

ABSTRACT

Federalism is a system of government that ensures constitutional division of powers between a federal government and its federating units in such a way that these two sets of government function in exclusive political domains for the achievement of shared goals. Federalism is well-suited for a country having a large area, population and regional identities, because it guarantees a considerable degree of autonomy and exclusive political domain for the federating units. The regional and ethnic identities are thus assured preservation, protection and prosperity through self-governance.

Federation is a union of states or provinces. In a federation power is shared between federal government and provinces. Centralisation of powers by the federal government undermines the accepted principles of federalism. In a highly centralised federal system, the constituent provinces become resentful towards the domineering dispensation of the federal government. They do not compromise on being relegated to the status of mere administrative units and deprived of their intrinsic rights. Consequently conflicts emerge in the political system. Centralisation of powers also results in bad governance since the federating units lack administrative autonomy and fiscal resources to deal effectively with their responsibilities. Such a state of bad governance leads to emergence of various intricacies and crises in federation. These crises, if not resolved through the standard inter-governmental conflict resolution mechanisms, lead to the collapse of socio-political and economic system, and even disintegration of the country.

Pakistan inherited a highly centralised federal system after its birth. The various constitutions promulgated in the country, i.e. the Government of India Act, 1935 as the Interim Constitution, the Constitutions of 1956 1962 and 1973 set out a centralised system of government with heavy concentration of powers in the federal government. The four military regimes extended over half of the country's life, have exacerbated the problem of centralisation of governance. The result has been bad governance and emergence of numerous crises and conflicts. The successive federal government have unilaterally tried to resolve these conflicts through unconstitutional mechanisms such as use of force. However, such attempts have been futile and have compounded the complex crises. As a result, the country; has been disintegrated in 1971. Learning from history is very essential for the policy-makers of the country, in order to avoid more unfortunate incidents of the sort. The provinces need to be empowered so that they can deal effectively with the challenges faced by them.

There exist several defects in the federation, which have retarded the growth of federalism in Pakistan. In order to establish federalism in• its real spirit; resolve the out-standing crises and ensure good governance, these flaws need immediate redressal. The research work is an effort to analyse the history of federalism in Pakistan from 1947 to 2009, identify' the defects in the federation, highlight the difficulties faced by the provinces due to centralisation of powers and propose remedies for the rectification of these problems.