

Pursuing National Integration: Role of Federalism in Pakistan after 18th Amendment

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Article Information	Abstract
Received: June 03, 2022 Revised: June 08, 2024 Accepted: June 29, 2024	Federalism provides equal opportunities to the sub-regional groups in a state having diverse socio-political and ethnic identities. There exists a debate that process of national integration is more effective under federalism than any other form of government. It is fundamentally considered 'unity in diversity' model for the states. After 18th amendment, federalism in Pakistan has found new avenues to re-integrate the provincial identities, cultural groupings, political sub-regionalism and administrative hierarchy. This process focused on the transformation of democracy, good governance and institutionalism. This research presents a model of national integration which has been emerged in the aftermath of 18th amendment. State institutionalization, democratization and inclusive federalism are three important characteristics of this model. The main argument of this paper is, "a consistent and stable decentralization process in the present form of federalism can enhance the process of national integration in Pakistan". Furthermore, this study concludes that, constitutional supremacy and the institutional working is very important for developing more inclusive national integration in Pakistan.
Keywords <i>National Integration</i> <i>Pakistan</i> <i>18th Amendment</i> <i>Federalism</i> <i>Institutionalization</i>	

1 Introduction

National Integration is considered as more effective under federalism than any other system. F.G Carnell (1962), Mazrui (1971), Duchacek & Enloe (1977), K. C Wheare (1967), Ojo (1999) and Ali (1996) are some of the most prominent scholars who argued in favor of this conception. All these writers have arguments that in diverse systems of modern governance, federalism is more consistent, democratic, durable and efficient. In a federal state, the process of national integration stems to promote 'unity in diversity'. The 18th amendment was in 2010 by Pakistan People's Party-led coalitional political regime. The main objective of this amendment was to inculcate the federalism, democracy and national integration provisionally in line with constitutionalism. After this amendment, federalism in Pakistan has found new avenues. It has to re-integrate provincial identities, cultural groupings, political sub-regionalism and administrative hierarchy. According to an argument, "18th amendment breaks

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the previous power structure and introduced a decentralized system of administration in Pakistan. This decentralization provide a context where several institutional actors renegotiated their role and responsibilities in a contested atmosphere” (Rana, M.A, 2020). Furthermore, the process focused on transformation of democratic norms, good governance and institutionalization. It is evident that the process of national integration is taking roots in the existing system of federalism in Pakistan.

Greater voice for the provinces under provincial autonomy, re-regularization of National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, continuity in the electoral process/enhancement in the public confidence on democratic norms as well as institutionalization are some of the key developments for strengthening the process of national integration in Pakistan. However, these seems not more than ordinary working. The nation needs to boost unified accountability process in the political domain. Social taboos are consistently prevailing in our society. The system of local government is not present of fully functional. So, there is a need to resolve all these pitfalls.

This research is paper is divided into three main parts. Part one explains the conceptual understanding of the process of national integration in line with the concept of federalism. Second part describes the historical evolution of the process of national integration in Pakistan. The last part identifies trend of national integration in post 18th amendment phase. Additionally, this research presents a model of national integration which has been emerged in the aftermath of 18th amendment. Institutionalization, democratization and inclusive federalism are three important characteristics of this model. Main argument of this paper is; ‘a consistent and stable decentralization process in the present form of federalism can enhance the process of national integration in Pakistan’. Furthermore, this study concludes that, constitutional supremacy and institutional working is very important for developing national integration in Pakistan.

2 Understanding National Integration through the Lenses of Federalism

National Integration is a feature, which usually used in the political terminology. It is concisely express with regard to multi-ethnic states having diverse political culture. Sometimes, federalism and national integration used in same context while defining the concepts of governance and administration. It is a complex concept and often used in the meaning of nation-building, national development, political development, institutionalization, national cohesion and *unity in diversity* (Dudley, 1976). Its importance further raised, when constitutionalism gain popularity in the 19th century. There are several definitions of the concept of national integration. These are often contextualized into the ethnic, socio-political and cultural settings. In these definitions; homogeneity of the political groups based on the consensus-based political decisions, political cohesion of different ethnic groups and the geographical territories, and spirit of national is common. By concluding, we can analyze that national integration brings about sense of belonging in state elites, create nationalism and strengthen state institutions.

