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**Pakistan Military – Ethnic Balance in the Armed Forces and Problems of Federalism**

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Since its birth in 1947, the Pakistani state does not seem to emerge from the spell of being considered a weak state. Over the years, it has earned several titles such as the ‘failed’ state or the ‘failing’ state. A major reason for such reputation pertains to the problematic nature of the federation. Given the tendency of the leadership to create a state with a strong center, the state undermined the significance of the federating units and multiple identities. The state was designed to have a strong center which imposed uniformity through force and on the basis of a rigid national ideology. Such politics, however, never allowed the state to consolidate as it totally negated the identities of the federating units. The imbalance of power and skewed distribution of resources is a major reason that the state continues to appear weak.

Historically, the state, especially the centrifugal forces have tried resolving the identity crisis or difference in the idea of Pakistan through the use of force, particularly military force. Multiple identities, recognition of ethnicity as a framework for consolidation of the state, or devolving powers to the provinces was always considered as

detrimental to the 'idea of Pakistan.' This attitude resulted in an increasing imbalance between the center and the federating units and, on the other hand, fed internal strife and violence. However, the political government elected in 2008 seems to have made an effort to bring a balance amongst the different regions of the state. This is done through introducing provincial autonomy which is built into the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment to the 1973 Constitution. Will the new formula work? It all depends on the effort put in by the civilian leadership in ensuring a smooth transition of power from the center to provinces. However, the success of transfer of power or de-centralization under the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment also depends on the military's perception to the constitutional change. Indeed, Pakistan's armed forces are a major player in the country's power politics. It depends for its resources on the state which means that the military favors concentration of power that includes the power to manipulate financial resources. Historically, the military has partnered with civilian forces to ensure a powerful center. However, in the face of an internal pressure to change the distribution of power, the military has also begun to use other methodologies to dilute the impact of power shifting from the center to the provinces by increasing its stake in the federating units. The military, as this paper argues, is likely to engage in a two-pronged approach in its response to the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment: a short to medium term, and a medium to long term. The first one refers to the military benefiting from the overall bureaucratic inertia to devolve power to the provinces which means that the power to manipulate resources will remain with the center for a fairly longer time. Second, the armed forces have begun to address its internal ethnic bias which may have an impact on strengthening the federation in the long to longer term. The military seems to re-shape the federation to bring greater harmony

and centralization. This also means that the defense establishment is enhancing its capacity to accommodate diversity. However, what is important to note is that a plan to re-define the army's relationship with the federation has been a process that predates the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment.

This paper aims to analyze the military's perspective on the future shape of the federation and issue of federalism in Pakistan.

### **The 'Idea of Pakistan'**

The issues of federalism in Pakistan pertain to the peculiar history of its birth. Forced into abandoning the concept of Indian nationalism, the founding father Mohammad Ali Jinnah embraced the idea of forming the state on the basis of communal identity. As argued by Jaswant Singh, considering the friction between Jinnah and Nehru and the unaccommodating attitude of the latter, Mohammad Ali Jinnah moved away from an Indian-nationalist paradigm to establishing a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent.<sup>i</sup> Then onwards, Jinnah's total focus on creating a separate homeland for Muslims made him cut deals with the local leadership in areas which were to become Pakistan. While the strategy was meant to turn him into the 'sole spokesman' for the Muslim, especially the Muslim elite, it also established a centralized and linear paradigm for the new state. Jinnah may not have wanted to theocratic state<sup>ii</sup> but the fact of the matter is that religion was fundamentally part of the state narrative, especially for a leadership that earnestly wanted to create a modern nation-state. Since the pre-partition Indian leadership was inspired by the colonial legacy, which included the idea of a nation-state, Pakistan's leaders tried to create a coherent and a homogenous nation-state

by using religion as glue. Despite that the formula did not work, the country's establishment considers religion as a formula to create an ideal nation state.

Notwithstanding references to Jinnah's desire to create a secular-liberal-democratic state for the Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent, the fact is that the structure of the state was determined by the circumstances which created Pakistan. Given the fact that state making is never a static process, the direct and indirect negotiations amongst different stakeholders resulted in deepening the state's commitment to religion. The Objectives Resolution of 1949, which is now the preamble of the 1973 Constitution, defined the Islamic-religious character of the Pakistani state. Furthermore, the earlier leadership starting with Jinnah's political successor, Liaquat Ali Khan, negotiated a compromise with religious right which was obvious in the above mentioned resolution as well as the state's lame response to growing anti-Ahmedism which started during 1951 finally leading to the anti-Ahmedi riots in Lahore in 1953. Politically, this meant that Pakistan had embarked upon defining itself as an Islamic state or what some call as the fortress of Islam where, as Farzana Sheikh argues, citizenship was accorded on the basis of an individual's putative relationship to religion.<sup>iii</sup> Then onwards, every leader compromised with the religious right. Though it is immaterial after 63 years what Jinnah exactly wanted, the fact is that had he been alive he might have found it problematic to deal with the religious discourse that was central to Pakistan's identity but on which the liberal segment of the ruling elite had no control. The religious clergy soon began to dominate the religio-political discourse as they were the only ones with the expertise to do so. It is quite immaterial whether the majority of people vote for the religious parties or not. But it is important to note that over years religious ideology has become

inextricably linked with the core state ideology. There was never any real opposition to this particular development as the liberal-secular elite, which ran affairs of the state, was dependent on the religious paradigm due to that being the basis of the country's origin.

