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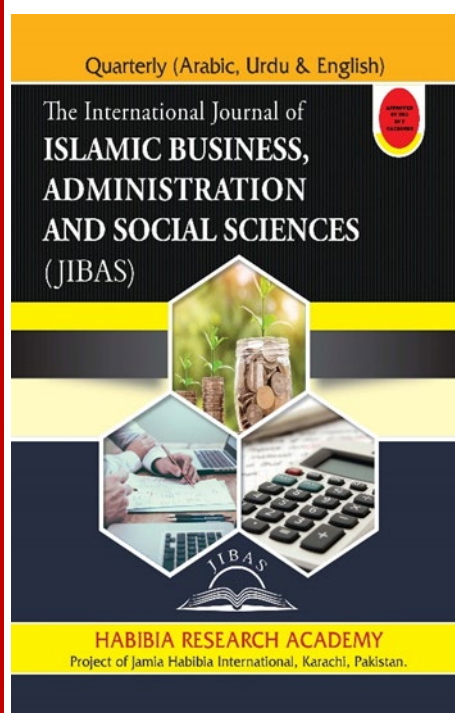
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TOPIC:

**ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE ROLE OF ETHNIC GROUPS IN
ELECTORAL POLITICS: A CASE OF PAKISTAN**

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ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE ROLE OF ETHNIC GROUPS IN ELECTORAL POLITICS; A CASE OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT:

After post-colonial politics ethnic element emerged as a prominent tool of politics in different countries of the world. The marginalized groups also assumed politics as a system of power and they tried to use their collective approach as their identity is a major weapon during electoral process in authoritarian concept of democracy where the strength also plays an ideal role. Like other post-colonial countries, the plurality of groups became important and the multi-groups used their ethnic identity as their political power. In this modern era of democracy every group tries to survive in the existing political setup. Therefore, in multi-ethnic states the study of ethnicity has become a popular topic of electoral politics with democratic approach because the relation between ethnicity and politics is a widely studied phenomenon. Now for dominant groups, ethnicity is considered as a challenge to political system in Pakistan. After the creation of Pakistan, the dilemma of ethnic conflict could not be resolved. This paper highlights the nature of relationship between ethnicity and political development in Pakistan which has multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual formation of society. Major ethnic groups inhabiting is divided on lingual, racial settlement bases as Baloch, Saraiki, Muhajir and Pashtoon. The relations between these groups have promoted the politics of ethnicity in the Pakistan..

Keywords: Ethnic groups, Politics, Political Autonomy, Identity, Marginalized, Regional.

INTRODUCTION:

This paper is primarily deals with the issue of ethnicity and its role in the electoral politics in Pakistan due to democratic system of politics. Pakistan is one of the state which is a populated with multi-ethnic groups and these ethnic groups are inhabited in entire Pakistan. During colonial period they struggled to get freedom under the umbrella of religion against majority group Hindu. With the creation of Pakistan all regional groups even they existed in some areas raised their voices for rights. They started to achieve their struggle for not only their survival under the federation of Pakistan but also tried to get their regional identity. Now one of their important cause were their identification in the country especially in East Pakistan when the rejected Urdu as a national Language. They claimed that they are in majority and in constitution 1956 Urdu and Bangla both declared as the national languages of Pakistan.

The separation of East Pakistan persuaded other regional groups and pushed them to ethnic politics as NAP in NWFP as well as Bazinju and Mangal promoted it in Baluchistan for a comprehensive interior independence for provinces. Same as in Urbane Sindh Sindhi and Muhajir politics started with new approach. Saraiki Punjabi politics also started in south Punjab because the People of south Punjab or Saraiki belt bitterly feel that they are under the mercy of upper Punjab. After 2008 Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani also said about Saraiki province which provided a little Oxygen to the people of south Punjab. Ethnicity has been now used as a tool for representation because the authoritarian democracy is suitable for ethnic politics. If state will not address the issue of representation as a challenge on equal basis and without discrimination, it may be causing social and political crisis as

political instability. It may be threat to peaceful coexistence, unity and national integration of Pakistan. Ethnic politics and regional sentiments are responsible for slow and low level political development and democratic process in Pakistan.

