

PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY & THE SOURCES OF INTERNAL CONFLICT IN PAKISTAN

One of the most contested sessions was on provincial autonomy as source of internal conflict in Pakistan. The panellists included Mir Hasil Bizenjo (Secretary General, Baluchistan National Party), Mukhtar Yousafzai (Pukhtunkha Milli Awami Party) and Aamir Riaz. Gulmina Bilal moderated the proceedings. A booklet on provincial autonomy was also released on this occasion which thoroughly addresses the issues from an historical perspective.

Session Objective:

- Ø To provide platform for the student leaders from all corners of the country to promote nation building through cooperation

Session Proceedings:

It was an open house discussion on the subject matter in which different students present their view points on Provincial Autonomy. At the end of the discussions Mir Hasil Bizenjo and Mukhtar Yousafzai concluded the session with their remarks. The views of different student leaders are as below:

Tariq Afghani: Azad Pakhtun Student Federation

Tariq Afghani representing Azad Pakhtun Student Federation said that his organisation believes in rights of all nationalities living in Pakistan and implore the State of Pakistan to provide provincial autonomy for all the nationalities along with a right to have a complete control over their natural resources. He said his organisation has put its efforts for an absolute provincial autonomy and the Central should only have control over currency, foreign affairs and defence. Moreover Azad Pakhtun Federation strives for the ethnical identity, natural wealth, mother tongue, customs, history, civilisation and culture for all. The organisation demands that as the current distribution of the provinces was done under British Rule for its own interests at that time, so they must be redistributed on the bases of Language, Culture and Geography and Pakhtuns should have a land based upon their ethnicity just like Baluchistan, Punjab and Sindh. Similarly he said that his organisation demands that in every province the mother tongue, of the people living there should be given a status of official language for education, law and order and all other aspects of life. Lastly he said that the distress and movements for separation will be continuing within the country and the people living in smaller provinces will keep on having a sense of deprivation until and unless the nationalities are not provided with provincial autonomy.

Fharukh Habib: General Secretary – Insaaf Students Federation (ISF)

General Secretary of Insaaf Students Federation raised the following few points while talking about the provincial autonomy:

- § ISF is a student organisation representing the students from all around the country and fully supports the Federation.
- § However ISF has a view point that Federation is deduced to provide linkages between the provinces and for that reason the Federation must provide equal rights to all provinces.
- § ISF has reservations against the distribution of 'NFC' awards on the bases of population.
- § If the Provincial Legislative Assembly passes a Law then the Federation should accept it.
- § A major portion of wealth, generated through available resources in all provinces, should be spent on the development of these provinces.
- § ISF strongly condemns all those external factors whose interests lie in, to grow Pakistan weaker and create destabilisation within the country
- § ISF also condemns the injustice being done with the provinces and appeals the Federation to recompense their deprivation
- § ISF will be in favour of all those efforts which are put to strengthen all the provinces of Pakistan
- § According to ISF community of any province is involved in discrimination against other provinces as all provinces are in need of each of other and their resources fulfil the needs of each other
- § For the above point Fharukh Habib gave an example that if the gas being produced in Baluchistan is used in cloth producing industry in Punjab is curtailed by Baluchistan then the supply of cloth from Punjab to Baluchistan will also be instinctively curtailed. Therefore political issues should not be associated with public problems and as such their further politicisation may be avoided and everyone's sovereignty should be respected

Ahsan Ghori: All Pakistan Muttahida Students Organisation (APMSO)

According to Ahsan Ghori of APMSO all provinces should be provided liberty and self-sufficiency on the basis of 1940 resolution. Provinces should have their rights so as to take their own choices. If we consider the developed countries, all the provinces, states and counties in those countries have absolute and equal rights. Federations of these countries have fortified by giving rights to their states and provinces. Therefore the Federation of Pakistan should only have a control over currency, defence and foreign affairs and all the rest rights should be distributed among the provinces, so as to condense the agitation and angst among the different nationalities living in the country, and our country should also take a place in the list of developed countries.

