



ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Conflictology and Role of State Institutions in Federalism: A Study on Gorkhaland and Balochistan

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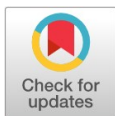
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Abstract— Conflicts are a common phenomenon in today's disorderly world. Ethnic conflicts usually arise in multi-ethnic, pluralistic, or democratic societies. While employing institutional theory, this qualitative study explores the role of institutions in escalating and de-escalating ethnic conflicts through analysis of Gorkhaland and Balochistan ethnic conflicts in India and Pakistan, respectively. Both conflict-prone regions hold significant geo-strategic importance for their countries and share common grievances ranging from political marginalization, identity crisis, structural inequalities, denial of democracy, and enduring state negligence. Since federalism is considered a golden road towards sustainable ethnic peace, a deep understanding of both conflicts' nature, synthesis, underpinning factors, and the contemporary situation is pivotal for advancing informed political discourse. The study follows a desk research method for data collection and a descriptive approach for synthesizing the facts gathered from secondary sources, including the grey literature. The study informs that the suppression of dissenting voices doesn't resolve ethnic conflicts instead adds insult to injuries. The study concludes that as long as the non-democratic policies of the governments are in place, this ethno-regional agenda would continue to be a significant issue in the politics of both federal states. The study implies that both countries should volte-face their state policy towards their respective conflict-prone regions to sustain a socially cohesive, economically viable, and politically stable society. The study also presents several contributions coupled with limitations and future research directions.

Index Terms— Balochistan, Democratic Governance, Ethnic Conflicts, Ethnicity, Federalism, Gorkhaland, Identity Crisis & Nationalism, India, Institutionalism, Pakistan, Pluralism.

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Introduction & Background

Conflicts are generally referred to as disagreements or struggles; they are also termed as battles, clashes, disputes, wars, competitions, contests, matches, disagreements, or duels (Wandberg, 2000). Despite the growing interest of scholars in the field, there is no standard definition of conflict. Cambridge dictionary explains that "an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles"

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or “fighting between two or more countries or groups of people”. [Steele \(1976\)](#) defines conflict as “a condition involving at least two parties, who have a mutual problem of position or resource scarcity, in which there is a behavior (or threat) designed through the exercise of power to control or gain at the other’s expense.” The most elaborative definition of conflict is: “conflicts involve struggles between two or more people over values, or competition for status, power and scarce resources” ([Coser, 1998](#)). Therefore, a conflict arises when individuals or groups have incompatible goals ([Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019](#)). One such form of conflict is identified as ethnic conflict.

Understanding Ethnic Conflict

Ethnic conflict is “a form of group conflict in which at least one of the parties involved interprets the conflict, its causes, and potential remedies along with an existing or perceived discriminating ethnic divide, and involve at least one conflict party that is organized around the ethnic identity of its members” ([Cordell & Wolff, 2009](#)). As per Britannica, “the conflict is usually not about ethnic differences themselves but over political, economic, social, cultural, or territorial matters” ([Reuter, 2017](#)). As [Omelaenko \(2020\)](#) explained, such conflicts usually arise in a multi-ethnic state; hence, it is common in pluralistic (democracies) societies. Ethnic conflicts challenge world peace and security ([Che, 2016](#)) while subsequently undermining the efforts towards shared prosperity.

Concept of Federalism

Federalism is a mixed-mode government where the authority is shared between the central government and the federating units. The federating units enjoy full political autonomy in some policy matters, while some issues are concurrent and mutually decided by both tiers of the government ([Thapa & Scholar, 2020](#)). These federating units are known as “states” in India and “provinces” in Pakistan. Several studies suggest that federalism (through institutional agility) can assist in resolving or mitigating ethnic conflicts ([Obydenkova, 2004](#)). Given its effectiveness in managing the challenge of diversity, multi-cultural societies prefer to opt for a federal system of government ([Ashraf & Shahzad, 2020](#)). To many scholars and policymakers, federalism is a “golden road” toward “sustainable ethnic peace” ([Wimmer, 2004](#)). Despite a growing interest of the countries in this form of government due to its multiple features, the concept of federalism has gone under scrutiny, raising some pertinent questions regarding its efficacy in recent times ([Agnew, 2021](#); [Hegele & Schnabel, 2021](#)).

