



## **Evolution of Federalism in Pakistan: From 1947 to 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment**

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### **Abstract**

The evolution of federalism in Pakistan from 1947 when Pakistan was created federation under the interim constitution of 1935. The Constitutions of 1956 and 1973 represented significant milestones in the establishment of a federal framework, with the latter acknowledging provincial autonomy and providing a foundation for a more equitable distribution of power. This study aims to explore the evaluation of federalism in Pakistan from 1947 to 2013 and seeks to critically examine whether these reforms effectively strengthened federalism and to what extent they addressed longstanding provincial grievances. Additionally, the study explores the external and historical factors that influenced the government's ability to implement decentralization. The principal objective of this research is to interpret the federal guidelines adopted through constitutional arrangements. Furthermore, the study assesses the effects of significant constitutional changes, including the 1956 and 1973 Constitutions, as well as important legislative actions on the federal system. The proposed study has adopted qualitative, theoretical, historical, descriptive and analytical case study design.

**Keywords:** Federalism, Constitution, Evaluation, Pakistan.

### **Introduction**

The concept of federalism in the Indian subcontinent and Pakistan has its roots in British colonial governance, particularly with the enactment of the Government of India Act of 1935, which granted provincial autonomy while simultaneously consolidating central authority. Following the attainment of independence in 1947, Pakistan adopted this existing framework but faced challenges related to centralization and increasing calls for provincial autonomy, especially from East Bengal. The 1956 Constitution sought to institutionalize federalism; however, it was the 1973 Constitution that notably enhanced provincial autonomy, creating a more resilient federal framework that would influence the development of Pakistan's federalism in the years to come.

Centralization has remained a persistent structural and political challenge in Pakistan's federal system since its inception. Despite being constitutionally a federation, the country has experienced repeated phases of centralized governance, which have undermined the principles of effective federalism and delayed the evolution of a truly participatory and autonomous provincial framework. In this background, such kind of variations need to be addressed which have been mired the path of cooperative federalism in Pakistan.

In the early post-independence years (1947–1958), centralization was primarily driven by the civil-military bureaucracy, which prioritized a strong center to maintain territorial integrity and national unity. The One Unit Scheme



(1955) exemplified this approach, merging West Pakistan's provinces into a single unit to create parity with East Pakistan, ultimately exacerbating provincial grievances and contributing to the secession of East Pakistan in 1971. Why these types of political arrangement were necessary? how much these were beneficial for that state?

Under military regimes (1958–1971, 1977–1988, and 1999–2008), centralization was institutionalized through constitutional manipulation, suspension of democratic institutions, and concentration of power in the executive. These periods weakened provincial autonomy, as federal decision-making became dominated by unelected actors, sidelining participatory governance and distorting the federal structure envisioned in the 1973 Constitution.

Even during civilian governments (1988–1999), centralization persisted, influenced by political instability, weak institutional development, and a lack of commitment to genuine federal principles. Provinces remained dependent on the center for financial resources, and the Council of Common Interests (CCI)—a key federal institution—remained largely inactive. Despite the existence of a federal structure, why did centralization persist in Pakistan even during the civilian governments of 1988–1999?

The passage of the 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010), championed by the PPP, stands as a solution in Pakistan's federal evolution. This amendment delegated significant legislative, administrative, and financial powers to the provinces, abolished the Concurrent Legislative List, empowered the CCI, and attempted to rebalance center-province relations.

## Historical Background

### Origin of Federalism in Subcontinent

Federal institutions were established by the British government in India as part of a larger colonial policy that also included colonies like Canada, Australia, and Malaysia. An important first step in this approach was the 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms, which established the framework for the political participation of religious minorities through distinct electorates or nominations.

### Seat Distribution in the 1909 Morley-Minto

Legislative Council		Total Seats	Elected Members	Appointed Members
Imperial Council	Legislative	60	27	33
Provincial Councils	Legislative	-	-	-
- Bengal		53	34	19
- Madras		48	21	27
- Bombay		47	24	23
- United Provinces		48	29	19
- Punjab		24	16	8
- Burma		17	9	8
- Bihar and Orissa		46	24	22
- Central Provinces		23	12	11

It was decided that this non-majoritarian strategy would work well in addressing the intricate multiethnic and multireligious community of India. This strategy



was advanced by the 1916 Lucknow Pact, which was supported by the Muslim League and the Congress (Mustafa, 2023, p. 11). It called for the overrepresentation of Indian Muslims in the Central Legislative Assembly, separate election systems, and constitutional protections for laws pertaining to religion and culture.

These efforts were furthered by the Government of India Act 1919, which adopted some suggestions from the Lucknow Pact and established limited province autonomy through the diarchy system. Under this arrangement, the provincial governor retained control over some matters while Indian ministers answerable to the legislatures in their respective provinces handled others. The foundation for the establishment of Indian federal institutions was created by this diarchy structure.

### Seat Allocation in the Government of India Act 1919

Council	Total Seats	Elected Members	Nominated (British Officials)	Special Interests (Elected/Reserved)
<b>Central Legislative Assembly</b>	145	104	41	27 (Muslims, Europeans, Sikhs, etc.)
<b>Council of State</b>	60	33	27	16 (Special Interests)
<b>Provincial Legislative Councils</b>	-	-	-	-
- <b>Bengal</b>	140	123	17	40 (Muslims, Landlords, Europeans)
- <b>Bombay</b>	114	86	28	28 (Muslims, Europeans, Landlords)
- <b>Madras</b>	127	98	29	27 (Special Interests)
- <b>Punjab</b>	93	71	22	20 (Muslims, Sikhs, Landlords)
- <b>United Provinces</b>	123	98	25	33 (Muslims, Landlords, Europeans)
- <b>Bihar and Orissa</b>	103	76	27	19 (Special Interests)
- <b>Assam</b>	53	39	14	9 (Special Interests)
- <b>Central Provinces</b>	71	49	22	10 (Special Interests)

Source: (Low, 1997)

The legislative framework reflected in this table demonstrates the dual character of colonial governance in late British India: on the one hand, limited political participation was extended to local and provincial elites, while on the other hand, real authority remained concentrated in the hands of the imperial center. This structure shaped the early patterns of power distribution, intergovernmental relations, and political mobilization that later influenced the trajectory of federalism in Pakistan.

A key observation is the imbalance between elected and nominated members at both central and provincial levels. In the Central Legislative Assembly, out of 145



seats, 104 were elected and 41 were nominated British officials. Similarly, in the Council of State, 33 were elected and 27 were nominated. This indicates that almost one-third of the representation at the central level remained under direct British control (Coupland R. , 1944, p. 88). This diluted the democratic character of the legislature, ensuring that imperial interests could override local demands whenever necessary.

In the provincial legislative councils, although elected members dominated numerically—such as in Bengal (123 elected to 17 nominated) and Bombay (86 elected to 28 nominated)—reserved and special interest seats were strategically allocated. These included Muslims, Sikhs, Europeans, landlords, and other special groups. Such an arrangement institutionalized communal and class-based divisions within provincial politics, fragmenting the development of a unified federal vision (Jala, 1990, p. 114).

Bengal and Punjab—two politically significant provinces—had high Muslim representation through both elected and reserved seats, giving Muslim elites a structured platform to articulate provincial and communal demands. This provincial empowerment of Muslim elites during the 1930s and 1940s later became central to Pakistan’s federal discourse, where provinces like Punjab maintained dominant roles in power sharing (Rais, 2008., p. 40).

