

IMPACT OF THE EIGHTEENTH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ON PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The current study tries to understand the impact of Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment on the subject of Provincial Autonomy in the context of 1973 Constitution of Pakistan. In the Constitutional history of Pakistan, the Eighteenth Amendment represents with far-reaching impact was a first bold and great step towards the provincial autonomy, with strong legislative, administrative and financial powers. The Eighteenth Amendment of Pakistan is well defender of nation's rights in form of provincial autonomy as well. The role of political leadership and parties in power at the center and federating units must be given credit for this positive step of constitutional transformation which strengthened the federation of Pakistan. The Eighteenth Amendment further strengthened the federal structure of Pakistan as it transferred the subjects of Concurrent Legislative List to the provinces and restored parliamentary democracy as envisioned in the 1973 Constitution. Therefore the knowledge of impact of Eighteenth Amendment on provincial autonomy avoids the ambiguity, uncertainty and removes unclear, vague issues. It removes the re-iterate statements, dissent notes and uncompromised level regarding provincial autonomy. It has also analyzed the Legislative, administrative and financial relations to bridge the gap amid center-provinces in Pakistan. In fact this study of existing constitutional structure and balance of powers has proven a fruit of good provincial autonomy.

Keywords: Administrative Autonomy, Center-units relations, Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment, Impact, Provincial Autonomy,

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Introduction

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a federal democratic state with its Federating Units and the Constitution¹ of the Islamic Republic Pakistan, 1973 recognizes and creates a balance between the authority of the Federation and the autonomy of the Provinces², which recognition has been given an iron cladding by virtue of the Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment.³ This amendment to the Constitution has inter alia introduced a drastic enhancement in the legislative authority of the Provinces by deleting the Concurrent Legislative List, whereby previously both the Central and the Provincial legislatures could legislate on the lists enumerated therein.⁴ The omission of the Concurrent Legislative List, left only a single Legislative List in the Constitution which exclusively subjects that can be legislated upon by the Parliament alone,⁵ and any subject not enumerated in these two lists would subject to the Constitution, be within the legislative competence of the Provinces.⁶

It was a major demand of the whole range of political leadership to abolish the Seventeenth Constitutional amendment, restore the original structure of 1973 constitution and to process the autonomy of provinces in the light of Charter of Democracy.⁷ In the process, it expanded its agenda even beyond the Charter of Democracy and dealt with various other controversial matters.

Here we are concerned only with provincial autonomy in Pakistan. That to discuss the impact occurred with the Eighteenth Amendment on the question of provincial autonomy in Pakistan. So in this regard Objectives Resolution also sustained this favor. Pakistan shall form a Federation according to the will of the people wherein the provinces will be independent with such limitations as prescribed by law.⁸

Omission of the Concurrent Legislative List, development of Part-II Federal Legislative list as well as joint-ownership of some list has increased its importance. The provincial autonomy here means the empowerment of provinces in the field of Legislative, administrative and financial dimensions.

Impact of the Eighteenth Constitution Amendment

The Eighteenth Amendment was the largest, unique, landmark and the most comprehensive reform package after the passage of the legal history of 1973 constitution. It was passed all the way with support from all political parties in the Parliament.

In pursuance of the motions adopted by the National Assembly on 10th April 2009 and the Senate on 29th April 2009, the Speaker of the National Assembly constituted Special Committee of the Parliament on Constitutional Reforms consisting of 27 members. Only 9 members belonged to three

mainstream parties Pakistan People Party, Pakistan Muslim League-N, and Pakistan Muslim League-Q while 18 belonged to ethnic parties from smaller provinces, as well as religious parties. Senator Mian Raza Rabbai of Pakistan People Party was elected by the members of the Committee as its Chairman on 25 June 2009.⁹

The Committee spent 385 hours on its deliberations and received 982 proposals from the public for various matters along with the provincial autonomy.¹⁰

The said Committee submitted its amendment Report containing 133 pages in April 2010.¹¹ This passed from National Assembly with heavy majority of 292 votes on April 8, 2010 and from Senate with 90 votes on April 15 2010 also without any opposition. President signed it on April 19, 2010 and promulgated on the following day. This Eighteenth Amendment has overhauled 102 Articles of the 1973 Constitution.¹²