Study Objectives

This study explores the role of state institutions in resolving ethnic conflicts in federal states while comparing Gorkhaland and Balochistan ethnic conflicts. The study intends to achieve the following objectives: i) to develop an exhaustive understanding of both ethnic conflicts and their underpinning demands; ii) to draw conflict profiles of both ethnic movements, since genesis, in a comparative perspective; and iii) to put forth viable policy recommendations for de-escalation of conflict.

Study Rationale

India and Pakistan got independence from British colonial rule in 1947. Both countries are considered pluralistic societies and confront several ethnic movements and conflicts posing significant socio-economic, political, and administrative challenges to the federation. Hence, a deep understanding of the nature of “conflictology” ([Vinyamata, 2010](#)) and its underpinning factors are essential for an informed discourse and evidence-based measures for de-escalating the conflict. Primarily, the researchers have selected Gorkhaland and Balochistan ethnic conflicts due to certain similarities. Geographically, both regions hold geo-strategic importance in their respective countries, are rich in natural resources, have a pre-independence history, and have active ethnic movements. Both movements emphasize equal rights and autonomy and subsequently receive a violent response from the government.

Significance of the Study

Being a first-of-its-kind comparative study of Gorkhaland and Balochistan ethnic conflicts, the present research has several contributions. Theoretically, it adds to the existing academic literature in federalism, conflictology, comparative public policy, and administrative sciences as no study has been conducted earlier to explore this phenomenon from a comparative perspective. Politically, the study brings forth relative insights into ethnic conflicts urging the political leadership to take account of the pitfalls hindering the institutions from effectively redressing the grievances of ethnic groups. Through viable policy recommendations, the study also arrests the attention of the policymakers for pursuing inclusive policies that ensure equality of opportunity in pluralistic societies.

Theoretical Framework

There have been different ethnic conflict theories. The concept is hotly debated across academic research agendas of multi-disciplines (Adlparvar & Tadros, 2016). However, it lacks a “unified theory for the analysis of conflicts”; hence, the scholars may opt for a necessary approach for answering research questions and achieving intended study objectives (Omelaenko, 2020). Premdas (1993) suggests analyzing ethnic conflicts through an institutional perspective, arguing that colonization has deeply affected the institutions as the colonialists positioned the race and culture-based rivalry at the center of the socio-economic and political lifecycle. The basic foundation of institutionalization is that: “institutions define the rules of political membership, representation, and resource allocation” (Crawford, 1998). Because the institutions can hinder the emergence and prevention of ethnic conflicts via participation, representation, distribution, and accountability – usually called the basic principles of a democratic system (Blagojevic, 2004). Therefore, the present study employs the institutional theory to support the arguments. The underlying reason for applying institutional theory is that it focuses on the role of institutions, given their structural viability, in the escalation and de-escalation of ethnic conflicts. The institutionalists believe that the strength of institutions has a decisive role in the emergence of ethnic conflicts. Here, strength means institutional agility and power that may be “observed how much democratic a state’s institutional structure is” because, without such authority, institutional theory cannot work (Wimmer, 2004). To avoid further destruction of the social fabric, it is essential to resolve the ethnic conflicts in a more systematic way, for which the acknowledgment of the deprivations of the ethnic groups is fundamental (UNICEF, 2021). Hence, an integrated approach is crucial where the center-state governments and institutions may move towards sustainable conflict resolution while opting for inclusive policies (Bitterman, Lopez, & Wright, 2007) instead of taking advantage of the situation for their selfish gains.

Methodology

Given obvious complications and geographical restrictions for researching this complex topic, this exploratory (descriptive) study employed a desk research method (Myers, 2019; Nel, 2019; Rodrigo, 2015) for collecting the secondary data and used descriptive analysis for synthesizing the facts gathered from the data sources. Since significant research literature was absent on this topic, the authors utilized multiple sources of grey literature. Overall, the data sources include peer-reviewed research articles, published books, commentaries, reports, government publications, websites, proceedings, media clippings, newspaper articles, dissertations, theses, etc. This method is popular among contemporary researchers undertaking qualitative studies despite certain implications.

