

# **The limitations of non-consociational federalism – the case of Pakistan**

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# Abstract

Pakistan has been a federation for most of its history, but possesses a chequered democratic history. The fact that it is not a consolidated democracy should not prevent us from analysing the ways in which the form of its federation has influenced identity formation and articulation. The form of its federation has changed radically, from the One Unit Plan adopted in 1955 to the secession of Bangladesh in 1971 and the reconstitution of the units of the Western Wing. The federal form is also contested, notably because the province of East Bengal/Pakistan contained the majority of the population before 1971 and Punjab has contained the majority of the population after the secession of Bangladesh. Pakistan's federation is also centralised and has experienced several severe ethnic conflicts –in East Pakistan, leading to the secession of Bangladesh, but also in Baluchistan and Sindh. Interestingly however, the community most often associated with nationalist demands, Pashtuns, have been remarkably quiescent. Pashtuns possess a strong sense of identity but they have not seen this as incompatible with their membership of Pakistan. One reason for this is their co-option in one of the institutions of state that matters – the army. Can this be replicated elsewhere in Pakistan? Federalism by itself is not a panacea for ethnic conflict regulation. Many authors and statesmen have questioned its utility as a mechanism of ethnic conflict regulation. But these authors miss the point that it is the particular structure of the federation, in terms of the numbers of units, composition of those units, and additional consociational mechanisms that determines its success or failure, and the extent of conflict. This paper will contend that it is the absence of consociational mechanisms for ethnolinguistic communities throughout Pakistan's history that has caused conflict, but that these consociational mechanisms need not be democratic. It will examine the different processes of accommodation of the different ethno-linguistic communities, and to what extent these processes explain the tensions between communities 2 and against the centre.

# Why look at federalism and consociationalism in Pakistan?

My previous research<sup>1</sup> on India and Pakistan – federal structures are not sufficient to explain ethnic conflict regulation

Both federalism and consociationalism have generally been associated with democratic forms of governance

So, to what extent have either made (or could make) a difference to ethnic conflict regulation in Pakistan?

# Non-democratic institutions

Brendan O'Leary's 'law'<sup>2</sup> – democratic federations without a staatsvolk will require additional consociational mechanisms

Many claim that military rule in Pakistan increases ethnic tensions

**BUT**

Non-democratic federalism can still have federal effects

Some consociationalism can have an impact in non-democratic federations.

# Many tensions

Secession Bangladesh 1971

Secessionist war in Baluchistan 1973-8 and tensions today

Violence in Karachi 1985-2000

General conflict over resource allocation

General accusations of Punjabization

# Structural challenges of Pakistan's federation

Small number of units (Slide 10)

Disparity in population sizes

Heterogeneity

Resource allocation

But would there be any change in the absence  
of.....

# A grand coalition

- Bengalis were represented in the government (see slide 11) but they were *generally* not community leaders
- They also had no power
- Real power resided elsewhere
- Co-optation of other communities has worked

# Proportionality

- Bengalis were massively underrepresented in the bureaucracy (Slide 12); historical discrimination
- Also underrepresentation of Sindhis and Baluchis but not Pashtuns (Slide 13)
- This has effects – Bengalis, Sindhis and Baluchis massively alienated
- Army even less representative (Slide 13) even today
- Lack of proportionality has resource implications

# Does any of this matter (will anything ever change?)

1. Proportionality can be an important element of ethnic conflict regulation in a federal system, even in the absence of democracy
2. Democratic forms of government in Pakistan would not solve ethnic tensions without consociational recognition of communities – in both democratic and non-democratic institutions
3. Democracy will not help stabilise Pakistan's federation in the absence of serious structural changes

# Federal Failures and the Number of Units 1900-2006<sup>3</sup>

Units	Federal States	Federal Failures	% of failures
2-3	16	12	75
4-7	10	5	50
8-12	5	1	20
➤ 13	15	2	13
Totals	46	20	43

# The Central Political Elite in Pakistan 1947-58<sup>4</sup>

	<b>East Pakistan</b>	<b>West Pakistan</b>
<b>Heads of State</b>	2	2
<b>Prime Ministers</b>	3	4
<b>Ministers, deputy ministers, state ministers</b>	27	27

# East-West representation in the upper echelons of the CSP in 1955<sup>5</sup>

<b>Rank</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>East as % total</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	19	0	0
<b>Joint Secretary</b>	38	3	7.3
<b>Deputy Secretary</b>	123	10	7.3
<b>Under Secretary</b>	510	38	7.3

## Ethnic Origins of Top Bureaucratic Elite (Class 1 Officers) in 1983<sup>6</sup>

<b>Group</b>	<b>Percentage pop in 1998</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Punjabis	44.15	47.9	+ 3.75
Pashtuns	15.42	11.9	- 3.52
Mohajirs	7.57	17.3	+ 9.73
Sindhis	14.1	4.4	- 9.7
Baluchis	3.57	0.7	- 2.87

## East-West Representation in the military office class 1955-56<sup>7</sup>

<b>Service</b>	<b>East Pakistan</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>West Pakistan</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Army</b>	14	1.5	894	98.5	908
<b>Navy</b>	7	1.2	593	98.8	600
<b>Air Force</b>	60	8.6	640	91.4	700

# Sources

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For a longer, written version of this paper see Katharine Adeney (2009) 'The limitations of non-consociational federalism - the example of Pakistan' *Ethnopolitics*, 8 (1): 87-106

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