However, despite the appearance of increased provincial representation, British officials and nominated members retained decisive influence. Their numerical strength, coupled with executive veto powers, ensured that provincial autonomy remained more nominal than real. Even when local elites participated in legislative debates, policy direction continued to be determined by the central colonial administration, reflecting a highly centralized federal structure. The Council of State, as an upper house with strong imperial influence, functioned as a mechanism to check provincial and popular legislative initiatives. This reflects a top-down model of federal control, in which provincial autonomy was tightly circumscribed by institutional design. This legacy can be traced to Pakistan’s post-1947 power structure, where strong central authority and weak provincial empowerment remained a defining characteristic of the federation (Waseem D. M., 2010, p. 05) . Furthermore, special interest representation—including landlords, Europeans, and religious groups—created parallel channels of power that did not necessarily reflect the democratic will of the broader population. This elite-oriented structure of representation restricted the rise of mass-based federal politics and entrenched vertical and horizontal inequalities among provinces (Samad, 2022, p. 138).

The numerical differences among provinces also signal asymmetrical political weight. Provinces like Bengal (140 seats) and Madras (127 seats) had larger assemblies compared to Punjab (93 seats) and Assam (53 seats). This asymmetry was not accompanied by equal legislative powers, meaning that size did not translate into federal bargaining strength. Instead, the imperial center retained fiscal and legislative supremacy, controlling the overall political equilibrium (Sayeed, 1967, p. 122) . The Government of India Act of 1919 was turning point in the constitutional evolution of British India, introducing the system of diarchy in the provinces. This system represented a limited and cautious step toward decentralization of power, and although it introduced some federal characteristics, it fell far short of establishing a true federal structure. According to Mehrunnisa Ali this arrangement was more of a controlled



experiment in administrative division rather than a sincere move toward power-sharing (Ali M. , 1996, p. 46).

Under the diarchy system, provincial subjects were divided into two distinct categories: "reserved" and "transferred." The reserved subjects included areas like law and order, justice, finance, and land revenue—critical functions essential to governance and control. These remained firmly in the hands of the British-appointed provincial governors, who were not accountable to the legislative councils and had overriding authority. On the other hand, the transferred subjects, which included education, public health, local government, agriculture, and public works, were assigned to Indian ministers who were nominally responsible to elected provincial legislative councils. This created a dual system of governance within the provinces—one controlled directly by the British and the other indirectly through limited Indian Participation. This arrangement as a semi-federal or quasi-federal mechanism that lacked the genuine autonomy or power-sharing found in true federal systems. She points out that while the system gave an impression of devolution, real authority continued to be centralized in the hands of the British colonial administration. The diarchy failed to meet the growing political consciousness and demands of Indian leaders and the public, who were increasingly calling for self-rule and responsible government. Indian ministers were handicapped in their roles, as their powers were constrained and subject to the discretionary powers of British officials. This led to frustration and disillusionment among Indian political actors, who viewed diarchy as a symbolic gesture rather than a substantive reform. This dissatisfaction turned into a strong sense of betrayal among Indian leaders, who had hoped that their loyalty and support during World War I would be rewarded with meaningful political concessions. Instead, they found themselves locked into a system where they had titles and offices, but no real power. Prominent political figures and parties, including the Indian National Congress, criticized the Act as a cleverly disguised attempt to delay full self-rule and appease Indian demands without making structural changes.

A Statutory Commission headed by Sir John Simon was dispatched by the British government in 1927 to evaluate the political climate in India and suggest additional constitutional changes. Though the committee was unable to satisfy Indian requests, it was confronted with protests and boycotts, which led to important discussions over the future constitution of India. Congress and the Muslim League engaged in fierce constitutional struggles in the late 1920s and early 1930s. 29 political groups attended the All-Parties Conference in Calcutta in 1928, but no agreement was reached. The Muslim League and Jinnah opposed the Nehru Report that followed, which was chaired by Motilal Nehru and did not include provisions for distinct electorates (Abdul Shakoor Chandio, 2024, p. 21). The importance of provincial autonomy in constitutional proposals between 1916 and 1946 is highlighted by Katharine Adeney's analysis. The main point of disagreement was how much autonomy this would be given; Congress preferred a centralized federation with residual powers at the center, while the Muslim League wanted more provincial autonomy and overrepresentation in the central legislative assembly (Adeney K. , 2007). In order to safeguard Muslim interests, particularly in areas where they are underrepresented, the League promoted a non-majoritarian, consensual system that placed a strong emphasis on distinct electorates and cabinet participation. Additionally, it promoted complete autonomy for regions with a majority of Muslims (M.J. Vinod, 2024, p. 34). This



realization influenced the framing of the Government of India Act of 1935, which attempted to introduce a more formal federal structure. The 1935 Act proposed an all-India federation that would include both British Indian provinces and princely states, and it replaced dyarchy at the provincial level with provincial autonomy. Governors would still have special powers, but Indian ministers were to be given greater control over provincial affairs. The center, however, remained under strong British control. The 1935 Act went further than its predecessor in terms of federal design; it too fell short of implementing true federalism due to its colonial context and the refusal of princely states to join the proposed federation.

### Provincial Legislative Assemblies

Province	Total Seats	Elected Members	Nominated (British Officials)	Special Interests (Elected/Reserved)
<b>Bengal</b>	250	184	66	84 (Muslims, Europeans, Sikhs, etc.)
<b>Madras</b>	215	165	50	71 (Muslims, Anglo-Indians, etc.)
<b>Bombay</b>	175	115	60	73 (Muslims, Europeans, etc.)
<b>United Provinces</b>	228	153	75	88 (Muslims, Sikhs, etc.)
<b>Punjab</b>	175	165	10	81 (Muslims, Sikhs, Europeans)
<b>Bihar</b>	152	108	44	57 (Special Interests)
<b>Assam</b>	108	68	40	42 (Muslims, Europeans, etc.)
<b>North West Frontier Province</b>	50	30	20	21 (Muslims, Special Interests)
<b>Central Provinces</b>	112	80	32	34 (Special Interests)
<b>Orissa</b>	60	40	20	20 (Special Interests)
<b>Sindh</b>	60	37	23	24 (Special Interests)

**Source:** (Coupland, 1944)

The structure of provincial representation outlined in the Coupland Report (1944) reveals the complex and asymmetrical nature of political participation in late colonial India. By the 1940s, constitutional reforms under the Government of India Acts (1919 and 1935) had introduced a quasi-federal framework designed to accommodate diverse communal, ethnic, and regional interests while maintaining imperial control. The table highlights how legislative assemblies in different provinces were not uniformly constituted—a feature that had profound implications for the development of local political demands and the spirit of federalism. One of the most striking aspects is the variation in the proportion of elected versus nominated members across provinces. For instance, Bengal had 184 elected members and 66 nominated officials, whereas Punjab had 165 elected members and only 10 nominated. This variation reflected not only regional differences in political mobilization but also the British strategy of uneven decentralization—where stronger political movements were given limited



