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# RESEARCH PAPER

# One-Unit Period and Sindh: A Bitter Reminiscence

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#### **PAPER INFO ABSTRACT** Received: This study inquires the political, cultural and economic February 09, 2020 grievances of indigenous Sindhis and role of the actual or Accepted: perceived injustices for the rise of Sindhi ethno-nationalism. March 28, 2020 One-Unit was a scheme introduced by the Pakistani Online: government to amalgamate all the areas of West Pakistan in a March 31, 2020 single province. Its implementation deprived existing provinces **Keywords:** of their autonomy. The defunct provinces were not mere administrative units but were historical homelands of One-Unit, Sindh, communities possessing distinctive ethno-cultural identities. Nationalism, Hence, it was not only a loss of political autonomy but was also Identity, a loss of identity for the people of smaller provinces. Larger Grievances, proportion of One-Unit population belonged to the former Representation province of Punjab. Punjabis also formed the most advanced ethnic group of West Pakistan. So their dominance in One-Unit's administration, economy and politics was quite obvious. The government was compelled to abandon the One-Unit scheme after a decade and a half because of the resolute opposition by smaller provinces nevertheless it left bitter memories. Indigenous population of Sindh akin to people of Corresponding other smaller provinces considered the One-Unit period as the **Author:** bitterest experience of their history. It is abominated as the colonial period during which people had to face many misbah.shaheen suffering and lead a miserable life. That strengthened ethno-@uos.edu.pk nationalists sentiment among indigenous Sindhis. perceptions of Sindhis' exploitation are how much based on reality demand a comprehensive investigation based on empirical pieces of evidence

### Introduction

All the areas of the western region of Pakistan were integrated in a single province by abolishing the existing provinces and autonomous states. The new

arrangement was called "One-Unit". It was envisioned as panacea to resolve various problems that Pakistan had to face during that period. Dispute between Punjab and Bengal over share of representation in central legislature of Pakistan had created a deadlock and hindered framing of constitution. Hence, it was anticipated that One-Unitwould be helpful to resolve the constitutional dilemma. More over administrative unification was believed to facilitate efficient administration and process of national integration. Conception of the One-Unit plan is attributed to army high command because thethen Commander-in-Chief of armed forces Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan in his autobiography revealed that One-Unit plan was conceived by him to resolve the constitutional and administrative problems of Pakistan (Khan M. A., 1967). The ascendant bureaucratic oligarchy played the leading role in its implementation and the group of Punjabi politicians supported them (Syed, 1995). The plan was bitterly criticized and begrudged throughout Pakistan except Punjab province.

The apprehensions about undesirable outcomes in future were more intense in Sindh as compared to other provinces because Sindh had the bitter experience of its amalgamation with Bombay Presidency during British Raj. Style of governance in nascent state of Pakistan had already disillusioned Sindhi intelligentsia and politicians. The coercive measures employed by the central government for the approval of the One-Unit plan became a source of displeasure among smaller provinces. Chief Minister of Sindh Muhammad AyubKhuhro on behest of central government compelled Sindh Legislative Assembly (SLA) to pass the bill for approval of One-Unit. The people of Sindh had certain suspicions about the future political leadership and bureaucratic administration of One-Unit province. There were apprehension of Punjabis' dominance and marginalization of people from smaller provinces because of Punjabis numerical strength and better level of modernization as compare to peripheral regions of West Pakistan (Syed, 1995). The paper would provide a detailed critical account of the indigenous Sindhis grievances and their impacts on Sindhi ethno-nationalism. It is comprised of three sections. First section is based on theoretical discussion. It would present an overview of international literature that is concerned with rise of ethno-nationalism due to unjust treatment of minority regions and groups by dominant groups. Second section deals with analysis of Sindhi grievance in light of available data and last section is based on discussion and conclusions.

