

## Federal Issues in Pakistan: Challenges and Prospects (2013-2023)

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*Pakistan is a federal republic with a complex system of government. The federal government shares power with the provincial governments, but the distribution of power between the two levels of government has been a contentious issue since the country's independence. This paper examines the major federal issues in Pakistan from 2013 to 2023, including the impact of political instability and polarization, economic challenges and opportunities, and the rise of extremism and intolerance of diversity and dissent. This article aims to explore and analyze these issues from a multidisciplinary perspective, using the secondary sources of data. The article argues that Pakistan's federal system has been under strain due to various internal and external factors, such as corruption, nepotism, civil-military relations, ethnic conflicts, terrorism, regional rivalries, and global pressures. The article suggests some possible solutions and recommendations for improving the federal governance and performance of Pakistan, such as constitutional reforms, fiscal decentralization, institutional strengthening, social inclusion, and dialogue. The article concludes that Pakistan's federal system has the potential to overcome its challenges and achieve its prospects, if there is a genuine commitment and cooperation among all stakeholders.*

## 1. Introduction

The adoption of a constitution is a momentous event in the life of a nation. It is a document that embodies the country's past struggles, achievements, issues, arguments, and compromises, as well as its present and future goals. A constitution is also a practical guide to government, a code of conduct for statesmen, and a symbol of hope and aspiration for the nation it serves (Siddiqi, 2023). The distribution of powers between the central government and its constituent entities, which are more appropriately referred to as federal units, is the main tenet of a federal government. The adoption of federalism by a majority of nation-states is a testament to its suitability for societies of a heterogeneous nature. Federalism can help to unite diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups within a single state, and prevent the disintegration of the state (Adeney & Boni, 2023).

A federal form of political system provides two divisible sets of subjects for the governance of a society; a federal government and the provincial government. A third list of the subject, referred to as concurrent, may exist, and both the federal and province may have authority over it. Nevertheless, the federal government's right is upheld when there are disagreements regarding the exercise of power. However, the federal constitution serves as the sole source of authority for the two sets of governments in a federal system (Hashmi & Fatima, 2020). The constitutional foundations should be the starting point for the effective operation of a federal system of government, which has evolved as a key political theory and an effective instrument for achieving political unification among various social entities.

Pakistan is a diverse and heterogeneous society, comprising various ethnic and linguistic groups. To achieve political harmony and stability in such a complex context, federalism was adopted as a key principle of governance. Federalism is a system of government in which power is shared between the central and the provincial governments. However, the distribution of power and resources between the two levels of government has been a contentious and unresolved issue in Pakistan since its independence. This paper aims to examine the major federal issues that Pakistan faced from 2013 to 2023, and how they affected the country's political, economic, and social development. Following are the research questions which will be addressed during the entire research.

1. How has the political instability and polarization in Pakistan affected the federal system and the relations between the center and the provinces?
2. What are the main economic challenges and opportunities facing Pakistan in the post-COVID-19 era, and how can the federal government address them effectively?
3. How has the rise of extremism and intolerance of diversity and dissent impacted the social cohesion and stability of Pakistan, and what role can the federal government play in promoting pluralism and tolerance?

### 1.1 Objective of the study

This study aims to address the federal challenges and issues of the Pakistan since 2013. It also analyzes the impact of political instability and polarization on Pakistan's federal system and

its relations between the central and provincial governments. It examines the main economic challenges and opportunities that Pakistan faces in the post-COVID-19 era and propose effective strategies for the federal government to address these challenges. This paper assesses how the rise of extremism and intolerance of diversity and dissent has affected the social cohesion and stability of Pakistan and recommend measures the federal government can take to promote pluralism and tolerance within the nation.

## 2. Literature review

Pakistan is a federal state with a diverse and complex reality. The country has faced a number of challenges in its efforts to strengthen its federal system, including political instability, economic inequality, ethnic and religious tensions, and the dominant role of the military in politics (Khan, 2021). However, there is a growing consensus among scholars and policymakers that federalism is the only viable solution for addressing Pakistan's political, economic, and administrative issues. A number of scholars have written on the challenges and prospects of federalism in Pakistan.