Sajjad Shar: Jiye Sindh Students Federation (JSSF)

Mr. Sajjad Shar who was representing JSSF expressed his views on provincial autonomy by saying that they were descendants of Sindh and *Mohenjo-daro*¹ which is the second biggest civilisation in the world. Sindh has been attacked from time to time because of its wealth. *Muhammad Bin Qasim*² made the first attack on Sindh and set the foundations of fundamentalism within the region and since then the people of Sindh have been fighting for their freedom.

G M Syed³ proposed the Pakistan Resolution, 1940 in the Sindh Assembly, which ultimately resulted in the creation of Pakistan. However, he became the first political prisoner of Pakistan because of his differences with the leadership of the country.

Later on Sindh was destroyed by 'One Unit'⁴ Policy and all of its resources were taken away from its local populace. Millions of people were killed and women raped over the soil of Sindh and therefore after independence of Bangladesh it was difficult for the oppressed people of Sindh to live as part of Pakistan, so G M Syed for the first time uttered for the freedom of Sindh and so is JSSF struggling for.

He further said that Sindh has always been entirely deprived of its resources. Return on Sindh's contribution in the National Funds even less than a quarter which is truly unfair to its citizens. He said our educational institutions have been damaged; our national workers are being kidnapped by Army of Pakistan and ISI; as Punjab has a strong Central Position so it has made us (Sindh) its colony; moreover we do not recognise the 1973 Constitution as we never agreed upon and signed the constitution.

Therefore we do not call for provincial autonomy but for an entire independence of Sindh and its separation from Pakistan, as we do not want to live for a single instant under such suppression. Our concern is not a replacement of Qaim Ali Shah⁵ but a separate Sindhi Nation for which we are striving for. So we demand that we should be given freedom straight away under the UNO Charter, and which is our right.

Shafiq Solangi: Mehran Student Council

¹ Moenjo-daro (Mound of the Dead) was one of the largest city-settlements of the Indus Valley Civilization of south Asia situated in the province of Sind, Pakistan. Built around 2600 BCE, the city was one of the early urban settlements in the world.

² Muhammad bin Qasim was an Umayyad (second of the four Islamic caliphates 661–750) general who conquered the Sindh and Punjab regions along the Indus river (now a part of Pakistan) at the age of seventeen.

³ G. M. Syed (January 17, 1904 — April 25, 1995) (abbreviation of Ghulam Murtaza Shah Syed) was a Sindhi nationalist, leftist, revolutionary and a sufi.

⁴ One-Unit was the title of a scheme launched by the federal government of Pakistan to merge the four provinces of West Pakistan into one homogenous unit, as a counterbalance against the numerical domination of the ethnic Bengalis of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The One Unit policy was announced by Prime Minister Chaudhry Muhammad Ali on 22nd November, 1954.

⁵ Syed Qaim Ali Shah is the current Chief Minister of Sindh. He is a prominent Sindhi politician of Pakistan affiliated with Pakistan Peoples Party and the current Chief Minister of Sindh.

Shafiq Solangi from Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad and representing Mehran Student Council said that we are in favour of Pakistan as a nation. Still there should be provincial autonomy in Pakistan. He said he strongly claims that it was the Sindhis who strived for Pakistan and historically, 'Sindh State' borders from Kashmir to *Kalat*⁶ before the Mughal Rule. He raised the following few points while talking in favour of the provincial autonomy.