but controlled representation, while weaker or more strategic provinces (e.g., NWFP, Sindh, Assam) were kept under tighter imperial control (Coupland R. , 1944, p. 57) . Another key feature of this structure was the special interests or reserved seats allocated to religious and ethnic communities, such as Muslims, Sikhs, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, and other minorities. This communal representation system institutionalized identity politics, shaping local political demands along religious and communal lines rather than class or regional development priorities (Jalal, 1990, p. 112) . For example, Bengal and Punjab, where Muslims formed significant populations, had large reserved blocks for Muslim representatives, giving them a formal space to voice regional and communal concerns within the legislature. However, this form of communal accommodation was not federal in a cooperative sense; rather, it was permissive and segmented. Each province had different compositions of power, resulting in unequal provincial autonomy. Provinces like Punjab and Bengal developed stronger local political elites, which later became key actors in federal negotiations during the independence movement. In contrast, smaller or less politically mobilized provinces such as Sindh, NWFP, and Assam remained administratively weak, reinforcing vertical power imbalances between the center (British India) and the provinces (Waseem, 1994, p. 64). The provincial distribution of seats also reflects the emergence of asymmetric federalism in the subcontinent. Provinces with larger assemblies and more elected seats—such as Bengal and Punjab—developed a more pronounced political identity, giving them leverage in negotiations with both the British center and other provinces. This asymmetry became embedded in Pakistan’s post-1947 federal design, where Punjab remained the dominant province in terms of population, administrative capacity, and political weight.

## **Emergence of Pakistan and Federalism**

During Pakistan's developmental years, from 1947 to 1950, there were major disputes concerning the layout of its federal system. These disputes stemmed from the new state's complex and multifaceted composition, which included a range of linguistic, ethnic, and regional identities. The main concerns were the merging of the princely states, the representation of various groups, and the distribution of power between the federal government and the provinces. The integration of princely states into the new federation was one of the first challenges. While most of the princely states in Pakistan acceded to the new dominion, the terms of accession were not uniform. Some states, such as Kalat and Bahawalpur, had distinct historical identities and sought a degree of autonomy that was often at odds with the centralizing tendencies of the federal government. The government in Karachi aimed to consolidate power and ensure political stability in the nascent state, which led to tensions with regional leaders and local populations who feared the erosion of their autonomy and cultural distinctiveness.

Another significant issue was the representation of the various regions and ethnic groups in the federal framework. East Pakistan, with its larger population, demanded equal political rights and proportional representation in national institutions. However, there was a reluctance from the West Pakistani elite to allow East Pakistan’s demographic strength to translate into political dominance. This imbalance led to growing resentment in East Pakistan, where the Bengali majority began to feel marginalized. The famous language



controversy of 1948, when Urdu was declared the sole national language despite the majority of Pakistanis being Bengali speakers, further deepened the mistrust between the two wings of the country and underscored the difficulties in creating a unified national identity.

The distribution of powers between the federal and provincial governments was also a source of persistent debate. The central leadership, influenced by concerns over national unity, security, and economic development, favored a strong center with limited provincial autonomy. On the other hand, provinces and regional leaders, especially in smaller units like Balochistan and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), demanded more authority over local affairs, resources, and governance. The lack of a formal constitution during this period and the reliance on interim arrangements only added to the uncertainty and confusion. Provincial assemblies were weak, and central intervention in provincial matters became a common practice, reinforcing the perception that federalism in Pakistan was more theoretical than practical.

### Diversity in Linguistics and Ethnicity

Pakistan has become a nation of many ethnic groupings, including Bengalis, Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, and Baloch. There were conflicts regarding the official language and administrative procedures because each community had unique cultural and linguistic identities. One major source of dispute was the decision to make Urdu the national language, even though only a small minority, mostly Muhajirs, spoke it as their mother tongue. The vast population of Bengalis in East Pakistan (modern-day Bangladesh) felt excluded from the language since it was being neglected.

### Diversity in Linguistics and Ethnicity in Pakistan (1947) Source: (Ansari, 2005)

Ethnic Group	Percentage of Population (approx.)	of Major Regions	Languages Spoken
<b>Punjabis</b>	55-60%	Punjab	Punjabi, Saraiki, Hindko
<b>Sindhis</b>	15-20%	Sindh	Sindhi
<b>Pashtuns (Pathans)</b>	8-10%	North-West Frontier Province (NWFP)	Pashto
<b>Baloch</b>	3-5%	Balochistan	Balochi, Brahui
<b>Bengalis</b>	15-20%	East Bengal (Now Bangladesh)	Bengali
<b>Muhajirs</b>	~2% (initially small but growing)	Urban centers (especially Karachi)	Urdu, Gujarati
<b>Kashmiris</b>	<1%	Kashmir, Punjab	Kashmiri, Pahari, Potohari
<b>Hazaras</b>	<1%	Quetta, Balochistan	Hazaragi, Dari
<b>Other Minority Groups</b>	<1%	Various regions	Various regional languages



## Centralization and Provincial Autonomy

An important point of contention during Pakistan's early federal framework was how much autonomy should be given to the provinces. Strong control over the provinces was the goal of the central government, which was presided over by West Pakistani politicians, especially the Punjabi elite. It was believed that this centralization was necessary to keep the young state stable and united. Nonetheless, in order to guarantee their interests were fairly represented and safeguarded, politicians from other areas—particularly East Pakistan—demanded increased province autonomy. These issues were not adequately addressed by the Government of India Act 1935, which Pakistan first ratified as a temporary constitution, which resulted in continuing conflicts.

## Representation and Unbalanced Power

It was controversial to discuss how East and West Pakistan were represented in the federal administration. In the federal arrangement, East Pakistan was underrepresented despite having a greater population. The Bengalis felt disenfranchised as a result of this disparity since they thought their political and economic goals were being disregarded. Due to the central government's unwillingness to rectify this imbalance, regional tensions increased and future strife was seeded.

## Princely States' Integration

There were also many difficulties in integrating princely states into Pakistan. Balochistani states such as Kalat attempted to negotiate admission terms that would protect their autonomy. Nonetheless, the central government sought a policy of complete integration, frequently utilising coercion or political clout to accomplish its objectives (Abbasi, 2010, p. 6). This gave rise to discontent and, occasionally, insurgencies, especially in Balochistan, where the people felt that their unique identity and independence were being undermined.

## Princely States Integration into Pakistan (1947-1948)

Princely State	Date of Accession	of Region/Province	Ruler's Decision
<b>Bahawalpur</b>	5 October 1947	Punjab (now Punjab)	Acceded to Pakistan
<b>Khairpur</b>	3 October 1947	Sindh	Acceded to Pakistan
<b>Swat</b>	3 November 1947	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NWFP)	Acceded to Pakistan
<b>Dir</b>	8 November 1947	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NWFP)	Acceded to Pakistan
<b>Chitral</b>	6 November 1947	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NWFP)	Acceded to Pakistan
<b>Makran</b>	17 March 1948	Balochistan	Acceded to Pakistan
<b>Las Bela</b>	17 March 1948	Balochistan	Acceded to Pakistan
<b>Kalat</b>	27 March 1948	Balochistan	Acceded after negotiations
<b>Hunza</b>	3 November 1947	Gilgit-Baltistan	Acceded to Pakistan
<b>Nagar</b>	18 November 1947	Gilgit-Baltistan	Acceded to Pakistan
<b>Amb</b>	1948	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NWFP)	Acceded to Pakistan

Source: (Lamb, 1991)



The One Unit Scheme of 1955 was one of the most controversial and consequential attempts at restructuring Pakistan's federal system. It aimed to merge the various provinces and princely states of West Pakistan—namely Punjab, Sindh, the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Balochistan, and several princely territories—into a single administrative unit. The stated rationale behind this move was to establish parity between the two geographically and demographically unequal wings of the country: East Pakistan, with its numerical majority, and the fragmented western provinces. The central government believed that creating a single West Pakistan province would simplify administration, reduce ethnic and provincial differences, and counterbalance East Pakistan's political weight.

