

A Debate on Decentralization and Governance in Pakistan and Iran through the Lens of Third Positionism

Dr. Tariq Saeed (Corresponding Author)

Research Associate at the Fatima Zahera Society for Women Development in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan (Qom, Iran) and Former Research Scholar at the Changan University (Xian, China) and Coventry University (Coventry, UK)
Email: tariqsaeed55@yahoo.com

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Abstract

In this scholarly investigation, a comparative analysis is focused on the principles espoused by Third Positionists, who advocate for the satisfaction of socio-political and economic rights for every ethnic community within the territory they inhabit within any given state. The study centers on Pakistan and Iran, both of which grapple with diverse ethnic segments asserting varied constitutional or political accommodations within their respective state structures. Examining the federal nature of Pakistan and the unitary structure of Iran, this research scrutinizes the approaches employed by both nations in managing ethnically diverse segments, with an emphasis on fostering multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism to secure contentment among various communities vis-à-vis governance and decentralization initiatives implemented by the central or federal authorities.

Given the global discourse on the dichotomy between federalism and unitarism within the social sciences, this study contributes to the ongoing dialogue by delving into how these systems function in ethnically diverse societies. The examination extends to encompass the ethnonational movements prevalent in both Pakistan and Iran, contextualized within existing constitutional provisions. The study culminates by offering recommendations, drawn from primary sources, to address the nuanced dynamics of governance, decentralization, and ethnonational considerations in these complex sociopolitical landscapes.

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Introduction

When Paul Collier presented the theory of “Greed versus Grievance” as a political economist, no one assumed that this theory could be applied to the issues within federalism or unitarism but only related to the war economy. In fact, the phrase “Greed versus Grievance” indicates that arms conflict on the bases of civil war where there can be involvement of three parties; one can be state-centric, the second can be ethnonational whereas; the third can be a non-state actor (any stakeholder within the war industry) who

trigger anyone or both sides to combat with each other for the sake of sailing his products/weapons (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

As Third Position school of political economy recommends economic and political rights to each ethnic community where it stays within the states. However, the level of provision of rights varies from community to community as per the level of their satisfaction constitutionally or politically (Historica, 2021) (Noor, 2021). Now, Paul Collier along with his colleague Anke Hoeffler relate the basic traits of Third Positionism with the concept “Greed versus Grievance”, and argue that civil unrest or chaos can be generated, triggered or installed in any state if ethnic segments would not be satisfied constitutionally or politically by the central/federal government (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

Although this is another story that which one is best among federalism or unitarism within the state regarding good governance and decentralization of authorities, Third Positionism does not believe in the fixation on the provision of economic and political rights to the ethnic community but varies as per the agreement with the central/federal government (Ejobowah, 2001, p. 70). Therefore, a state structure should not be federated or unitary but hybrid. Under the respective perspective portrayed by third Positionists, this study examines the concept of governance and decentralization within the federal state structure of Pakistan and unitary state structure in Iran, and comparatively analyzes which one version of state structure is satisfying ethnonational segments generously and precisely.

Thus, firstly this study has to look over the concept of governance and decentralization within the context of Pakistan and Iran.

Concept of Governance and Decentralization

The concepts of governance and decentralization are varying within the different socio-political segments in Pakistan and Iran. Generally. The term “Governance” is used to indicate the process of interaction between citizens and government by utilizing rational power, norms and laws (Bevir, 2008, p. 01). Similarly, the term “Decentralization” highlights the process by which the central government transfers powers to provincial or regional governments in terms of planning and decision-making (Bevir, 2008, p. 64). However, supporters, as well as critics about existing level of governance and decentralization, are always presented in each country around the globe.

By analyzing basic themes of “governance” and “decentralization”, this study finds a correlation between both concepts where governance at the provincial, regional or city level can be exhibited by some sort of delegating powers to either local democratically elected public representatives, nominated authorities or bureaucracy. On the other hand, governance within the context of public governance, foreign policy, corporate sectors, environmental policies, land record maintenance, health administration, internet including social media management, information technology management, regulatory governance, participatory governance and defense-related governance is also the subjected to criticism by either one

or more than one parties/groups/segments in different perspective in each country around the globe (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007, pp. 01-20). Therefore, the study does not find 100% consensus on the existing level of governance and decentralization in any country including Pakistan and Iran.