The religious paradigm was central to the thinking of the leadership because, as mentioned earlier, this was considered as the only credible formula for gelling different communities together. In any case, religion being the basis for the formation of this particular state, it was not possible for the ruling elite to exclude faith from the social contract. Moreover, religion was the key rallying point for the defense establishment which motivated its manpower on the basis of the religious ideology. The state had to emphasize the significance of religion. Hence, the religious identity cannot be extricated from the nature of the state. More important, a fixation on a particular religious identity and the military acquiring the role of the guardian of this ideology made the armed forces central to the idea of Pakistan.

Another dimension of the 'idea of Pakistan' is that the founding leadership struggled with creating a centralized identity through the use of force and authority. The controversial accession of the princely state of Kalat, which formed the South-Western province of Baluchistan, or the dismissal of the opposition government in the former Frontier province (renamed in 2010 as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa), indicated the impatience of the central state with the concept of multiple identities of the Pakistani state as it, in their minds, negated the need for the partition of India into two separate states. According to renowned historian, Ayesha Jalal, a top-down method using coercive means was necessary for state formation and consolidation.<sup>iv</sup> One of the preoccupations of the founding leadership was to create a socio-culturally and socio-politically coherent nation-

state especially to prove that Pakistan was a successful experiment in nation-building. This meant creating a single and dominant state narrative. Mohammad Ali Jinnah's strategy therefore was to use a combination of politics and force. However, such transformation had a high political price which no one seems to have calculated at that time. Moreover, an authoritarian character was also inherited from the leadership, which supported the creation of Pakistan. The Muslim elite comprising mainly of feudal landowners, who occupied territories that eventually became Pakistan, tried to establish their authority especially vis-à-vis other religious communities. Islam and authoritarianism were their key drivers. This tone was followed throughout the country's history.

In the ensuing years, the centralized character of the state became even more problematic due to the bureaucratization of the polity. The strengthening of civil and military bureaucracies meant that political contestation had a secondary place in the political scheme of things. As Mohammad Waseem argues, what we saw was the birth of a bureaucratic-polity in which the political class was used for reasons of political legitimacy rather than serious politics.<sup>v</sup> One of the features of this 'overdeveloped' state was that it had little appreciation of the multiple identities of the society or sensitivity towards the functioning of federalism. The state bureaucracy combined forces with the political leadership, especially those that wanted to play a significant role at the national level, in subduing the significance of the federating units. Historically, regional politics or multiple ethnic identities were emphasized only during a crisis between the political elite and the state bureaucracy. For instance, the present co-chair of the Pakistan People's Party and the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari evokes his Sindhi identity and makes

an appeal to regional politics to stave-off a political onslaught by the establishment.<sup>vi</sup>

Conversely, parties, which aim at greater share of power, abandon their ethnic identity.

The natural beneficiary of the over-centralization of the state is the bureaucracy, primarily the military which was used consistently by the centrifugal political forces to ward-off regional influences on the state. The following table gives an idea of the use of brute force by the state in addressing political tensions within the federation.

**Table 1**

<b>Conflict &amp; Violence: Relations between Center and Federating Units</b>			
<b>Period</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>State Reaction</b>
1948	Baluchistan	Rebellion	Use of military force
1958	Baluchistan	Rebellion	Use of military force
1969-71	East Pakistan	Political Emancipation	Use of military force
1969-71	Bahawalpur	Struggle for restoration of province	Use of police force
1973	Baluchistan	Demand for ethnic empowerment	Use of military force
1985	Sindh	Protest against military government	Use of military force
1992	Sindh	Expansion of ethnic influence in urban areas	Use of military force
2005-to date	Baluchistan		Use of military force

Although we will return to this table and analyze the details, it is suffice to say at the moment that the military played a crucial role in calibrating relations between the center and four main provinces. This peculiar political dynamics was convenient for the state bureaucracy as it strengthened its grip over the state and ensured the flow of greater percentage of national resources to the bureaucracy, especially the military.

The military is considered a significant player in the country's power politics. Its significant role in politics evolved within a few years after the country's independence in 1947. Despite the fact that the military owes much of its significance to the relative weakness of civilian institutions and Pakistan's evolution as a national security state due to the threat from India, it has expanded its role over years to include internal security matters as well. In fact, the military does not necessarily differentiate between external and internal threat. The latter is an extension of the former. Since the military provides more than just security against external threat and has evolved to be the guardian of the state's ideology as well, it ensures subordination of all other stakeholders to the centralized idea of Pakistan. The Pakistani armed forces represent the Turkish military in reverse. The military protects the religious identity of the state and ensures through the use of force that all other identities are merged into one or neutralized effectively.