The book *Pakistan: A Hard Country* by Anatol Lieven, serves as a vital source in understanding the challenges and prospects of federalism in Pakistan. Lieven argues that Pakistan's federal system has been weakened by a number of factors, including political instability, economic inequality, and ethnic and religious tensions (Lieven, 2012). However, he also believes that Pakistan's federal system has the potential to be a source of strength and stability for the country. Lieven offers a number of recommendations for strengthening the federal system, including constitutional reforms, fiscal decentralization, and institutional strengthening.

In the book *Pakistan: Political Roots and Development 1947-1999*, Safdar Mahmood discussed a detailed analysis of the constitution-making process and the main features of different constitutions and the reasons and consequences of their failure (Ahmed, 2021). It also evaluates the performance and policies of the military regimes of Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, and Ziaul Haq, as well as the functioning and challenges of the elected civilian governments after the restoration of democracy in 1985 (Mahmood, 2000). It also examines the activities of various political parties, as well as their leadership and electoral performance. The book presents a concise and critical overview of the major aspects of Pakistan's history, constitution-making, political parties, democracy, and foreign policy.

In the book *The Military and Politics in Pakistan, 1947-1997*, Hassan Askari Rizvi emphasizes the role of the military in Pakistani politics and society. Rizvi argues that the military has played a dominant role in Pakistani politics since its independence in 1947 (Rizvi, 2000). He identifies a number of factors that have contributed to the military's rise to power, including the weakness of civilian institutions, the country's geopolitical insecurity, and the military's own institutional interests. Rizvi's book is an essential resource in understanding the complex relationship between the military and politics in Pakistan.

The book, *Making federation work: federalism in Pakistan after the 18th Amendment* by Asma Faiz is a seminal collection of several articles from various disciplines coherently, with a

commendable emphasis on federalism (Faiz, 2015). It adequately explains that why federalism is necessary. The book covers all facets of federalism and is a useful addition to the federalism literature. The 18th Amendment itself is a significant development in Pakistan's constitutional history. In the many parts of the book, this incident has been examined from a variety of perspectives. An extensive analysis of the historical, political, economic, social, and environmental aspects of this special federal experiment has been conducted by a vast array of accomplished academics. Additionally, it offers policymakers, practitioners, and scholars a valuable insight.

In the book *Federalism in Pakistan: Early Years* the author Muntazra Nazir provides a historical and conceptual analysis of the federal system of Pakistan (Nazir, 2008). The book explores the factors that necessitated federalism for Pakistan, such as its diverse and complex reality. The book also assesses the problems and opportunities of federalism in Pakistan, such as the imbalance of power between the center and the provinces, the aspirations for more provincial autonomy and protection, and the importance of democracy, elections, decentralization, and regional identity. The book contends that federalism with provincial autonomy is the only feasible solution for addressing the political, economic, and administrative issues of Pakistan, and that strong and autonomous provinces imply a strong Pakistan.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This research will use a qualitative one-method approach to explore the federal issues of Pakistan. The data will be collected from secondary sources, such as academic journals, government reports, and news articles. The data will be analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach to identify and code patterns in the data, and then develop interpretations of these patterns. The purpose of the research is to explore the federal issues of Pakistan, which is known as explanatory research.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### **4.1 Historical Background**

Federalism is a system of government in which power is divided between a central authority and constituent units, such as provinces or states. Federalism is not a fixed or uniform model of government (Mueller & Fenna, 2022). It can vary in terms of how much and what kind of power-sharing occurs between the two levels of government, as well as the institutional structures and mechanisms that regulate their relations (Mueller & Fenna, 2022). Federalism can also change over time in response to changing political, economic, and social circumstances. Therefore, federalism requires constant negotiation and adaptation among the various actors involved in the federal system.

The origin of federalism in Pakistan can be traced back to its formation in 1947, when it emerged as a consequence of the partition of British India into two independent states: India and Pakistan. Pakistan consisted of two geographically separated wings: West Pakistan and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) (Chandio et al., 2021). The two wings had different ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious features, which posed a challenge for the integration and cohesion of the new state (Kukreja, 2020). Moreover, Pakistan inherited a highly centralized and bureaucratic

system of government from the British colonial rule, which did not suit its diverse and complex reality (Hashmi, 2022).