Discussion

Ethnicity is modern phenomenon of the world and it is not limited only in developing world it can be seen even developed countries of the world now. Actually ethnicity is a grass root level issue of representation and still the state are not addressing this issue at grass root level. Ethnicity is an issue of identity for communities and ethnic groups.¹ Ethnicity appeared as new term and first it seems to be in the Oxford Dictionary in 1972.² The scholars defines ethnicity as Horowitz defines “ethnicity is, of course a recurrent phenomenon and its shifting contexts make it sometime more and sometime less prominent”.³ Mazari Says, that, “ethnicity is cultural and linguistic symbols at a basic level and which provides internal cohesion and differentiate an ethnic group from other groups. According to her, ethnicity is also a type of social organization to class formation”.⁴ The concept of ethnicity is not limited it is very vast and two major schools of thoughts explained it in their own as the Primordialist and instrumentalist. While The Geertz Primordialist defines ethnicity “the cultural givens assumed blood ties, race, language, region, religion and custom as the heart of the ethnic matter”.⁵ Instrumentalists focus upon competition and interaction their stress is on the situational and circumstantial nature of ethnic solidarity. They consider ethnicity as a weapon in the pursuit of collective advantages.⁶

“Ethnic group is a collection of people who share some patterns of normative behavior and form a part of a larger population, interacting with people from other ethnic groups within the framework of a social system. For Cohen, one of the characteristics of a people so addressed as an ethnic group is the “sharing of normative behavior”. This normative behavior is a distinct behavior which distinguished one group of people from others and it include kingship, marriage, friendship, festival, rituals and other similar ceremonial activities. Normative behavior can

also be coupled to the continuous interactions with other distinguished group especially within the same Nation-State. Therefore ethnicity can be seen as interaction between culturally distinct groups operating within a common social context.⁷

The other characteristics may be as special political concerns, attachment to home land and institutions or a consciousness of kind or a sense of distinctness from others.⁸

Ethnicity a tool of Political Development

In seventy years of the history Pakistan, ethnicity has played its role in the political development and unfortunately the country did not make a sufficient progress due to the ethnic politics for several issues. The ethnic politics did not provide an opportunity of real and true leadership, only so called politicians were produced by the regional groups who no weightage in the nation because they have only their personal or ethnic benefits and that’s why they lost their powers very soon and created only disappointment for the nation.

The early 10 years of Pakistan passed without any strong political advancement and Ayub imposed Martial Law in 1958, he abrogated constitution and created an environment of hate and exploitation among the regional units. He introduced Basic Democracies and implemented EBDO for senior politicians which promoted feelings against him. BD members were his indirect electoral college for presidential election which minimized the political activities in the country. In constitution 1962 he missed all the political spirit/Ayub Khan totally became dominant as a supreme power. In this situation all unites and almost all ethnic groups were demanding autonomy due to undemocratically elected Ayub. All major ethnic groups did not welcome Ayub dictatorial rule. In this position there were no role of Political parties and which was very important because in every era political parties played a vital role but in constitution 1962 there was no clear instruction about political parties. The nature of democracy was minimized and the political system was without any democratic values. The role and performance of political parties was not practically available.⁹ According to Waseem “the particular frame work grossly hampered the growth of electoral democracy in Pakistan”.¹⁰ It has to be seemed that Ayub Khan was so much rigid as he expressed, “regarding a centralized political system that he even in his last speech emphasized that it was in the best interest of the country to have a strong center”.¹¹ During Ayub regime East Pakistan mostly felt exploitation, deprivation and marginalization because they said west wing is not providing the enough share of their economic sources. People of Bengal were demanding separate provinces as autonomous unit with separate governor. It was the first ethnic crisis in Bengal during Ayub but he did not take any notice of such voice.¹² Table Showing Per Capita GDP of East and West Pakistan.