The first war with India in 1947/48 was like the military striking a goldmine in terms of its nuisance value for the state and state ideology. Consequently, the civilian government invested 70 percent of the total budget on defense in the first year of the country's existence.<sup>vii</sup> The situation did not change significantly in the ensuing years (see tables 2 & 3 to understand the significance of military security in the national paradigm).

**Table 2**

<b>Comparative Expenditure, 1981 – 95</b>				
	<b>Health</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Defense</b>	<b>Interest Payment</b>
<b>1981-82</b>	0.6	1.4	5.7	2.4
<b>1982-83</b>	0.6	1.5	6.4	3.1
<b>1983-84</b>	0.6	1.6	6.4	3.4
<b>1984-85</b>	0.7	1.6	6.7	3.5
<b>1985-86</b>	0.7	2.3	6.9	3.8
<b>1986-87</b>	0.8	2.4	7.2	4.2

<b>1987-88</b>	1.0	2.4	7.0	4.9
<b>1988-89</b>	1.0	2.1	6.6	5.0
<b>1989-90</b>	0.9	2.2	6.8	5.4
<b>1990-91</b>	0.8	2.1	6.3	4.9
<b>1991-92</b>	0.7	2.2	6.3	5.3
<b>1992-93</b>	0.7	2.4	6.0	5.6
<b>1993-94</b>	0.7	2.2	5.6	6.3
<b>1994-95</b>	0.7	2.4	5.5	5.7

*All figures given as percentage of GNP*

Source: Economic Survey of Pakistan in PR Chari and Ayesha Siddiqa-Agha, "Defence Expenditure in South Asia India and Pakistan". RCSS Policy Study 12, (Colombo: Regional Center for Strategic Studies, June 2000). P. 39.

**Table 3**

<b>Comparative Expenditure, 2001-2010</b>				
	<b>Current Exp % TE</b>	<b>Dev Exp % TE</b>	<b>Defence Exp % TE</b>	<b>Debt Servicing % TE</b>
<b>2001-02</b>	84.7	15.3	18.1	52.5
<b>2002-03</b>	88.1	14.4	17.8	31.6
<b>2003-04</b>	81.1	16.8	19.3	36.6
<b>2004-05</b>	77.4	20.4	19.0	26.2
<b>2005-06</b>	73.8	26.0	17.2	24.4
<b>2006-07</b>	76.4	24.1	13.9	25.4
<b>2007-08</b>	81.4	19.9	12.2	25.4
<b>2008-09</b>	80.7	19.0	20.5	34.8
<b>2009-10 B</b>	78.6	21.1	17.2	27.1

**TE = Total Expenditure**  
**B = Budgeted**  
**Source:**  
[http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter\\_10/04\\_Public\\_Finance.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter_10/04_Public_Finance.pdf)

The state bureaucracy and central elite defining Pakistan as a national security state changed the nature of the state and intensified its authoritarian character. The ruling elite was more inclined towards using force to cobble a state together rather than increase

peoples' stakes in the country through adopting a socioeconomic development paradigm. It is today a fact that every time any government is pressed for resources and has to meet the financial shortfall through reducing some expenditure, it is always development spending that is reduced. The national security apparatus has never allowed any government to reduce non-developmental expenditure, especially on defense. The reduction announced during Pervez Musharraf's rule basically pertained to cosmetic changes. His handpicked and imported prime minister Shaukat Aziz mainly superficially subtracted certain expenses such as military pensions from defense estimates and added it to another head. In any case, the defense budget was never transparent. The military does not consider itself accountable to any civilian dispensation.

The above inter-sectoral imbalance in spending acquires a more critical dimension when compounded with the problem of ethnic imbalance in the armed forces. Historically, the military was dominated by people from Punjab which is the largest province in terms of population (see the following table for comparative population figure). The larger issue, however, is that the military does not select on the basis of an ethnic quota. The armed forces traditionally have a bias for Punjabis and Pushtoon and that too from select areas. Historically, the bulk of the army was drawn from Punjab (about 71-75%), Pushtoon (15-21%), Mohajir and Sindhis (3-5%) and Baluch (about 0.3%).<sup>viii</sup> Given the military's tremendous political power, the less-powerful ethnic groups felt left out from the main corridors of power. It may be true that the federal government or a ruling party/coalition partner with local provincial elite, it still does not give the provincial elite and people the same clout and significance in state affairs as they would by being part of the security establishment. Consequently, leaders from minority

provinces such as Baluchistan call the military ‘not as a national military but a Punjabi force with a mercenary and exploitative character’.<sup>ix</sup>

For a long time now the military has maintained its control over exit and entry into the institution. This is because the dominant ethnicities in the military benefit from the myth which was built by the British colonial power regarding the presence of a martial race in the Indian Subcontinent. According to the popular military mythology, certain races in the Subcontinent have a greater propensity to fight. Their physique and mindset is more suited to combat. Such a myth was deliberately constructed to find alternative sources of manpower recruitment after the 1857 war of independence. Since the Indian forces recruited from other parts of the Subcontinent and which were stationed in the military cantonments in Madras, Bengal and Bombay did not show a long-lasting and firm allegiance to the colonial rulers, the latter wanted to create a more loyal force. The British government started a system of distributing land and creating communities through such bribes to ensure a more loyal force. The bulk of the Indian forces were then recruited primarily from Punjab and what was then the North-West Frontier Province. It was to bolster the reputation of this new force that the myth of martial races<sup>x</sup> was spread.

