

Ethnic Politics in Pakistan

By Nasreen Akhtar

Introduction

As a result of questions of ethnic identity, Pakistan has had enormous difficulty in developing a coherent sense of nationhood. Religion has polarized more than unified societies. Even within a single religious denomination one may find numerous strands. Doctrinal differences, political contestation for power, material gains and territorial space can make the particular religion and the question of authenticity one of great dispute.¹

Complex historical and social factors have shaped the interaction between religion-ethnicity and politics in Pakistan, a state which came into being with the support of ethnic groups.

Pre-independence Muslim identity threatened by Hindu dominance was a more important factor than ethnicity among Muslim groups and political parties. Of course, Islam has remained at the centre of post-Independence political discourse; nevertheless it is today less important when the central issue has become the demand of constitutional rights by various ethnic groups.

The question of what type of state Pakistan should be -- liberal democratic or Islamic -- evokes distinct responses from each social sector and political interest. Military leaders, mainstream political parties, and Islamists have all attempted to define this relationship according to their vision of a just society and the role of religion in society and state affairs. Thus the Civil-military rule and their policy preferences provided a space for community groups to emerge as an effective force in the state.

Among the three main forces in the country, the quest for shaping the Pakistani state has added yet another dimension to the ethnic and political polarization in Pakistan.

As a consequence of this conflict of interests and the strange alliances it produces, the autonomy of the civil political sphere and civil liberties and minority rights has been severely compromised.

In this paper I shall explain how ethnic groups have been politicised and promoted by the state elite. I shall also examine two basic questions. Has the

¹ Rasul Bakhsh Rais, *Recovering the Frontier State: War, Ethnicity and State in Afghanistan*, (USA: Lexington Books, 2008).P.1

democratic system in Pakistan diffused ethnic identity or exaggerated its effects, particularly in the decade of the 1950s'?

Secondly, how has ethnicity undermined or strengthened the democratic process? This paper also explores how the democratic process or the lack of it has accommodated and promoted ethnic groups in Pakistan.

Accommodation and promotion of ethnic groups in both military and civilian rule for political interests has been an open secret. General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervez Musharraf both had used the ethnic minority party the Mohajir Qomi Movement (MQM) to retain power and to suppress their rivals.

During the military regime the promotion of ethnic politics remained inevitable because military rulers needed the support of such minority political parties to balance and offset the mainstream parliamentary parties.

Pakistan suffered due to an excess of centralism and the lack of democratic values. Democracy and Authoritarianism cannot work together; the victor as we have seen in Pakistan will always be the latter.

Since 2008, the government has offered economic package to the Balochi people but separatist nationalists and Baloch leaders have rejected it. Akhtar Mengal has floated six demands which are being compared with Shaikh Mujib's six points. Thus we can see the politics of civil war in Pakistan where ethnic groups are playing cards to get power and have challenged the writ of government in some areas of Balochistan.

Theoretical Framework

As for the origins and continuation of ethnicity, two opposing schools of thought have appeared within comparative ethnicity: Primordialists consider ethnicity to be based on culture and they reckon it as something ingrained in human nature.

On the contrary, the instrumentalists propound that ethnicity is socially constructed and it is the elites of a group who construct ethnic identities². A number of scholars follow the middle road by claiming that ethnicity has both objective and subjective dimensions. To them, it is the relative weight of each that counts in various situations³.

Pakistan is a fragmented, polarized and multi ethnic state. Ethnic movements have at times shifted from seeking advantage within the state to moving beyond to the realm of ethno-nationalism -- and then reverting to earlier positions. These

² .Crawford Young, *Athenicity*. Annual Review of Sociology, (1985),p.660

³ . Ibid.,P.661.

shifts have been correlated primarily to international developments such as the case of the “greater Balochistan” and Pashtun movements. We have seen in the elections of 2002 and 2008 the re-emergence of ethnic-coalition partnerships in the centre.

How should ethnicity be defined in the context of Pakistan? All ethnic groups claim to have a common language, culture and distinctive social traits, which differentiate or distinguish each from other similar groups.⁴ But the important thing is that a group adopts a common identity and acquires a social label that is recognised as such by others. The political factors in ethnic politics have been highlighted by Hamza Alvi, a noted Pakistani sociologist, who has stressed the over-developed state structure, weak political institutions, and the perception of “Punjabi hostility” as major causes of regional-ethnic conflicts.⁵

While Walker Connor states that the ethnic group may evolve a structural identity by developing a particular type of ‘joint’ relation, differing from the way others organize their ‘social roles’⁶, Teodorson and Theodorson in their *Modern Dictionary of Sociology* define ethnic group as a “a group with a common cultural tradition and a sense of identity which exists as a subgroup of a large society. The members of an ethnic group differ with regard to certain cultural characteristics from the other members of their society”.⁷

Pakistan is comprised of heterogeneous ethnic orders; in fact, the people of Pakistan form a complex ‘polygot’ as Tahir Amin puts it, with migration from Central Asia, and Iran, plus the indigenous.⁸ If we look at the history of pre-secessionist movement 1971, there were six major ethnic groups: Baloch, Bengalis, Mohajirs, (Mohajirs are called Urdu speaking in Sindh and migrated from Northern India), Punjabis, Pashtuns, and Sindhis.

But -- with the exception of the Bengalis in what was till 1971 East Pakistan -- there have always been a mix of ethnic groups in all the provinces. Unlike India, Pakistan has not altered the territorial status of the provinces it inherited from British India in 1947. So although ethnic groups claim a “home province”,

⁴ Riggs, Fred W. *Ethnicity: Concepts and Term Used in Ethnicity Research*, (Honolulu: International Social Science Council, 1985)

⁵ Hamza Alvi, “ Authoritarianism and Legitimizing of State Power in Pakistan”, in Subtrata Mitra (ed), *The Post Colonial State in South Asia*, (London: 1990).

⁶ Walker, Connor, “ Nation-Building or Nation- Destroying?”, *World Politics*, vol,24.No,3. (April,1972). pp 319-355

⁷ Theodorson, George A. & Achilles G. *Theodorson. A Modern Dictionary of Sociology*, (New York: Crowell Co, 1969).