The first constitution of Pakistan was adopted in 1956, which declared Pakistan as an Islamic republic and a federal parliamentary democracy (Amir & Ahmad, 2020). The constitution provided for a bicameral legislature, with equal representation for both wings in the upper house (Senate) and proportional representation in the lower house (National Assembly) (Kukreja, 2020). The constitution also divided the legislative powers between the central and the provincial governments into three lists: federal, provincial, and concurrent. However, the constitution was abrogated in 1958 by a military coup led by General Ayub Khan, who imposed martial law and suspended all political activities (Hashmi, 2022).

The second constitution of Pakistan was promulgated in 1962 by Ayub Khan, who became the president of Pakistan (Hassan et al., 2021). The constitution replaced the parliamentary system with a presidential system, and abolished the provincial governments and legislatures. The country was divided into two administrative units: West Pakistan and East Pakistan (Munawar & Mushtaq, 2022). The constitution also introduced a system of basic democracies, which consisted of local councils elected by indirect suffrage. The constitution was criticized for being authoritarian and centralist, and for ignoring the demands and aspirations of the people of East Pakistan (Amir & Ahmad, 2020).

The third constitution of Pakistan was enacted in 1973 by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who became the prime minister of Pakistan after the separation of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1971 (Ishfaq et al., 2022). The constitution restored the parliamentary system and the provincial autonomy. The constitution also declared Islam as the state religion and provided for an Islamic advisory council (Kapoor, 2021). The constitution was widely accepted and supported by all major political parties and groups in Pakistan (Hashmi, 2022). However, in 1985, Zia-ul-Haq, who became the president of Pakistan, who imposed martial law and initiated a process of Islamization. He amended some provisions of the 1973 constitution, such as increasing the presidential powers, introducing a non-party based electoral system, establishing a federal shariat court, and adding some Islamic clauses. The constitution also revived the provincial governments and legislatures, but reduced their autonomy by transferring some subjects from the provincial list to the concurrent list. The constitution was opposed by many political parties and groups for being undemocratic and un-Islamic (Hassan et al., 2021).

After the restoration of democracy in 2008, the constitution amended some provisions of the 1973 constitution through the 18th amendment, such as abolishing the presidential powers to dissolve the parliament or dismiss the prime minister, restoring the parliamentary system, renaming some provinces (NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), creating a new province (Gilgit-Baltistan), devolving some subjects from the concurrent list to the provincial list, increasing the provincial representation in the National Finance Commission and the Council of Common Interests, and establishing a parliamentary committee on appointment of judges (Majeed & Akhtar, 2021). The constitution was hailed as a landmark achievement for strengthening the federalism and democracy in Pakistan (Hashmi, 2022).

The current situation of federalism in Pakistan is characterized by both challenges and prospects (Khatoon, 2023). On the one hand, Pakistan faces multiple sources of internal and external conflict, such as political instability and polarization, economic crisis and inequality, extremism and intolerance, regional rivalries and security threats, and global pressures and opportunities (Bukhari et al., 2024). These factors have put a strain on the federal system and the relations between the center and the provinces, as well as among the provinces themselves. On the other hand, Pakistan has also witnessed some positive developments, such as peaceful political transitions, constitutional reforms, institutional strengthening, social mobilization, and dialogue and cooperation (Hashmi, 2022). These factors have created a potential for enhancing the federal governance and performance of Pakistan, as well as for resolving the existing and emerging issues in a peaceful and democratic manner.

This paper will examine the major federal issues of Pakistan from 2013 to 2023, focusing on the following domains: political, economic, and social (Khatoon, 2023). The paper will explore the causes, dynamics, and consequences of these issues, as well as the responses and strategies adopted by the various actors and stakeholders involved in the federal system. The paper will also suggest some possible solutions and recommendations for improving the federal governance and performance of Pakistan, as well as for promoting peace and stability in the country (Bukhari et al., 2024).