The Pakistan military continued to benefit from such a myth. This was for two reasons. First, the bulk of the military inherited at the time of partition was drawn from the areas which had initially benefitted from the myth of the martial races under the British. The Punjabis, Mohajirs (the migrants from India) and the Pushtoons dominated the armed forces. It was in their interest to sustain this peculiar ethnic balance. Second, the dominant ethnicities wanted to maintain their control over the military because of the financial benefits attached to it. For instance, the Pakistani military and its officers

continued to benefit from the perks and privileges that were accorded to them under the British rule.<sup>xi</sup> The colonial power had, as mentioned earlier, initiated a system of distributing lands to loyal tribes and communities that were also inducted into the armed forces. The Pakistani military continued with the system of rewards. Resultantly, the dominant tribes wanted benefits to remain confined to their areas. The benefits and power is one of the reasons that the Punjabis are seen as perpetuating their control over the armed forces.<sup>xii</sup>

### **The Military and the Federation**

Whatever the reason for the above bias, the fact of the matter is that the dominance of Punjab in the armed forces led to the military's increased involvement in internal problems but having dire consequences for the state. Pakistan continues to be a single state but the reality is that the relations amongst the federating units are far from normal. There is a deep-set resentment against Punjab mainly due to the ascendancy of civil and military bureaucracy. The military itself suffers from a certain arrogance which it acquired over a long time due to its dominance of power politics. The predominance of Punjabis also gives the army a sense of ethnic homogeneity which is considered detrimental to democracy in Pakistan and one of the causes of ethnic strife.<sup>xiii</sup> More important, it breeds insensitivity towards other ethnic groups.

Not surprisingly, Pakistan has had a series of internal wars in which the state exhibited insensitivity towards the federating units. One of the prime reasons for these internal wars or conflicts was also due to the condition of Punjabi and Mohajir nationalism versus the rest of the ethnic communities. Despite being the dominant community the Punjabis sacrificed their ethnic identity and traded it for a more

centralized version imported from the Muslim minority areas in India where the Pakistan movement started. The Sindhis, Baluch and Pashtun have a greater sense of their own ethnic identity as well. However, the crux is that the Punjabi insensitivity towards sub-nationalism resulted in the military's propensity of interpreting the lack of consensus to accept a singular and centralized national identity or state narrative as disloyalty and treason.

Over the past 63 years, the Pakistani state has experienced full-blown internal conflicts vis-à-vis three federating units: Baluchistan, East Bengal and Sindh (refer to table 1). The central state has used force in all parts of the country, especially wherever it was confronted with disagreement on the federal government's version of nationalism. Although it was always insensitive to the multiple identity discourse, the focus on centralized nationalism became obsessive after the breakup of East Pakistan in 1971. The final nail in the coffin was India's attack to precipitate the chaos in East Pakistan. Then onwards, all demands of sub-regional nationalism were necessarily viewed as hostile to the state. This does not mean that the bias was not always there. In fact, the military and the dominant elite's mindset resulted in deployment and application of maximum force in handling a political crisis in the eastern wing of the state. The military's partnership with forces of religious right such as the Jamaat-e-Islami and its militant wings came in handy to unleash terror upon the Bengalis.<sup>xiv</sup> The army operation, 'Searchlight' launched on March 15, 1971 cracked down on all dissent in the Eastern Wing. It was General Mohammad Yahya Khan's military at its best trying to curb difference of opinion. The operation was a response to the six-point demand of the East Bengali leadership.

The Bengali leadership had protested against the power imbalance between the two wings which, in any case, had an odd relationship due to the absence of geographical proximity. East and West Pakistan had a thousand miles of enemy territory in between. The military, which was dominated by Pushtoon and Punjabi generals were resentful towards their Bengali countrymen. The military establishment was uncomfortable with the idea of transferring power to the Bengalis who were considered ethnically inferior. In his book about the 1971 debacle, an army officer-turned-intellectual, Sadiq Salik quoted another Pakistan Army officer as saying that: “Don’t worry...we will not allow these black bastards to rule over us.”<sup>xv</sup> Such derogatory remarks expressed the ethnic bias and exclusivity of the army, the majority of the Punjabi population and the West Pakistani leadership.

To top it all, the manner in which East Pakistan finally drifted apart physically from the western wing and made a separate state that is Bangladesh planted resentment in the hearts of the Punjabi establishment against all ethnic contestation. In fact, the powerful establishment stuck closer to the idea of a singular and centralized Islamic identity. All opposition to the establishment’s idea of Pakistan was seen as a foreign conspiracy against sovereignty of the Pakistani state. The military tends to get extremely sensitive about sub-regional ethnic politics especially where it suspects foreign involvement as in the case of Baluchistan. The state has responded with tools of violence in dealing with Baluch movement. It has fought uprising at several occasions in history, at time deploying maximum force as in 1973. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was the Prime Minister then, hailed from a ‘minority’ province himself. Yet, given his personal political ambitions he was far more sympathetic to the establishment’s perspective and applied

force against obscurantist forces in Baluchistan. Bhutto's reaction was driven by the military which had used force earlier in 1948 and 1958 to crush a Baluch rebellion. The military under General Pervez Musharraf had even a sharper reaction to any disagreement arising from Baluch leadership. In 2007, Nawab Akbar Bugti was killed as a result of a military operation.