⁸ Tahir Amin, *Ethno-Nationalist Movements of Pakistan: Domestic and International Factors*, Institute of policy Studies, (Islamabad: 1988) pp.92-93

according to Rasul Bakhsh Rais, “the same territory is claimed as historic homeland by at least one other, and in some instances, more than one ethnic identity.”⁹

In fact, in Sindh and Balochistan, waves of migration have altered the demographic balance; firstly with the inflow of refugees from other parts of India in 1947, and then from Afghanistan in 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded the country. Since then, only ANP (Awami National Party) has demanded Pakhtunistan complaining about Punjabi domination.¹⁰ Unequal distribution of economic resources has led to migratory movements and finally separatist movements in the case of Bangladesh and now Balochistan. Punjabi and Pashtun migration in Sindh have led to Sindhi and Mohajir movements. They use language and history to authenticate separateness – as Hindu and Muslim parties did in pre-Partition India.¹¹ In Punjab the Saraiki – who speak Saraiki -- community also claims to be a separate group in South Punjab an agrarian region and a major source of revenue.

The relationship between democracy and multi-ethnic polarized society is interactive. The ethnic character of society would influence first and foremost the political ordering of the community, determine rules of politics and shape the general patterns of political behaviour; a degree of democratic maturity would mitigate ethnic tensions.¹²

This is true in the Pakistani context since the British Raj supported Punjabis and Pashtun in comparison to other ethnic groups. As a part of their divide- and-rule strategy they termed ethnic groups who supported the British during the uprising of 1857 “martial races” while groups that had been instrumental in the uprising were dubbed “ non martial races,”¹³ Also the biggest colonial legacy of the British has been the highly centralized and authoritarian state apparatus that came under the domination of Punjabis and Pashtuns over time. Consequently, the state elites of Pakistan have tried to create a single nation-state by using Islam and Urdu as a smokescreen for their nation–building policies.

⁹ Rais, Rasul Bakhsh “Politics of Ethnicity and Democratic Process in Pakistan” in *Ethno-Nationalism and the Emerging World Disorder* Gurnam Sing (ed),(New Dhlhi:Kanishka Publishers, Distributors,2002).

¹⁰ Author’s interview with Islamabad based retired bureaucrat.

¹¹ Tariq Rehman, *Language and Politics in Pakistan*, (Krachi: Oxford University Press,1996).

¹² Rasul Bakhsh Rais, *Recovering the Frontier State: War, Ethnicity, and State in Afghanistan*,op.cit.

¹³ Craig Baxter, Yogendra Malik, Charles Kennedy, & Robert Oberst. *Governments and Politics in South Asia*. Colorado: West view Press, 1998. pp 8-9.

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In West Pakistan, ethnic groups raised their voices against prejudice and discrimination by the Punjabi dominating class, and Baloch clashed with the centre in the late 1950s on the issue of land allotments to Punjabi settlers along with the border with Sindh. But the Issue was resolved. Since 1999, land has become a political issue, at Gawadar, non-Baloch have been allotted lands increasing local resentment.¹⁴

Will East Pakistan crisis repeat in Balochistan?

In Pakistan rulers have assumed power through dubious means, and then re-employed dubious means to sustain their power. Ever since Pakistan's independence in 1947 until the fall of East Pakistan in 1971, ethno-centrism prevailed. The central government occasionally sought to provide an ideological battleground to all ethnic groups in East and West Pakistan, but that remained mirage.

Inequity and inequitable distribution of resources by the central government had isolated the Bengali from the state, especially after 1954, when the overall economic situation deteriorated. Out of the total development fund, East Pakistan's share was only 22.1% and non Bengali businessmen, financed by capital from West Pakistan had set up most manufacturing enterprises.¹⁵ Limited Bengali representation in the central government had increased the sense of deprivation, suppression and exploitation. The fragile economic situation in East Pakistan made the Bengali people anti-West Pakistan and also enhanced their ethnic identity. The Bengali move for provincial autonomy encouraged other ethnic communities in West Pakistan. Unfortunately, the same ideology could not defuse the sentiment of separate nationalism between Bengalis and Punjabis. Ethnic identities were strengthened in East Pakistan, and, to a lesser extent, in the smaller provinces of West Pakistan, especially in Sindh. Ethnic sentiment between East Pakistan and West Pakistan increased after elections 1954, when all the opposition parties were united and they emerged as a binding force the United Front. They defeated the Muslim league, and their victory had lent greater impetus to Bengali ethno-nationalism. Increasing violence between Bengali and non-Bengali workers gave the central government a pretext for dismissing the United Front government, establishing Governor's rule in East Pakistan and banning the Communist Party. This dismissal caused further resentment amongst

¹⁴ . Balochi' student's interview with author.

¹⁵ Tariq Ali, Pakistan: Military Rule on People's Power, (New York: William Morrow & Co Inc 1970).

the Bengali population and Communist Party¹⁶ The close association of the governor General (Ghulam Muhammad) with the Punjabi elite and the neglect of the Bengalis increased the resentment of the Bengali people. The Governor's reliance on the Punjabi community widened the gulf of mistrust between East and West Pakistan.¹⁷

Parity was an issue of great concern. Weak and limited Bengali representation in the central government had increased the sense of exploitation. The Bengali demand for an autonomous province encouraged other ethnic communities in West Pakistan. In Sindh, G.M Syed (Ghulam Muhammad) also wanted separate identity as 'nationalist. He formed a political block in 1953, Sindh Awami Mahaz (Sindh People's Front). He demanded full autonomy, except defence, currency, and foreign affairs: the Jeey Sindh movement was born in the early 1960s. The movement itself was not one organization, rather a cluster of parties joined by some groups in Balochistan and the North West Frontier Province (NWF) opposing the One Unit scheme. In the NWFP, Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan and Awami league (branch in NWFP), formed an anti one-Unit Front, which was joined by elites from the other provinces. G.M.Sayed argued that Pakistan was under the yoke of Punjabi and Mohajir domination and Sindhis had no chance for social mobility since they were not represented the two key institutions of the bureaucracy and the Army. He argued that Islam was an ideological façade used by the ruling elites to dominate other ethnic groups.¹⁸

In East Pakistan, Bengalis were quite bitter about West Pakistanis domination and they very naively branded every West Pakistani as Punjabi. The usual expression was, *Sala Punjabi Hey* (Brother-in-law/ also "swine" in Bengali is Punjabi).¹⁹ Before the military action of March 1971, though common Bengali did not want separation, claims a retired bureaucrat, there were political leaders who demanded a separate land and had sowed the seed of ethnicity.²⁰ Indeed, the consequence of ethnic nationalism was the civil war of 1971 and a successful secession.

Over the past 60 years in Pakistan, the spectre of regionalism and possible future secession has been voiced by disaffected Pashtun, Baluchi, Mohajir, Sindhi and Saraiki radical groups. In many instances we have seen that failure to integrate

¹⁶Khalid Bin Sayeed, *The Political System of Pakistan*, Printed in Pakistan by arrangements with Houghton Mifflin 1966.p.62

¹⁷ Ibid.p.74

¹⁸ ..pp-92-93.