Moreover, a debate within Pakistan and Iran has also been observed that whether the country should be run federally or unitary. Meetings with some government officials as well as ethno-nationalists during surveying in both countries facilitated this study to know that both states have pro-federalism and pro-unitarism elements. Likewise, numerous ethno-national communities seek some sort of specific privileges or certain constitutional or political accommodations within the existing state structure.

Constitutional Provisions about Governance of Decentralization

Whenever a constitution is engineered in any country, the level of and quality of the governance within the state usually compares with the defined standards of good governance (Galligan, 2013, p. 65). Now, the question arises that what is good governance. World Bank elaborates on “how power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development” (Conable, 1991). Similarly, UNDP defines good governance as “Governance has been defined as the rules of the political system to solve conflicts between actors and adopt decision (legality). It has also been used to describe the “proper functioning of institutions and their acceptance by the public” (legitimacy). And, it has been used to invoke the efficacy of government and the achievement of consensus by democratic means (participation)” (Hyman & Erickson, 2010).

As good governance for the general public is only the cohesive policies, consistent management, proper oversight and accountability, guidance and the processes and decision-rights for a given area of responsibility; each socio-political or ethnic community has its version of acquiring the respective status of governance within the state by seeking decentralization. Therefore, a constitution in each country tries to accommodate each socio-political and ethnic community by providing sufficient political and economic rights at the local level for ensuring participatory governance in terms of promoting “good governance” (Lyon, 2015, pp. 56-80).

By analyzing constitutional provisions about governance with decentralization, the study finds; the constitutions of Pakistan and Iran; both tries justify their political systems as the provider of good governance by decentralization of political and economic rights. Thus, the study now looks at the constitutional provisions within Pakistan and Iran regarding examining how both constitutions deal with respective phenomena.

A Case Study of Pakistan

Constitution of Pakistan 1973 defines implications of good governance by decentralization as;

- 1) Article 32 bounds the state to promote a local government system consisting of democratically elected representatives in the areas concerned while, special representatives of women, workers, and peasants must be elected (Constitution of Pakistan 1973, 2021).
- 2) Article “b” of section “3” in article 73 allows local government to impose, alter or remove taxes within its jurisdiction regarding utilizing collected revenue for the betterment of locality (Constitution of Pakistan 1973, 2021).
- 3) After the 18th amendment in the constitution, Article 140A confines each provincial government to establish its own local government system. However, elections would be conducted under the supervision of the Election Commission of Pakistan under article 219(a & d) and 222(b & f) (Constitution of Pakistan 1973, 2021).
- 4) Article 199(1) restricts local governments to follow described rules, otherwise, the high court of the province can take necessary action (Constitution of Pakistan 1973, 2021).
- 5) On the other hand, article 70(4) defines that local government institutions in cantonment boards are the subject of the federal legislative list as described in the fourth schedule (Constitution of Pakistan 1973, 2021).

A Case Study of Iran

Chapter 07 of the Iranian constitution comprising articles from 100 to 106 deals with good governance by decentralization as;

- 1) Article 100 allows the people of each town, tehsil, district and province to elect their local councils regarding ensuring participatory governance within the social, economic, industrial, health, cultural educational and other welfare-based developments (Constitution of Iran, 2021).
- 2) Article 101 permits the state to constitute a supreme council of councilors belonging to all provinces regarding looking after the working of provincial, districts, tehsils and towns councils (Constitution of Iran, 2021).
- 3) Article 102 authorizes the supreme council of provincial councilors to plan the developmental projects for provinces, districts, tehsils and towns; and then present them before the parliament for further debate and legislation (Constitution of Iran, 2021).
- 4) Article 103 bounds all the heads and other public representatives of provincial, districts, tehsils and town councils to follow the rules and regulations within their jurisdiction (Constitution of Iran, 2021).
- 5) Article 104 permits the state to establish councils for forming Islamic courts, cooperation in agricultural sectors, the welfare of workers and peasants, educational development, and betterment in public services. However, a mechanism for establishing respective councils and their responsibilities would be determined as per the laws (Constitution of Iran, 2021).
- 6) Article 105 restricts each council to legislate as per Islamic as well as national laws (Constitution of Iran, 2021).