The military establishment is equally resentful of political movements that challenge the GHQ's national narrative. The two cases that belong to this category pertain to the movement for the restoration of Bahawalpur province (1969-71) and political resentment against the military in Sindh during the 1980s. The first case is about the movement of the people of what was once the princely state of Bahawalpur for restoring the status of the province after the dissolution of one-unit.<sup>xvi</sup> During the early 1950s, the country was divided into two units – the eastern unit comprising of the eastern wing and the western unit comprising of territory in the western wing. The Bahawalpur state, which had functioned as a province for a couple of years due to an agreement between the founding father Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Nawab of the princely state regarding the Pakistani state recognizing the status of Bahawalpur as a separate province, was never reverted to this status after the one-unit was dissolved. The people had come out with a movement which was then forcibly crushed through the use of police under the military rule of General Yahya Khan. The older generation of Bahawalpur still remember the mayhem created by the police shooting directly at the mob outside the famous Fareed gate killing a lot of people.<sup>xvii</sup>

In case of Sindh, General Zia-ul-Haq dealt with the southern province severely after the military takeover in 1977. Since the army chief had overthrown a popular prime

minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who hailed from the province, there was a general resentment amongst the population against what they considered as a Punjabi army. The army cracked down on the people who were always considered suspect due to a historical movement for the separation of Sindh by another Sindhi nationalist leader G.M. Syed. There were many incidents of the army using extreme force against ordinary people in order to break down their political resistance against the military government. Not to forget the military's operation in 1992 against the Mohajir community in Karachi. The leaders of the Motahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a party representing migrants from Muslim minority areas in India, view the military's operation as a Punjabi army crushing an ethnic community due to the sharp tone of ethnic politics.<sup>xviii</sup>

### **18<sup>th</sup> Amendment and Military's Imagination of the State**

Despite all its efforts the establishment is not able to wish ethnic politics away. The ethnicity card gained significance especially when the army threw a popular leader like Bhutto whose party the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has emerged as a national party but with a prominent shade of ethnicity. The increasing discomfort that the smaller provinces felt towards the bigger province tends to surface at various occasions especially on the issue of distribution of water and other resources. The 1973 Constitution had introduced the concept of provincial autonomy that was further refined through the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment. The change in the constitution is meant to strengthen provincial autonomy that includes fiscal autonomy. Politically, the provision on provincial autonomy presents an alternative vision of Pakistan which is based on the empowerment of the federating units. The PPP government, which came into power in 2008, hopes to create stakeholders in its own political survival against a potential military onslaught. The creation of a new

province of Gilgit-Baltistan through a presidential ordinance and re-naming North-West Frontier Province as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) to fulfill the wishes of the Pushtoon people are actions which are meant to create a lasting partnership between the political parties and forces in these territories and the ruling PPP. In addition, and as mentioned earlier, the ruling PPP is also trying to invoke the ‘Sindh’ card to muster support in the home province of the founding leader of the PPP, and of the current president Asif Zardari. On March 11, 2011 the party called for a strike across the Sindh province to protest against a particular judgment of the Supreme Court. The protest, however, is less about indicating displeasure and more about showing its strength through playing the ethnicity card. The strike is meant to send a signal to the military or Punjabi dominated establishment that Sindh looks apart from the center and Punjab on certain critical issues.

The military is not oblivious to the threat posed to its own imagination of the state and its organizational power by the political forces and empowerment of the federating units. While it is in no mood to change its formula for Pakistani nationalism, it hopes to expand its outreach to the formerly neglected portions of the federation and sync them with the military’s imagination of the state. There are three measures that are being taken in this regard:

- (a) Expand recruitment to areas neglected earlier
- (b) Silently support the case of the creation of ethnic-neutral provinces
- (c) Silently support the expansion of religious right in provinces known for flagging regional identity

### ***Changing Pattern of Military Recruitment***

There is evidence to suggest that Pakistan military has thought about changing its image of being a Punjabi dominated army to acquire the character of a national army.

Although the move predates the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, a report published in 2007 and released by the Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR), a public relations agency of the armed force, revealed a plan by the army to reduce the number of Punjabis.<sup>xxix</sup> According to this report, the percentage of Punjabis in the army being 71% in 2001 was subsequently reduced and brought down to 57%. Furthermore, the report claimed that the number of Punjabis would be further reduced to around 54% by 2011. The reduction of Punjabis would be accompanied with an increase in human resource intake from other provinces. For example, from 2001-2011 the composition of Pushtoons in the army would increase by one per cent to 14.5 per cent. The recruitment from Sindh would increase from 15% to 17%. Recruitment of Baluchis, which stood at 0% in 2001 was increased to 3.2% with a further expansion by 2011 bringing the intake to 4%. Similarly, recruitment from Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas, which stood at 0% in 2001, would be brought to 9% by 2011.<sup>xxx</sup> It is important to note that these numbers merely indicate domicile rather than the real ethnicity of a recruit (domicile signifies the city of birth or residence of a citizen which may be different from his/her ethnicity).