### **Theoretical Overview**

Following theoretical insights would be supportive to comprehend the central argument of the article that how and why ethno-regional grievances generate conflicts and strengthen ethno-national identities. The centralized and authoritarian system set up by paramount nationalities developed a sense of socio-political and economic deprivations which later became a cause to generate conflicts based on ethno-national identities (Kellas, 1991). The exceeding role of the state in resource distribution has exacerbated the complaint to be dominated by a particular group (Young, 1983). In post-colonial states, bureaucracies play a

very vital role in state administrative affairs and in the case where bureaucratic positions are more dominated by a specific group or some particular groups, members of excluded groups are denied meaning full participation in states' affairs. Hence it is perceived that bureaucratic administrators belonged to a specific group treat their co-ethnics more advantageously in the distribution of rewards and other material gains. The ethnic groups having lesser representation in bureaucracy consider themselves as discriminated. The situations which emerge due to the discriminatory policies in distribution of reward and resources are further exploited by the elite of excluded groups to initiate struggle based on ethnic identity (Wimmer, 1997). Large ratio of revenue generation from a specific region but small ratio of revenue utilization in that area exacerbates perceptions among dwellers of the region that their resources are being ransacked by those who are dominant at center (Wimmer, 1997). The activists and intellectuals associated with ethno-nationalist movements also warned their co-ethnics about more miserable future if they fail to resist present injustices committed by dominant groups (Heraclides, 1997). Political elite of socio-cultural groups politicize the multiple identity markers such as; ethnicity, language and culture to get the support of the general masses for the achievement of their own sociopolitical and economic objectives. Ethnic cultures, languages and other identity markers are manipulated by them for achievement of their goals (Brass, 1991). In these situations authoritarian regimes have to face the challenge of ethnonationalist or separatist movements which sometimes come forth as the key opponents of states' authorities. Demands for the identification of regional identities and provincial or ethnic autonomy coincide with demands for restoration of democracy and provision of civil rights. The democratic movements become the allies of regional autonomist movements (Henders, 1997).

# **Methods and Materials**

The present study is descriptive and explanatory. It provides a brief description of the socio-political and economic situation of Sindh and indigenous Sindhis during One-Unit era. It is an investigation of Sindhis' sense of deprivation due to actual or perceived injustices. Focus of the study is to comprehend the factors responsible for the rise of Sindhi nationalist sentiments during that period. Cause and effect relations have been explained by qualitative interpretation of the data. The study is deductive in its nature as it made analysis of the particular case in context of broadly recognized scholarly insights or general theories. Both primary and secondary sources of research were utilized for data collection such as; census reports, national and Sindh Provincial Assembly debates, official reports, books, journal articles, unpublished dissertations, periodic articles and internet sources.

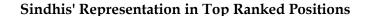
# Sindhis' Grievances during One-Unit

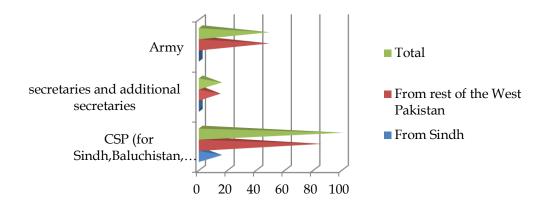
# i) Lesser representation in administration and bureaucracy

Prior to the implementation of One-Unit scheme, administrative body of the Sindh province was comprised of native Sindhi elite, though there were complaints of excessive intrusion by the central government in provincial matters. However some of the actions taken by Sindh government, for instance resistance to refugees' settlement in Sindh, opposing the proposal of the separation of Karachi, recruitment of indigenous Sindhis in the government sector, preservation and furtherance of Sindhi culture and literature and measures to increase Sindhis' representation in central services were appreciated by native population (Soomro, 2004). Creation of One-Unit deprived Sindhis of their inalienable right to rule their ancestral land autonomously. They considered it a serious blow for their national pride(Kennedy, 1991). The provincial headquarter of One-Unit was in Lahore; that was situated at a faraway distance from the Sindh region and was an unfamiliar place for Sind his because of linguistic and cultural differences. Journey to a distanced place inhabited by a community whose mother tongue was unintelligible for native Sindhis wasn't trouble-free for predominantly illiterate native Sindhi masses. Those visits were not excursions but a compulsion for resolution of problems related to official administration.