- 7) Article 106 declares that no one authority can abolish any council but if it will not fulfill its responsibilities as per the law. However, the council can contact the court for compliance (Constitution of Iran, 2021).

Ethno-National Movements and Their Reasons for Emergence in Pakistan and Iran

Now, the question is; if the constitution in each country satisfies almost all the major socio-political and ethnic segments, then what is the reason for emerging ethnonational movements. During analyzing the nature of ethnonational movements in Pakistan and Iran, the study finds the nature of ethnonational movements and the reasons for their emergence as their perceived mechanism for governing the state as exhibited in the table given below;

Nature of Ethno-National Movement	Reason of Emergence	Pakistan	Iran
Ethno-Linguistic Identity	Seeking autonomy within the state on the bases of language	Awami National Party, Pakhtunkhwa Mili Awami Party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Saraikistan Democratic Party, Jiye Sindh Qomi Mahaz,	Turkmens living at Iran-Turkmenistan Borderland
	Seeking sovereignty on the bases of language	Baloch Liberation Army in Balochistan, Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army in Sindh	Movement for Sovereign South Azerbaijan, Movement for Sovereign Eastern Kurdistan, Movement for United Azerbaijan, Movement for Al-Ahvaz as Sovereign City State, Movement for Sovereign West Balochistan
Administrative-based autonomy	Seeking autonomy on the bases of existing provinces	APML (limited autonomy under tight federalism)	Moderation and Development Party, NEDA Party, Islamic Iran Freedom and Justice Organization, Union of Islamic Iran People Party, National Trust Party, Executives of Construction Party, Islamic Labor Party.
	Seeking autonomy on the bases of	MQM (Pakistan) in Sindh,	Popular Party of Reforms

	making new provinces or restructuring existing ones	Bahawalpur Sooba Tehreek in Punjab, Hazara Sooba Tehreek in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	
State-centrism	Tight Federalism	PML(Q), PTI and APML	
	Unitarism		Pro-Revolutionaries including Front of Transformationalist Principlists, Society of Devotees of the Islamic Revolution, Society of Path seekers of the Islamic Revolution, Front of Islamic Revolution Stability, Association of Islamic Revolution Loyalists.
(Loose) Federalism	Greater autonomy for provinces	PPP, PML(N), BNP (Mengal) and ANP	Numerous Azerbaijani, Kurds, Gilak, Talysh, Armenians, Georgians, Baloch, Arabs and Turkmen intellectuals and political leaders.

(Zaheer, 2021) (Asghar, 2021)

Primary visits of the case studies and conduction of interviews make the study able to investigate that;

- 1) Language is the biggest factor in both countries where several ethnolinguistic communities seek governance and decentralization on the bases of considering linguistic traits. However, some ethnolinguistic communities look for sovereignty in Pakistan¹ and Iran² where both states trace foreign funding behind respective dilemmas (Asghar, 2021) (Zaheer, 2021).
- 2) Although, post-revolution Iran believes in administrative-based autonomy to provinces, several ethnolinguistic communities; especially Azerbaijanis and Kurds claim that Imam Khomeini once promised to deliver linguistic-based autonomy to each ethnicity during the pre-revolution Islamic movement. However, he refused to deliver later. Likewise, some linguistic communities like

¹ On the bases of Baloch and Sindhi language, several terrorist groups were confronting with Pakistan Army by attacking civil innocents in Balochistan and Sindh provinces of Pakistan. However, military operation against them have been concluded with the end of their foreign funded activities (Zaheer & Asim, 2021).

² Iran also alleged United States, Israel and UNPO for supporting Movement for United Azerbaijan and Movement for Sovereign South Azerbaijan in the provinces of East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, Ardabil and Zanjan. Similarly, other movements like "Movement for Sovereign Eastern Kurdistan in the provinces of Kurdistan, Ilam, Kermanshah, Hamadan and somewhat in West Azerbaijan", "Movement for Sovereign Arab city State of Al-Ahvaz or amalgamation of this city with Iraq in Khuzestan Province", and "Movement for Sovereign West Balochistan in Sistan-o-Balochistan and Karman provinces" are funded by anti-Iran states (Abbas, 2021).