This report tends to contradict a claim made in a background note by the Army GHQ regarding a concerted effort to draw in other ethnicities since the 1990s.<sup>xxxi</sup> Also, in a recent paper by Shuja Nawaz and Christine Fair, the authors present data provided by the GHQ according to which the percentage of Punjabis in the army was brought down to 40% by 2001.<sup>xxii</sup> There is a possibility that the army might have mulled over the idea of building a ‘national’ or a more representative force during the decade of the 1990s, a plan which was put through implementation only in 2001. While the military management was more reluctant to induct larger number of human resources from East Pakistan,<sup>xxiii</sup> there is

a possibility that enhancing recruitment from a unified West Pakistan was seen as critical for national integrity. In fact, a move was made in this regard by setting up a cantonment in Pannu Aqil, Sindh during the 1980s at a time when the province was politically unstable. According to more recent reports, the cantonment continues to play a significant role in attracting people to the army. For instance, in early 2011, 239 out of 700 recruits were locals from Pannu Aqil.<sup>xxiv</sup> Given the military's concerns for security of this region and stave-off the threat of a possible Indian incursion into it, the above-mentioned cantonment was established to strengthen the military's control of the area.<sup>xxv</sup> However, one cannot underestimate the social impact of this particular cantonment or other cantonments that the army planned in Baluchistan and Swat. After all, as is obvious from the Fair-Nawaz study, there seems to be a greater propensity towards joining the armed forces in areas having large cantonments.<sup>xxvi</sup> Although the plan for the cantonment at Sui, Baluchistan and Swat (after the military operation) was temporarily shelved, the army is trying to make headway through a different methodology. For instance, Baluchistan, which became highly unstable after the mid-2000s, the army seems to have shelved the idea for setting up a cantonment and replaced it with a plan to open cadet colleges and schools for Baluch children.<sup>xxvii</sup> The army claims to have inducted about 22, 786 Baluch children in various military-run schools and colleges.<sup>xxviii</sup> A fair amount of publicity regarding setting up of educational projects could bring greater dividends in terms of improving the military's credibility in internal strife-torn regions. These educational institutions, as one development sector expert from Quetta stated, would provide an alternative for the Baluch middle class.<sup>xxix</sup> These institutions, he added, are not for the lower or lower-middle classes as the children from this social stratum will not

be able to qualify the entrance exams. In any case, these institutions are meant for the children of civil and military bureaucrats residing in Baluchistan, and the middle class of the Pushtoon and Baluch population.<sup>xxx</sup> Eventually, this may also neutralize resentment towards the state and its armed forces. Or even if this scheme does not produce dividends in the short-term, it will help create a partnership between the military establishment and the Baluch middle class.

Referring to the impact of Pannu Aqil cantonment in Sindh, the fact of the matter is that the presence of a couple of huge cantonments compounded with the military's power, which the locals find impressive, seems to have played a role in attracting ethnic Sindhis towards the idea of joining the armed forces. Although intake from Sindh province continues to be less than its share in the country's population,<sup>xxxi</sup> the province has experienced a growing tendency of people joining the military. Some Sindhi intellectuals were of the view that there is a realization in the society that ethnic Sindhis could only contest their case for a favorable treatment by partnering with the most powerful institution of the state.<sup>xxxii</sup>

The most important and noteworthy aspect of the new recruitment trends is that the generals want to keep their control over the process of entry into the institution. This represents their historical bias towards those not considered part of the 'martial' races. Just like the army was suspicious of the quality of Bengali soldiers and officers, there appears to be a discomfort with the quality of manpower from Sindh and Baluchistan. However, the discomfort is also due to their unhappiness with the educational quality of a recruit from these areas. The army had relaxed its criterion to induct men from Baluchistan and Sindh. This means that it had to spend more resources to upgrade the

capacity of the recruits before integrating them into the organization's system. This bias is critical in the army's resistance to the idea of turning the military from a voluntary service to conscription. Baluch politicians like Sanaullah Baluch<sup>xxxiii</sup> support the idea of conscription which would help integrate his people in the state, but also enhance the people's input in their security. Senior generals, nevertheless, are extremely wary of this idea. Lt. General (ret'd) Javed Hassan was totally averse to the idea as all professional generals are.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Pakistani generals shun the idea of a conscript army as they believe that only a voluntary military, which is well trained, can face the threat faced by the country.<sup>xxxv</sup> This situation is not likely to change even with the passing of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment. The military may continue to work towards integrating other ethnicities, but it is not likely to re-structure the organization or the recruitment pattern.