Conflict Profiles: Gorkhaland and Balochistan Ethnic Conflicts

Overview of the Gorkhaland ethnic conflict:

Gorkhaland conflict represents the long-due demand of Gorkhas for a separate state within India, obsessed with an “identity crisis” and structural inequalities (Middleton, 2015). The movement is deliberated as the first political signal of desire by the Nepali-speaking people in India D. Datta and Sengupta (2020). This movement is of Nepali-speaking people of India who want to get separated from the State of West Bengal and have their separate state called Gorkhaland within India (Thapa & Scholar, 2020) Wenner, 2021). In 1835, the British colonists started developing Darjeeling as a hill station and attracted people from Nepal to work there. Hence, Nepalese turned out to be the mainstream population in the area. Although they came from diverse language groups, social status, and cultural backgrounds, “Nepali became the lingua franca” besides they got the individuality of becoming “Gorkha” (Poddar, 2020; Wenner, 2013) due to the statehood demands in several parts of the country. During the 1970s and early 1980s, many Gorkhas were pushed out. Therefore, they tried to move to Nepal. But due to the taciturn response, they returned to Darjeeling and its adjoining districts. They became a numerically dominant ethnic group in the hills of West Bengal (Negotiating Statehood: A Case of Gorkhaland in India, 2018). The Indian Gorkhas are wrongly portrayed as “People from Nepal.” The negative behavior of the dominant Bengali population, to brand them as “Foreigner or Nepali instead of Indian,” has led to several movements, including the Gorkhaland Movement (Middleton, 2015). The motive was a clear recognition of their identity and citizenship in India. Initially, the movement demanded Gorkhas’ inclusion into the scheduled tribe, scheduled caste, and minority class; securing them in the tribal block and belt; introducing Nepali as a subject at postgraduate level; the satellite council to Gorkhas, and so on. But none of these demands were taken into consideration by the Indian government (Surya Newar, 2017). At present, the primary goal of the conflict is, therefore, asserting their identity as a part of the broader national Indian identity. The conflict centers on socio-economic and identity factors (Lichbach, 1989). The Gorkhas believe that establishing a separate state of Gorkhaland will help them secure equal treatment as enjoyed by the other Indian communities.

Current Situation of the Conflict

In 2011, a tripartite agreement of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), instead of the DGHC, was signed between the Trinamool Congress (TMC) led by Mamata Banerjee and the Central Government of India for another autonomous council (Middleton, 2015; Wenner, 2015). Thus, this shift in interest de-escalated the conflict. In June 2017, a new conflict phase was started (Middleton, 2015). This time a declaration of the State of West Bengal for teaching the Bengali language in schools as a compulsory subject was the reason (P. Datta et al., 2014; Sundas, 2017). It sparked ire among Gorkhas and brought about large-scale protests, strikes, and violence, with several skirmishes between the protestors and the police resulting in a prolonged law and order situation halting life and livelihoods in the area (BBC News Services, 2017). To call this three-month-long striking chaos off, the Government of West Bengal handpicked Binoy Tamang from the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM) as GTA Chief (Thami, 2021). Recently, Gorkhas have responded ferociously to the "Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019" passed by the Indian Parliament – blaming that it will encompass settlements of Non-Gorkhas in the Gorkha-majority areas (Ghosh, 2009; Nangsel, 2020).

Overview of the Balochistan Ethnic Conflict

The emergence of Baloch nationalism can be traced back to the pre-partition times when the Britishers made the institution of "Sardars and Nawabs" of Balochistan so strong that certain rivalries evoked due to the conflict of interests with massive exploitation of the people at the hands of few. After independence, perpetual assertions have been made by the Baloch politicians to acquire provincial autonomy and authority over natural resources (KC, 2020; Wani, 2016, ?). Concurrently, some armed separatist groups raise slogans of independence, but they don't enjoy much public support, whereas the government response has been authoritarian, not democratic (Iqbal, 2012).

Balochistan, the largest province of Pakistan, represents a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural society (Sabir, Razzaq, & Scholar, 2010), yearning for unity in diversity (Kukreja, 2020). There exist three major ethnic groups, including Baloch (majority), Pash-tun, and Brahvi. Before the partition of the sub-continent, the region was governed by the British, who strengthened the institution of "Sardars and Nawabs" and kept the masses under dispossession (Aslam, 2011). Besides getting institutional support from the whole administration for running the public affairs, the Britishers exploited the selective tribal families who had their particular stakes. The animosity between the federation-province relations was started with the annexation of Swat to Pakistan against the will of the Baloch people (Taj, Shah, Bilal, et al., 2018). Initially, the movement was oriented towards attaining constitutional provincial autonomy and authority over its natural resources. While several fractions demand provincial autonomy, the Baloch separatists raise slogans of independence of Balochistan from Pakistan. The dissidents often target governmental holdings, security personnel, and civilians, particularly the non-Baloch population (Roth, 2021). The insurgents appear both heavily armed and reasonably skilled in military strategies. Since the dawn of Pakistan, the southwest province has witnessed five violent uprisings and still struggles for stability. The current scenario of unrest in the region has become multifarious as international players have also jumped in (Kulkarni, 2018). Conversely, the federation seldom earnestly took the provincial concerns and grievances (Akhtar, Qumber, & Hashmi, 2018). Afore resolving the conflict through political and democratic institutions, the extensive use of force by the state has developed anti-state sentiments among the people (Hashmi, 2015).