¹⁹ Author's interview with an Islamabad based retired bureaucrat, (20 August 2012).

²⁰ Ibid.

ethnic groups into a national power structure or inability to grant them fair degree of cultural and political autonomy has politicized many of them, leading to civil war.²¹

The Baluch tribes have distinct territorial domains governed by tribal Sardars. Ethnically and politically, Baluchistan is much more fragmented than has been generally realized. A policy of offering cosmetic insubstantial authority to the Baluch people while denying real power has evoked considerable unhappiness. Baluch nationalists agitated their concerns under both the military and democratic regimes. The causes of the direct confrontation with the central governments have been the same, whichever the regime.

In Balochistan politics of civil war seems a disintegration of federalism. East Pakistan was lost because ethnic issues converted in civil war. Balochi separatist do not allow other factions to live in Balochistan. Punjabi²² and Hazara²³ people are being targeted. Non-Baloch are considered alien.²⁴ Ethnic cleansing in Balochistan may have colossal impacts on Pakistani democratic society. Punjabi officials seem reluctant to join their duty in Balochistan and strive to change cadre if politically they have some influence.²⁵ Target killing increased after military operation 1996 against Akbar Bugti. Akbar Bugti challenged the development programme and declared that Balochistan is for the Baloch only ““Balochistan belongs to the Baluch people and not to outsiders. The tribes have special interests, and control of natural resources is our primary demand. We own the natural resources, but these are being exploited for the benefit of others. We will not allow others to steal our wealth. Your sensitive installations will remain insecure, because you have pilfered, what belongs to our people.”²⁶

President Mushraf was directly hit by Baloch nationalists when he visited Kohlu, one of the conflicting areas in Balochistan. Mushraf sent the army to curb ethno-ethno nationalists and increased Baloch alienation, Bhutto's military action failed to control the ethnic faction in Balochistan so Mushraf also could

²¹ Selig Harrison, “Nightmare in Baluchistan,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 32 (Autumn 1978), pp. 136-160.

²² . For detail see Daily Times, July 7, 2012

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C07%5C07%5Cstory_7-7-2012_pg1_1

²³ .Saleem Javed, Hopes Fades for Hazaras of Pakistan” DAWN, June 29, 2012.

²⁵ .Currently a police officer was transferred in Quetta but he was assigned some duties in Cricket Board of Pakistan. Revealed by author's colleague.

²⁶ Ayaz Ahmad Kahn, “A test case for Jamali's government, *Dawn*, (31 January 2003).

not resolve the longstanding issue. The same action was taken in East Pakistan by Genral Yahya Khan and he lost Pakistani unit.²⁷

Does democracy accommodate or promote a divisive ethnicity in Pakistan?

In Pakistan, as in other developing countries, ethnic identity submerges narrow caste and tribal identities into a larger whole. Ethnicity, both in its subjective form of self-characterization such as Mohajir as well as in its objectivity of out-group recognition is determined by political conditions. The arousing of ethnic sentiment among the members of group is usually goal-oriented on seeking redistribution of power and national resources.

The politicization of an ethnic group usually gives rise to common demands which reinforce the political consciousness of the ethnic group. Mobilization may produce militancy, terrorism; or involve the community in a democratic process to effect a desired a political change.²⁸

If democracy works it promotes pluralism, political tolerance, accommodation and equal economic and political opportunity. However, constitutional and political legitimacy, fair recruitment of political representatives through the electoral process from all sections of the population, fundamental liberty equal access to political power, the rule of law, and accountability are the core values of a democratic process. Unfortunately, these elements have never existed in Pakistan's undemocratic, which ultimately created the vacuum for ethnic groups. In Pakistan the true democratic system has not taken root. Centralization of governmental authority, military rule and its intervention in politics, and the feudal mentality have only complicated ethnic politics in Pakistan. The fundamental challenge that the developing democracies face is this; how to accommodate the interests of the ethnic minorities?²⁹ Two major provinces of Pakistan, Sindh and Balochistan have become hub of ethnic conflict. In Karachi, confrontation between MQM and ANP (Awami National Party) Pashtun

²⁷ . In December 1971, Pakistan as federal state failed after losing her Unit East Pakistan.

²⁸ Anayatullah, C. "Democracy ,Ethno nationalism and the Emerging World Order", in Sushil Kumar(ed), Gorbachev's Reforms and International Change, (New Delhi: Lancers Books 1993.), p201

²⁹ Ghosh, Partha S., Ethnic Conflict and Conflict Management: The Indian Case, (ICES Pamphlet Series-3, Kandy: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1996) pp 34-35

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increased violence and unrest. During the last four years both Ethnic-Political parties tried to suppress each other³⁰.

In Pakistan, undemocratic process has enhanced ethnic conflict. Ethnic politics has been dominated by the state elite. Punjabi and Sindhi have dominated in the central government; while Pashtuns, Balochs, and Mohajirs have been deprived. Mohajirs, however, have been glorified during the Mushrraf era, also MQM and Peoples Party have an un-natural alliance in the centre.³¹

Emerging Ethnic Politics in Pakistan

Ethnicity was consolidated in an undemocratic regime during Ayub Khan's period. He took over as the first military ruler in 1958 and started a process of modernization of Pakistan with the military as its purportedly enlightened spearhead. His political policies had two objectives: centralizing the state and creating an authoritarian system. Although the One Unit scheme³² had already been in place since 1955 when the acting Governor General, Iskandar Mirza promulgated it, the pursuit of the first goal prompted Ayub Khan to bolster the system by strengthening the executive branch vis-à-vis the legislative.

The second prong of Ayub's strategy emphasized the establishment of an authoritarian system in order to ensure political stability, as manifested in the Basic Democracies limited franchise introduced in the 1962 Constitution.³³ On the cultural side Urdu had already been declared the national language in 1952. On the whole his policies led to severe discontent among ethnic communities across Paksitan. The processes set in motion by Ayub Khan were primarily responsible for the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Under General Yahya Khan, ethnic conflict and contradiction between the state and the Bengali community took off. Sheikh Mujib, the leader of the Awami party, obtained the majority of the seats in the general election of 1970 – and should therefore by principles of majority rule have been able to head the government of

³⁰ . Farrukh Saleem, "Why Karachi Bleeds"? The News, April 1, 2012

³¹ . It is unnatural political alliance because MQM and Peoples party both have different policies. Moreover, MQM was separated from PPP thrice in less than four years.