The Eighteenth Amendment has brought some issues as well. These are challenges that are lying before the institutions that are equipped and empowered after incorporation of this amendment. Federating units are given the right of legislation over the concurrent list. The devolution of power has been introduced from center to the units while priorly the provincial powers were devolved to the local bodies.¹³ With this devolution now provinces are required to create infrastructure for the utilization of these powers. With the transfer of powers some ministries and round about 100 autonomous bodies are transferred to the provinces. There was need of an exerted efforts thousands of employees and man an institutions. It is also a big challenge to work within the limits of Eighteenth Amendment. A well-disciplined and mature leadership is required to carry on this task of keeping up with the consolidation of the state Report of the Sub-Committee on provincial autonomy.¹⁴

Succinctly speaking, Eighteenth Amendment is a package which offers favor and power but at the same place it poses challenges for the provinces to show capability of shouldering the responsibility of the enhanced powers. It bounds leadership with task of keeping the integrity of the state along with the autonomy of the federating units.¹⁵

The term „autonomy“ has been derived from Greek word meaning thereby “the freedom for a country, a region or an organization to govern itself independently, and the ability to act and make decisions without being controlled by anyone else.”¹⁶

According to the Black’s Law Dictionary the expression „autonomy“ is „the right of self-government or a self-governing state.”¹⁷

Provincial Autonomy means “the complete freedom and independence of the provincial government, from the control of the central government in the provincial domain of legislation, administration and finance. Further the central government would have no authority and power in the provincial spheres.”¹⁸

Here the impact of provincial autonomy means to produce and discuss that change which has been arisen from the Eighteenth Amendment amid Center-provinces.

The essential elements of provincial autonomy are the independence of functions, taking-over responsibilities and separations of resources. In other perspective it does not stand for disuniting of provinces from federal government or end of relations amid center-provinces. But the devolution of powers from center to provinces is a lawful delegation of three major components; legislative, administrative and economic autonomy in terms of responsibilities, functions, and resources is called dimensions of provincial autonomy.¹⁹

In this sense, devolution of powers from center to provinces revolves around three dimensions of provincial autonomy as under.

Legislative Autonomy

The main function of the Parliament is to make laws for the good governance of the country. The legislative autonomy deals with the distribution of legislative powers from center to provinces. In Eighteenth Amendment the Mediation Committee and Concurrent Legislative List of the Fourth Schedule have been removed from for the sake of provincial autonomy.²⁰

Since the 47 Entries of Concurrent Legislative list in the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution would be omitted under this Amendment, the subjects for legislation were strictly bifurcated amid Federal-Provincial Assemblies.²¹ Therefore the omitted entries of Concurrent List remain the subjects of provinces, where the Provincial Assemblies shall have power to make laws for their respective province.²²

Article 142, substantive parameters for the Federal and Provincial Legislatures to exercise their respective-exclusive sphere over the subject-matter, topics and activities, as well as the territorial boundaries, over which laws framed and legislated by them, may have applicability.²³ Parliament is authorized to legislate exclusively on subject-matters, topic and activities enumerate in two parts, Federal Legislative List and matters incidental or ancillary thereto.

The Provincial Assembly shall and Parliament shall not, have power to make laws with respect to any matter not enumerated in the Federal Legislative List.²⁴ The Parliament shall have exclusive powers to make laws with respect to matter pertaining to such areas in the Federation as are not included in any Province.²⁵ Nevertheless 3 subjects of Concurrent List to legislate laws with respect to criminal Laws, criminal procedure and evidence have been conferred to both Parliament and Provincial Assembly. That is why it called mixed Subjects for legislation.²⁶ From the Concurrent Legislative List, one has been shifted to the Federal Legislative List-I, and two Lists have been moved to the Federal Legislative List Part-II

participatory management both by the Federation and the Federating units through Council of Common Interests.

Although the Federal laws would prevail over the provincial laws if they are on the same subject. In this way, Federal laws that were passed on account of the „Concurrent List“ before the enactment of Eighteenth Amendment would continue to prevail over the Provincial laws on the subject on which Provincial laws have exclusive application after the Eighteenth Amendment.²⁷The Parliament shall be empowered subject to Eighteenth Amendment, to regulate any matter not enumerated in the Federal Legislative List for one or more provincial assemblies prior to pass resolutions by Assemblies.²⁸

In terms of legislative autonomy, the abolition of the Concurrent List implied that all subjects therein nearly 47 were now exclusively in the provincial domain and provisions, such as Article 172(3), placed critical natural resources areas such as oil and gas as „joint and equal“ federal-provincial subjects.²⁹

Administrative Autonomy

The administrative autonomy, deals two components, the relationship amid Federation-Provinces and the special provisions to resolve the federation-provinces conflicts or conflicts amid provinces. In order to strengthen provincial autonomy in administrative terms certain measures have been adopted under the Eighteenth Amendment.

