

Factors for balkanisation and future of pakistan politics essay



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More than 30 years after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan is still sucked in a quagmire. Its governance, never a strong point, has broken down. Pakistan is now radicalised to a point where even the Afghan President Hamid Karzai accuses it of exporting ‘terrorism’. Pakistan’s economic progress is in serious jeopardy. Its social fabric is torn seemingly beyond repair. Located on historic invasion routes to India, the lands that now constitute Pakistan have had their fair share of border changes. In the process many kingdoms, sultanates and states have been formed and disintegrated. The Pakistan created on 14 August 1947 broke apart in an acrimonious war in 1971 into Bangladesh and West Pakistan. Now three territorial issues have the potential of seriously altering its current boundaries, against the backdrop of perceived discrimination – which became the basis of independence of Pakistan and then Bangladesh. Pakistan now is marred by the ongoing ethnic disharmony within the state. This chapter would analyze the various factors which would probably lead to the balkanization of Pakistan state. However, there is also a possibility of surviving the turmoil. Thus, this part of the study would also explore the likely factors which would prevent the state from disintegrating into fractions. The future of Pakistan lies uncertain. There could be many possibilities in which the nation would carve out a path for itself.

FACTORS PROMOTING BALKANISATION

Socio-economic pressures

2. Pakistan suffers from acute social and economic problems to deal with. Any nation which is not able to resolve its social problems for long due to budgetary constraints will see them turning into socio- economic problems.

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The main fibre of the society lies in providing the basic necessities of life at an affordable expenditure. In the context of Pakistan, owing to the fact that it is a developing nation, there is no wonder that it is engulfed with a number of social and economic problems. The real issue is not the presence of these problems in society because there is no concept of an ideal society in the world. Every country in the world has its own set of socio-economic problems. The main issue is the extent and intensity of the socio-economic problems of Pakistan which have soared to alarming levels.

3. Social Problems. Pakistan has been facing a lot of social problems since its inception in 1947. To begin with, there were problems of lack of funds, rehabilitation of refugees, poor infrastructure and widespread poverty of masses. At present the gravest problem that Pakistan is facing is its precarious law and order condition. Terrorism has become a headache for federation and a nightmare for public. Besides terrorism there are other social problems which are older and more widespread. The biggest of these problems is poverty. 70% population of Pakistan lives in villages. Most of them don't have access to adequate basic needs of life. They are struggling for bread and butter. A large chunk of population lives below poverty line. They live in miserable conditions. Lack of proper food, clothing and shelter, poor sanitation, unsafe and sometimes contaminated drinking water are just some of their many problems. Illiteracy is yet another problem of Pakistan. The literacy rate lingers on 56% and ironically it also includes those people who can just read and write their name in Urdu. Corruption is another huge social problem. Unemployment is also regarded as a major social problem. Major portion of Pakistan's population consists of youth and a large number

of young people who have the ability and are willing to work are unemployed. These are just few of the many social problems Pakistan is facing today. Population expansion has been a real issue of concern for all governments. With limited resources it is very difficult to cater to the needs of growing population.

4. Economic Problems. Economic prosperity serves as a backbone for the overall progress of a nation. Poor economic condition is the root cause of so many problems that exist in a society. Unfortunately, Pakistan's economic conditions are pathetic. As if power crises, lack of foreign investment for the development of industrial zones, backward and out-dated technology were not enough, Pakistan's indulgence in war on terrorism served as a fatal blow to the already crumbling economic state. Instable political system, dictatorship in its worse form and non-effective democracy has badly affected the economic progress of Pakistan. Prices of all consumer products in general and food products in particular are rocket high. War on terrorism has served as a serious blow to the tourism industry of Pakistan. Due to war on terror, local people of war-ridden areas are migrating to other areas of Pakistan specially urban areas which is taking a toll on the already existing miniscule and poorly managed provincial resources. There is a great economic disparity among the people. If this situation prevails then the internal security situation will deteriorate, which would definitely have its impact on the overall economic situation of the country.