Nigeria is a unique case study while studying the process of national integration in the federal setting. The sate experienced many ups and downs in her politics and main streaming of ethnic groups both in civilian and in martial rules. This state is considered as the most diverse nation-state in the world. A Nigerian scholar propound that, federalism is a cosmetic mechanism for developing national integration in multi-ethnic states. He has the opinion that, national integration is a schizophrenic process where ethnic groups are managed in a constitutional way through elite cooperation in the political setting (Ojo, 2009). However, there are many other

scholars who do not agree with this conception and denied the validity. Tariton (1965), May (1970), Elazar (1987) and Ayoade (1988) have the opinion that, there are many examples where federalism has failed to promote national integration. This is true to some extent when we study pre-1980s the literature on this concept. This argument has no validity in the modern state system where countries having adopted federalism successfully adopting the national integration process and Pakistan is a fine example when we study its post 18th amendment period.

By précising all the discussion, it is evident that federalism can be a fair feature for establishing national integration, if the constitutional working is exercised. The government institutions properly paly their efficient role in the ambit of the constitution. The administrative departments exercise their responsibilities according the rule of business. In these circumstances, good governance prevails. Political maturity often take place. Political parties respect the public mandate. The provincial of sub-regional governments also specifically find ways for developing rule of law and solidarity. The public confidence hails. Hence, national integration evolve.

3 Evolution of National Integration in Pakistan

The formation of Pakistan was made possible with the political merger of provinces having Muslim majority. The colonial governance system was based on the unitary model of governance and mobility of resources and powers were in the hands of the central government. The people belonging to the newly established state bifurcated on regional, religious, ethnic, caste, creed and cultural lines. So, the process of national integration in these circumstances was seemed difficult. Under the preliminary pact known as objective resolutions (1949), it was decided that federalism and constitutionalism will be the important pillars which can create more stability in the process of national integration (Ziring, 1980).

This is worth interesting to note that, federalism often talk about ‘unity in diversity’ and autonomy for the sub-regional identities. These trends are considered very important for developing national integration in heterogeneous society. After the passage of the objective resolution in 1949, Pakistan adopted three constitutions (1956, 1962 and 1973 respectively), but provincial autonomy was missing in all these pacts (Bukhari & Faisal, 2013; Ali, 1996). Apart from this, Pakistan experienced four martial rules which thrived down the democratic norms. Acute centralization was seen. The political parties stagnated or suspended their political working (Alam, 2018). The process of national integration was halted. Political cohesion often miss-appropriated with religious and ethnic slogans. Smaller provinces, especially Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa often voiced for their political rights from the sitting federal governments. Province of Punjab, being a majoritarian population often being criticized by the political party heads belonging to smaller provinces.

It was revealed that true spirit of provincial autonomy and constitutionalism has been neglected, which halted the process of nation building, political development, national cohesion, and institutionalism in Pakistan. After 18th amendment, federalism in Pakistan has found new avenues to re-integrate the provincial identities, cultural groupings, political sub-regionalism and administrative hierarchy. This process focused on the transformation of the process of democracy, good governance, institutionalism and federalism in the country.

The political fields play a significant role for the development of national integration. The political parties work by considering the popular will. The public also exercise its power for

choosing able officer bearers. By considering these arguments, it is evident that the process of national integration in Pakistan did not take place on political field. That is why, various ethnic, linguistic, political, sectarian, regional and financial issues emerged in the time which still needs to be resolved amicably by the stakeholders.

4 Post-18th Amendment Scenario

Charter of democracy was signed between the two major political parties of Pakistan in 2006. This document provided a background for the adaptation of 18th amendment. It was revealed by PML (N) and PPP that, the true spirit of federalism will be brought back in the constitution of Pakistan. An integration process in different provinces will also be coordinated by the central government. The grievances of the public will be resolved through political process (Friday Times, 2006). This documented fulfilled the commitment of the two parties in 2010. 18th amendment was adopted. This amendment has provided the following possible aspects for the process of national integration in Pakistan.

4.1 Provincial Autonomy

Provincial autonomy under the original draft of 1973 constitution was not present in its true sense. It was committed in the early phase that, arrangements will made after 10 years for evolving consensus for provincial autonomy (Adeney, 2007). The 18th amendment provides sufficient provincial autonomy to the provinces. Colonial legacy of centralized ruling is no more. Provinces have now greater voices in many aspects. Political elites are being bargained on genuine political demands of the people (Waseem, 2010). The Federal government started Aghaz-e-Haqooq Package to minimize the grievances of the people of Balochistan.

The former FATA territory integration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under 25th amendment which sought to establish uniform system of administration for federally administered regions (Mahmood, 2023). These two major breakthroughs were adopted to re-integrate the citizens and develop national loyalties among them. Financial resources were mobilized. However, there is much need to develop confidence among the public of Balochistan and tribal belt in particular to run the national integration process. This confidence can be developed through composite dialogue, resource mobilization, provision of civil and provincial rights, establishing rule of law and stabilizing the good governance.