#### **4.2 Pakistan's Federal Structure and its challenges**

Federalism in Pakistan has been a catchword since 1947 (Ahmed, 2021). The federal structure of Pakistan is severely challenged by provincial independence movements fueled by ethnic tensions, fiscal/economic exploitation and feudalism (Rothschild, 2016). Secondly; linguistic movements, lawlessness, cross borders conflicts, military dictatorships, invasion of international groups and superpowers on state's sovereignty played a vital role in deconstructing federalism (Ishfaq et al., 2022). Social legitimacy of corruption, intolerance, and unequal benefits of citizenship also served as an instrument of marginalization.

#### **4.3 Challenge of the Provincial Autonomy**

One of the key challenges faced by Pakistan's federal system is the lack of provincial autonomy (Rothschild, 2016). The central government has often disregarded the political sensitivities and aspirations of the provinces, especially the smaller and less developed ones. It has created a strong impression in the provinces that the central government does not tolerate dissent and wants to rule them with a firm hand (Hashmi, 2022). The interim and regular Pakistani constitutions (1956, 1962, and 1973) created a strong center, reinforcing the centralizing trends inherited from the pre-independence British Indian political arrangements (Oldenburg, 2010). The central government often invoked Islam to counterbalance regional and parochial sentiments and emphasized unity based on Islamic principles. However, it did not establish a participatory political system and failed to address the concerns of the provincial interests. Centralization was accompanied by non-participatory governance and political management. As a matter of fact, dictatorial and authoritarian political system negates the spirit of federalism, accentuate distrust and mutual fear. The repeated military intervention and periodic constitutional breakdown also

undermined the role of provinces and reinforced centralization and non-democratic trends in Pakistan (Rizvi, 2000). Some of the recent issues that have sparked tensions between the center and the provinces are:

- **The National Finance Commission Award**

The NFC Award is a constitutional mechanism that determines how federal revenues are distributed among the provinces. It is supposed to be revised every five years with consensus among all stakeholders. However, it has been delayed since 2015 due to disagreements over the criteria and formula for resource sharing. The smaller provinces have demanded more fiscal autonomy and a fairer share of revenues based on multiple factors such as population, poverty, backwardness, revenue generation, and inverse population density. They have also opposed any deduction of funds for national security or development projects at the federal level before allocating them to the provinces. The center, on the other hand, has argued for more resources for itself to meet its obligations and responsibilities. The deadlock over the NFC Award has created mistrust and resentment among the provinces and hampered their development plans.

- **The 18th Amendment**

The 18th Amendment was passed in 2010 as a landmark constitutional reform that devolved more powers and responsibilities to the provinces in various fields such as education, health, environment, social welfare, agriculture, and tourism. It also abolished the concurrent legislative list that allowed both the centre and the provinces to legislate on certain subjects. The amendment was hailed as a historic step towards strengthening provincial autonomy and democracy in Pakistan. However, it has also faced criticism and resistance from some quarters who have questioned its implementation and implications. Some have argued that the amendment has weakened the federation by creating an imbalance between the centre and the provinces. They have also claimed that it has increased corruption, inefficiency, and mismanagement at the provincial level. Others have suggested that some subjects should be restored to the concurrent list or transferred to the federal level for better coordination and regulation. The centre has also expressed its concerns over some aspects of the amendment such as the restructuring of the Council of Common Interests (CCI), which was a forum for resolving inter-provincial disputes (Faiz, 2015).

- **The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that aims to enhance connectivity and cooperation between China and Pakistan through a network of roads, railways, pipelines, power plants, industrial zones, and ports. It is expected to bring significant economic benefits and opportunities for both countries as well as for the region. However, it has also generated controversies and conflicts among different stakeholders in Pakistan over its design, execution, and impact. The smaller provinces have accused the centre of favouring Punjab in allocating CPEC projects and resources. They have also raised objections over the route alignment, environmental impact, land acquisition, security arrangements, labour rights, and

transparency of CPEC contracts. They have demanded more representation and participation in CPEC decision-making bodies and mechanisms. The centre has tried to address some of these concerns by holding consultations with the provinces and revising some aspects of CPEC plans. However, it has also maintained its authority and influence over CPEC affairs by invoking national interest and strategic partnership with China.