5. The negative influence of these problems become a menace for the society and start asserting pressure on the government to either divide the society into packets or go for better reforms. The Pakistan government for <https://assignbuster.com/factors-for-balkanisation-and-future-of-pakistan-politics-essay/>

long has not been able to bring about any revolutionary change in the society to make it conducive to govern. The frequent power change and the struggle between the democracy and army rule have added to the miseries of the masses. A prolonged economic decline coupled with the problems of deepening societal divisions will weaken the capacity of the state and turn Pakistan into a state at war with itself. There is a risk where combination of economic vulnerability and civil unrest lead to a situation where Pakistan's government is unable to deal with both and that increases the chance that sectarian risks escalate. A combination of these three factors might lead to a state collapse.

Dynamics of Provincial Politics

6. The existing four provinces are like four states within a state. These four big administrative units create regional and provincial friction bordering on hatred. Ever since the creation of Pakistan, one of the overriding hurdles in the way of coveted national cohesion and unity are these administrative elephantine units that vie and remain at loggerheads with each other. With a separate language of each province, the four separate nationalities look conspicuously distinct. Besides it creates communication barriers between the people with less or no knowledge of the national language Urdu.

7. Since it came into existence, Pakistan ruling class has always suspected the provincial nationalism. The ruling class has always tried to suppress the regional, ethnic and provincial identities in an attempt to foster an overarching 'Islamic identity' for Pakistan. Local languages have been discouraged and Urdu has been imposed as the lingua franca to forge a sense of common nationhood. Pakistan has already suffered disintegration in <https://assignbuster.com/factors-for-balkanisation-and-future-of-pakistan-politics-essay/>

1971. The fruits of devolution of powers are universally known for balanced and effective development of both rural and urban areas of a country on one side and the backward and advanced areas on the other. In big units as we have in Pakistan, the major chunks of allocation of funds go to those cities or towns from which the politicians or the members of the parliament come. Even otherwise in Pakistan, the rural development has mostly remained neglected as most of the development funds are spent in the urban settlements.

8. The smaller provinces have several grievances against the largest province- Punjab. The grievances range from taking more share of funds to the undue use of water as well as because of the army whose bulk comes from Punjab. The smaller provinces (in terms of population) have continued to suffer from a feeling of deprivation and exploitation by Punjab[1]. Even Musharraf's regime that promised to strengthen the federation, remove inter-provincial disharmony and restore national cohesion could not address the concerns of the smaller provinces. Instead of responding positively to the legitimate demands of the nationalist groups, the Punjabi dominated military and bureaucratic establishment has reacted in a high handed manner, which has left the other ethno-nationalist groups with no other choice than to openly advocate separatism. Punjab is the target of complaints and grudges of other provinces for being a privileged province as was West Pakistan compared to the former East Pakistan. East Pakistan's cessation (for Bengalis independence) could have been averted if the Eastern wing of Pakistan had been fairly and equitably treated. Similar kind of threat and danger of disintegration looms over Pakistan now. The Pakistan of dreams conceived

during partition from India in 1947 has lost relevance. All the effort to unite Pakistan and bind it into one identity have been futile.

Identity Crisis

9. Pakistan society is now torn by ethnic and sectarian divides, as is worn out by the worsening ethnic situation in Baluchistan, the inter-ethnic power struggle in Karachi, and rising sectarian violence . Unlike India, which made rapid progress towards democracy, Pakistan could never do the same. The father of the nation, and the moving spirit behind the creation of Pakistan, Qaid-I-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, expired on 11 Sep 48. His successors in the Muslim League were rather weak and could not steer the fledging nation towards a stable democracy. In fact, no general election was ever held during the first 11 years of its existence.

10. Ethnically driven sub national forces are still active in Pakistan's political system and are a constant source of internal pressure on the political set-up of Pakistan. There are trans-national pulls between the Baluchis in Pakistan and Iran, between the Pathans in Pakistan and Afghanistan, between the Mohajirs and the Indian Muslims and between the Sindhis in India and Pakistan. Pakistan by denying Bengalis autonomy had to bear a bifurcation of the country. Though there are remarkable difference between the world in 1971 and 2012, yet the fault lines have the potential to erupt in a disaster. It appears that strong ethnic and regional groupings have discouraged the people of Pakistan to unite ideologically. Unity in diversity, seems a far cry here. Pakistan does seem to suffer from a serious identity crisis.