### *Neutralizing Ethnic Politics*

Part of the process of coping with ethnic politics seems to be through neutralizing the ethnic political discourse. This is achieved through allowing the creation of ethnic neutral provinces. There is a view that the army was less averse to the idea of renaming Frontier province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa rather than just Pakhtunkhwa. The latter name echoes of the historic demand for Greater Pushtoonistan which is discomfoting for Pakistani nationalists. Similarly, the establishment seems to be supporting the idea of restoration of Bahawalpur province than committing to the establishment of a Saraiki province. Though both the Saraiki and Bahawalpur provinces would be carved out of Punjab, which many believe is the nerve-center of Pakistan's ruling establishment, the latter is relatively more ethnic neutral. The Punjabi and Mohajir settlers in Bahawalpur, which was formerly a Saraiki stronghold, have sufficient power to

ensure that politics is not entirely dominated by ethnic Saraiki speakers. Not surprisingly, people, who have close association with the establishment,<sup>xxxvi</sup> support the movement for the restoration of Bahawalpur. An ethnic neutral Bahawalpur province poses an effective counter-weight to a Saraiki province that will be based on a particular ethnic identity. The PPP leadership appears to promise to include the establishment of a Saraiki province in its election manifesto.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The establishment is likely to be uncomfortable with such an idea. It would rather put its eggs in the basket for creating an ethnic neutral province. There were even discussions of dividing the country into several administrative districts to counter the restlessness found amongst people due to ethnic politics.

### ***New Partnerships to Neutralize Ethnic Politics***

Over the years, especially after the end of the 1990s, other ideologies have emerged which naturally counterbalance ethnic politics. This refers to the growth of Islamic militancy and ascendancy of the religious right. Some of these elements have connections with the military. The partnership between the military, mullah and militant is based on a shared vision of nationalism. The militant forces tend to have a pan-Islamicist mindset which means that they are less likely to follow ethnic or communal ideologies.

Over a couple of decades or more, militant outfits seem to be expanding their tentacles in mainland Pakistan as well. While there are problems in the tribal areas and parts of KPK due to turmoil in Afghanistan, it does not explain the expanding influence of Pakistan based militant outfits such as Sipah-e-Sahaba (SSP), Lashkare Jhangavi (LeJ), Jaishe Mohammad (JeM), Harkat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islami (HUJI), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), and Lashkare Taiba (LeT). These outfits have links with the military

intelligence agencies and continue to get support due to the convergence of views between the military and the militants on India and the West.<sup>xxxviii</sup> These outfits have not only spread in South Punjab from where they recruit manpower, but have also begun to push into other regions such as Baluchistan and Sindh. The number of madrassas, which are linked with one of these outfits or the other, run into thousands, especially in upper Sindh that was known for its resistance to the establishment. Militant outfits like LeT and its sister organization Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) seem to be gathering influence in areas in Sindh occupied by religious minorities such as Hindus.<sup>xxxix</sup> Although there is no study available to systematically analyze the impact of the growth of militancy in these areas, growing strength of militancy and religious right is likely to cut across ethnic politics. The agenda or views of the religious right support a centralized vision of the state.

## **Conclusion**

The passing of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment marks a contest between the centrifugal and centripetal political forces in Pakistan. While the current PPP government hopes to dilute the power of the central government and establishment, which has besieged the federation for the past 63 years, by encouraging provincial autonomy, the military is aiming at an opposite outcome. The army GHQ being the most powerful player hopes to dilute the effect of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment through striking newer partnerships and expanding its narrative to the different regions of the country.

The religious identity and a centralized national narrative is critical for the military-led establishment in Pakistan. The country lost its eastern wing because the military establishment was not keen to understand and appreciate the narrative of multiple identities of the state. The GHQ has used force against the Baluch, Sindhis and

other nationalities to keep them aligned with the central state narrative. However, given the competition by the political forces the military has opted to alter its strategy and use co-option rather than force to convert people to a central idea of Pakistan. It has begun to expand its presence in what are considered as minority provinces. In Baluchistan, for instance, efforts are being made to build a friendly image of the armed forces and bring the middle class on board. A similar tactic is adopted for Sindh. The military is also encouraging or turning a blind eye to the expansion of militant groups and religious right in the country. This is meant to effectively dilute the impact of ethnic politics. For example, the military has systematically supported the religious right in provinces such as KPK and Sindh. The religious right tends to compete with the ethnic political narrative.

However, what is important to note is the fact that the military's plan to expand its peculiar national narrative predates the 18th amendment. The defense establishment has been working consistently to bring other ethnicities on board for which it claims to have willingly reduced the number of Punjabi personnel in the armed forces. While the military data may not necessarily present a true picture, the organization is making an effort to create an idea of Pakistan which can compete with the political stakeholder's idea of Pakistan with multiple identities.

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<sup>i</sup> Jaswant Singh, *Jinnah – India-Partition Independence*. (New Delhi: Rupa and Co, 2009). Pp. 140-274.

<sup>ii</sup> Such a claim is based on his September 11, 1947 speech. For citation see, <http://beenasarwar.wordpress.com/2009/08/30/jinnah-revisited-thank-you-jaswant-singh/>

<sup>iii</sup> Farzana Shaikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan*. (Columbia/Hurst Publication, 2009).