³² Under this scheme the following were integrated into the new province; the former province of Sindh, Punjab, and NWFP; the city of Karachi; the former states of Balochistan, Bahawalpur and Khairpur,, Balochistan, and the Tribal Areas (Pakistan: from 1947 to the Creation of Bangladesh", Keesing's Research Report No.9 Charles Scribner's Sons, New York: 1973).p.64

³³ Rasul Bakhsh Rais. Building Nation and State in Pakistan. In Charles Kennedy, Carl Ernst, Kathleen McNeil, & David Gilmartin, *Pakistan at the Millennium* (Karachi: Oxford University Press 2003). Pp.7-17

Pakistan. But Zulfqar Ali Bhutto, the founder of the Pakistan People Party (PPP), who received the majority in West Pakistan, was not ready to share power with a Bengali leader. General Yahya Khan could not defuse the tension between the two leaders. The result was widespread ethnic violence and agitation in East Pakistan. The violence escalated to such an extent that Indian forces were involved in support of Bengali separatists and helped them to recognise their separate identity as 'Bangladeshi'. This successful movement encouraged another set of ethnic conflicts between the state and regional elite of rural Sindh.

Promotion of Ethnicity in Democracy

Pakistan emerged as a polarized but Muslim state in the world. The formerly united Islamic republic was now divided into two states, Bangladesh and Pakistan. It was not Bengali sentiments against the West Pakistanis, but against the centralisation of power. Bengali politicians and leaders were considered incompetent and unreliable in west Pakistan, and Punjabi establishment was dominated³⁴ which was not ready to accommodate Bengali leaders.

After the separation of East Pakistan General Yahya resigned and handed over power to Zulfqar Ali Bhutto, who tried to deal with Sindhi grievances about government jobs under the quota system, and the language issue. Soon however he started targeting his rivals in Balochistan, NWFP and Punjab, and dismissed the elected provincial governments in Balochistan³⁵.

Bhutto had declared Urdu as the national language in the 1973 Constitution, yet he adapted certain policies to encourage regional language and cultures³⁶. Although card of language was played between east and west Pakistan, it was materialized by Zulfqar Ali Bhutto.

Bhutto's downfall came in 1977 when General Zia-ul-Haq took over under martial law. While earlier leaders had made claims about Islam. Zia went ahead and actually imposed Islamic law, in a selective and flawed way. Zia introduced the Zakat Ordinance empowering banks to deduct Zakat from the saving accounts of individual depositors. The Shia community protested against this act and they were exempted³⁷, dividing Pakistan in Shia-Sunni (sectarianism). Yet he allocated vast development budgets to Balochistan from 1982-86.³⁸ His policies had

³⁴ . Interview with Bangladeshi scholar during the workshop in New Dehli in January 2010.

³⁵ .Khalid Ahmad, Reareview Mirror, (Alhamra: Islmabad).pp35.

³⁶ Tahir Amin,op.cit. p.133

³⁷ Syed Shabir Hussain, *Ayub, Bhutto and Zia: How they fell victim to their own plans*, Lahore: Sang-e-Meel,2001.p114

³⁸ Sayed Shabir Hussain, op.cit. P. 179

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enhanced ethnic and religious extremism in Pakistani society.³⁹ General Zia faced resistance from the PPP during the Restoration Movement of Democracy (MRD) uprisings of 1983 and 1986 that demanded an end to martial law rule and the revival of the 1973 Constitution.

Zia's obsession with suppressing the PPP led him to support the formation of MQM and to search out G.M.Sayed who shared Zia's antagonism to PPP.⁴⁰

As mentioned earlier, the military regime has alternated between promoting or oppressing ethnic groups as it suits them. But the restoration of democracy in Pakistan in 1988 opened up the political system to participation by all ethnic groups. This surely reduced the degree of alienation they had felt during the long military and Martial Law rule of General Zia –ul- Haq.⁴¹

Muhammad Khan Junejo, a Sindhi politician, nominated as Prime minister by Zia in 1985, invited Benazir Bhutto to an All Parties Conference to discuss the Geneva accords setting a time table for a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. General Zia dismissed Junejo in May 1988⁴²; after Zia himself was assassinated general elections were held.

Since 1988, Pakistan has held six general elections, which have been contested by all mainstream national political parties and ethno-regionalist groups. Election 1997 saw a remarkable change in terms of building political coalitions across ethnic and provincial boundaries. The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) after sweeping the elections yet decided to form a coalition government with all significant regionalist parties, Awami National Party (ANP), Balochistan National Party, (BNP), MQM .

The ANP, that had had demanded establishment of Pakhtunistan and had opposed the creation of Pakistan became the coalition partner of the Muslim League. For a decade the two parties worked very closely on national political issues .They separated when the Muslim League Government refused to agree to the demands of the ANP to rename the NWFP as Pakhtunkhawa and scrap the plan of building the KALABAGH dam.

³⁹ Ian Talbot. Back to the Future? Pakistan, History, and Nation-Building. In Charlesenedy, Carl Ernst, Kathleen McNeil, & David Gilmartin, *Pakistan at the Millennium* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003). P72

⁴⁰ Iftikhar H. Malik. The Politics of Ethnic Conflict in Sindh. Nation, Region, and Community in Pakistan. In Subrata K. Mitra & R. Allison Lewis (ed) *Subnational Movements in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Segment Books, 1998). PP08-81

⁴¹ Rizvi, Hasan-Askari, "The Legacy of Military Rule in Pakistan"

⁴² Benazir Bhutto, *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy & the West* (London: Simon & Schuster 2008). Pp.91-92.

Baloch leaders who took up arms against the federal government when Zulfqar Ali Bhutto dismissed their government in 1973 were pulled back by the imperatives of democratic politics. In Sindh, successive elections had exposed the hollowness of the popularity of the Jeey Sindh Movement. Sindhi nationalists failed to win a single seat in any election. On the other hand, electoral process has brought into fore a new ethnic force in Sindh, the MQM, which represent the Muslim immigrants from India, concentrated in urban areas. The emergence of MQM was partly a response to Sindhi nationalist sentiment, and partly to the declining power of the Mohajir community⁴³.

The tricky questions of provincial autonomy, devolution of power and inter-ethnic relations have not been resolved. The democratic process offers merely a framework to address many of these issues. In general, democracy has contributed to the diffusion of ethnicity, while imposition of army rule has revived fissiparous ethnic sentiments and delayed ethnic accommodation.

Four different trends in Pakistan's ethnic politics show that democracy may offer the best political framework for the promotion of multi-culturalism and peaceful accommodation among diverse ethnic groups in a transitional state.