#### 4.4 Resource Allocation Disparities

Another challenge faced by Pakistan's federal system is the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities among different provinces and classes of people. Pakistan is a country of stark contrasts and disparities in terms of income, wealth, education, health, and human development. According to the World Bank, Pakistan's Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, was 33.5 in 2015, which is higher than the average of 32.6 for South Asia. The poverty rate in Pakistan was 24.3% in 2015, which means that nearly one-fourth of the population lived below the national poverty line. However, there are significant variations across regions and groups. For instance, the poverty rate in Balochistan was 41.2%, while in Punjab it was 19.3%. Similarly, the literacy rate in Pakistan was 60% in 2018, but it ranged from 43% in Sindh to 72% in Islamabad. The Human Development Index (HDI), a composite indicator of life expectancy, education, and income, also shows wide gaps among provinces. In 2019, Pakistan's HDI was 0.557, which ranked it at 154 out of 189 countries. However, the HDI for Punjab was 0.647, while for Balochistan it was 0.421 (Global\_POVEQ\_PAK.Pdf, 2020).

The unequal distribution of resources and opportunities has exacerbated economic disparities and social inequalities in Pakistan. It has also fueled grievances and demands for more fiscal autonomy and fairer revenue-sharing mechanisms from the provinces. The provinces have complained that they do not receive their due share of revenues from the federal divisible pool, which consists of taxes collected by the centre from various sources such as income tax, sales tax, customs duty, and excise duty. They have also argued that they bear the brunt of the fiscal burden imposed by the centre through debt servicing, defense spending, subsidies, and grants. Moreover, they have expressed their dissatisfaction with the allocation of funds for development projects under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), which is decided by the centre with little input from the provinces. They have demanded more say and transparency in the PSDP formulation and implementation (Burki, 2023). The resource allocation issue has affected various sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, industry, energy, and education. For example:

- **Agriculture**

Agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan's economy, contributing about 18.5% to the GDP and employing about 38.5% of the labour force in 2020. However, it faces many challenges such as water scarcity, low productivity, climate change, market distortions, and lack of research and innovation. The provinces have different agro-climatic conditions and crop patterns that require different policies and interventions. However, the centre has often imposed uniform policies and regulations that do not suit the provincial needs and preferences. For instance, the centre has fixed the support prices for major crops such as wheat, rice, cotton, and sugarcane without consulting the provinces. It has also controlled the inter-provincial



movement of agricultural commodities through various restrictions and quotas. These measures have created inefficiencies and distortions in the agricultural markets and affected the farmers' incomes and incentives.

- **Industry**

Industry is another important sector of Pakistan's economy, accounting for about 20.3% of the GDP and employing about 13.8% of the labour force in 2020. However, it faces many challenges such as low competitiveness, high cost of doing business, energy crisis, outdated technology, and lack of innovation. The provinces have different industrial potentials and priorities that require different policies and incentives. However, the centre has often imposed uniform policies and regulations that do not suit the provincial needs and preferences. For instance, the centre has fixed the tariffs and taxes for various industrial sectors and products without consulting the provinces. It has also controlled the inter-provincial trade and commerce through various barriers and restrictions. These measures have created inefficiencies and distortions in the industrial markets and affected the industrial growth and development.

- **Energy**

Energy is a vital sector of Pakistan's economy, as it is essential for both production and consumption activities. However, it faces many challenges such as supply-demand gap, high cost, low quality, environmental impact, and governance issues. The provinces have different energy resources and requirements that require different policies and strategies. However, the centre has often imposed uniform policies and regulations that do not suit the provincial needs and preferences. For instance, the centre has determined the electricity generation mix and pricing mechanism without consulting the provinces. It has also controlled the inter-provincial transmission and distribution of electricity through various constraints and losses. These measures have created inefficiencies and distortions in the energy markets and affected the energy security and sustainability.

- **Education**

Education is a crucial sector of Pakistan's economy, as it is essential for human capital development and social progress. However, it faces many challenges such as low enrolment, high dropout, poor quality, gender disparity, curriculum issues, and lack of research and innovation. The provinces have different educational needs and aspirations that require different policies and interventions. However, the centre has often imposed uniform policies and regulations that do not suit the provincial needs and preferences. For instance, the centre has set the national curriculum and standards for various levels and subjects of education without consulting the provinces. It has also controlled the inter-provincial recognition and accreditation of educational institutions and degrees through various criteria and procedures. These measures have created inefficiencies and distortions in the educational markets and affected the educational outcomes and opportunities.