However, while the One Unit Scheme was presented as a step toward national integration, it was perceived by many, especially smaller ethnic and regional groups in the western wing, as a centralizing and authoritarian maneuver. The smaller provinces lost their distinct identities and autonomy, as governance became heavily dominated by bureaucratic and military elites, primarily from Punjab. The centralization of power alienated non-Punjabi groups, particularly Sindhis, Baloch, and Pashtuns, who saw the move as a dilution of their cultural, linguistic, and political rights. They feared that their resources and political representation were being absorbed into a centralized structure that primarily served the interests of the dominant province.

The implementation of the scheme also exposed weaknesses in Pakistan's federal design. Instead of promoting unity, it deepened the sense of alienation and marginalization among smaller ethnic groups, who began to demand the restoration of their historical provincial identities. The absence of genuine federalism and meaningful provincial autonomy under the One Unit Scheme gave rise to opposition movements and regional nationalist sentiments, which continued to grow throughout the 1960s. East Pakistan, too, viewed the scheme with suspicion, interpreting it as an effort to reduce its numerical superiority by inflating the representation of the western wing through artificial political parity. The One Unit experiment not only failed to address the core issues of federal imbalance but also exacerbated tensions between the center and the provinces. The scheme centralized authority in the hands of a few, sidelined the democratic aspirations of the people, and ignored the cultural and historical diversity of the regions. This led to increased agitation, political unrest, and a growing demand for decentralization.

The eventual dissolution of the One Unit Scheme in 1970 was taken place. Under General Yahya Khan's regime, the government officially reversed the merger and restored the original provinces of West Pakistan. This move was driven both by growing political pressure and the need to address widespread dissatisfaction. The restoration of the provinces was seen as recognition of the failure of the centralized model and a return to a more pluralistic and federated political structure.

## **Federalism under the Constitution of 1956**

Pakistan tried to create a federal system of government for the first time after gaining independence in 1947 with the adoption of the 1956 Constitution (Abdul Shakoor Chandio, 2024, p. 17). With the goal of meeting the various and intricate demands of the recently constituted nation, this constitution attempted to strike a balance of authority between the federal government and the province



governments. Federalism was not effectively implemented in practice because the 1956 Constitution, despite its stated goals, had strong centralizing tendencies.

## Structure of the Federal System

Pakistan was established as a federal republic in 1956 by the Constitution, with East Pakistan and West Pakistan, two halves that are geographically and culturally distinct from one another. It sought to offer a structure that would allow both sides to live side by side under a single national administration while still retaining some degree of provincial autonomy.

## Legislative Framework

The 1956 Constitution established a bicameral federal legislative branch consisting of the Senate and the National Assembly

## Seat Distribution in the National Assembly under the 1956 Constitution

Region	Number of Seats	Remarks
East Pakistan	150	Based on population size; East Pakistan had a larger population than West Pakistan.
West Pakistan	150	Despite a smaller population, West Pakistan was given equal representation to ensure parity between the two wings.

Source: (Qureshi, 1957)

This arrangement was designed to maintain parity between the two wings of the federation, ensuring that neither could dominate the other politically. However, in practical terms, this undermined the principle of democratic representation, as it diluted the political weight of East Pakistan's population in the federal legislature.

While West Pakistan benefitted from over-representation, East Pakistan's majority was neutralized through institutional mechanisms, leading to growing political discontent and feelings of marginalization among the Bengali population. This artificial parity contributed to structural imbalances in the federation, fostering tensions over political power-sharing, resource distribution, and administrative control.

1. National Assembly: East Pakistan's bigger population naturally gave it an advantage in elections for the National Assembly, which served as the main legislative body. But the purpose of the representation was to guarantee that both wings were heard when making decisions at the federal level.

2. Senate: Regardless of a province's size, equal representation was intended to be provided by the Senate. This was done in an effort to prevent one wing from dominating the other in legislative concerns and to strike a balance between the interests of East and West Pakistan (Ahmed S. J., 1990, p. 13).

## Assignment of Authority

The Federal List, Provincial List, and Concurrent List are the three lists that the constitution used to outline the distribution of powers between the federal government and the province governments.



## Assignment of Authority under the 1956 Constitution

<b>List</b>	<b>Federal Government (Exclusive Authority)</b>	<b>Provincial Government (Exclusive Authority)</b>	<b>Concurrent List (Shared Authority)</b>
<b>1. Federal List</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defense</li> <li>- Foreign Affairs</li> <li>- Currency and coinage</li> <li>- National taxes (customs, income tax, etc.)</li> <li>- Citizenship and immigration</li> <li>- National infrastructure (railways, airways, seaports)</li> <li>- Atomic energy</li> <li>- Post and telegraph</li> <li>- Inter-provincial trade</li> <li>- Central banking and monetary policy</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Criminal law</li> <li>- Marriage and divorce</li> <li>- Bankruptcy and insolvency</li> <li>- Labor disputes</li> <li>- Electricity</li> <li>- Education (standards of higher education)</li> <li>- Environmental pollution</li> <li>- Public health</li> <li>- Marriage and contracts</li> <li>- Economic planning (joint projects)</li> </ul>
<b>2. Provincial List</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Police and public order</li> <li>- Provincial taxes (land revenue, agricultural tax)</li> <li>- Local government and municipal corporations</li> <li>- Agriculture and irrigation</li> <li>- Education (excluding higher education standards)</li> <li>- Public health (provincial hospitals, healthcare centers)</li> <li>- Industries not listed in the federal</li> </ul>	



<p><b>3. Concurrent List</b></p>	<p>- Both federal and provincial governments had overlapping powers. For areas listed here, if there was a conflict, <b>federal law would prevail.</b></p>	<p>list</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provincial roads and transport</li> <li>- Provincial trade and commerce</li> <li>- Both federal and provincial governments had shared responsibilities.</li> </ul>
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Source: (Khan H. , 2001)

**Federal List:** This list contained topics like foreign policy, defense, and currency that were solely within the purview of the federal government. These regions were under the total jurisdiction of the federal government.

**Provincial List:** Topics included on this list were to be overseen by the provinces, giving them the autonomy to deal with regional problems. But compared to the Federal List, the Provincial List was much shorter and less extensive.

**Concurrent List:** Laws pertaining to items on the Concurrent List may be passed by both the federal and local governments. But in the event of a dispute, federal law took precedence, suggesting a centralizing bias.

The 1956 Constitution of Pakistan laid down a framework for resource allocation between the federal and provincial governments. This framework was primarily based on taxation and revenue-sharing mechanisms. The Constitution divided the fiscal responsibilities and sources of revenue between the federal and provincial governments to ensure an equitable distribution of resources across the country, particularly between East Pakistan and West Pakistan.