1. Punjab and Pakistani Nationalism

Punjab is the richest in terms of agricultural and industrial production. A growing number of Punjabi educated families have adopted Urdu as the first language in urban and even rural areas. Ordinary Punjabis feel that Urdu is a superior language and a symbol of literate status. Today, the best Urdu literature is being produced in Punjab where hundreds of popular magazines are published every month. The intellectual and political environment of Punjab has not been congenial to the growth of Punjabi nationalism.

There are material reasons for the support to Pakistan nationalism in Punjab as well. The Punjabis comprise the largest single ethnic group (60-65 percent) in the Pakistan Army,⁴⁴ which for almost two decades has been the largest employer. Likewise, they have the greatest representation in the civil services. They have also made tremendous gains in business and industry.

It is estimated that in the 1980s, 85 percent of the 1.3 million Pakistani workers in the Gulf countries were Punjabis and Pashtuns, Punjabis constituting the

⁴³ Zulfqar Ali Bhutto's decision to introduce the quota system for Sindhi and ,provincial government's decision to introduce Sindhi language

⁴⁴ Kennedy, Charles H. "The Politics of Ethnicity in Sindh," *Asian Survey*, ol31, No.10 (1991).p.946

overwhelming majority⁴⁵. This means that 75 percent of the remittances in the 80s that were in the neighbourhood of \$ 2.5 to \$ 3.00 billion annually was invested in Punjab.

Saraiki Belt in Punjab

The people in southern part of Punjab, comprising three administrative divisions, Multan, Bahawalpur, and Dera Gazi Khan, called the Saraiki belt, where Saraiki is the main language. The Saraiki people or Multani are an ethnic group from the south-eastern areas of Pakistan, especially in the area of the former princely state of Bahawalpur. The Saraikis maintain that they have a separate language and culture, but their language is often viewed as a dialect of Sindhi or Punjabi⁴⁶. In 1960's Saraiki nationalists under Riaz Hashmi started efforts to for Saraiki to gain official language status and efforts for a new Saraiki province out of Southern Punjab were started. This movement however died down during General Zia-ul-Haq's era and reemerged only after his death. This time the goals were to have Saraiki language recognized and to have official documents in southern Punjab printed in Saraiki along with a few other demands like a Saraiki radio and television channel⁴⁷. There have been two movements in Southern Punjab, one political and the other cultural. The people of the former princely state of Bahawalpur launched a political agitation in support of a provincial status for Bahawalpur and against its continued merger with Punjab in 1969 after the One Unit was disbanded. The movement evoked a popular response. The demand for the separate province gained so much support that almost all the candidates fielded by the Bahawalpur Muthida Mahaz (Bahawalpur United Front) won national and provincial seats from the region in the 1970s elections. However, the PPP government weakened the movement. The east Pakistan crisis and the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 made the central government and the Punjabi elite hostile to regionalist movements. There is a significant presence of Punjabi settlers in Bahawalpur, Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, who dominate business, government jobs, and industry, while the Saraiki community is largely peasants of mainly Saraiki landowning class, small business, (Shopkeepers). But significantly the Saraiki feudal class (Mazari, Laghari, Makhdooms) that dominate electoral politics have never given any support to the idea of a

⁴⁵ .Ibid.

⁴⁶ . <http://waseb.wordpress.com/2010/04/19/saraiki-people/>. Accessed on November 4, 2012

⁴⁷ .Adeel Raja, "Saraiki Language", <http://www.dostpakistan.pk/geography/languages/316-saraiki-language.html>. Accessed on November 4, 2012

Bahawalpur or a larger Saraiki province that would include all the three administrative divisions mentioned above. This feudal class which provides some leadership is integrated with the power structure of Punjab. As the Punjabi settlers form a large vote bank in most constituencies, the Saraiki political elite prefers to remain silent, often denouncing those who support regional movements. The ousted Prime Minister, Makhdoom Yusaf Raza Gilani, was Saraiki, but has never supported the Pakistan Oppressed Nation Movement (PONM) founded in September 1998. However, he supported Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PMLQ) on a separate province, South Punjab. South Punjab is the most underdeveloped area where people have no basic facilities e.g clean drinking water, good infrastructure, and medical facilities. Poverty is the major problem in South Punjab. Democratic representatives have always failed to produce mega project in this region. Indus river is situated in District Rajanpur and waiting for a bridge which would provide opportunity to the people of Rahmiyar Khan, Bahawalpur and Rajanpur to establish their business. Both military and democratic regimes have failed to keep their promises⁴⁸. Comparing with the other regional belts in Pakistan, the Saraiki belt is more accomodationist. All communities, Saraiki, Mohajir, Punjabi and Pashtoons live with peace and harmony. They have assimilated and accepted each other's culture. Intermarriages are common and mother tongue has lost its significance because all communities speak all languages.⁴⁹

Pashtun Political Integration

The North Frontier Province (NWFP) and the adjoining Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have 15.1 percent of the total population of the country. The Pashtuns are the predominant ethnic group in these areas. They also form a majority across the Durand Line in Afghanistan, which was founded by a Pashtun ruler more than two centuries ago. But Pashtuns also dominate northern parts of Balochistan, and in the past 50 years a very large number of them have migrated to Karachi, the big city of Sindh. There are two other ethno-linguistic groups in the NWFP, Hindko and Saraiki. The original people of Peshawar city and surrounding areas are Hindko Speaking. They are mainly concentrated in the Hazara District. A vast majority in Dera Ismail Kahn Khan speaks Saraiki. Both

⁴⁸ . In 1980s, GneralZia made promise to build a bridge and in Benazir Bhutto's era President Laghari who belonged to South Punjab also committed to grant funds for the Indus river, Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi promised and failed, and the last Saraiki Prime minister Yousaf Raza Gilani also announced to build historical bridge on the Indus River but yet it is not materialized.

⁴⁹ . Author's personal experience , author belongs to Saraiki belt.

these languages are closer to Punjabi than Pashtu. This linguistic divide also marks the political divisions in the province, historically; these two groups have been the strong supports of the Muslim League and the demand for the Pakistan in 1947. On the other hand the Pashtun leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan wanted a third option for the Pashtuns, meaning a country of their own.

The political bitterness between the central government dominated first by the Muslim League and then by Ayub Khan and the Pashtun nationalists led by Ghaffar Khan and his son Abdul Wali Khan lasted for more than two decades. Ghaffar Khan and his followers continued to champion the cause of a separate state of the tribal areas along the Durand Line. The demand for Pashtunistan received political support only from Afghanistan India and the Soviet Union⁵⁰. But the Pashtun movement never posed a serious threat to Pakistan because it did not receive wide support among the Pashtuns.