#### 4.5 Ethnic diversity

Pakistan is a diverse and heterogeneous country, with over 15 major ethnic groups that differ in physical features, historical bloodlines, customs, dress, food and music. However, Pakistan's federal system has failed to accommodate the diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious identities and interests of its people. The state has often adopted a centralized and homogenizing approach that has ignored or suppressed the pluralistic and multicultural nature of the society. The state has also failed to provide equal representation and rights to different ethnic groups in the political, economic, and social spheres of the country. This has created a sense of alienation and resentment among many ethnic groups, who have felt marginalized and discriminated by the dominant groups and institutions. This has also contributed to extremism, intolerance, and violence in the society, as some ethnic groups have resorted to armed struggle or militant activism to assert their identity and demand their rights. Some examples of how ethnic diversity has posed challenges for national integration and cohesion are:

- **The Baluchistan insurgency**

The Baluchistan insurgency is a long-standing conflict between the Baloch nationalists and the Pakistani state over the issue of political autonomy and resource control. The Baloch's are the largest ethnic group in Baluchistan, the largest but least populated province of Pakistan. They have a distinct culture and language that is different from the dominant Urdu and Punjabi languages. They have also been historically deprived of development and opportunities by the central government, which has exploited their natural resources such as gas, minerals, and ports without giving them a fair share of revenues (Sheikh, 2023). The Baloches have been struggling for political autonomy and self-determination since the inception of Pakistan, and have launched several armed insurgencies against the state. The current insurgency started in 2004 after the killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti, a prominent Baloch leader, by the Pakistani army. The insurgents have targeted security forces, government officials, infrastructure, and settlers from other provinces. The state has responded with military operations, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and human rights violations. The insurgency has claimed thousands of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands of people (Dionnet, 2020).

- **The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement**

The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) is a non-violent social movement that emerged in 2018 to demand justice and rights for the Pashtuns in Pakistan. The Pashtuns are the second largest ethnic group in Pakistan, mainly inhabiting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province and the tribal areas along the border with Afghanistan. They have a distinct culture and language that is different from the dominant Urdu and Punjabi languages. They have also been affected by decades of conflict and violence in their region, which has resulted in displacement, poverty, insecurity, and human rights violations. The PTM has raised four main demands from the state: 1) an end to extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of Pashtuns by security forces; 2) an end to racial profiling and harassment of Pashtuns at security checkpoints; 3) an end to landmines and unexploded ordnance in Pashtun areas; 4) an end to collective punishment of Pashtun communities for alleged militant activities. The PTM has mobilized millions of

Pashtuns across Pakistan through peaceful rallies and protests. The state has responded with censorship, intimidation, arrests, and violence. The PTM has faced accusations of being anti-state, anti-army, anti-Islam, and pro-India (Kakar, 2020).

- **The Sectarian Violence**

The sectarian violence is a recurring phenomenon of religious intolerance and extremism that has plagued Pakistan for decades. It involves violent clashes between different sects of Islam, mainly Sunni and Shia Muslims. Sunni Muslims constitute about 80% of Pakistan's population, while Shia Muslims constitute about 15-20%. However, there are significant variations across regions and groups. For instance, the Shia population is higher in Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and parts of Baluchistan and Sindh than in other regions. The sectarian violence has been fueled by various factors such as ideological differences, political rivalries, foreign influences, militant groups, and state policies. The sectarian violence has taken various forms such as targeted killings, suicide bombings, mob attacks, and communal riots. The sectarian violence has claimed thousands of lives and injured many more. It has also created fear, hatred, and mistrust among different religious communities. It has also undermined the social harmony and national unity of Pakistan.

