quality of manpower from Sindh and Baluchistan. However, the discomfort is also due to their unhappiness with the educational quality of recruits from these areas. The Army had relaxed its criterion to induct men from Baluchistan and Sindh. This means that it had to spend more resources

to upgrade the capacity of the recruits before integrating them into the organisation's system.

Under the leadership of Gen Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, the Army has struggled to change its image in provinces like Baluchistan by claiming to increase recruitment from a province that is in a conflict with the federation. The Army claims that it has compromised on the basic criterion for selection such as physical (height and chest size) and other parameters.³⁴ It has also established a number of cadet colleges all over Baluchistan to train youth from an early age and prepare them for recruitment later. Nevertheless, sceptics argue that these cadet colleges do not really enroll ethnic Baluchis but mainly Punjabis settled in the province or the Pushtuns, who, in any case, are friendlier towards the state and its armed forces. The nature of hostility amongst the Baluch, especially after the killing of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti by Pervez Musharraf is such that there is a moral pressure on the Baluchis not to join such an initiative. The ongoing violence in Baluch areas also adds to the instability, which does not make such ventures attractive to the ethnic Baluch.

Referring to the military's internal bias towards non-Punjabis and Pushtuns, it is critical in the Army's resistance to the idea of turning the military from a voluntary service to one of conscription. Baluch politicians like Sanaullah Baluch³⁵ support the idea of conscription which would not only help integrate his people in the state, but also enhance the people's input in their security. Senior Generals, nevertheless, are extremely wary of this idea. Lt. Gen Javed Hassan (Retd) was totally averse to the idea as all professional Generals are.³⁶ Pakistani Generals shun the idea of a conscript Army as they believe that only a voluntary military, which is well trained, can face the threat faced by the country.³⁷ This situation is not likely to change even with the passing of the 18th Amendment. The military may continue to work towards integrating other ethnicities, but it is not likely to restructure the organisation or the recruitment pattern. It will certainly take years for officers from smaller provinces to get promoted to senior level ranks. Such aspirations are more likely to be met if an ethnic Baluch or Sindhi becomes the Army Chief one day. This is exactly what had happened during the tenures of Gens Mirza Aslam Beg and Pervez Musharraf who encouraged the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs based mainly in Karachi through promotion and

selection to important positions within the military government and within the Army. Nonetheless, in the long run, the Punjabis from north and central Punjab have an edge. Informally, within the Army, the senior officers from Gujranwala, Jhelum and Chakwal are referred to as an influential group that manoeuvres opportunities for promotion and better postings. Thus, smaller provinces like Sindh and Baluchistan have a long way to go in terms of improvement in representation within the senior ranks of the armed forces, especially the Army.

Neutralising Ethnic Politics

Part of the process of coping with ethnic politics seems to be through neutralising the ethnic political discourse. This is achieved through allowing the creation of ethnic neutral provinces. There is a view that the Army was less averse to the idea of renaming the Frontier Province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) rather than just Pakhtunkhwa. The latter name echoes the historic demand for Greater Pushtunistan which is discomfiting for Pakistani nationalists. Similarly, the establishment seems to be supporting the idea of restoration of Bahawalpur province rather than committing to the establishment of a Saraiki province. Though both the Saraiki and Bahawalpur provinces would be carved out of Punjab, which many believe is the nerve-centre of Pakistan's ruling establishment, the latter is relatively more ethnic neutral. The Punjabi and Mohajir settlers in Bahawalpur, which was formerly a Saraiki stronghold, have sufficient power to ensure that politics is not entirely dominated by ethnic Saraiki speakers. Not surprisingly, people, who have close association with the establishment,³⁸ support the movement for the restoration of Bahawalpur. An ethnic neutral Bahawalpur province poses an effective counter-weight to a Saraiki province that will be based on a particular ethnic identity. The PPP leadership appears to have promised to include the establishment of a Saraiki province in its election manifesto.³⁹ The establishment is likely to be uncomfortable with such an idea. It would rather put its eggs in the basket for creating an ethnic neutral province. There were even discussions of dividing the country into several administrative districts to counter the restlessness found amongst people due to ethnic politics.

New Partnerships to Neutralise Ethnic Politics

Over the years, especially after the end of the 1990s, other ideologies have emerged which naturally counter-balance ethnic politics. This refers to the growth of Islamic militancy and ascendancy of the religious right. Some of these elements have connections with the military. The partnership among the military, *mullah* and militant is based on a shared vision of nationalism. The militant forces tend to have a pan-Islamist mindset, which means that they are less likely to follow ethnic or communal ideologies.

Over a couple of decades or more, militant outfits seem to be expanding their tentacles in mainland Pakistan as well. While there are problems in the tribal areas and parts of KPK due to turmoil in Afghanistan, it does not explain the expanding influence of Pakistan based militant outfits such as the Sipah-e-Sahaba (SSP), Lashkar-e-Jhangavi (LeJ), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Harkat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islami (HUJI), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), and Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT). These outfits have links with the military intelligence agencies and continue to get support due to the convergence of views between the military and the militants on India and the West.⁴⁰ These outfits have not only spread in south Punjab from where they recruit manpower, but have also begun to push into other regions such as Baluchistan and Sindh. The number of *madrassas*, which are linked with one of these outfits or the other, runs into thousands, especially in upper Sindh that was known for its resistance to the establishment. Militant outfits like the LeT and its sister organisation, Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), seem to be gathering influence in areas in Sindh occupied by religious minorities such as Hindus.⁴¹ Although there is no study available to systematically analyse the impact of the growth of militancy in these areas, the growing strength of militancy and the religious right is likely to cut across ethnic politics. The agenda or views of the religious right support a centralised vision of the state.

Conclusion

The passing of the 18th Amendment marks a contest between the centrifugal and centripetal political forces in Pakistan. While the previous PPP government, by encouraging provincial autonomy, hoped to dilute the power of the central government and establishment, which has besieged the federation for the past 63 years, the military is aiming at an opposite

outcome. The Army GHQ being the most powerful player hopes to dilute the effect of the 18th Amendment through striking newer partnerships and expanding its narrative to the different regions of the country.

The religious identity and a centralised national narrative is critical for the military-led establishment in Pakistan. The country lost its Eastern Wing because the military establishment was not keen to understand and appreciate the narrative of multiple identities of the state. The GHQ has used force against the Baluchis, Sindhis and other nationalities to keep them aligned with the central state narrative. However, given the competition by the political forces, the military has opted to alter its strategy and use co-option rather than force to convert people to a central idea of Pakistan. It has begun to expand its presence in what are considered as minority provinces. In Baluchistan, for instance, efforts are being made to build a friendly image of the armed forces and bring the middle class on board. A similar tactic is adopted for Sindh. The military is also encouraging or turning a blind eye to the expansion of militant groups and the religious right in the country. This is meant to effectively dilute the impact of ethnic politics. For example, the military has systematically supported the religious right in provinces such as KPK and Sindh. The religious right tends to compete with the ethnic political narrative.

However, what is important to note is the fact that the military's plan to expand its peculiar national narrative predates the 18th Amendment. The defence establishment has been working consistently to bring other ethnicities on board for which it claims to have willingly reduced the number of Punjabi personnel in the armed forces. While the military data may not necessarily present a true picture, the organisation is making an effort to create an idea of Pakistan which can compete with the political stakeholder's idea of Pakistan with multiple identities.

Notes

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