Azerbaijanis, Kurds and Baloch blame the formation of new provinces in Iran has divided their majority into particular regions that historically belong to them (Asim, 2020).

On the other hand, the study only finds the All Pakistan Muslim League (not functioning properly now) under the leadership of former president General Pervez Musharraf as the only political party that believes in limited administrative-based autonomy within the existing provincial structure under tight federalism. At the same time, MQM (Pakistan), Bahawalpur Sooba Tehreek and Hazara Sooba Tehreek also demand administrative-based autonomy by forming new provinces or restructuring existing provinces (Asim D. M., 2019).

- 3) Numerous segments in Pakistan and Iran are purely state-centric. However, state-centrists in Pakistan usually look for tight federalism whereas; the respective segment in Iran supports unitarism. Another point is; all the pro-revolutionary political parties also favor unitarism in Iran (Asim, 2020).
- 4) As state-centrists have quite opposite directions to the supporters of loose federalism. Both consider each other as a threat for state sovereignty. In Pakistan, if PPP, PML(N), ANP and BNP (Mengal) support loose federalism under the 18th amendment, state-centrists criticize them by quoting the example of Yugoslavia. Similarly, supporters of a loose federation criticize state-centrists as the reason for East Pakistan's disintegration (Noor, 2021). The same is the case with Iran. Pro-revolutionaries oppose supporters of the loose federation as a threat to the sovereignty of Iran whereas; advocates of loose federalism find their secure future only in multicultural federated Iran (Abbas, 2021).

Comparative Analysis from Third Positionists' Perspective

When third Positionists analyze the demands and perspectives of different ethnic segments in Pakistan and Iran. They neither favor linguistic-based autonomy nor support administrative-based autonomy, state-centrism or loose federalism, but they seem to be opportunists. They believe that each ethnic community has different natural demands regarding governance and decentralization, and each ethnic community should be dealt with by separate agreement with the state or central government regarding the provision of economic and political rights as per their demand; either constitutionally or politically. Hence, the political system within the ethnically divided state would be harmonious in terms of ensuring multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism (Abbas, 2021).

Therefore, in the case of Pakistan, whether ethnicities are defined on the bases of languages³, provinces⁴ or races⁵, the federal government should deal with each community as per the demands, and accommodate them constitutionally or politically within the area where they stay (Noor, 2021). The same is the case with Iran where post-revolution authorities should realize the existence and actualities of ethnic communities; either on the bases of languages⁶, religions⁷, sects or races⁸ (Abbas, 2021).

³ Linguistically, Balochistan has become the land of Baloch, Pashtun and Brahui people, Sindh is the region of Sindhi and Urdu speaking communities, Punjab has Punjabi and Saraiki as major languages while, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa identifies as the land of Pashto, Hindko and Chitrali languages. Likewise, Wakhi, Broshaski, Balti and Shina languages are spoken in Gilgit-Baltistan whereas; Kashmir language is the major language in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (Rahman, 2011, pp. 01-02).

⁴ Some foreign funded terrorist groups in Balochistan were targeted workers or passengers belong to Punjab province. They were not discriminate among Punjabi or Saraiki speaking people but only tried to propagate against the fake-claimed hegemony of Punjab over the land of Baloch people in Balochistan (Bizenjo, 2011).

⁵ Some of intellectuals from Chitral seek extra constitutional or political privileges to the people of Chitral and Khalash because of their historical Albanian-Macedonian traditional culture and language (Ali, 2013, p. 79).

⁶ Linguistically, Iranian society has been significantly divided into Persians, Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Talysh, Tat, Tatum, Gilan, Mazandaran, Turkmen, Baloch, Pashtun, Arabs, Armenians, and Georgians. Moreover, there are several other dialectics in the provinces of Khuzestan, Khorasan-e-Razavi, North Khorasan, South Khorasan, Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan and Kermanshah whose speakers claim to have separate linguistic identities (Abbas, 2021).