### Resource Allocation under the 1956 Constitution

Revenue Source	Federal Government (Exclusive Control)	Provincial Government (Exclusive Control)	Shared (Revenue-Sharing Between Federal and Provincial Governments)
<b>1. Federal Taxes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customs duties</li> <li>- Export duties</li> <li>- Central excise duties</li> <li>- Corporate income tax</li> <li>- Import duties</li> <li>- Federal stamps and post taxes</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Income tax (non-corporate sectors)</li> <li>- Sales tax (on goods, but shared revenues)</li> <li>- Estate duty (shared revenue from estates passing on death)</li> <li>- Succession duties</li> <li>- Capital gains tax</li> <li>- Agricultural tax (provincial tax, but coordinated with federal policies)</li> </ul>




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<b>2. Provincial Taxes</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Land revenue</li> <li>- Agricultural income tax</li> <li>- Provincial excise duties</li> <li>- Urban immovable property tax</li> <li>- Local taxes (octroi, property, vehicle, entertainment)</li> </ul>	
<b>3. Grants and Fiscal Transfers</b>	- Equalization Grants for provinces (to balance development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receipts from federal grants and loans</li> <li>- Provincial borrowing with federal consent</li> </ul>	- Special federal grants for infrastructure projects in provinces
<b>4. Natural Resources</b>	- Federal control over natural resources (e.g., oil, gas, minerals)	- Provinces retained control over local resources (forestry, fisheries, etc.)	
<b>5. Revenue-Sharing Mechanism</b>	- Collection of certain shared taxes like sales tax and income tax	- Provinces received a share of federal revenue	- Federal-province coordinated development projects and funds allocation

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Source: (Burki S. J., 1999)

Pakistan's great geographic dispersion, linguistic and cultural diversity, and the necessity of ensuring equitable political representation and regional economic growth all contributed to the country's 1956 Constitution's requirement for federalism. Pakistan had to overcome the difficulty of uniting disparate regions into a single nation-state after obtaining independence in 1947. Federalism was viewed as a means of fostering stability and managing these differences (Khalid, 2013, p. 13).

There was numerous ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groupings within Pakistan's population. There were other ethnic groups in West Pakistan, including the Baloch, Pashtuns, Sindhis, and Punjabis, each with its own language and customs. Bengali was the primary language spoken in East Pakistan (Idrees, 2024, p. 12). Federalism allowed provinces to protect and develop their distinct cultural and linguistic identities, creating a governmental framework that could support this variety. This was essential for creating a feeling of community and averting the alienation of various groups, which may have jeopardized the unity of the country.

Adopting federalism was also motivated by the desire to guarantee equitable political representation. Because East Pakistan was home to a bigger population than West Pakistan, questions of fair representation in a centralized administration were raised. In order to counterbalance this, the federal system



gave equal representation to both wings in the Senate, regardless of population size, whereas the National Assembly's representation was determined by population. The purpose of this dual system was to guarantee that both sides have a voice in national matters and to prevent control by any one region.

Federalism was viewed as a way to encourage equitable economic growth among Pakistan's regions. The resources and degree of development varied between the regions. Provinces were able to customize economic strategies to meet their own needs and goals within a federal framework. While the federal government took care of more general matters like defence, foreign policy, and macroeconomic management, provincial governments could concentrate on providing local infrastructure, health care, and education. The objective of this allocation of duties was to improve the effectiveness of administration and guarantee a fairer allocation of resources.

The need to control tensions and disputes in the region contributed to the adoption of federalism. Significant political and social issues, including as disagreements over language, the distribution of resources, and political authority, arose after independence. Federalism offered a framework for local government and regional autonomy to handle these problems. The federal system attempted to lessen regional tensions and foster national solidarity by giving provinces some degree of self-governance.

Pakistan's 1956 Constitution included federalism as a practical solution to the nation's particular problems. Its goal was to handle the enormous geographic dispersion, linguistic and cultural variety, and political intricacies of a recently established state.

Federalism was designed to promote national stability and unity by offering a framework for equitable representation, regional autonomy, and balanced economic development. The introduction of federalism in 1956 was a critical step towards addressing the various requirements of Pakistan's regions and guaranteeing a more inclusive and representative governance system, despite its difficulties and eventual inadequacies. Despite having a federal foundation, Pakistan's 1956 Constitution was unable to create a sustainable federal system because of issues with leadership, centralised power, political instability, and cultural and geographic gaps as well as economic disparities. Together, these elements weakened the federalist tenets and aided in the constitution's ultimate collapse. In order to handle regional divisions and advance national unity, the experience brought to light the difficulties and complexities of adopting federalism in a varied and recently independent state. It also highlighted the importance of responsive, robust, and inclusive administration.

## **The 1962 Constitution of Pakistan**

President Ayub Khan's administration drafted Pakistan's 1962 Constitution, which was a dramatic divergence from the 1956 original constitution. Significant changes towards a more centralized and regulated political structure occurred during this time, which had a significant impact on Pakistan's federalism. Ayub Khan's vision, which placed a heavy emphasis on a central government, was overwhelmingly accepted over the suggestions provided by the Constitution Commission, which was headed by Justice Shahabuddin.



## **Important Aspects of the 1962 Constitution**

**Presidential System of Government:** The transition from a parliamentary to a presidential system was the most significant change. Instead of being chosen directly by the people, the President was indirectly chosen through the Electoral College, which grants him or her broad executive authority. Provincial governments' function and influence were diminished by this arrangement, which concentrated executive power in the hands of the President

**Unicameral Legislature:** The 1962 Constitution established a unicameral National Assembly in place of the 1956 Constitution's bicameral legislature. Despite the fact that East Pakistan had a larger population than West Pakistan, this legislature was distinguished by equal representation for both countries. In addition to simplifying government, the shift to a unicameral system allowed for more central control (Ahmed S. J., 1990, p. 21).

**Single Legislative List:** The 1962 Constitution only had a Federal Legislative List, as opposed to the three lists (Federal, Provincial, and Concurrent) that outlined the separation of responsibilities in the 1956 Constitution. This meant that the provinces had little autonomy and little legislative power because all major legislative functions were centralized at the federal level.

**One-Unit Scheme Retention:** West Pakistan's provinces were combined into a single administrative unit under the One-Unit Scheme, which was kept in place. Although the goal of this plan was to equalize representation between East and West Pakistan, it further consolidated administrative power and reduced the autonomy and identities of the provinces in West Pakistan. The One Unit Scheme negated the principles by dissolving provincial governments and legislatures, placing all administrative and political control in the hands of the federal government. However, instead of promoting equality and unity, the scheme centralized authority, undermined provincial autonomy, and suppressed regional identities. Rather than fostering harmony, this centralization created feelings of resentment among smaller provinces, particularly Sindh, Balochistan, and NWFP, which felt dominated by Punjab's influence. The policy also attempted to erase linguistic and cultural distinctions in the name of national unity, which only deepened alienation and mistrust. While it claimed to equalize representation between East and West Pakistan, it effectively strengthened bureaucratic and military control, marginalizing democratic institutions and provincial voices. The One Unit policy, therefore, contradicted the essence of federalism, which is built upon the recognition of diversity, shared governance, and equitable participation. Its legacy contributed to regional discontent and weakened the foundations of national cohesion in Pakistan.

The reasons behind President Ayub Khan's inclination towards a centralized system rather than federalism were his aspirations for political stability, economic growth, national cohesion, and effective administration. He decided to consolidate power due to a number of factors, including his military experience, the frail status of democratic institutions, and the difficulties of leading a nation that is divided both geographically and culturally. His centralized strategy sought to address these problems, but in the end, it exacerbated political unrest and regional unrest, underscoring the difficulties and trade-offs in striking a balance between central control and regional autonomy in a nation as diverse as Pakistan.