Year	Per capita GDP East	Per capita GDP West	East- West Disparity Ratio	Disparity index
1959	269	355	1.32	100
1960	277	363	1.31	97
1961	286	376	1.31	97
1962	277	397	1.42	131
1963	299	408	1.36	113
1964	293	426	1.45	141
1965	295	427	1.45	141
1966	290	448	1.54	169
1967	307	468	1.52	163
1968	312	490	1.57	178
1969	314	504	1.61	191

(13)

In the election 1970 when Awami League won the election and political situation became worst no solid attempt were made and the identity issue remained serious and important one and Bengali want to get the power at any cost after winning election. Through election

the ethnic groups want to form their own government. The centralized approach and undemocratic regimes triggered ethnic conflict and Pakistani nationalism was dominated by ethnic nationalism which eventually was ended up with the disintegration of country and East Pakistan separated in 1971. After the separation of East Pakistan Z.A Bhutto assumed the power but the center and provincial crisis remained as usual. Bhutto imposed Governor Rule in Balochistan and NWFP to control NAP and JUI provincial governments. With representation language crises also created linguistic crisis in Sindh. Finally Prime Minister Bhutto had to intervene by giving a compromise formula and both of the languages were given official status in the province.¹⁴

Ethnic Politics and Separation of East Pakistan

Ayub Khan imposed Martial Law in 1958 and remained in power for ten years. At last a movement was started by the middle class of Pakistan. After a conflict between police and students in Rawalpindi this protest sparked all over the country with in no time. Soon this movement turned into violence. Ayub Khan tried to control the situation and initially he took some steps as he agreed to remove the emergency, he released all political rivals even Sheikh Mujeeb-ur-Rehman which was in jail under the charges of Agartala Conspiracy Case and he accepted to restore the parliamentary system of election but all his devices failed because the opposition demanded him to leave the government and forced him to resign. In 1968 opposition parties demanded Ayub's resignation for free and fair election in Pakistan. Soon the political circumstances had become worst and was not in favour of Ayub Khan, when situation became out of control, Ayub Khan accepted his failure and finally he handed over the power to Chief of Army Staff Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan on 25th March 1969.¹⁵ As a Chief of Army Staff and Martial Law administrator General Yahya Khan promised that fair and free election would be conducted in Pakistan on the base adult franchise rights. Yahya Khan assumed the charge of government on 25th March 1969 and he issued legal framework order in March 1970 to hold the election and promised to grant provincial autonomy and the rights to the people of both parts. He decided the representation of both parts on the basis of population and election policy was adopted on basis of one man one vote. 300 general and 13 reserved seats for women were decided for National Assembly and allocation of seats for each province was as following.

Seats for Nation Assembly (¹⁶)

Sr.No	Description	General Seats	Women Seats	Total Seats
1	East Pakistan	162	07	169
2	Punjab	82	03	85
3	Sindh	27	01	28
4	NWFP	18	01	19
5	Balochistan	04	01	05
6	Frontier Area	07	0	08
Total Seats		300	13	313

Provincial Assemblies Seats (17)

Sr. No	Description	General Seats	Women Seats	Total Seats
1	East Pakistan	300	10	310
2	Punjab	180	06	186
3	Sindh	60	02	62
4	NWFP	40	02	42
5	Balochistan	20	01	21

Election announced on 7th and 17th December 1970, while due to cyclone in East Pakistan for nine seats of National Assembly and eighteen seats for provincial assemblies election announced on 17th January 1971. These elections were held on party basis and political parties were allowed to start their electoral campaign from 1st January 1970. Almost 24 political parties participated in the elections 1970 while the real contest was between Awami league and Pakistan People's Party.¹⁸ After L.F.O Bhutto started his campaign on economic issue and he promised to uplift the economic position of the people with the slogan of "*Roti, Kapra Makan*" While Mujeeb rose his voice for the rights and his six points became popular in East Pakistan and their impacts looked in general election. Mujeeb contested election on the basis of the rights of the east Pakistan. The general election 1970 changed the whole political condition in East Pakistan. In East Pakistan the situation was changed by Awami League and gained absolute majority under the leadership of Sheikh Mujeeb ur Rehman.

Party Position in National Assembly (19)

Sr. No	Political Party	East Pakistan	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Balochistan	Total
01	Awami League	160	0	0	0	0	160
02	PPP	0	62	18	01	0	81
03	MLQ	0	01	01	07	0	09
04	CML	0	07	0	0	0	07
05	J.U.I	0	0	0	06	01	07
06	J.U.P	0	04	03	0	0	07
07	N.A.P	0	0	0	03	03	06
08	J.I	0	01	02	01	0	04
09	Convention M.L	0	02	0	0	0	02
10	P.D.P	01	0	0	0	0	01
11	Independent	01	05	03	07	0	16
Total Seats		162	82	27	25	04	300