⁷ Article 12 of the Iranian constitution only authorizes followers of Twelver Shia Islam, Hanafi Islam, Shafai Islam, Hanbali Islam, Maliki Islam and Zaidi-Shia Islam to be accommodated from the facilitations given by the state. Similarly, article 13 of the constitution recognizes only Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians to be non-Muslim citizens in Iran (Roofi, Asim, & Zaheer, 2020).

The biggest criticism on Iranian political system is that Iran is considered as the native region of emerging or evolving several other religions, sects or faiths like Yarsani (extracted from spiritualism taken from the teachings of Hazrat Ali but now declared as the separate religion), Bahai and Bab (both extracted from Shia Islam but now called themselves as separate religions), and Mandaenism (also called Christians of Saint Johns, declare themselves as separate religion). But, Iranian constitution neither gives any privilege to respective communities nor recognize them as the legal citizens in Iran. Therefore, a major segment of them have been settled abroad or forced to hide its religious identity while living in Iran (Abbas, 2021).

On the other hand, Armenian Catholics (a different fraction from Roman Catholics) and followers of Georgian Orthodox Church are living peacefully in Iran by enjoying privileges defined in the constitutions generally for Christians (Asim M., 2020).

⁸ As Azerbaijanis in Iran are Turkic-origin, claim that they were promised for linguistic-based autonomy during pre-revolution Islamic Movement but Imam Khomeini refused later. However, current Supreme Leader of Iran is Azerbaijani by father while, Persian by mother. So, he should respect his race, and he should accommodate his racial fellows constitutionally and politically (Roofi, Asim, & Zaheer, 2020).

Similarly, if Turkmen in the provinces of Golestan, North Khorasan and Khorasan-e-Razavi demands either federalism for enjoying economic and political rights or seek amalgamation of their populated region with the Republic of Turkmenistan; central government of Iran must accommodate them as per their level of satisfaction within the territorial jurisdiction of Iran.

Otherwise, they have clear position against authoritarianism under unitarism exhibiting by central government in Tehran (Abbas, 2021).

Hence, third Positionists give the “US-cum-Swiss mixed model” as a solution for ethnically divided Pakistan and Iran where the state should be divided into different regions on the bases of significant ethnic communities where each region has separate privileges⁹ (as demanded) taken from central/federal government constitutionally or politically by some sort of agreement/contract (Asghar, 2021) (Zaheer A. , 2021). However, remaining subjects other than the privileges have to be looked after by the central/federal government in each region. On the other hand, like the judicial system of the United States, third Positionists seek strict judicial observation of regional governments and central/federal government at central/federal level by the Supreme Court. Supreme Court must be a guarantor for state-centrism, sovereignty and integration; and it must have an influential role in conflict resolutions between the center and regions/provinces. However, no one region must be allowed to have a separate militia or army but depends upon the national army having representation of all the regions within the state without any biasedness or discrimination. So, neither Pakistan nor Iran would face threat from any ethnonational movement in near future but will be exhibited as examples of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism (Asghar, 2021) (Zaheer A. , 2021).

Conclusion

Although, the constitutional study of Pakistan and Iran traces a clear exhibition of governing mechanisms and the process of decentralization in the Iranian constitution than the constitution of Pakistan 1973. However, the universal nature Devolution of Power Plan introduced by Pervez Musharraf for the entire country once gave realization to each common person that the country also runs under unitarism or tight federalism by delivering economic and political rights to the district governments rather than consuming heavy budget on provincial governments. However, his military rule became the reason for opposing such a comprehensive empowered local government system that could never be exemplified in the history of Pakistan (Asim D. M., 2019). On the other hand, almost relevant features have been found in the local government system of Iran under unitarism (Abbas, 2021).

Therefore, the study concludes that whether there is Pakistan or Iran, the political culture of both states cannot allow ensuring governance and decentralization under provincialism because it triggers ethno-nationalists to gradually demand greater autonomy that moves the country toward the “Yugoslavian model” or “Czechoslovakian model” (Noor, 2021). Thus, state-centrism (either under tight federalism or unitarism) under the basic principle of Third Positionism is the only way to accommodate all the significant ethnic communities regarding ensuring multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism in ethnically divided states.

⁹ By availing particular demanded privileges, they enjoy decentralization of authorities and govern the territory by exhibiting “good governance” where they live (Historica, 2021).

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