- § Redistribution of land
- § Equal rights to all
- § Independent Parliament
- § Qualitative education
- § New social contract
- § We already know what type of problems we face so we need to do is to think of solutions now
- § As it is the chance for the Federation to give powers to provinces
- § Amendments to be made in the constitution of Pakistan
- § Concurrent list and Federal list



PAKISTAN: QAUM PARASTI, SUBAE KHUDD MUKHTARI AUR ADM MARKAZIYAT – AIK TARAKHEE JAYAZA (URDU)

This booklet is a valuable and informative historical resource on the issue of provincial autonomy and has traced tendencies of centralization since the colonial times. It argues for embracing the diversity of Pakistani regions and instigates a dialogue that is informed by detailed historical evidence on centrist forces in the country. Some of the information given in the booklet challenge many generally held assumptions about the political history of Pakistan

The booklet would start a new dialogue with youth who are expected to unload historical baggage of parochial assumptions about the issue.

Preface of the booklet has been written by Prof. Aziz-uddin Ahmad.

This booklet was launched during the ALL PAKISTAN STUDENT LEADERS' CONFERENCE ON PEACEBUILDING IN CAMPUSES (19th-24th July 2009) organized by BARGAD.

Supported by HBS/ Written by Aamir Riaz

Sardar Taleem Yaghi: Jammu Kashmir Peoples Students Organisation (JKPSO)

While representing the motive of JKPSO Sardar Tasleem said that the history of State of Jammu Kashmir is centuries old. In 1931 people of Kashmir resisted against the *Dogra Raj* and later in 1947 a resolution to join with Pakistan was passed in which

⁶ Kalat was a princely state located in the centre of the modern province of Baluchistan, Pakistan.

Dogra Hari Singh was informed to join Pakistan otherwise the Kashmiris will start off an armed stance against him. As a result of this struggle approximately 34000 square feet region was freed and is now called Azad Jammu Kashmir. Indian forces entered the rest of Kashmir to occupy the region and when the Kashmiri people even defeated the Indian forces, India passed the issue to United Nations (UN). A resolution was passed through UN in favour of the people of Kashmir and UN accepted their right to choose.

With this the Kashmiri people have a conviction to join Pakistan and have been trying hard for the past 62 years. However with altering policies by the Pakistani heads of State, for Kashmir, the sentiments of Kashmiris have been wounded and very sadly the current President of Pakistan considers the riot of Kashmiris as terrorism.

Therefore JKPSO appeals from all Pakistanis to accompany Kashmiris in their great efforts to attain freedom and their right to choose. Moreover JKPSO assures all the people of Pakistan that till Kashmir unites with Pakistan there efforts and struggle will carry on.

Jamiat Talba-Islam (JTI) and Provincial Autonomy

A representative of JTI said that all Muslims are one and their tribes and nationalities are means to introduce them. He said initially by imposing 'One Unit' the rights of the people were violated and JTI strongly condemns it. Therefore a provincial autonomy should be assured according to 1973's Constitution. Moreover he pointed out that the true violator of provincial rights is the National Army and Civil Bureaucracy. He said that they are also the victims as the Supreme Court rejected *Hasba Bill* twice, which was an attack on provincial autonomy. The state should only have a control over currency, foreign affairs, communication and defence. A protection of single nationalism is also very important along with provincial autonomy.

Raja Ghulam Mujtaba: Chairman, Jammu Kashmir Student Liberation Front (JKSLF)

Points discussed by Raja Ghulam Mujtaba, on provincial autonomy were that his organisation open heartedly accepts the right to choose and right to be separated. Therefore all the underlying nationalities should be given a right to choose for themselves on the basis of UN Charter. Nevertheless JKSLF wants to make this thing clear that State of Jammu Kashmir is neither a legal, historical and geographical part of India nor of Pakistan. Also this Kashmir conflict between the two countries is not a struggle for a piece of land but for the national liberty of 18 million people. Hence JKSLF appeals for the rights of the Kashmiris to choose for themselves and their future and also the government of Pakistan should abide by the promises it has made with the Kashmiri citizens.