Other the other hand, Pashtuns present a classical case of integration through economic modernization and political democracy. In the 60s the industrial development in Karachi and parts of Punjab attracted Pashtun workers. And their flow to these areas has continued. They form now roughly 4 percent of Sind's population. A significant portion of unemployed Pashtuns were absorbed by the new industrial activity in their home province, particularly in the decades of 1970s and 1980s.

The Pashtuns are the only ethnic group that has disproportionately excess representation in the armed forces (30-35)⁵¹. The elite is very integrated into the economic and political power structures of Pakistan. The business community owns some of the big industrial houses in the country. In the 1990s, Gaddon-Amazai areas of the Frontier emerged as one of the developing industrial zones in the country. These developments have dampened Pashtun separation.

Renaming the NWFP

The ANP in 1997 demanded the renaming of the NWFP as Pakhtunkhawa province. The people of Hazara Peshawar and the Dera Ismail Kahn resisted the move because they preferred some con-ethnic name for the province. The PML government that had reached some understanding with the ANP on this issue refused to accept this demand, fearing such a concession would erode its support in Punjab as well as among its traditional constituents, such as the Hindko, Hazar and Saraiki speaking population of NWFP. This fight over the re-naming of the province ended the 10 year partnership between the ANP and the PML.⁵²

⁵⁰ .S.M.Burk, Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis,

⁵¹ Kennedy Charles, op.cit..

⁵² The Nation, 4 February 1998.

The coalition government PPP-PML-N and JUI have accepted the ANP demand and the PML-N had no objection⁵³. In fact, the sense of ethnicity has increased and other ethnic groups such as the Saraiki, Mohajir, also demand their separate areas.

Baloch Ethno-nationalism

Balochistan is the largest province but contains only 5.1 percent of the population of Pakistan. The Baloch tribes have distinct territorial domains governed by tribal *Sardars* (chief). Ethnically and politically, Balochistan is much more fragmented than has been generally realized.

Balochistan has seen four conflicts with the central government over the past sixty years. Although the Shai Jirga, the official consultative assembly of the Baloch tribes established by the British decided to accede to Pakistan, the Khan of Kalat, a ruler of princely state, in the province, declared independence. As this action was against the declared principles of the partition plan, and could pose serious threat to the integrity of the new state, then central government sent a limited force to put pressure on the Khan to sign an accession document on April 1, 1948. The second conflict took place in 1958-59 over the allotment of lands to the Punjabi settlers in the areas close to Sindh, to be irrigated by a new canal called the Pat Feeder dug from the Guddu barrage in upper Sindh. These clashes did not provoke any coordinated Baloch response. The issue was resolved when local tribes were also allotted land.

The third direct confrontation between the Baluchis and Pakistan armed forces began in the February 1973 when the central government of Bhutto dismissed the provincial government of Balochistan on the trumped up charges that it was violating the Constitution and raising Baluch armies to secede from Pakistan.

The Balochis were outraged over the dismissal of their first elected government and launched a guerrilla war which went on for four years until Bhutto was thrown out of power by the military.

Bhutto's decision to deploy the army in Balochistan against some tribal groups was his political mistake. The action in Balochistan affected the country's direction in many ways and provincialism assumed new dimensions"⁵⁴ The military regime released Pashtun and Baloch leaders who had been incarcerated for more than four years and were facing treason charges before the special courts that Bhutto had set up. The Baloch coalition forged a close political alliance with

⁵³ . Later PML-N quitted PPP in the centre and became opposition in the House.

⁵⁴ Khalid Hassan.p.186

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Pashtun nationalists from the NWFP that helped them to win political support of Pashtuns in Balochistan. That demand for provincial autonomy persists today. In 1978 the military regime granted amnesty to Baloch guerrillas, allocated funds for their resettlement and released thousands of remaining prisoners. This tragedy took the lives of about 5,300 Baloch guerrillas and 3300 Pakistan army personnel. The economic and human cost of this conflict was horrendous.⁵⁵ Baloch guerrillas had considerable support from Afghanistan.

The revival of democracy in 1980s in Pakistan brought about fundamental change in the politics of the Balochistan National Party, the Balochistan National Movement and the Jamhuri Watan Party. The mainstream parties such as the PPP and PMLL have also increased their support in the province. The Pashtuns are no more aligned with the Balochis. With the inflow of the Afghan refugees to Balochistan the interests of the Pashtuns and Balochis now clash. Balochis fear that Afghan refugees are going to tilt the demographic balance in favour of Pashtuns, who want to carve a separate province out of Balochistan.

The Baloch elite continues to voice concerns about the distribution of financial resources between the central government and their province. They want a greater share of royalties from the sale of natural gas, a better deal in the allocation of finance for development, and greater provincial autonomy.⁵⁶

A fresh conflict has erupted after Nawab Akbar Bugti's death on 26th August 2006 . The Musharraf regime had a confrontation with Bugti who demanded an increase in royalty. In January 2003 Bugti said, "Balochistan belongs to the Baloch people and not to outsiders. With a party which has manipulated into power with a powerless prime minister, the future is uncertain. We remain deprived and exploited.... The tribes have special interests, and control of natural resources is our primary demand. We are not beggars. We own the natural resources, but these are being exploited for the benefit of others. We will not allow others to steal our wealth. Your sensitive installations will remain insecure, because you have pilfered, what belongs to our people."⁵⁷

The Musharraf regime outdid its predecessors. It not only added Gawadar, new cantonment plans, Akbar Bugti's killing and disappearances to Baluchistan's festering sores, it also dared the nationalists to climb the mountains and put a seal

⁵⁵ Sartaj Kahn, Riaz Ahmad, "The Changing Face of Pashtun Nationalism", The News: The Political Economy Section, (2 July, 2000)

⁵⁶ DAWN, (January 23, 1998)

⁵⁷ Ayaz Ahmad Kahn, "A test case for Jamali's government, *Dawn*, (31 January 2003).

on its implacability by dismissing the recommendations of a sympathetic Senate committee.⁵⁸

Sanauilla Baloch, General Secretary Baloch National Party, stated that since 1999, land allotment to Punjabi in Gawadr has posed a serious threat to Baloch nationalism. The Baloch are being converted to a minority; land is sold to Punjabi elite and community.⁵⁹

Ethnic Polarization and Conflicts in Sindh

Sindh has witnessed more ethnic polarization and violence since the 1980s, than any other province of Pakistan. Most of the violence has been confined to Karachi the port city of Sindh and the financial and Industrial centre of the country. Various ethnic groups live in this city. They represent all nationalities of Pakistan. Sindhis are the only native groups while others have settled there after the creation of Pakistan. Mohajir came to Karachi in large numbers at the time of Partition. Sindhis protested against Mohajirs because they feared that more refugees from India would be brought in. In early years of Pakistan from 1947 to 1951, one million Mohajirs were settled in Sindh. Liaqut Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of the country, and himself Mohajir, had a generous policy towards the newcomers in the allotment of prime urban properties through the Evacuee Property Trust.⁶⁰

They gained majorities in Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpur Khas, and Nawab Shah.⁶¹ More significantly, Mohajirs dominated the newly established central government of Pakistan. The Sindhis resented the concentration of the Mohajirs in their province, their monopoly over government jobs, state institutions, and favours in allotting urban properties. The political and ethnic polarization that has taken violent form in Sindh goes back to the early years of Pakistan's policy of resettlement of immigrants from India.