The election's results were totally in the favor of Awami league and Mujeeb-ur-Rahman because Awami League received absolute majority in all over the Pakistan and it swept the elections in East Pakistan. While Peoples Party got a majority in West Pakistan. Mujeeb

and Bhutto did not agree on any suitable agreement and deadlock was created between them and this dead lock continued. Both Bhutto and Yahya were not in position to make any solid political decision. This deadlock led the country to anarchy. Military troops were sent to East Pakistan by Yahya Khan to control the situation. No concrete political efforts were made on his behalf to pacify the East Pakistanis. Military action even fueled the situation and Pakistan had to lose her Eastern part.²⁰ The efforts for national integration through democratic process was not fulfilled and unfortunately the country faced serious political crises, constitutional issue and the unconstitutional act as enforcement of Martial Law badly affected the dream of its creation. Even the country lost its national integration and in 1971, East Pakistan was separated. The downfall of Bangladesh supported other deprived groups as the Saraiki speaking people of South Punjab whose identity is not recognized started a struggle for their separate identity and the issue of ethnicity and ethnic conflict raised in Pakistan. In 1977, Zia imposed martial law in Pakistan again with 3rd time in the history of Pakistan and during Zia Regime the state policy remained same in its spirit. Ethnic groups again demanding for their due rights especially political representation and Zia focused a new emerging identity of Urdu speaking in Sindh as Muhajir, he availed this opportunity and adopted the policy of divide and rule as his ancestors in the past.²¹ In his time with ethnic politics he also opened the door of sectarian politics in Pakistan which affected badly to Pakistani Politics in upcoming years.²² He promoted MQM and Sindh Baloch Pakhtoon Front for ethnic rivalries. With the help of ethnic politics in Sindh he pushed PPP on back-foot. Pakistani nation turned to regional and ethnic loyalties.²³

A committee was formed by MQM and Muhajir Etihad to define the term 'Muhajir in 1987 and Altaf Hussain defined that Muhajir is one who speaks some Urdu, and belongs to middle class urban community. After the emergence of Muhajir ethnic identity, initially MQM claimed a place for Urdu speaking by dividing Sindh especially in urban areas and a controversy started in Sindh giving rise to ethnicity in the politics of Pakistan. But MQM, at the time of its formation gave a nine point agenda in its charter according to which only Sindhis and Muhajirs were real Shindis and they should have a right to vote and have business licenses. Another demand was to accept Muhajirs as the fifth nationality of Pakistan.²⁴ After Zia During democratic era the issue of ethnicity has become little bit cool but in Sindh MQM and ANP in Karachi started violence as a result a grand operation started against them. But again military regime of Pervaiz Musharraf ethnic conflict rose again in Balochistan and Karachi. The murder of Nawab Akbar Bugatti created unrest in Balochistan while in Sindh Musharraf again fully supported to MQM. In urban areas of Sindh MQM swept the election through rigging and violence which destroyed the peace of Karachi and provincial government was support less.

After Musharraf in PPP and PMLN time ethnic politics is considered now the important tool of victory Punjab and Sindh card was used by PPP and PMLN respectively. In Sindh MQM used Muhajir soba card and in south Punjab the voice of Saraiki Province is also in progress now a days. In Punjab due to the domination of Punjab is the central point in all

political debates of ethnic based parties. There is a demand to divide Punjab in to two or three province but the creation of Saraiki province is the main demand. The federal parties like PPP and Pakistan Muslim League (N) do not favor this division. With partition of Punjab the demand for new province in Sindh and KPK will be another challenge for political forces. In the election 2018 groups of politician form South Punjab Soba Mahaz and won almost seats in south Punjab. In rural areas personalities are dominant that political parties every party try to issue the Ticket to winning horse and that's why these political elites try to use ethnic card in their constituencies due to biradism. In rural areas biradri also plays important role in electoral politics so elite also plays a vital role in the promotion of ethnic politics as Cohen said, "elites are the persons who occupy commanding positions in some important sphere of life and who share a variety of interests arising from similarities of training, experience, public duties and way of life".²⁵

The elites may be of different types, social, religious, and political. The political elites comprise the power holder of a body politics. They include leadership and social formation out of which leadership typically emerges. The political elites play a very vital role in any political system. They formulate opinions, articulate diverse interests of masses and aggregate their demands while participating in decision making process. While performing these functions, they leave an enduring impact on the performance of the political system. Particularly, in a developing political system having a history of social, political and linguistic stratification, their role is highly crucial. There are different opinions and views about the elites of national and ethnic political elites in Pakistan to have a better understanding of the issues of Pakistani politics which is considered the politics of persons and biraderies.