The 1962 Constitution and its quasi-federal structure, meanwhile, came under fire and opposition despite these good intentions. Some opposed it on the



grounds that it limited true provincial autonomy and local administration by consolidating too much power in the hands of the federal government. Due in part to this centralized approach; dissatisfaction grew throughout Pakistan, which in turn prompted calls for increased provincial autonomy and subsequent changes to the constitution. In order to centralize power for the goals of political stability, economic growth, administrative efficiency, and national unity, President Ayub Khan implemented quasi-federalism in the 1962 Constitution (Malik, 2009, p. 22). Even while it met some of its goals, it also prepared the way for later discussions and changes that would balance federal-provincial relations throughout Pakistan's constitutional history.

### Federalism under the 1973 Constitution

As Pakistan moved from military to civilian government under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the years after East Pakistan's independence in 1971 were crucial in the country's political history. In the middle of a divided country, Bhutto, as the leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), took on a new role as the administrator of civilian martial law, which was intended to stabilize Pakistan after the war (Ahmed S. J., 1990, p. 43).

The Pakistani Constitution of 1973 established legislative lists to define the respective powers of the federal government and the provinces. The federal list gave the federal parliament exclusive legislative authority, the concurrent list gave both federal and provincial legislatures the ability to legislate on certain issues, with federal laws taking precedence in the event of a dispute, and the provinces retained residual powers. Some critics said that the long number of federal laws limited province authority, while others saw the constitution as a symbolic move in the right direction towards the maximum amount of provincial autonomy possible in comparison to previous ones.

### Authority Distribution under the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan

Authority/Subject	Federal Government	Provincial Government	Concurrent Authority (Before 18th Amendment)
<b>Foreign Affairs</b>	Full authority (exclusive domain)	No authority	-
<b>Defense and Armed Forces</b>	Full control over defense, military, and national security	No authority	-
<b>Currency, Coinage, and Foreign Exchange</b>	Full authority	No authority	-
<b>Inter-Provincial Matters</b>	Federal government can regulate inter-provincial trade and coordination	Limited authority within provincial boundaries	-
<b>Communication (Telegraph,</b>	Full authority	No authority	-



**Telephones,**

**Postal Services)**

**Criminal Law**

Federal Parliament legislates criminal law (e.g., Penal Code)

Provinces enforce criminal law -

**Civil Law and Procedure**

Federal Parliament can legislate

Provinces have authority to enact laws on civil procedure Yes, prior to 18th Amendment

**Trade and Commerce**

Full authority on international trade

Provinces regulate internal trade within their boundaries Yes, under the concurrent list (before 18th Amendment)

**Banking and Finance**

Federal authority on regulation and control of banking and finance

No direct authority, except for provincial taxation -

**Natural Resources (Oil, Gas, Minerals)**

Joint control: Federal government handles overall management, provinces have a say in their resources' regulation after 18th Amendment

Provinces play a role in resource management (greater authority after the 18th Amendment) Concurrent before the 18th Amendment

**Education**

Federal role in curriculum guidelines, higher education

Full control over primary, secondary, and technical education (post-18th Amendment) Yes, under concurrent list before 18th Amendment

**Health**

Federal government sets national health policy

Provinces handle health services and hospitals Yes, before 18th Amendment

**Environmental Protection**

Federal role in overarching environmental laws

Provincial role in environmental protection and local implementation Yes, before 18th Amendment

**Police and Law Enforcement**

Federal government oversees intelligence agencies

Provinces have authority over provincial police forces -



<b>Taxation (Federal vs. Provincial)</b>	Federal authority to levy taxes such as income tax, customs duty, sales tax	Provincial taxation powers (e.g., property tax, agriculture tax, excise)	-
<b>Labor Laws and Employment</b>	Federal legislation on industrial relations	Provincial role in labor welfare, employment conditions	Yes, before 18th Amendment
<b>Agriculture</b>	Federal policies for national coordination	Full authority over provincial agriculture and irrigation management	-
<b>Land Revenue</b>	No federal role	Provincial governments handle land revenue and related matters	-
<b>Transport</b>	Federal control over railways, air travel, and highways	Provincial authority over road transport and local infrastructure	Yes, before 18th Amendment
<b>Water and Power (Hydropower, Dams, etc.)</b>	Federal government oversees major national projects (e.g., dams)	Provincial role in local water management, irrigation, and power distribution	Yes, shared before 18th Amendment
<b>Census</b>	Federal authority	No provincial authority	-
<b>Provincial Autonomy</b>	Federal laws must respect provincial jurisdiction	Provinces have legislative autonomy in areas not exclusively federal	-

Source: (Ziring, 1997)

One of the most important institutional changes was the creation of a bicameral parliament with the Senate and National Assembly. While the Senate guaranteed equal participation from all provinces, including Islamabad and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the National Assembly offered representation based on population. The Senate has generally been subservient to the National Assembly, even though it is a revising chamber. This is especially true when it comes to matters of economic policy and the appointment and removal of the chief executive (Noman, 1988, p. 43).



## Seat Allocation under the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan

### 1. National Assembly (Lower House)

The National Assembly seats are allocated based on the population of the provinces. Over time, the number of seats has been adjusted due to population changes and constitutional amendments, but the initial distribution under the 1973 Constitution was as follows:

Province/Region	General Seats	Women Seats	Total Seats
<b>Punjab</b>	116	13	129
<b>Sindh</b>	43	5	48
<b>NWFP (Now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)</b>	26	3	29
<b>Balochistan</b>	6	1	7
<b>Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)</b>	7	0	7
<b>Islamabad Capital Territory</b>	1	0	1

**Total: 200 General Seats + 22 Women Seats = 222 Total Seats** in the National Assembly (1973 initial allocation)

Punjab holds a dominant share of 129 total seats (116 generals and 13 reserved for women), representing over half of the total parliamentary strength, which aligns with its large population size. This demographic advantage translates into considerable political weight, allowing Punjab to play a decisive role in government formation, coalition politics, and policy direction. Its overrepresentation relative to other provinces raises long-standing debates over equitable federal representation and the balance of power within the federation. Sindh, with 48 seats (43 general and 5 women), represents the second-largest unit in terms of parliamentary presence. Although Sindh's population is smaller than Punjab's, its urban-rural political divide, particularly between Karachi/Hyderabad and rural Sindh, gives it a strategically important but less numerically dominant role in federal politics. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (then NWFP) holds 29 seats, making it the third-largest represented province. Its numerical marginality in Parliament has historically limited its bargaining power, despite its significant strategic importance, particularly in security and regional politics. Balochistan, with only 7 seats in total (6 general and 1 reserved for women), is the most underrepresented province in terms of population-to-seat ratio. This minimal representation is one of the structural factors behind Balochistan's grievances regarding federal power-sharing. Its small seat share restricts its ability to influence national legislation and policy, reinforcing its dependency on political alliances and federal transfers rather than autonomous decision-making. FATA (now merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) had 7 general seats and no reserved seats for women, reflecting its unique constitutional and administrative status prior to the 25th Amendment. The absence of women's representation underscores the institutional marginalization of this region, which historically remained outside the mainstream legislative and administrative structure of the federation. Islamabad Capital Territory's single general seat further highlights the centralized administrative control of the capital, with minimal representation in Parliament relative to its political significance as the seat of federal power. The seat distribution mirrors demographic realities but also institutionalizes



asymmetry within Pakistan’s federal structure. While Punjab’s dominant representation reflects population size, it simultaneously creates perceptions of political imbalance among smaller provinces. Sindh and KP have moderate representation that allows them some space for coalition bargaining, while Baluchistan’s minimal share deepens its sense of political marginalization. FATA’s historical exclusion from women’s representation and full provincial status reflects its peripheral incorporation into the federal system. This structure contributes to center-province tensions, as smaller units perceive federal dominance by Punjab, limiting their role in national decision-making. A more balanced and inclusive representational structure, while respecting population size, would require innovative federal mechanisms—such as strengthened provincial autonomy, second-chamber empowerment, or weighted voting systems—to mitigate political inequality and foster cooperative federalism in practice.