The dynamic economy of Karachi and Sindh have attracted immigrants preferentially. According to the 1981 census Sindhis made up 55 percent of the population of the province. Mohajir constituted the second largest group 24

⁵⁸ I.A.Rehman, "Pacifying Baloch", Dawn, July 31, 2008

⁵⁹ Talk with Geo tv channel "Jawabdhey", on 10-08-2008

⁶⁰ Policy of allotting land to all Mohajirs discriminated against the Sindhis – a simple unverified affidavit was enough to claim property in Pakistan as compensation to leaving India.

⁶¹ Kardar, Shahid, "Polarization in the Regions and Prospects for Integration," in S.A.Zaidi (ed), Regional Imbalances and the National Questions, (Lahore: Vanguard, 1992)

percent⁶² (Pakistan 1981). Punjabis were 10.6 percent; Pashtuns were 3.06 percent, Balochis 6 percent.

Most of these ethnic groups have taken up jobs and business in Karachi or in other urban areas. The flow of other ethnic groups from neighbouring provinces has continued. Bhutto, who was not willing to share power with Mujib in United Pakistan, accepted power with his political opponents in NWFP and Balochistan. NWFP and Balochistan had adopted Urdu as the official provincial language. Then the leader of National Awami Party (NAP), Wali Khan declared:

‘We are not even thinking of renaming the NWFP as Pushtunistan because it is no longer an issue for NAP.’⁶³

Bhutto’s government allowed Sindhi language as the official language in Sindh. Bhutto’s policy of adopting a regional language in this major province caused discontent among the other communities; Mohajir, Punjabi, and Pashtun. The language issue triggered NWFP and Balochistan demands to protect their language. Although Pakistan is a fragmented state people want to retain their identity with their language. The PPP government has seen the danger signal and therefore amended the language bill to adopt both Sindhi and Urdu as official languages .

The Bengali political leadership had no role in the political process but their agitation was mobilised on the issue of language, which was surrogate for many of their grievances. Bhutto wanted Sindhi as the official language because he saw the Mohajir as the future political threat . To this purpose, he introduced the quota system for Sindhis in provincial and federal government. Although the quota was implemented in other provinces too in Sindh it caused great damage. Two major conflicting ethnic groups emerged: Mohajir and Sindhi. These groups have changed the political path in Sindh particularly. Later General Zia ul Haq played the Mohajir card and helped that community form their political party Mohajir Qomi Movement (MQM).

Bhutto was an ambitious person with a feudal mentality as well as being an actual feudal lord; he could not have had a working relationship with the NAP in the tribal areas NWFP and Balochistan. Wali Khan managed to exploit PPP’s policies regarding language in Sindh. Bhutto dismissed the governments in NWFP and Balochistan. Regional ethnic movements were suppressed by force and the Army was sent to take over in 1973. Bhutto’s decision to deploy the army

⁶² Census Report 1981, Islamabad: Governemt of Pakistan Publication Bureau

⁶³ Thir Amin, op.cit.pp.122-125

affected the country's direction in many ways and provincialism assumed new dimensions"⁶⁴

Bhutto started to redress some of the grievances of the Sindhis in early 1970s. Bhutto was Sindhi and he understood the feeling of his community. To compensate for the past deprivation, he decided to fix quota for the rural Sindhis in provincial and federal jobs on the basis of their population. He inducted Sindhis to provincial and federal offices of employment without a competitive examination where it was feared they might have lost out to Mohajirs. Quotas were not confined only to jobs; they were extended to admission to professional institutions, such as engineering and medical colleges. Such policies had long term effects on inter-ethnic relations.

In 1972, the provincial government headed by Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's cousin, made Sindhi the official language of the province and compulsory from the fourth to twelfth grade.⁶⁵ This provoked riots by the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs.

The question comes why did Bhutto adopt a clear ethnic agenda in Sindh? One can see the growth of Sindhis nationalism, the PPP had emerged critical as the largest national party on the political scene. In 1970s election there was no question of Sindhi grievances articulated by the nationalists such as the late G.M. Syed and his party being taken seriously. Sindhi voters voted PPP, and rejected all Sindhi nationalists. Bhutto's party dominated the politics of rural Sindh. After Bhutto's death nationalist groups had hardly any representation in the provincial or national legislature. The PPP was reduced to a regional party of rural Sindh. In the 1997 elections it failed to win any seat in other provinces. In 2002, Benazir Bhutto, the party chairperson, was in exile and the party had representation in all provinces and at the centre as well. In 2008, after Benazir's assassination, PPP emerged as the largest party in the country but could not form the government in the centre. Like the first government of Benazir Bhutto 1988-1991, it formed a coalition government with the alliance of PML-N, and ANP. Once again ethnic groups have their representation in the centre. Zardari's government unanimously agreed to impeach president Musharraf and this threat forced him to resign on 18 August 2008.

In contrast to Sindhi nationalists, the MQM the driving force behind Mohajir ethnicity, has dominated elections in Karachi and Hyderabad since 1988. The MQM has been riding on the strong wave of Mohajir identity and the issue of ethnic rights. Politically, they have influence in Karachi and have been supporting

⁶⁴ Ibid.p.186

⁶⁵ .Lawarance Ziring, *Pakistan in to the 21st Century*,(Vanguard:Islamabad),

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PPP, PML-N, PML-Q and they want to be recognised as a fifth nationality, and separate Karachi from Sindh. They received political support from general Zia-ul-Haq's military regime which did not confine its strategy of countering Sindhi militant nationalism to military means. It encouraged, financed and organised the MQM as a counterweight to the Sindhi separatism.⁶⁶ So Zulfiqar Bhutto's ethnic card was matched by the military; but all this has unhappy consequences for democratic politics in Pakistan.