<sup>iv</sup> Interview with Dr Ayesha Jalal (Boston: April 2008).

<sup>v</sup> Mohammad Waseem, *Politics and the State in Pakistan*. (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1994). P. 123.

<sup>vi</sup> "Nisar lashes out at Zardari, accuses him of provincialism." In *Dawn*, Vol. LXV, No. 72, 14/03/2011. P. 1.

<sup>vii</sup> Abdurrahman Siddiqi, *The Military in Pakistan, Image and Reality*. (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1996). P. 70.

<sup>viii</sup> Ayesha Siddiqa, *Military Inc: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. (London: Pluto Press, 2007). P. 59.

<sup>ix</sup> Interview with Sardar Ataullah Mengal (Karachi: 31/0/2004).

- <sup>x</sup> Douglas M. Peers, 'The Martial Races and the Indian Army in the Victorian Era' in D. Marston and C. Sundaram Eds. *A Military History of India and South Asia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2008) 34-52.
- <sup>xi</sup> Ayesha Siddiqi, *Military Inc: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. (London: Pluto Press, 2007). P. 181.
- <sup>xii</sup> Mushahid Hussain, 'Reforming the Armed Forces,' June 10, 2001. Originally published in *The Nation*. Available at [tp://chowk.com/articles/5060](http://chowk.com/articles/5060). Selig S. Harrison, 'Pakistan's Ethnic Fault Lines,' *The Washington Post*, May 11, 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/10/AR2009051001959.html>.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Selig S. Harrison, 'Drawn and Quartered?' *New York Times*, February 1, 2008. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/01/opinion/01harrison.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=Selig+S.+Harrison&st=nyt](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/01/opinion/01harrison.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Selig+S.+Harrison&st=nyt).
- <sup>xiv</sup> Nadeem F. Paracha, 'Smoker's Corner: Violent Ghosts.' <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/13/smokers-corner-violent-ghosts.html>
- <sup>xv</sup> Sadiq Salik, *Witness to Surrender*. (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1979). P. 29.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Interview with Syed Tabish Alwari (Bahawalpur: July 2010).
- <sup>xvii</sup> Interview
- <sup>xviii</sup> Discussion with Hyder Abbas Rizvi (London: 03/06/2007).
- <sup>xix</sup> Khan, Sher Baz, 'Punjab's dominance in army being reduced: ISPR,' *The Dawn*, September 14, 2007. <http://www.dawn.com/2007/09/14/top13.htm>.
- <sup>xx</sup> *Ibid.*,
- <sup>xxi</sup> Background note provided to author by General Headquarters, Pakistan Army, 1990 in C. Christine Fair and Shuja Nawaz, "The Changing Pakistan Army Officer Corps". *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 34, Issue 1 February 2011. P. 17.
- <sup>xxii</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army*, (University of California Press, 1984). p. 43.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> "Recent Recruitment in Pak Army from Sindh". A report by Lt. Col. Hassan Imam, PRO Karachi Corps. In *Hilal*, (*Pakistan Armed Force's Magazine*, Edition 9. Vol. 47, March 2011. p. 34.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Ayesha Siddiqi, Military's Pannu Aqil Model in *The Friday Times*, February 04-10, 2005, Vol XVI, No. 50.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> C. Christine Fair and Shuja Nawaz, "The Changing Pakistan Army Officer Corps". *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 34, Issue 1 February 2011. p. 27.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Lt. Col. Farooq Ahmed, "Pakistan Educational City Sui: A Special Report." In *Hilal*, Edition 8, Vol. 47, February 2011. Pp. 18-21).
- <sup>xxviii</sup> *Ibid.*,
- <sup>xxix</sup> Discussion with Usman Qazi (Islamabad: 13/03/2011).
- <sup>xxx</sup> *Ibid.*,
- <sup>xxxi</sup> C. Christine Fair and Shuja Nawaz, "The Changing Pakistan Army Officer Corps". *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 34, Issue 1 February 2011. p. 23.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Discussion with Aziz Narejo and Noor-ul-Huda Shah (October 2004 and December 2010).
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Discussion with Sanaullah Baluch (Islamabad: June 2004).
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Interview with Lt. General Javed Hassan (Islamabad: December 2002). He was then the commandant of the National Defence College, Islamabad.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Ayesha Siddiqi, Case of Conscription for the Pakistan Army in *The Friday Times*, Jan 17-23, 2003, Vol. XIV, No. 47.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> The movement for the restoration of Bahawalpur province is being spearheaded by Mohammad Ali Durrani, the information minister under General Musharraf. He is known for having close ties with the military.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> 'Saraiki Province to be Included in Next Manifesto: Gilani'. In *Dawn*, Vol. LXV, No. 72, March 14, 2011. P. 12.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Ayesha Siddiqi, 'Terror's Training Ground.' In *Newsline*, 9 September 2009. See, <http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2009/09/terror's-training-ground/>
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Discussion with Sindhi journalist Mirani Mehran (11/03/2013). The journalist also showed photographs of Afghan settlements being created in Shikarpur, Sindh.