## 2. Senate (Upper House)

The Senate was designed to provide equal representation to all provinces, regardless of their population size, ensuring that the smaller provinces have an equal say in legislative matters. The seat allocation for the Senate in the 1973 Constitution was as follows:

Province/Region	Seats	Remarks
<b>Punjab</b>	14	Equal representation for each province
<b>Sindh</b>	14	Equal representation for each province
<b>NWFP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)</b>	14	Equal representation for each province
<b>Balochistan</b>	14	Equal representation for each province
<b>FATA</b>	8	Directly elected by National Assembly members from FATA
<b>Islamabad</b>	2	Representing the federal capital

**Total: 66 Seats** in the Senate (1973 initial allocation) (Khan H. , 2001)

The distribution of seats presented in the table reveals a deliberate institutional design to balance power among Pakistan’s federating units through equal representation of the provinces in the upper house (Senate). Each of the four provinces—Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly NWFP), and Balochistan—receives 14 seats, regardless of population size. This structure is fundamentally different from the National Assembly’s population-based representation and reflects a federal principle of parity intended to address inter-provincial power asymmetries.

The equal provincial representation model in the Senate serves as a counterbalance to the National Assembly, where population dictates political power. This bicameral structure is crucial for maintaining the federal equilibrium, ensuring that smaller provinces are not completely overshadowed by Punjab’s demographic advantage. However, equal representation alone does not guarantee effective federalism. The Senate’s limited powers compared to the National Assembly, particularly in fiscal and financial matters, restricts its ability to fully protect provincial interests. Thus, while institutional design reflects a



federal spirit of parity, the operational capacity of the Senate remains constrained, leaving provinces—especially the smaller ones—dependent on political alliances and executive negotiations to influence policy outcomes (Waseem M. , 2012)

This arrangement reflects a hybrid federal model, where the upper house compensates for the lower house’s demographic imbalance, yet the effectiveness of this compensation depends on political will, institutional empowerment, and cooperative intergovernmental relations. The National Finance Commission (NFC), the National Economic Council (NEC), and the Council of Common Interests (CCI) were established by the constitution as important organizations to oversee federal-provincial relations and promote shared government. The NFC and NEC were responsible for allocating funding and creating economic strategies, respectively, after consulting with provincial representatives. The CCI functioned as a forum for resolving disputes between the government and the provinces (Arshad, 2019, p. 231).

### Resource Allocation under NFC Awards (Before the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment)

NFC Award Year	Population-Based Formula (%)	Provincial Share of Divisible Pool (%)	Federal Share of Divisible Pool (%)	Criteria for Allocation	Additional Notes
1974 Award	100% based on population	Provinces: 20% of divisible pool	Federal: 80% of divisible pool	Population-based (no other criteria used)	Provinces were allotted funds solely on the basis of population.
1991 Award	100% based on population	Provinces: 37.5% of divisible pool	Federal: 62.5% of divisible pool	Population-based	Slight increase in the provincial share of the divisible pool.
1997 Award	100% based on population	Provinces: 37.5% of divisible pool	Federal: 62.5% of divisible pool	Population-based	No change in allocation formula, retained emphasis on population.



<b>2006 NFC Award</b>	<b>100% based on population</b>	Provinces: <b>41.5%</b> of divisible pool	Federal: <b>58.5%</b> of divisible pool	Population-based	The federal share slightly decreased, while the provincial share increased.
<b>Post-18th Amendment (2010)</b>	<b>Multiple criteria</b> introduced (Population, poverty, revenue generation, area)	Provinces: <b>56% (increased share)</b>	Federal: <b>44% (reduced share)</b>	Population 82%, Poverty 10.3%, Revenue Collection 5%, Inverse Population Density 2.7%	Major reform in resource allocation formula, giving greater autonomy and shares to provinces.

Source: (Iftikhar Ahmed, 2007)

Pakistan's political history exhibits a persistent trend towards centralization of authority, under both civilian and military administrations, despite the constitutional provisions that attempt to strike a balance between federalism and shared governance. Smaller provinces were frequently left out of this centralization, which sparked demands for increased provincial autonomy and institutional changes. Under Zia-ul-Haq's rule, the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) and later accords like the Charter of Democracy (2006) emphasized these demands, which led to the adoption of the eighteenth constitutional amendment, which profoundly reshaped federal-provincial relations (Abbasi, 2010, p. 53).

Although Pakistan's 1973 Constitution established the foundation for shared governance and federalism, centralization and dissatisfaction among the provinces have made implementing the constitution difficult. Pakistan's dynamic political fabrics is reflected in the ongoing discussion over constitutional amendments, where striking a balance between federal and provincial interests continues to be a crucial and dynamic process in the nation's pursuit of political stability and equitable governance.

### Measures Taken by Pakistan to Promote Federalism

Pakistan has taken a number of steps to advance federalism with the goals of ensuring provincial autonomy, addressing regional inequities, and striking a balance between the powers of the federal government and the provinces. Important actions consist of:

#### Constitutional Reforms

The 18th Amendment (2010) to the Constitution was giving the provinces enormous authority over the federal government. In order to increase provincial autonomy, it moved topics from the Concurrent Legislative List—which the federal and provincial governments shared—to the Provincial Legislative List. The 1973 Constitution laid the groundwork for Pakistan's federal republican



system and delineated the respective authorities of the federal and province governments.

### **Council of Common Interests (CCI)**

The Council of Common Interests (CCI), which represents federalism's ideals and practices in Pakistan, is an essential component of the nation's federal system. The CCI is a constitutional organisation created under Article 153 of the Pakistani Constitution. Its purpose is to maintain peace and coordination between the federal and provincial administrations, strengthening the federalist system of governance (Arshad, 2019, p. 229). The Chief Ministers of the four provinces, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and up to three federal ministers whom the Prime Minister designates make up the CCI. By guaranteeing that the interests of the federal and provincial levels are fairly represented, this composition encourages a balanced approach to decision-making. The CCI offers a regular forum for discussion and cooperation since it convenes at least once every ninety-day period (Mustafa, 2023, p. 1738).