Manzoor Kakar: Pashtun Students Federation

Currently the country is going through even worse circumstances than in 1971. Reasons for these dreadful conditions are a control by the Federation over the rights of the smaller provinces, their populace and the interference in Afghanistan. Manzoor Kakar said that today the terrorists have made 'Pashtun Nation' a battle field. So as in 1971 East Pakistan was separated from us and now in such dreadfulness with one strike the rest of the country could be divided into pieces. Currently ANP is fighting a war to save the whole nation and if the nationals of this country do not stand by us then the whole matter would be out of hands to save the country. Only solution is the peaceful Afghanistan, as with peace in Afghanistan the concept of peaceful Pakistan is out of question. Moreover provincial autonomy is equally important to save the nation where all nationalities should have equal rights.

National Student Federation (NSF)

A representative of NSF said that his organisation believes in the right to choose for all different nationalities living in Pakistan and considers that all nationalities should be guaranteed their national rights; different languages should be given a status of national languages within their respective regions where Urdu shall only be a communicating language across the provinces. Further he said today the state of affairs is to that extent where a new political harmony is needed among the different nationalities, while considering them all equal and providing them with freedom of expression and full control over their resources otherwise the country could have further intimidation of splitting into pieces. Lastly he said that a Secular Socialist Democratic Constitution could be a way out for Pakistan's current problems, which promises the diverse nationalities with their rights.

Ismami Jamiat Talibat

A female representative of Ismami Jamiat Talibat, while sharing her organisation's view point on Political Autonomy said that it has been an issue in Pakistan since it came into being. As Pakistan is a notional state and on the basis of Islam in 1947 Baluchi, Pashtun, Punjabi, Seraiki and Sindhi all came together. So since then till now it is this common value, Islam that we all have neglected. She put forward the following few suggestions on behalf of her organisation:

- § All the nationalities and nationalities living in different provinces should be provided with their societal, geographical and historical rights
- § Provinces should be given rights in accordance to their resources
- § Federal status should be unaltered and few basic authorities should remain with the Federation
- § Military and politics should be separated
- § However she said to divide the country to talk about separate national states within the country is inconsiderate for us a Pakistanis

Kabeer Afghan: Pashtunkhwa Students Organisation (PSO)

Kabeer Afghan from PSO said Pakistan is a multinational State which is situated on the historical lands of Baluchis, Pashtuns, Punjabis, Seraikis and Sindhis. Pakistan is not a single nation State but a home of five different nationalities where each nationality has its own history, language, culture and geography. He used the term 'Pashtunkhwa Nation' and said that currently the Pashtuns are deprived of their national identity. He said Pashtunkhwa is divided into four different units which include North Pashtunkhwa, South Pashtunkhwa (Pashtun areas of Baluchistan), Attock/Mianwali (In Punjab) and Central Pashtun (FATA). Therefore he said combining these a joint Pashtun Province should be formed for Pashtuns. In this Pashtun nation its peoples' right should be considered over the income worth billions of rupees, generated through its natural resources, waters, electricity, minerals and forests. Pashtu language should be given a status of national language within the boundaries of Pashtun Nation; and the traditions and culture of Pashtun people should also be restored.

He gave the reference of 1940's Resolution in which it was clearly mentioned that all different States of the country would be independent and there would be a democratic system in which the powers would be in peoples' hands. However the dictatorships and secret agencies denied the rights of the people, especially the Pashtun people while giving them the name of 'state rebels' and deprive them of their freedom. All this has closed the doors for social and economic development of the Pashtuns.

Therefore he appealed that military's and secret agencies' interference in politics should completely be blocked. Moreover based on 1940's Resolution a new social contract should be done to end the political and economical differences between the suppressed nationalities and the dominant groups.

Mukhtiar Khan: Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party

Our country Pakistan is a multinational state consisting of historic motherlands of Pashtun, Baluch, Sindhi, Seraiki and Punjabi nations. The act 1935 and the Social Contract of 1940 which ensured Autonomous and Sovereign units (states), likewise, the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946, the transfer of power in the Independence Act of 1947 and the first constituent assembly provided us sufficient ground to frame very smoothly, in the very first days, a constitution for a genuine, Democratic, Parliamentary, Federal Pakistan.