The Eighteenth Amendment has provided for effective participation of the Provinces in the process of decision making at the Central level. Article 147 empowers a Provincial Government to entrust functions to the Center. Despite the recognition of the concept of the provincial autonomy, the Provincial Governments were permitted to entrust any of its functions to the Federal Government.³⁰

The Eighteenth Amendment, in its pursuit of participatory federalism, has revised and enhanced Articles 153 and 154 with the aim of reviving this unique mechanism. The 1973 Constitution has conferred a prominent position to the Council of Common Interests to formulate and regulate policies for the Federation in relation to a number of subjects, including Water and Power. Decision of the Council of Common Interests has an obligatory effect unless the same is modified by the Parliament at the instance of the Federal Government.³¹The Council of Common Interests is a noteworthy constitutional institution which irons out differences, problems and irritants between the provinces inter se and the provinces and the federation in respect of matters specified in Article 154. The Council is responsible to Parliament, which in joint sitting may from time to time by resolution issue directions through the Federal Government generally or in particular matters to take action as the Parliament may consider just and fit and such directions shall be binding on the Council.³²

Legislative subjects under Part-II of the Federal Legislative List required a coordinated and intergovernmental policy and the Council of Common Interests was to formulate and regulate policies in relations to matters in Part-II of the Federal Legislative List and to exercise supervision and control over related institutions. Council of Common Interests also acted as an intergovernmental forum to avoid conflict between the policies of the provinces and the federation under vertical sharing of power and encouraged cooperative federalism and strengthened provincial autonomy. Council of Common Interests could also formulate and regulate policies in respect of matters in Part-II of the Federal Legislative List and Constitutional wisdom behind this was to embed and mainstream participatory and cooperative federalism in national governance. Such policies, with Constitutional fiat behind them, may be considered by the legislature while legislating on subjects falling under Part-II of the Federal Legislative List so that the footprint of Provincial autonomy and Federalism was visible in a proposed legislation which was also a constitutional requirement as Article 142 of the Constitution had been made subject to the Constitution.³³

These amendments were deemed necessary, both to ensure participatory federalism and to accommodate the new items incorporated to the Federal Legislative List Part-II. This forum provides for joint policy formation and management by the Federal and Provincial Governments on matters enumerated in Part-II of the Federal Legislative List.³⁴

The National Economic Council membership, which was previously left somewhat ambiguous, has been clarified under the Eighteenth Amendment. The Constitution covers the formation and duties of National Economic Council.

In order to formulate and regulate policies regarding matters in Part-II of the Federal Legislative List, and exercise supervision and control over related institutions.³⁵

The National Economic Council shall review the overall economic condition of the country and shall, for advising the Federal Government and the Provincial Governments, formulate plans in respect of financial, commercial, social and economic policies; and in formulating such plans, it shall, amongst other factors, ensure balanced development and regional equity and shall also be guided by the Principles of Policy.³⁶

The Federal government would have to consult the provincial Government before constructing a hydroelectric power plant in that Province.³⁷ The Provincial Governments have sometimes complained that stations were built in areas where they were not required.³⁸

There is a Constitutional Mechanism for any dispute regarding electricity between Federal Government and Provincial Government, shall be moved to the Council of Common Interests for the resolution of the dispute.³⁹

Financial Autonomy

The Financial autonomy deals with the distribution of revenue, and property amid federation-provinces. The National Finance Commission, like the National Economic Council is an extra-ordinary institution which is to advise and make recommendation to the President in the financial matters.⁴⁰

The mandate of the National Finance Commission has been provided in Article 160. It has been made binding that the share of a Province in any Award of National Finance Commission would not be less than the share of that province as compared to previous award. Both the Federal and Provincial Finance Ministries would be monitoring the implementation of the Award biannually and submit their reports before both Houses of Parliament and the Provincial Assemblies.⁴¹ There is a constitutional mechanism between the Federal Government and the Provinces to supervise carrying out of the Award and to keep Parliament and Provincial assemblies abreast with the Award's implementation.⁴²

The Eighteenth Amendment was incorporated to ensure in increased devolution of financial revenues from the Federation to the Provinces. It aims to forestall repetition of past inequities, when the financial resources of certain Provinces were arbitrarily and drastically reduced.⁴³