Current Situation of the Conflict

The violent insurgency in Balochistan, which started in early 2005, is still enduring in Pakistan. As claimed by The Diplomat, after the killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti, "the insurgency is not under the direction of any Sardar or Nawab." Enforced disappearances, abductions and extrajudicial killings add insult to injuries (Baloch, 2021). The insurgents have picked up arms against the federal government in Balochistan, further pushing the resource-rich province into the "fragility trap" (Ellis-Petersen, 2020; Hasan, 2016).

According to the World Baloch Forum, 20,000 people had been killed, and 25,000 civilians had disappeared between 2000 to 2016 in Balochistan (Security, 2004). The Guardian and Aljazeera report that 139 people were kidnapped from the province during the first eight months of 2020, while 84 were set free (Baloch, 2021; Ellis-Petersen, 2020). Whereas, the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) reports that "it has received 1144 cases of allegations of enforced disappearances from Pakistan between 1980 and 2019, with a vast number in 2015-16" (International Commission of Jurists, 2020). However, a US-based organization, namely the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), reports a steady decline in the events of Organized Political Violence (OPV) involving the Baloch militants after 2015. At the same time, the organization has recorded 38 OPV events with 110 casualties from 2017 to 2019 (Figure 1). Several factors account for this decline in the insurgency, including an array of counterinsurgency operations spanning over many decades, cacophony among different Baloch radical groups, multiple amnesty schemes announced by the government, and a leadership vacuum in separatist groups, are pertinent to mention (KC, 2020; Marino, 2019; Siddique, 2019).

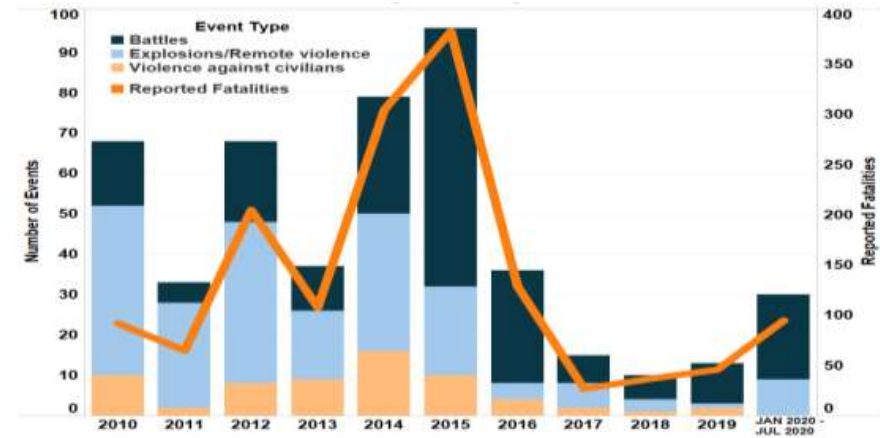


Fig. 1. Organized Political Violence Involving Baloch Separatist Groups (January 2010- July 2020) (Source: KC (2020))

The first seven months of 2020 have witnessed an increase in the OPV events involving the Baloch separatist groups. While lambasting the deteriorating law and order situation and seeing no hope from the government regarding missing persons, Balochistan National Party (BNP-M) bid goodbye to its coalition with the PTI-led federal government in June 2020 (The Express Tribune, 2020). As of 31 July 2020, ACLED reports 30 OPV events involving Baloch separatists causing 95 fatalities (Figure 2).