Furthermore it is the well contemplated opinion of Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party that Paksitan can exist and prosper only if its constitution is based on the following genuine, Democratic, Parliamentary, and Federal principles amongst other:

- § Pakistan is composed of Pashtun, Baluch, Sindhi, Seraiki and Punjabi nations each having its own motherland with the name of Pakhtunkhwa/Afghania, Baluchistan, Sindh, Seraiakistan and Punjab respectively.
- § Pakhtunkhwa/Afghania is to be composed of NWFP, the Chief Commissioner's Province (Southern Pakhtunkhwa, former British

Baluchistan) and Pashtun territories of the former Attock and Mianwali districts. In the meanwhile, Chief Commissioner's Province is to be revived and raised to the status of Autonomous Province. Provisionally, a constitutional, conventional and customary arrangement is to be made so that political, economic, financial and administrative powers of the present province of Baluchistan are shared amongst Pashtuns and Baluchis on the basis of equality of nations.

- § Central Pakhtunkhwa (the seven agencies and the Tribal areas adjoining districts) having its present constitutional status shall have an elected *Jirga* with an elected executive on the basis of Adult Franchise, Fundamental Rights and other Democratic principles.
- § All the Colonialist bureaucratic and Dictatorial black laws shall have to be done away with.
- § The Federation of Pakistan shall have Legislative, executive and Administrative powers in relation to the four subjects of: i) Defence; ii) Foreign Affairs; iii) Currency and iv) Communication

Mohayyuddin Baluch: Chairman Baluch Students Organisation (BSO)

While discussing the issue of Provincial Autonomy, Mohayyuddin Baluch from BSO shared his view that Baluchis have been facing the financial crisis since Pakistan came into being. The education system in the province is also suffering through similar crisis and in the one and only university in Baluchistan there is a scarcity of funds and Vice Chancellor had to face much difficulty even to pay his staff. In terms of resources Baluchistan is the third richest region in the world yet more than 90 percent of its people are living below the poverty line and this has increased the sense of deprivation among the Baluch nationals to the limit. The level of safety is so poor that people feel insecure just not in their neighbourhood and institutions but even in their own houses. This all because of one-sided policies of the State of Pakistan as the media, resources, scholars etc., hence no one has a freedom in the province. Now a strong reaction is building up in Baluchistan against these actions. People cannot face the continuous denial of their rights, freedom and continuation. Now the question is about the national rights of the Baluchis, which has already been approved under the UN Charter. As a result BSO demands for national reconciliation.

Mukhtar Yousafzai

First of all Mr. Mukhtar Yousafzai expressed his gratitude to BARAGD which has provided a platform where he could come and interact with student leaders from all over the Pakistan and present his party's view point in a multi-cultural environment. Then he addressed all the Punjabi participants in attendance that if he say something in opposition to Punjab then he must be excused and no offense should be taken. As he said they (Baluchis) are the people who do not hate anybody on the basis of her/his language, ethnicity or religion.

Then he said this issue of nationalism is just not an issue of Pakistan but in many countries and has become a cause of conflict and breaking up of several nations around the world. He gave the examples of Germany and Vietnam which faced harsh realities while dealing with similar problems and said that in Pakistan also it is fairly a national matter (*Quami* issue). Now the Baluchis have been facing a severe bitterness for the past 62 years just to favour this *Quami* issue. Pakistan is a land of multiple nationalities such as Pashtun, Baluch, Sindhi, Seraiki and Punjabi, living here for thousands of years.

In 1947 when Pakistan came into being it was on the basis of 1940's Resolution, passed in Manto Park Lahore, and in the resolution it was made clear that different nationalities living here will be sovereign and autonomous. On the other hand different nationalities living here were never given a status of free and self-sufficient all through the history of Pakistan's existence.

In addition to this Pakistan has now become a home for terrorists and Pakistan army and agencies are being accused of having links with these terrorists.