The Financial autonomy also covers natural gas and hydro-electric power. The net proceeds of Federal excise duty on oil and natural gas and royalty collated by the Federal Government on natural gas would be paid to the Province in which well-head of oil or natural gas are situated. While the net proceeds of the federal duty excise on the oil levied at a well-head and collected by the Federal Government shall not from part of the Federal Consolidated Fund, but shall be paid to the Province in which the well-head of oil is located. This revision is intended to make the Province in which the well-head is situated a beneficiary of its oil resources, a provision already in place for natural gas.⁴⁴

The rule governing borrowing is addressed under Article 167 of the Constitution. The Provincial government may borrow or give guarantee on the security of its Consolidated Fund within the limits determined by the Act of Provincial Assembly. There is a restriction that a province without the consent of the Federal Government cannot raise any loan if there is still outstanding any part of a loan already made or guaranteed by the Federal Government. However the Federal Government may consent subject to condition as it may think fit to impose. There is no such mention that a Province can or cannot borrow outside Pakistan. But as the foreign trade and exchange is controlled by the Federal Government it is obvious and clear that a Province is not allowed to borrow Pakistan without the consent of the Federal Government.⁴⁵

Federal oversight has been provided through the National Economic Council; indeed one of the reasons for amending Article 156, pertaining to

the National Economic Council and its composition, was to facilitate provincial acquisition.

Here in financial sense, our state governs two types of property. One property owned by the people of Pakistan. Public are the ultimate owners of natural resources through their Governments and State controlled entities.⁴⁶

The other one is called ownerless property. The scope of ownerless property extends to the law of escheat and the vesting in Government of ownerless property such as the lands, minerals, and other valuable things. After the Eighteenth Amendment the property within the continental shelf or underlying the ocean beyond the territorial waters of Pakistan shall vest in the Federal Government. Mineral, oil, natural gas produced within the Province or the territorial waters adjacent there to would vest jointly and equally in that Provinces and the Federal Government.⁴⁷

The redaction applied to this Article is crucial for the Provinces. It recognizes their rights as beneficiaries of their own natural resources, in collaboration with the Federal Government. As a consequence, all new discoveries of minerals and natural gas within the Provinces and territorial water adjacent there to shall be owned jointly and equally by the Provincial and Federal Governments. It meets with the longstanding demands of public for provincial autonomy and recognition and preservation of the right to enjoy the proceeds of natural resources.⁴⁸

In terms of fiscal autonomy, the provincial share in the Federal Divisible Pool expanded to more than 50 percent and the transfer of General Sales Tax on services to the provinces in accordance with constitutional provisions provided the provinces with autonomous sources of finances and enlarged the provincial fiscal base.⁴⁹

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusion of this research paper is simple, it identified, the impact of Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment on Provincial Autonomy. The Eighteenth Amendment was the most significant, largest, unique and landmark reform package in the legal history of 1973 Constitution. In the Constitutional history of Pakistan, the Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment was original mandate towards the provincial autonomy, with strong legislative, administrative and financial powers for giving effect to the Charter of Democracy. The Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment is extraordinary task because of long-standing desire of the people of Pakistan and popular demand of political leadership and inveterate need of political parties in power to reinstate the real and original structure of 1973 Constitution and abolish the anti-democratic Constitutional amendments in the passage of history. Succinctly speaking, Provincial autonomy is the direction of strong federation and actual democracy. Pakistan being a

democratic state ever supporting and elevate the real color of balance of power between Center and Federating-units.

The Eighteenth Amendment is the real foundation of balance of powers. It makes the constitutional institutions powerful and active. It is for the smooth running of machinery and to bring it in equal motion all the political, administrative and financial parts of the Government. The role of political leadership and parties in power at the center and federating units must be given credit for this positive step of constitutional transformation which strengthened the federation of Pakistan. The impact of Eighteenth Amendment further strengthened the federal structure of Pakistan as it transferred the subjects of Concurrent Legislative List to the provinces and restored parliamentary democracy as envisioned in the 1973 Constitution.

Therefore the study of impact of Eighteenth Amendment avoids the ambiguity, uncertainty and removes unclear, vague issues. It further avoids the re-iterate statements, dissent notes and uncompromised level regarding provincial autonomy. The research contribution enhanced the circle of knowledge and widened the area of constitutional law and constitutional study.

The crux of the debatable subject is expedient to analyze the Legislative, administrative and financial relations to bridge the gap amid center-provinces in Pakistan. In fact this research knowledge of existing constitutional structure and balance of powers has proven a fruit of good provincial autonomy.

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