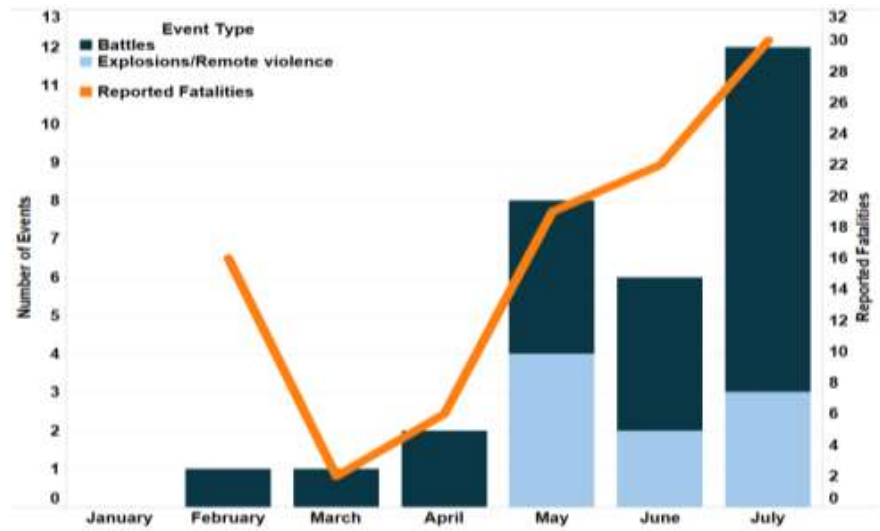


Fig. 2. Organized Political Violence Involving Baloch Separatist Groups (January 2010- July 2020) (Source: KC (2020))

Recently, the province has witnessed a surge in violence that hints towards the intact roots of the separatist elements in the area (Jamal, 2020). Multiple events, including the assassination of Mr. Siraj Raisani and 127 other people in a deadly suicide blast in 2018 and a series of attacks on civil armed forces (BBC News, 2021; Hashim, 2019; Latif, 2011; Yousafzai, 2020), paint a worrisome picture of the law and order situation in the province (Akbar, 2018).

Comparative Analysis of Gorkhaland and Balochistan Ethnic Conflicts

The researchers identified the following six themes (see Figure 3) that further informed the discourse and helped explain the study phenomenon and underpinning factors of both ethnic conflicts.



Fig. 3. Underlying Themes Explaining Gorkhaland and Balochistan Ethnic Conflicts (Source: Developed by Author)

A detailed elaboration of each theme is given below:

Geo-strategic Environment

Gorkhaland: Darjeeling is a landscape of foothills enclosed via the borders of Bhutan to the west, Nepal to the east, the Indian state of Sikkim to the north, and the plains of Bangladesh and Bengal to the south (Besky, 2017; Poddar, 2020). Just below Darjeeling, there is the “Siliguri Corridor” that is known as “India’s Chicken’s Neck” (Singh, 2017). It is a narrow stretch of land located in the West Bengal State, with Bangladesh and Nepal on either side of the corridor, while Bhutan is situated on the northern side. It is the only access route to the Indian North-East from mainland India. West Bengal consists of 20 districts, and one of them is Darjeeling, with four administrative divisions: Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong, and Siliguri (Bengal, 2021).

Balochistan: The geo-strategic location of Balochistan is one of its kind as it occupies much importance not only in the geo-politics of Pakistan but also enjoys international significance. Being the largest province of the country, Balochistan spans over 44% of the total area and accounts for only 5% population of the country (Kazmi & Khan, 2018). It serves as the gateway for South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East Rehman and Shah (2017). The province has a common border of around 475 miles with Iran on the western boundary and about 625 miles alongside Afghanistan. Almost 562 miles of the area connecting to the Makran Coast of the Persian Gulf is located in the province (Shah, 1997). With the magnificent development of the Gawadar seaport and investment opportunities through the “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC),” the province has become a business pivot for both national and international stakeholders (Yousafzai, 2020; Zubair, 2019).

Natural Resources and Economic Deprivation

Gorkhaland: Gorkhaland is famous for its natural beauty, bustling tourism, snow-clad mountains, and tea gardens. However, the forest products and tea industry are declining, affecting a significant occupational base in Darjeeling hills (Besky, 2017). The identity crisis, economic inequality, political instability, weak governance, and social deprivation are on the rise. Further, a lack of adequate road infrastructure and transportation system (Ganguly, 2005), massive deforestation, chronic power outages, and discriminatory practices against Gorkhas in public sector jobs have made life difficult for the hill people (Satgar et al., 2020). Often, locals alleged that the “natural resources are drained out from the area to benefit others” (Gupta, 2016). The government needs to understand that only hill councils or autonomy are not the answer; instead, it must promote equality, accountability, and development with sustainable and inclusive growth if it sanguinely wants to contain the conflict Ching (2016).