#### **4.6 Future Prospects for Federalism in Pakistan**

The future prospects for federalism in Pakistan depend on various factors such as the political stability, economic recovery, provincial autonomy, resource allocation, and ethnic diversity of the country. Federalism is a form of government that allows different regions and peoples to share power and resources under a common political union. However, federalism in Pakistan has faced many challenges and problems since its inception in 1947. Some of these challenges are political instability, economic crisis, provincial autonomy, resource allocation, and ethnic diversity. These challenges require urgent and comprehensive policy initiatives and reforms from the central and provincial governments. The following are the policy recommendations;

##### **4.6.1 Political Stability and Legitimacy**

One of the main challenges for the government is to ensure political stability and legitimacy in the country. This requires holding free, fair, and transparent elections as soon as possible and respecting the mandate of the people. The government should also strengthen the democratic institutions and processes and uphold the rule of law and constitutionalism. Moreover, the government should foster a culture of dialogue, consensus, and tolerance among different political parties and groups. Additionally, the government should seek constructive engagement and cooperation with the military and other state institutions.

##### **4.6.2 Economic Stability and Growth**

Another major challenge for the government is to restore economic stability and growth in the country. This requires implementing the IMF program with due diligence and prudence and

seeking alternative sources of financing and investment. The government should also enhance domestic revenue mobilization by reducing tax exemptions, broadening the tax base, improving tax administration, and enhancing compliance. Furthermore, the government should curtail and improve the quality of public expenditure by reducing distortive subsidies, improving the financial viability of the energy sector, and increasing private participation in state-owned enterprises. The government should also strengthen management of public debt by better institutions and systems, developing a domestic debt market, and seeking debt relief from bilateral and multilateral creditors.

#### **4.6.2 Provincial Autonomy and Inter-Provincial Harmony**

A key opportunity for the government is to enhance provincial autonomy and inter-provincial harmony in the country. This requires revising the NFC award that determines how federal revenues are distributed among the provinces based on multiple factors such as population, poverty, backwardness, revenue generation, and inverse population density. The government should also implement the 18th Amendment that devolved more powers and responsibilities to the provinces in various fields such as education, health, environment, social welfare, agriculture, and tourism. Moreover, the government should establish the CCI as a constitutional body that serves as a forum for resolving inter-provincial disputes and ensuring coordination among the federation and the provinces. The government should also involve the provinces in the decision-making and implementation of CPEC projects that affect their regions and interests.

#### **4.6.3 Resource Allocation and Regional Imbalances**

Another opportunity for the government is to improve resource allocation and reduce regional imbalances in the country. This requires enhancing transparency and accountability in the PSDP formulation and implementation by involving the provinces and other stakeholders in project identification, appraisal, approval, monitoring, and evaluation. The government should also promote balanced and inclusive development across regions and sectors by prioritizing human development, social protection, infrastructure development, and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, the government should encourage regional cooperation and integration by facilitating trade, investment, tourism, and cultural exchange among different provinces and regions.

#### **4.6.4 Ethnic Diversity and National Integration**

A vital goal for the government is to promote ethnic diversity and national integration in the country. This requires recognizing and respecting the cultural and linguistic rights of different ethnic groups by allowing them to use their own languages in education, media, judiciary, and administration. The government should also ensure fair representation of different ethnic groups in federal institutions such as parliament, judiciary, military, and civil service. The government should also promote dialogue and cooperation among different ethnic groups through forums such as the National Commission for Minorities (NCM), the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), and the National Action Plan (NAP) for countering terrorism and extremism. The government should also support the development and empowerment of different ethnic groups

through schemes such as the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), and the Ehsaas Programme.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Pakistan faces multiple federal challenges that require urgent and comprehensive policy initiatives and reforms from the central and provincial governments. These challenges include political instability, economic crisis, provincial autonomy, resource allocation, and ethnic diversity. Federalism is a form of government that allows different regions and peoples to share power and resources under a common political union. However, federalism in Pakistan has faced many challenges and problems since its inception in 1947. To overcome these challenges and problems, the government needs to adopt a participatory, inclusive, and cooperative approach that respects the diversity and autonomy of the provinces while ensuring the unity and integrity of the federation. The government also needs to address the root causes of conflict and violence in the society by promoting democracy, development, human rights, and social justice. Only then can Pakistan achieve its potential as a prosperous, progressive, and peaceful country.

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