The MQM has used all legal and illegal means to establish itself as a separate group in Karachi, Hyderabad. It has vigorously pursued a nationalist ethnic agenda, more dangerous than the Sindhi and Baloch nationalists. Its act of violence, kidnapping and terrorism that grew after a number of splits in its organization in the early 1991, finally evoked a reaction from the central government which ordered the army in June 1992 to suppress terrorism in Karachi. The military operation started under the PML, PPP government of Benazir Bhutto. There have been several instances of extra-judicial killings of suspected MQM terrorists in police custody. The Bhutto government and general Naseerullah Baber, then the Minister of Interior, justified these killings as "police encounters". Some claim that the MQM is a fascist organization with a separatist ideology⁶⁷. It is the only party that uses terror as a political tactic and has its own torture cells across Karachi. Sindhi nationalists claim that the Urdu-speaking intelligentsia has failed to condemn the violent practices of MQM.⁶⁸

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement observed a countrywide protest against controversial remarks by Sindh Senior Minister Zulfiqar Mirza during a speech against MQM chief Altaf Hussain and Urdu-speaking people.⁶⁹

Ethnic group an Instrument of the Political Leadership

In Pakistan, any ethnic group can be used as an instrument of the political leadership.

May 12, 2007 saw a direct ethnic conflict between MQM and PPP. The MQM government in Sindh sponsored its workers. The deposed chief justice (CJ), Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhary⁷⁰, was to address the Sindh High Court Bar Council in Karachi. Since the MQM was an ally of Musharraf they decided not to

⁶⁶ Rasul Bakhsh Rais,

⁶⁷ Abbas Azhar, "Eyeball to Eyeball", *Herald*, July 1997.37

⁶⁸ Fayaz Alam Solangi, "Sindhi Nationalist Movement :1988-2004, unpublished paper. Department of Social Science, University of Management Sciences Lahore, 2005.p54

⁶⁹ .Asad Farooq, "MQM Protests against Mirza's remarks, Daily Times, July 15, 2011

⁷⁰ On 9 March 2007, the chief justice of the Supreme Court was removed by president Musharraf.

allow the deposed CJ to address the lawyers on 12 May. MQM held a large rally to denounce what it called 'political jugglery' in the name of the independence of judiciary. The MQM controlled the traffic and looked after the security arrangements at the venue of rally. They sealed off Karachi city. The CJ was being supported politically by PPP, PML-N and other political parties. In clashes between MQM and rival groups 34 people were killed and over 140 others injured including Pashtuns (the supporters of Imran Khan's party PTI). Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhary remained confined to the lounge of the airport throughout the day and returned to Islamabad. MQM claimed that 10 activists were killed, while PPP said its 15 party workers lost their lives. The Pashtoon Action Committee Loya Jirga claimed that 16 members of Loya Jirga and ANP were killed in that incident.

Yet on the same day in Islamabad, the pro-Musharraf PML-Q and allies staged a big show to their support and strength. Musharraf declared that "politics will be countered by politics" and he chose to address rallies in his support. 60,000 vehicles were booked from Punjab for 500,000⁷¹ people brought to Islamabad by district nazimz (governor) and ministers danced in front of the national parliament to the beat of *dhol* (drum), in the traditional Punjabi *bhangra* style, as young men fell to violence. Then the railway minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmaed called it the "awakening of Punjab". Divisive ethnic politics was openly employed by the Head of the State and his political allies.⁷² The Pashtoon community reacted strongly over MQM's violent action. The Peshawar High Court Bar Association (PHCBA) warned MQM ministers not to visit NWFP and urged lawyers and Pashtoons to shoot ministers if they crossed the Attock bridge "Burn down MQM offices and wage a jihad on its members on seeing them anywhere in the provinces". MQM closed its office in Peshawar. OHCBA president Latif Afridi declared "Pashtun will avenge the bloodshed of innocent Pashtoons in Karachi by the MQM, which is a group of terrorists".⁷³ It is mainly due to the ineptitude of the 3rd rate politicians Pakistan suffered.⁷⁴ The recent ethnic uprising in Karachi has broken the previous record. Both ANP and MQM blame to each other, they are plying ethnic cards to retain political powers but common and poor people are being killed. Blaming foreign hands in Karachi killing is an excuse to divert the people's attention. Political parties in Sindh have failed to perform according to the democratic values.

⁷¹ Dawn, MAY 11, 2007.

⁷² Rasul Bakhsh Rais, "Where do we go from here?", *Daily Times*, (May 15, 2007)

⁷³ Launch Jihad against MQM, PHCBA chief asks Pashtoons, *Daily Times*, (May 15, 2007).

⁷⁴ Interview with Dr. Abdul Khaliq Kazi, an Australia-based scholar, (July 30, 2008)

Conclusion

Ethnic politics are at some level an indication of immaturity; citizens in a democracy cannot be appealed to on public policy, but must be canvassed solely on the basis of their tribe, language or religion. Such politics most often prevails when the most immediate needs have not yet been served, as is the case with backward or Third World countries.

Democracy, or at least its formal expression of electoral politics, has legitimised the power of the MQM. Without democracy its claims of mass following would have remained in doubt, and it might have been suppressed by the state. Other ethnic and regional groups have either lost out to their mainstream political rivals or have joined them in broader national coalitions. The case of fragmented Baloch political groups and the ANP, the traditional torch-bearer of the Pashtun nationalism, is in point. They have formed coalitions with other parties, notably the PPP, after 2008. The democratic process, in this respect, seems more integrationist than the old-fashioned dictatorial approach, sadly much appreciated in Pakistan. It has brought leaders of different regions and political perspectives closer to one another than ever before. The alliance among the PPP, PML-N, and ANP promoted better understanding of Pashtun concerns in Punjab and Sindh. But Balochis are seen as separatist: military operations started by the Musharraf regime continue today despite the change of government.

The democratic process does not guarantee a climate of reconciliation among the main ethnic groups. Zulfqar Ali Bhutto's period had divided the community between Sindhi and Mohajir and drawn the line of hate and prejudice. Ethnic polarization in Sindh continues to fuel tensions between ethnic Mohajirs and Sindhis. A similar fault line is emerging between Pashtuns and Balochis in Balochistan province and at a lesser scale among the Pashtuns and peoples of HAZRA division and Dera Ismail Khan district in NWFP. Yet the military in politics can only exacerbate ethnic problems; democracy provides the best framework under which various ethnic groups have found political space. However, during the last democratic regime, all ethnic groups became active and their demand for separate units in Pakistan has been accelerated. Pakistan needs more provinces; this may bring peace and stability in Pakistan.