Balochistan: Balochistan is blessed with vast caches of metallic and non-metallic natural resources (Government of Balochistan, 2021) like coal, chromite, barytes, sulfur, marble, quartzite, iron ore, limestone, copper, silver, gold, uranium, aluminum, and platinum, and huge maritime potential (Kalim & Syed, 2020). But it is least urbanized, thinly populated, and marginally developed compared to the other federating units. Approximately the province contributes 36% to 45% of its natural gas and consumes only 17 percent (Wirsing, 2008). There is an important relationship between natural resources and conflicts as the UN Environment Program reports that natural resources account for almost 40% of all intrastate conflicts from 1950 to 2010. All resources are under the direct control of Islamabad, whether they

are on land, on the coastline, or underground (Hashmi, 2015). When the federal government exploits such endowment and the province is not given its due share, the conflict emerges. Such exploitative policies lead to structural inequalities and repressive state behavior; and the authoritarian nature of quasi-federalism promotes “centrifugal tendencies” (Ahmed, 2020) that supplement the separatist sentiments.

Grievances

Gorkhaland: Gorkhas’ grievances are related to ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and economic distinctions. The demographic change among Gorkhas; a high degree of unemployment among Gorkha youths vis-a-vis the hegemony of Bengali culture; the fear and distrust towards Bengal and its general public due to the perceived socio-economic superiority of the Bengali population; and the existence of unequal and unfair competition between them as well as the ethnocentric attitude of the larger Bengali political class, have brought the demand for the state of Gorkhaland in the mid-1980s (Katwal, 2015).

Balochistan: Balochistan has been a conundrum of violence due to many structural disparities. The Baloch uprising, like any other insurgency, is diverse and complicated. The grievances of Balochis against the state of Pakistan vary from economic underdevelopment, political seclusion, continual security forces presence, and natural resource expropriation in the province; hence, speak volumes about fragility in Balochistan (Javed & Nabi, 2018). On the contrary, the state argues that the Baloch Tribal Sardars perpetuate the conflict. They eschew the government’s approach to integrate and develop the province for retaining their grip on power and resources. Nevertheless, grievances relating to self-rule, fair political representation, equitable power-sharing, and control over natural resources hold significance in the backdrop of Balochistan.

Nationalism and Identity

Gorkhaland: Usually, nationalism is an “unnoticed facet” having a significant impact on our lives (Goode, 2020). The primary goal of the Gorkhaland conflict is to assert their identity as a part of the broader national Indian identity, as they want to stay as a national of India. They contemplate that creating a separate state of Gorkhaland will secure them equal treatment as extended to and enjoyed by other Indian communities (Rai, 2018). Similarly, Wenner (2013) explains that the Bengali and Adivasi groups, who are in opposition to the demand of Gorkhaland, consider the demand of a separate state as secessionist and define its motive to create a “Greater Nepal” threatening India’s security and sabotaging its integrity. Still, according to Gorkhas, their “politics of identity is not of secession, in fact, for them, Indian nationality is a matter of proud possession and privilege, not a liability” (Wenner, 2013).

Balochistan: The nationalist revolution of the Balochi people spans Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. At the time of independence, Balochistan didn’t want to be a part of Pakistan; instead, it wanted to be an independent state, keeping good relations with Pakistan (Khan, 2020). The political leaders strongly resisted the proposed annexation. Mir Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo delivered the most critical speech in 1947. He said: “Pakistani officials are pressuring to join Pakistan because Balochistan would not be able to sustain itself economically.. we have minerals, we have petroleum and ports. The question is where would be Pakistan without us” (Singh, 2017). After various consultative sessions and accords, eventually, the state of Kalat made part of Pakistan. Since then, “a new phase of identity issues and the question of nationalism got importance in the politics of Pakistan in general and Balochistan in particular” (Hashmi, 2015). Baloch people consider them “a separate nation, not ethnicity” and they dream of a “Greater Balochistan” (Noraiee, 2020).

Denial of Democracy

Gorkhaland

Role of state (West Bengal) in creation of Gorkhaland:

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPIM] and All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) are two mainstream political parties of West Bengal. Both parties are not in favor of the creation of Gorkhaland as a separate state within India. Both try to deal with ethnic desires by giving them regional autonomy under the state’s authority. Interestingly, in 1947, the CPIM agreed on forming an independent state of Gorkhaland but, in the 1950s, it changed its policy and vowed to resolve the ethnic conflicts via regional autonomy (Brass, 1984). This approach of the CPIM leads to the concept of a “state within the state” or an autonomous unit under the power of the state (Wenner, 2015). The party opposes all the statehood demands within India and holds that no one should be separated to make a new state within India. They argue that creating new states would not resolve the issue of ethnic conflicts because when one state is created, the other statehood demands will follow, and this situation would endanger the internal unity of India (Wakode, 2011).