### **Federalism and the CCI: Important Areas of Cooperation**

**Management of Natural Resources:** The allocation and management of natural resources, including water and mineral resources, is one of the crucial sectors in which the CCI plays a significant role. A fair distribution of water resources is essential given Pakistan's reliance on agriculture and its diverse climate. In accordance with the federal concept of equitable resource sharing, the CCI arbitrates conflicts and develops regulations to guarantee that each province has equal access to these resources. The CCI confronts difficulties including political tensions between the federal and provincial governments, problems implementing policies, and disagreements over resource distribution, despite being essential to Pakistan's federalism. Notwithstanding these obstacles, the CCI continues to be a vital organization for promoting unity among the states and guaranteeing that the various interests of Pakistan's provinces are fairly represented and taken care of inside the borders of the country. One of Pakistan's main contributions to federalism is the Council of Common Interests, which embodies the ideas of shared government and collaboration. (Khalid, 2013, p. 203) A federal system's delicate balance of power is maintained by the CCI, which does this by promoting communication and collaboration between the federal and provincial governments. Its significance in fostering national unity and equitable development throughout the nation is highlighted by its role in managing shared interests and settling conflicts. One of the main components of Pakistan's federal structure is the Council of Common Interests, which was created to guarantee a collaborative approach to resource management and governance. Maintaining national unity and tackling concerns that cut beyond regional lines are important roles played by the CCI, which brings together the federal and provincial administrations. Notwithstanding its difficulties, the council is a crucial institution in Pakistan's political and administrative setup because of its work, which promotes equal and balanced development nationwide.

### **National Finance Commission (NFC) Awards**

The National Finance Commission (NFC) Awards are a vital tool for advancing Pakistani federalism since they guarantee a fair allocation of funds between the



national government and the provinces (Saeed, 2013, p. 03). By acknowledging the varying financial requirements and contributions of various areas and encouraging unity and collaboration among the provinces, this method upholds the fundamental values of federalism. The NFC Awards' main features that support Pakistani federalism are as follows:

### **Resolving Regional Inequalities**

The NFC Awards attempt to give less developed regions more help by accounting for variables including poverty and underdevelopment. The NFC Awards are an essential tool for advancing federalism in Pakistan because they guarantee a just and equitable distribution of financial resources, improve provincial autonomy, encourage intergovernmental cooperation, and address regional disparities (Nazir, 2008, p. 13). This helps to address regional disparities and promotes more uniform economic development throughout the nation. Together, these components support the nation's overall stability and growth while fortifying the federal system. A critical issue lies in the lack of accountability and transparency in provincial spending. Even when provinces receive increased allocations, inefficiency, corruption, and poor governance often prevent funds from translating into tangible development outcomes. As a result, the NFC Awards may increase fiscal flows but fail to address structural inequalities or improve service delivery at the grassroots level.

### **Local Government System**

Pakistan's local government systems, which seek to transfer authority and duties to the local level in order to improve democratic governance, promote development, and more efficiently attend to local needs, are a major contributor to the country's federalist spirit. Pakistan's constitution encourages federalism by distinctly defining the roles and responsibilities of the federal, provincial, and municipal administrations. The 2010 ratification of the 18th Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution, which gave the provinces considerable newfound authority, was a major turning point in the country's federalism movement. This amendment also required provincial legislatures to create local governments and provide them financial, administrative, and political duties.

In Pakistan, local governments are usually organized into three levels: union councils, tehsil/taluka governments, and district governments. At the highest level, district governments are in charge of overseeing education and health services, developing and carrying out development initiatives, and maintaining district infrastructure. The intermediate level taluka/tehsil administrations concentrate on local infrastructure, land revenue collection, and municipal services. The lowest level, union councils, handles primary health and education services, local dispute resolution, and basic community requirements (Nadeem Malik, 2019, p. 19).

Pakistan's local government systems have a number of difficulties despite their apparent advantages. Local government authority is frequently compromised by political meddling from provincial governments. Furthermore, the insufficiency of financial resources and capacity sometimes impedes the efficiency of local administrations. Their capacity to support federalism has been further undermined by times of administrative instability and void brought on by the absence of regular local government elections.

On the other hand, Pakistan's local government structure has a lot of potential



for strengthening federalism. More political accountability and engagement are encouraged by regular elections and strong local government. Delivery of services that are more responsive and efficient and catered to the unique requirements of local communities is made possible by decentralized administration. Local governments may support comprehensive and well-balanced regional development by coordinating their development activities with national and provincial goals (Muzaffarr, 2022, p. 28).

The current obstacles must be addressed in order for local governments to fully advance federalism. These obstacles must be met with steady legislative backing, sufficient funding, and ongoing capacity building. Enhancing local government capacities would reinforce Pakistan's federal framework, promoting more cohesion and progress throughout the country. Local governments are essential to strengthening democratic processes and advancing federalist ideals in Pakistan because they make sure that administrative and governing duties are distributed to the local level

The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, passed in 2010, is one of the most significant constitutional reforms in Pakistan's history, aimed at strengthening federalism by decentralizing power and granting greater autonomy to the provinces. Before the amendment, Pakistan's political structure was heavily centralized, with the federal government controlling key policy areas such as health, education, and natural resources. The amendment addressed several long-standing grievances of the provinces by redistributing powers and restructuring the relationship between the federal and provincial governments. One of the most important aspects of the 18th Amendment was the abolition of the Concurrent List, which contained subjects on which both the federal and provincial governments could legislate.

### **Analytical Review**

The imbalance that benefits the central government, especially Punjab, is another important component in the strong centralization of power. Punjab, the most populated province, continues to have a major effect on the central power structure. Its greater presence in the army and bureaucracy, two essential institutions in Pakistan's governmental structure, is indicative of this supremacy. Due to Punjab's substantial influence within these organisations, smaller provinces' concerns are frequently overshadowed and the province has a disproportionate amount of authority at the federal level. Pakistan's constitutional frameworks have always centralised authority in the hands of the central government. Three different constitutions (1956, 1962, and 1973) gave the Centre substantial legislative authority, with the most important topics covered by the federal list. When the real allocation of powers was looked at, the promise of regional primacy in all these constitutions seemed to be primarily rhetorical. The 1956 constitution gave the Centre significant legislative authority, and the 1962 and 1973 constitutions created a similar kind of central sovereignty. The smaller provinces in the Western unit became estranged from the Centre due to this concentration of power, as Punjab had a significant portion of the army and bureaucracy.

To tackle these problems, a sincere dedication to federal values and fair allocation of resources is necessary. Smaller provinces' discontent with finance arrangements emphasises the necessity of fairly evaluating local resources and development requirements. Money should be distributed taking into account



each province's developmental needs in addition to its population. To guarantee a more equal and balanced allocation of resources, the Centre and provinces must have bilateral as well as group meetings. Pakistan can only progress towards a more equitable and decentralised federal structure that respects the distinct requirements and contributions of each of its provinces by taking such steps.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

After examining various global practices and experiences with federalism, it can be concluded that federalism remains the most effective framework for governing diverse societies and protecting the interests of different communities. While it has proven successful in established democracies, it often poses challenges for newly formed states still developing stable political institutions. Most countries tend to adopt federalism gradually, as it requires time and institutional maturity to function effectively. Over time, maintaining a balance of power between national and subnational units becomes essential, as illustrated by the United States—where authority has historically shifted between the states and the federal government in search of equilibrium.

The development of federalism in Pakistan from 1947 to 2013 showcases the significant influence of political parties in shaping the nation's federal structure. This era, depicted by the ongoing shifts between centralization and decentralization, illustrates the intricate challenges of governance in some country rich in ethnic, linguistic, and regional diversity. Political parties have played a crucial role in advocating for regional autonomy, negotiating power-sharing deals, and fostering the idea of cooperative federalism, which focuses on collaboration among different government levels while maintaining their unique authorities.

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