11. On 9 May 2012, the resolution to divide Pakistan into three provinces was passed. The editorial of Nawa-E-Waqt, an Urdu daily of Pakistan termed May 9 as a 'Black Day' in the history of Pakistan as this decision would give an opportunity to the 'external elements' to achieve their heinous designs. The creation of new provinces would act as catalyst to the already existing demands of smaller provinces being carved out of Sindh and KPK and would also fuel the desire of Pashtoons to look forward to the creation of an independent state by disintegrating Pakistan. Till the time the Punjab domination is not shattered, the phenomenon of disintegration will persist.

Radicalisation and a Jihadi State

12. The rising tide of radicalism in Pakistan has certainly threatened the stability of the state. It has widened the fissures in the social fabric of the state and led to a situation of war of all against all[2]. The state of Pakistan has become a terror hub. The number of terrorists outfits operating in the country are probably the highest as compared to any other country. FATA has indeed provided sanctuary to the radical forces of all kinds. The Pakistan Army's periodic thrusts into this region and increasing drone attacks have failed to contain the radical Islamist tide. The comparatively younger generation is not inhibited to attack the military. These elements have coordinated their activities and have successfully penetrated into the Pakistani hinterland and recruited local jihadi operatives to launch attacks against the Pakistani state. This problem is compounded by the reluctance of the Pakistani state to mainstream this region by introducing universal franchise and establishing an effective local representative system of administration[3].

13. The continuous influx of Jihadis into the state of Pakistan will force the Pakistan military into fighting them thus dividing the political setup. With non-state actors gaining prominence in the state, the traditional friends of Pakistan like China and Saudi Arabia will insulate controlling authorities of their respective areas and Pakistan will splinter into smaller Pakistans.

FACTORS PREVENTING BALKANISATION

State of Punjab

14. The state of Punjab enjoys almost a monarchical status in the country. So long as there is Pakistan, Punjabis will be the big bosses. Punjab sucks out resources from other provinces for its own uses and never really gives back to the provinces. Fields in Punjab are irrigated by rivers that flow through KPK. Most high administrative jobs are held by Punjabis. In the army, almost all high ranking officers are Punjabis. Promotions are not given on merit, they are given on preferential treatment. Being a Punjabi has its advantages. The Punjabinisation of Pakistan has been a sore bone of contention with all other provinces.

15. Punjab, in its own interest will never let Pakistan disintegrate. This will lead to its losing governance power and economic advantage it has over other provinces. The Army which is the ultimate controlling authority in Pakistan is ruled and dominated by Punjab and would always like to control the politics of Pakistan to its own advantage.

Pak Army

16. Intimate in its relations, Pakistan's army plays a significant part in maintaining the stability of Pakistan. The strength of the army as a

stabilising force in Pakistani politics is relatively undisputed. Even Indian scholars, such as C. Raja Mohan, argue that “ the extraordinary strength” of the army has been the “ core” of Pakistani identity, providing a check and balance on the instability of both political and Islamist actors. It has become particularly relevant since the army is the only institution with the ability to stem the rise in extremism and insurgent violence and, unsurprisingly so, since Pakistan historically commits nearly a quarter of its annual budget to the military.

17. In the post-Musharraf era, Gen Ashfaq Kayani, the Chief of Army Staff, has reversed a number of destabilising policies within the army. For example, the army has traditionally involved itself in all areas of political control in the state and, under Musharraf, had infused more than a thousand of its own staff within the bureaucratic system. Educational facilities, specifically universities, had their governance structures stacked with military personnel, resulting in revisionist curricula and controlled access to information. The real power in the country continues to vest in the Army, with the ISI

firmly under its control. Time and again, the civilian leadership has proven incompetent and venal, and been removed by the Pakistan Army. Time and again, the people of Pakistan have welcomed the Army takeover.

18. The Pakistan army is the biggest unifying factor and has proved its mettle, when it comes to running the country. The army would be the most trusted option incase there is a scenario of Pakistan failing as a nation.