Center’s Role in Creation of Gorkhaland

The decision to make a new state rests with the central government, but the consent of the respective state government is also required in taking such a decision which is evident from the history of Indian state formation (Bal, 2007; Mishra, 2000; Stein, 1985). The state of

West Bengal is not in favor of creating a separate state of Gorkhaland; nevertheless, it wants to resolve the issue via autonomous councils or development plans (Daniyal, 2017).

It is worth mentioning that all mainstream political parties, from Indian National Congress (INC) to TMC or Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), exploited the "Gorkhaland Sentiment." Often Gorkhaland issue is used to gain political mileage by the ruling elite. The attitude of political parties has been earning votes in elections by any means, and for that, they manipulated the ethnic movement (Wenner, 2018). This situation explains the sheer trust deficit among the critical stakeholders of the movement. In sum, "their electoral gain-oriented game has kept on destabilizing the whole state's political environment. This should end immediately in greater interest" (Sarkar, 2020).

Balochistan

The government has recurrently refused the Balochi people their right to democracy. Resultantly, the government has been incapable of integrating them into the mainstream. The denial of democracy has appeared as the forced incorporation of the Balochis into Pakistan. Niazi (2005) believes that each of the four Baloch uprisings happened due to events like the One-Unit design, the unrest and revolt of 1973-77, and the general elections of 2002. Equally, the "Islamabad theory" supporters consider that the four insurgencies resulted from the denial of democracy to Balochistan. However, detailed scrutiny of such events divulges that the federation ignored the democratic principles during the execution of policies towards the province. Evidence also supports this notion that people who advocate democratic values, if excluded, become supportive of militant groups. On August 15, 1947, Khan of Kalat announced the independence of the princely states, comprising contemporary Balochistan, so did the Kalat Assembly. Irrespective of such democratic moves for autonomy, the federation compelled the chief of princely states to undertake loyalties to Pakistan in March 1948.

Later in 1970, General Yahya Khan abandoned the "One Unit Scheme," established the province of Balochistan, and announced to hold elections. Instantaneously, the hostility bugged. This situation in the history of Balochistan is critical for the government to learn that when democratic rights are assured, the uprising and violent behavior tend to be ceased (Niazi, 2005).

Use of Force

Gorkhaland: The Indian government deals with the issues in Gorkhaland in a heavy-handed manner which includes police raids on GJM's Chief Bimal Gurung's residence and office. During the initial phase of the struggle, the movement turned out bloody as it cost more than 1200 innocent lives during the Gorkhaland agitation of 1986 (Daniyal, 2017).

Balochistan: The Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and army have conducted operations during each insurgency in Balochistan. Such actions went further than the commonly accepted standards of using force, adding to the people's grievances, and they reacted back sadistically.

Current Stage of both Ethnic Conflicts

Gorkhaland: Gorkhas are demanding a separate state within the Indian Territory; hence, they are at the second stage of ethnonationalism. The agitation through the Gorkhaland movement revolves so much around the identity crisis that it badly wants to be a part of the nation-state (Thami, 2021). Initially, the only aim was to get a separate state. Later on, specific events and agreements led to escalation or de-escalation of conflict.

Balochistan: Looking deeply into the Balochistan ethnic conflict, we find two distinct groups. First, the Nationalist Balochs promote the voice of "Azad Balochistan" and have anti-state sentiments. Second, the Moderate Balochs, who are demanding provincial autonomy, under the constitution of 1973. The latter is opposed by the nationalist group that restrains them from participating in the political and electoral processes for the "greater cause of Balochistan." Although the moderate Baloch consider that they are being marginalized and aloof from the political (democratic) processes, yet they have faith in making efforts within the state's political system (Hashmi, 2015).

Discussion

The descriptive analysis of the secondary data underscores that the geo-strategic significance of Balochistan for Pakistan is more than the importance of Gorkhaland to India. Accordingly, both governments reacted to the conflict situation differently. The Pakistani government's reaction towards Balochistan has been stricter than the Indian reaction towards Gorkhaland. Likewise, the response of the Balochis was more violent than Gorkhas. While following a reactive approach, both India and Pakistan acted authoritatively instead of adopting a democratic course. Both states emphasized establishing regional elites from a handpicked party. Both neglected the root causes of ethnic conflict and only focused on addressing the "ethnicity dimension" of the conflict being formed in response to elites' actions, where a significant part of people's lives and culture was overlooked. In the Gorkhaland case, it is evident from the study of the State-Center role that none of them favored the statehood demand of the Gorkha people. Over time, both tiers of the federation neglected the "identity crisis"