4.2 Re-organization of NFC Award

The 7th NFC Award created fiscal consolidation among the provinces. It addressed the poverty in smaller provinces, economic inequality in the provinces and infrastructural development in the different geographical territories (Mustafa, 2011). It is the consensual Award which has been unifying by all the provinces. This Award minimized the offensive voices of smaller provinces against the province of Punjab and try to create homogeneity among the provinces on the distribution of economic resources from the divisible pool. However, centralization in the economic resources continues despite the implementation of this award (Adeney, 2012). The award is marked a major transformation for making the criteria of resource distribution in an equitable and progressive way. It was a need based award. However, it failed to confine the full sense of equality among the provinces (Javed & Ahmed, 2019).

The present NFC Award was promulgated in 2009 which required to be re-evaluated after five years, i.e in 2014. Due to successive political instability in Pakistan, this did not reframed until now. Although different governments plan to exercise the constitutional domain, however did not find the mutually shared political will. So far, the review of new NFC Award is itself is big opportunity/issue to be resolved by the political forces in Pakistan.

4.3 Regularization in Electoral Process

The electoral process is the backbone for running the democratic political regimes in the modern state system. It is a lynchpin for strengthening and stabilization of democratic process. In this way it is equally impact on the working of federalism. More democratic electoral process contributes to stable federal regimes. In last 58 years, 12 general elections held in Pakistan. The electoral process delayed many times due certain political reasons. However, it is only in last 16 years, that certain constitutional cycle for the electoral process in Pakistan is practiced (Jabbar, 2024). It has been observed for the first time in the political history that fourth consecutive term is administering the central government and the provincial governments which are elected through the electoral process. Some scholars argue that, 4th democratic wave is in the process which has created nationalism and national cohesion in Pakistan.

Regularization in the electoral process has created a way of dialogue, consensus and communication tool among the provinces, political parties and the citizens/voters for creating national integration in public domain. However, there is still a debate that the electoral system needs reforms at greater level (Saleem Ullah, 2022). Amendments in the electoral laws are required to empower the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). These reforms must ensure impartiality of ECP in the electoral process. It must also abolish the dynastic political trends in political parties and also ensure undisputed and efficient elections in the country.

4.4 Strengthening of Democratic Norms

Democratic norms are taking root. Political parties and the elites are now more conscious about accountability process. Governance is now better than the previous regimes and is continuously improving. State institutions have started working in their constitutional domain (Faisal & Ahmad, 2021). There seems national cohesion in the government institutions in terms of working, administration and execution of the policies. However, there is need to institutionalize the role of parliament, parliamentary committees, the Council of Common Interests (CCI), National Security Committee (NSC) and the National Economic Council (NEC) (Husain, 2023). The parameters of accountability will be established by processing these measures. It can be established an argument that with strengthening of democratic norms, national integration will also take strong roots.

4.5 Evolution of Institutionalization

The 2008 governance transition in Pakistan provided an opportunity for institution building in Pakistan. This process is further expanded in 2013, 2018 and afterwards. The role of National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Election Commission, judiciary, military and other stakeholders is expected more professional and institutionalized as compare to the previous

political tenures. At all what is important is that all institutions needs to recognize the institutional position and then explore the constitutional role, responsibilities, duties and rights and intact to perform those duties under the shadow of the constitution. This process will create national integration and reduce the reservation of the smaller provinces. Previous system of power politics needs to be replaced with the broad nation based institutional performance.

For broadening the system of governance, major reform package is very important to be considered by the national and provincial administrations. Although the process is very complex, but upon its completion will provide liberal political regimes in Pakistan. A reasonably responsible government can work on this tendency.

5 Post 18th Amendment and Challenges to National Integration

Pakistani society and the stakeholders adopted federalism as a way to create regional homogeneity, cultural assimilation and to promote national integration. Due to successive changes in governance patterns over the years resulted into the reposition of challenges. Simultaneously, parochial approach to address these issues further deteriorated the governance stability resulting into more and more gap between the governance and social inclusion. Although federal transformation from the very beginning accelerated the society on inclusive path on political grounds but this approach remained deserted over the time. The successive political regime tried to establish a controlled system where decisions have taken on base of might is right principle.

The 18th amendment transformed the working of federalism in Pakistan to resolve the issues of national integration which are still prevailing. Following is a list of issues which needs to be resolved steadily depending upon the need, working and resolution framework.

5.1 A Federal Society with Multiple Divisions

Pakistan is a deeply divided society. These divisions are based on geography, culture, language, aspirations and last but not least are governance principles. Ethnic, religious and sectarian conflicts are common. The implementation of law and order is poor and inefficient. All these issues are associated with poor educational governability at the grass root level. The government lacks planning in achieving Education for All commitment under Dakar declaration 2015 and Vision 2030 targets due to poor planning in education system (IPRI, 2015).