Iran

19. The disintegration of Pakistan will have severe effects on its neighbouring nations. The political scene in the region would change and would give rise to a state of unrest and instability in the region. Particular is the case of Pakistan getting divided on ethnic lines. The first amongst all to detach itself from Pakistan would be Baluchistan which has been struggling for autonomy for long. The demand for a free state has its own peculiarities. The Baluchs also comprise of the areas in the neighbouring state of Iran and few parts of Afghanistan. If the Baluch demands are met and they are offered a separate state, it would give way to the struggle for Greater Baluchistan which would involve the Baluchs of Iran. This will not be in national interest of Iran. Iran cannot afford to lose certain areas due to an unrest situation in Pakistan. It has got both political and strategic ramifications. Iran would be loathe to supporting Baloch nationalism because it too has a Baloch problem and would not like to do anything that creates troubles in the Iranian Balochistan.

20. It would be imperative that Iran gets deeply involved into the internal situation of Pakistan and take adequate measures to contain Baluch nationalism. Iran would try its best to create an environment for further unification of Pakistan so as to create an environment of peace and sovereignty.

FUTURE ROADMAP OF PAKISTAN

21. Pakistan is slowly drifting towards greater political and social fragmentation. Most threats to its future are internal because of the sharpening multiple fault lines, a weak and dispirited civilian leadership, and <https://assignbuster.com/factors-for-balkanisation-and-future-of-pakistan-politics-essay/>

the threat of religious extremism and militancy. The society is more fragmented than ever before, and the economy is unable to internally develop enough resources to sustain the state system. If these trends continue, Pakistan may lose efficacy and become a non-performing state in most sectors of society. If Pakistan has to disintegrate, it would not happen at once. But, will occur in stages for the reason that the ethnic protests and demands for separate provinces or states are in different stages of passion. The very fact that Pakistan has disintegrated into small states would open a Pandora box of issues.

Jasmine Revolution

22. The internal situation in Pakistan is graduating from bad to worse. The state is failing virtually in every field, be it political, economic, social, ethnic, provincial or militarily. The fissures in the society are deep rooted and are waiting for a spark to ignite the already existing grievances and disharmony amongst the various factions. The spark could be anything from a motivating speech by a leader, a self-immolation, a newspaper article or a message on a social networking site. What brings about the feelings of the disgruntled populace, only time will tell.

23. The spread of the Jasmine revolution from Tunisia to other nations is a most recent example of igniting the minds of the protestors to achieve their ultimate demands. The possibility of a similar revolution in Pakistan is very high. It would not be an exaggeration to imagine a break off of Baluchistan leading to a consistent revolt by Pakhtoons to break away from the nation. This may fuel the already existing demands of a separate province based on their respective rationale. The smaller provinces may not divide the nation
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as such on the world map, but would be enough to create much more problems for Pakistan internally.

Idea of Balkanised Pakistan

24. The argument for Balkanizing Pakistan or, more specifically, fragmenting the Islamic Republic so it's easier to police and economically develop, has been on the table since Pakistan's birth in 1947 when the country was spit out of a British laboratory. And lately, the concept is looking more appealing by the day, because as a result of flawed boundaries combined with the nexus between military rule and Islamic extremism, Pakistan now finds itself on a rapid descent toward certain collapse and the country's leaders stubbornly refuse to do the things required to change course. But before allowing Pakistan to commit state suicide, self-disintegrate and further destabilize the region, the international community can beat them to the punch and deconstruct the country less violently. The Baluchis takes the lead and has the strongest movement on for decades.

25. The Pakistani federation is therefore once again showing signs of strain, and many Pakistanis fear that the resurgence of ethnic nationalism will inevitably lead to armed clashes between the ethnic nationalists and the Pakistani security forces, which could well shake the foundations of the State. The likely proposal for fragmentation would be to break off and allow Afghanistan to absorb Pakistan's KPK and FATA, which would unite the Pashtuns. In addition, the provinces of Baluchistan and Sindh would become independent sovereign states leaving Punjab as a standalone entity.

Pakistan Without Baluchistan

26. If Baluchistan were to become independent, Pakistan would lose a major part of its natural resources and would become more dependent on the Middle East for its energy supplies. It would also dash Islamabad's hope for the Gwadar port and other related projects. Any chance of Pakistan becoming more attractive to the world will be lost. Pakistan will also lose its nuclear testing grounds which would be its greatest setbacks.