and ethnic sentiments of the people of Darjeeling hills. Instead, they used a developmental funding strategy to deal with the Gorkhaland issue through an autonomous council. The same has been the case with the Pakistani government since it never wanted to extend such provincial autonomy to Balochistan as aspired by the Baloch leadership. Despite devising a sustainable solution to overcome the persistent socio-economic inequalities, the government tried to resolve the conflict via developmental packages, like Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan and the 18th Constitutional Amendment extended share in the 7th NFC Award (ur Rehman, Khan, & Gill, 2014) and through excessive use of force to repress the dissenting voices.

Consequently, the initiatives to bring peace and development in the region brought out no significant impact Pipes (2010) explained that when Islamabad addressed Baloch grievances through bids of economic backing, reduced military presence in the province, and moved towards a political solution – violent attacks were most often reduced. The same is the case with Gorkhaland, both Gorkha National Liberal Front (NLF) and GJM agreed to create an autonomous council, and the conflict de-escalated. But when the people realized that the councils were unsuccessful in fulfilling their aspirations, the conflict escalated again.

In both ethnic conflicts, the tepid response of the political elite towards the people's desires and the state's failure to resolve the genuine grievances resulted in the escalation of the conflict towards violence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The comparative analysis of both Gorkhaland and Balochistan Ethnic Conflicts explains that both governments attempted to monopolize people's demands as a weapon and exerted to gain political authority and resources that resulted in negative political fragmentation in the population. The demand in Balochistan that started from asking provincial autonomy has now converted to the secessionist movement. Whereas, the peaceful demand of Gorkhaland (started as an "identity crisis") has now transformed into a violent movement. However, the (violent) reaction of both Gorkhas and Balochis is not justified either, especially in the Balochistan issue where the Baloch separatists and militant groups are brutally butchering innocent people and continuously challenging the writ of the government.

Both conflicts necessitate a long-lasting solution to avoid a resurgence of uncertainty in the conflict areas. Center-state governments, political leaders, and Baloch and Gorkha elites need to negotiate the issue peacefully, bearing the larger public interest in mind. The institutions should practice fair democratic practices with an integrated approach for resolving ethnic conflicts. The governments should fulfill their promises made to the people at any cost; otherwise, it would create mistrust among the masses, making them violent and rummaging around for help from "foreign hands" that may lead to political destabilization and anarchy. Further, suppressing dissenting voices through force or cosmetic solutions in the form of half-hearted and disintegrated development packages should not be a policy option for brokering a short-lived solution towards ethnic conflicts. Despite all-out efforts and thousands of martyrdoms, the government is still striving to abolish insurgency in the province. It is believed that this problem can only be resolved through a constructive and collaborative political dialogue. The nationalist movement in Balochistan is weak and divided as the majority of the Baloch population favor more provincial autonomy, not secession. Towards the end, it would be safe to say that as long as the non-democratic policies of the government and grievances of the concerned stakeholders are there with no exertions towards capacitating and promoting the democratic institutions, the ethno-regional agenda would continue to be a significant issue in the politics of both federal states – India and Pakistan.

Policy Implications

The paper elongates specific policy implications. Given the geo-strategic importance of Gorkhaland and Balochistan, both federations succinctly entail learning that they can't afford an enduring conflict in their respective regions. Also, neither conflicts can diminish in a democratic society, nor the use of force can deal with them. The failed security-centric perspective is evidenced in both cases. Therefore, a workable strategy to de-escalate these conflicts lies in identifying the root causes through evidence-based interventions to overcome structural inequalities through an agile institutional mechanism. Through a bottom-up approach, both governments can gain public trust towards resolving the ethnic conflicts and help strengthen federalism. And that is very much possible through the strengthening of the state institutions. It is, therefore, necessitated that both India and Pakistan volte-face their state policy towards their respective conflict-prone regions if they want to attain, maintain, and sustain a socially cohesive, economically viable, and politically stable society.

Limitations and Future Research

This qualitative study focuses on exploring the role of institutions in resolving ethnic conflicts in federal states. There are several state institutions in India and Pakistan. For this study, the researchers have restricted to only two institutions, i.e., the state-center relations and the role of political parties. Future researchers may consider analyzing and comparing ethnic conflicts across multiple geographical locations and institutions. Likewise, comparisons of unitary and federal states may also be made.

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