Conclusion: The political calculation and permutation of who gets what, when, and how of the political and economic potentialities of the nation are the main sources of hostility and conflicts that has continued to threaten the political stability and advancement of democracy in Pakistan. The incessant struggle for power is always heating-up the nation's polity. Pakistan's democracy has been characterized by ethnic-based politics since independence; different ethnic group is affiliated with one political party or the other. In the context of ethnic politics, in this paper it is tried to highlight the ethnic dilemma of Pakistani politics due multi ethnic and multi lingual country. Pakistan is facing the intra-ethnic situation since its creation 1947 due to the annexation of multi-ethnic regions. The delay of constitution and election made the situation critical due to the issue of representation. One unite Scheme and Military regimes also increased feeling of exploitation among the provinces and the regional elites were motivated and urged to make weak the national leadership continuously and as result East Pakistan separated in 1971. The downfall of East Pakistan also motivated the other regional groups to use ethnic card especially in NWFP and Balochistan during Bhutto era. While during Zia regime MQM and Sindhi Nationalist were promoted against Peoples Party. MQM became a dominant ethnic and linguistic group of Urban Sindh especially in Karachi and Haiderabad. In South

Punjab the issue of Saraiki identity has been raised, due to injustice, inequality and imbalance distribution of resources and representation as compare to upper Punjab. In the last election a group of politician contested the election on the slogan of South Punjab as a Separate province. So the issue of ethnicity is a reality in Pakistan it is not a problem actually need is to address ethnic groups and their genuine demands. It is necessary for the state to deal with all ethnic groups with the spirit of equality and fairness to resolve their issues and provide them unanimous opportunities for their rights in representation. When their grievances will be address the ethnic conflicts or intra-ethnic problems, the ethnic politics will be minimized and national politics will be promoted than regional or elite politics which may considered as problem. But in positive sense of this context, it can be concluded that Ethnicity is not a problem but it is a mechanism of power sharing in democracy. Ethnicity created a sense of awareness among the people for basic rights. Ethnicity has played a leading role in the formation of new administrative units as well as in the demand for new administrative units. Yet what is important is that ethnic politics has changed the structure of political elites and perception of party politics. To minimize and reduce the negative impact of ethnicity, it is necessary for the state institution to address the socio-political and economic problem at regional level and provide maximum representation to marginalized ethnicities. Simultaneously the grant of political-administrative autonomy through the devolution of power at smaller or basic unit level can bring the ethnic mendicants and ethnic secessionists into the national fold. The equal distribution of economic equal sources and avoidance to creating economic imbalance among the different ethnic groups providing fiscal autonomy at basic unit level can also minimize the concerns linked with ethnic politics. However, all this may require constitutional shelter. For, a policy of balanced ethnic compensation need to be adopted by the Political parties and political parties should not be dominated by one single ethnic group or even personalized leadership structure. For a Policy of reconfiguration of regional and provincial boundaries for the accommodation of ethnic interests and to transfer the benefit of regional autonomy can be adopted after decentralization of powers and geo-ethnic nature of electoral constituencies must be revised to provide a levelled field to contest electoral politics for are all groups. At ideological and conceptual levels ethnic identity should not be conceived as a threat to the national integrity of Pakistan and ethnic issued be made part of the national curricula.

It can be concluded that the maximum participation and inclusions of ethnic groups in the political process is the key to the unity and national solidarity in a multi-ethnic state. Ethnic groups struggling for the preservation and restoration of their basic political rights should be provided opportunities to develop their faith in tolerance, mutual understanding and compromise which is possible only in a strong democratic political set-up. The ethnicity is not a problem in Pakistan but it comes in conflict when the powers are centralized and diversity is not recognized by decision makers. Ethnicity becomes problematic when demands and concerns of different ethnic communities are not addressed. So political and

democratic inclusion of different ethnic groups, not the exclusion is the only option to bring the country out of this quagmire and democracy has a capacity to solve problems which is only possible through power sharing and the continuity of the political system.

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