Pakistan: Next five years

27. The foundation of Pakistan since its birth has been unstable and has been in turmoil always. There have been a number of setbacks in the history of last 65 years including the dissolution of the state into a new Bengali nation called Bangladesh. However, still the nation has managed to restrain the turmoil and carry on with the bundle of issues. The nation sometimes saved by the army has time and again proved its will and recoverability to come out of the grave situations.

28. Pakistan as a nation may not see much change in the immediate future and would remain in the stability/instability paradox. For the next five years, it is misleading to talk of a breakaway of discontented provinces and a breakup of the state, or total state failure. Next five years of Pakistan would decide its future. The outcome of the struggle for various issues including demands for separate state or separate provinces will materialise in the next five years which would shape the coming days of the nation. For the near future – the next five or six years – Pakistan will either struggle on or undergo a more rapid decline, which will be evident by the rise of a more complex and fractious relationship among the provinces and between them

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and the center. This will be delayed if the present cooperative arrangement between the politicians and the generals continues, even if there is a change in personalities.

Pakistan: 2020

29. Pakistan is in the throes of serious internal unrest. A wide range of political, economic and social imponderables will determine future course of events in Pakistan. In the longer term, the breakup of Pakistan is possible, but breakup would be preceded by the disintegration of the army, either after a war, through ethnic and sectarian differences, or the splitting of the army by some Punjabi political movement. The possible outcome of the growing instability due to economic, social, and political turmoil would result in the possible balkanization of Pakistan. The likely scenario would be as mentioned in succeeding para.

30. The government in power would be unable to convincingly address issues of good governance. Maladministration would rob the government of its legitimacy. Opposition parties would increasingly become combative and try to pull down the government. The army would start manipulating the political parties and fears of a likely coup would flourish. The judiciary would become assertive and occasionally oversteps its legal and constitutional mandate. The economy would not pick up despite several sharp infusions of external aid. Unemployment would rise, economic distress levels would remain high, inflation would soar and production constraints would lead to food shortages, profiteering and corruption. Agriculture and manufacturing sectors would remain weak. Low confidence levels would prevail in the economy which would lead to large flights of capital and de-valuation of the <https://assignbuster.com/factors-for-balkanisation-and-future-of-pakistan-politics-essay/>

Pakistani rupee. The right wing political and radical parties would become active and Islamists would continue to expand their influence inside Pakistan. The Pakistan army under international pressure would continue to play the cat and mouse game on the issue of Islamists. To forestall the threat from India, the Pakistan army would ramp up militancy inside India. Provincial grievances would mount and movements for secession would pick up pace. Parts of Pakistan would become ungovernable. And Pakistan finally balkanizes.

Conclusion

31. Pakistan is undergoing the toughest phase of its existence. Nothing at present is falling in line as far as Pakistan as a nation is concerned. The governance, policies, economic instability, ethnic disputes, sectarian violence, social unrest and the military together have brought the nation to a juncture where the very existence of the country is questionable.

32. The very idea of Jinnah's Pakistan has been lost sight of. The division of Pakistan in 1971 has not borne any lessons to the country or its polity. The regional ethnic unrest in the country and demands for a separate state or a province impinges the further growth of the nation. These demands and movements would probably bring Pakistan on the verge of further dividing itself. The socio economic pressures existing in the society further compounds the issue. The radical attitude and support to jihadis have brought Pakistan in a state of violence within.

33. The most dominating state of Punjab which has the highest share in all fields of the nation building as well as enjoying the power in all forms would

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like to retain Pakistan as one nation. The army has been a unifying factor in Pakistan which is also being dominated by Punjabis. Punjab would use army to control the uprising of all forms of opposition and those supporting any idea of disintegrating the nation in any way. Iran being directly affected by any fractioning of Pakistan would also be interested in a stable and unified Pakistan and would render all possible support to save the country from any kind of fragmentation.

34. The immediate future may see Pakistan as a unified country, however, it is uncertain to determine for how long it would be able to sustain. The growing unrest and a civil war kind of situation owing to a number of factors can lead Pakistan to a culmination point beyond which it would disintegrate into smaller Pakistans.

35. Pakistan today is on the self-destruct mode. Its stability is what most would want especially the countries in the region. However, it appears that the current masters of Pakistan's destiny are hell bent upon proving their Islamic state status to the Islamic world. They may become the face of political Islam but if this continues, they may be wiped off the face of the subcontinent as a country.