There is an appropriate link between education and national integration. More education and literacy can establish a durable national integration. Pakistan's poor investment in education makes this nation as one of the lowest developing nation having reduced literacy rate which stands at 58 percent while 22.6 million children aged between 6 and 16 are not still attending the school due to poverty, meagre economic resources and poor family planning. The federal as well as the provincial governments needs to scale up the education system by endorsing quality education so that national integration can be established in true spirit.

5.2 Administrative Supremacy of Central Government

The 18th amendment has provided constitutional freedom to the provinces in various administrative matters. Certain constitutional measures were adopted to ensure division

between the federal and provincial governments. The amendment specifically distributes the powers and functions between the federal and provincial governments to promote national integration. However, many stakeholders still argue that provincial governments still not equipped with the relevant administrative features to exercise all these powers (Syed, 2010).

It is propounded that provinces have been provided constitutional supremacy strong legislative, administrative and financial autonomy. Some segments argue that this initiative has weakened the administrative structure of the state while providing a constitutional supremacy in administration in the name of law and order while fomenting bureaucratic chain (Hussain, 2019). The governor, chief secretary and provincial Inspector General of Police are still appointed by the federal government to control the administration of the provinces.

5.3 Patronage Politics

The political parties can instigate positive change in any country. They are responsible to promote national integration through electoral participation. They also establish civic practices in the society. The parties are considered as the real representative face of Pakistan. It has been argued that political parties will focus on acquiring public space in post-electioneering process. The people-specific and people-oriented policies may drive under public motives by these parties whether at national or at provincial levels. On the other hand, parties are now focusing on the relevant level of governing provinces to engage people in national integration process.

It is evident that small group of political elites aspire to become the stakeholder both in central government and in the provinces. The political parties are still controlled by the specific families stick to politics for very long time. Sometimes, it is argued that political parties are the vehicles which provide different political elites access to state resources both in the center as well as in the provinces. The party bonds internally too tie with family owned decisions in the administration. Reforms in system which can provide general public more political freedom can be implemented steadily (Shah, 2023).

5.4 Local Government Practices

The local government practice is essential for strengthening the process of national integration. The essence of national integration lies in consisting practice of local government to empower the people at the grass root level so that the issues may be addressed at their door step. Pakistan has not seen any consistency in executing the local government. In the post 2018 amendment, the provinces tried local government bodies for two times diversifying their local government laws. These two tenures also proclaimed many hindrances. It is argued that local bodies have not been allowed to work as constitution desire (Khan, 2021).

Furthermore, in distribution and allocation of resources among the provinces, inequality prevails. This inequality further grow social stratification and political polarization in the society which effectively generate bad governance. It is evident that Pakistani nation is deeply divided on ethno-linguistic and politico-religious lines. There seems institutional friction at various forums. Ideological clash and fundamentalism is also persists. Insecurity prevails in the people of smaller provinces. Due to these consistent challenges, fragile integration persists (Bangwar, 2022).

The stakeholder in Pakistan must try to address the prevailing issues of national integration on pragmatic principles exploring the reformed and decentralized state policies. For reinforcement of integration, Pakistan needs to promote inclusive economic development, provision of equal rights to its citizens, intending cultural assimilation, fair distribution of resources to provinces and last but not least is to establish national political outlook before the world through law of land, justice and well-being of the people.

6 Conclusion

Prosperity, integrity and development of Pakistan lies in promoting national integration. Our political stakeholders need to harmonize the socio-economic development on equal grounds. The political elites need people centric approach to resolve the ongoing issues. This issue can be resolved by ensuring democracy, institutional working in the ambit of constitution, empowering local government and guaranteeing equal rights to the people living in different provinces. Pakistan as official entity should de-emphasize on ethnic thinking. The parliament should adopt a proper way through national consensus to resolve the ongoing issues which are jeopardizing the process of national integration. The federal government is still more powerful in exercising political powers in the provincial domain in name of maintenance of public order. There is need to establish a framework under which it should be restricted to do so against the interest of the provinces. If the political parties, institutions and the political stakeholders obey the constitution in its true spirit, national integration can evolve in positive way.

National integration is not short sighted and short term process. It takes time. The time in a sense to really reform and steadily introducing accountability, rule of law, national interests, and the exercise of constitutional rights. Which are given by the constitution. National integration start with Grand National Dialogue. That dialogue should be parliament oriented and according to the constitutional principles. Although the time seems unstable but it should not be prolong further.

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