There is a need to bring drastic changes in Pakistan. Yes there is a Parliamentary Committee formed for such issues and we do favour this committee but it is not sufficient. There is a need to call for an all Pakistan Conference in which all the national, social and structural issues are discussed in detail.

Furthermore there is a need to amend 1973's Constitution. To build up a strong, democratic and prosperous Pakistan it is very important that Army of Pakistan and other agencies should entirely stay away from politics and all national parties should take drastic steps to bring a systematic and comprehensive change within the country.

There is need to structure a system which should divide the country into provinces based on different nationalities. These *Quami* provinces should have absolute right over their resources, legal system and civil matters. The Federation should restrict itself to issues such as Foreign Affairs, Currency, Defence and Communication.

Reflections by Mir Hasil Bizenjo

Mir Hasil Bizenjo (Secretary General, Baluchistan National Party) also expressed his thanks to BARGAD who has provided him with an opportunity to talk about such an important issue, the country is going through currently.

He said the main trouble begins when we use this term of 'Provincial Autonomy'; as the region where we are sitting right now is multinational and it includes just not Pakistan only but Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan etc. He said he wants to take his young audience into history and he wished that the young students should do a proper reading on this historical background of this ongoing issue and do some work on it.

After Second World War, British Rule started to drop its strength and many colonised nationalities stimulated towards liberty, whether in Africa or in Asia. Furthermore as these big powers lost power to maintain their colonies after the war, they felt a need to divide the nationalities into segments so they remain dependent on

them. India's partition itself was a part of this whole conspiracy. This just not happened in our region but also in Arab, where Arab Emirates and Israel are the best examples.

Now if we consider the Resolution of 1940, the name or concept of Pakistan is mentioned nowhere. Its reference came two to three years later and then in next four years an entire nation was created. He said the creation of the country was a part of an international scheme where our land was used for various interests of the big powers. Consequently the Army of Pakistan was also created for western interests, and for many years the Army officials have been trained in the US.

Next he said that there is no reality in the concept of 'Two Nation Theory', even if do consider it true for an instance then what about the Hindus in Pakistan and what about the Muslims in India. Our nation was created on the basis of hatred between the Muslims and Hindus and so the Subcontinent⁷ was divided as part of an international stratagem.

Then while criticising our Leaders of the state he said that they continued on the same grounds on which the nation was built upon. Pakistan was used against China and Russia, with the people had nothing against them, but only because the West and specially the US had interests in it and now the poor people of this country are paying off for their leaders, wrecked leadership.

He said the one and only thing happened in Pakistan since it was created has been the strengthening of its Army. Now it's this Military institution, which has taken control over the entire nation and running the country. This dictator leadership has withdraw the concept of parliament and hence the democracy from our roots.

Furthermore since the British Rule the most exploited thing in the country has been the religion, Islam. It has been used to take advantage of innocent people by convincing them for Jihad in Kashmir or in Afghanistan or at times against each other.

The Army of Pakistan is the biggest threat to the sovereignty of the country; it is this large number of Military a reason that different nationalities living in the country tend to keep on fighting with each other on issues like provincial autonomy and national autonomy. Therefore a need is to cut down the size of Army. The 80 percent of the resources go this institution so naturally the rest of the people living in country will be fighting against each other in the name of provincial autonomy and such other issues.

Lastly he suggested there is a need of following few things to be done in the country:

- § A reduced size and budget of the National Army
- § Restore the Senate within the Parliament
- § Budget should go to the Senate instead for Assembly
- § All the provinces should be given the full utilisation of their resources

⁷ The phrase 'Subcontinent', used on its own in English, commonly refers to the Indian subcontinent. The term subcontinent includes the Republic of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

- § Concept of strong Centre cannot work anymore for Pakistan as it has brought us to this extent where everyone is talking about separation and parting from the country
- § Otherwise no country is forever and geographies of the countries keep on changing and we should prepare ourselves for it