At the commencement of One-Unit, bureaucratic power was budding and consequently the decision making power was too shifting towards bureaucracy, although there was a façade of democracy (Talbot, 1999). However, with the enforcement of martial law that façade also vanished and the civil-military bureaucrats became the actual power holders. General Ayub Khan assumed power as the chief marshal law administrator. He believed that politicians are inept for statecraft (Khan M. A., 1967; Alavi, 1983). Resultantly the way was paved for bureaucracy to establish its complete control at all levels of administration. Such arrangement enhanced bureaucratic powers by demounting all types of legal hindrances in the way of administrators to manage the state's affairs according to their own free will (Sayeed, 1968b). Ayub's vision of a strong central government was meant an independent and authoritative executive not contingent on the impulses of the legislature (Gauhar, 1985). Hence, legislative assembly became a mere representative forum for all the submerged regions.(LaporteJr, 1976). And the financial affairs became out of its domain ( Craig Baxter, Yougendra K. Malik, Charles H. Kennedy & Robert C. Oberst, 1988). Owing to such ascendant role of executive, the system closely resembled the constitutional autocracy of vice regal system of British India (Sayeed, 1968b). The other institution where native Sindhis had representation was the federal cabinet. However in lieu of cabinet member, the actual influential in the decision making process were civil servants (Sayeed, 1968a); (LaporteJr, 1976); (WrightJr., 1991)so substantial participation in policy making was possible only by dint of enormous presence in civil-military bureaucracy which they didn't possess(Ziring, 1980). The top most cadre, 'Civil Services of Pakistan' (CSP) that was supposed to

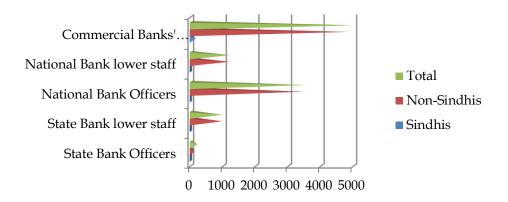
transact the important bureaucratic functions and had been relishing monopoly in the prestigious bureaucratic positions, had inediquate representation of native Sindhis(Waseem, Affirmative Action Policies in Pakistan, 1997b),(Sayeed, Role of Army in Pakistan, 1968b) as is explained in figure 1.





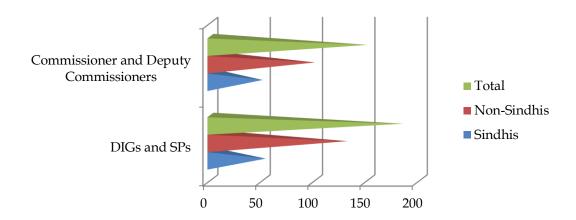
Almost all the top management authority of various public sector organizations namely; Water and Power Development Authority, Industrial Development Corporation, Planning Commission, etc. were in the hands of non Sindhis (Tahir, 2010). When provincial head quarter of Sindh was abolished and government employees were asked to shift at Lahore for assumption of their duties. Majority of Sindhi officials refused and opted retirement option because of faraway place and inauspicious working conditions (Bhutto, 1988),that further reduced already meager proportion of Sindhis in government services. (Sayeed, 1967; Syed, 1974; Khuhro, 1998). The findings of a survey conducted in 1969-70 revealed that the ratio of Sindhis and non Sindhis in federal government was one by five thousand (1:5000) and native Sindhis consisted of even less than 40 % of government servants posted in Sindh region during one-unit period (Ahmed, 1999). While answering a question in One-Unit assembly, it was revealed that the number of indigenous Sindhis was limited to only one officer against the post of secretaries, deputy secretaries and joint secretaries respectively (Ahmad, 1988). Their representation in other key government departments like railway, telephone & telegraph and accounts were also very limited (Ageef, 1989). Board of revenue that is considered a very important institution for lands allocation did not had even a single Sindhi in five-member board to protect the indigenous Sindhis' interests (Tahir, 2010; Ahmad, 1988). In addition, representation of Sindhisin public and private sector banks was insufficient as is explained in the figure given below.

# Sindhis' Representation in Banking Sector



Ayub prioritized rapid economic growth. Consequently "Planning Commission of Pakistan", got a potent rolein administrative and policy making mechanism (Syed, 1974). Technical experts were accorded key role in highest decision making. But those experts largely belonged to non-Sindhi community which caused further exclusion of native Sindhis in policy making process (Haq, 1995). Even in the district administration significant number of the officers posted in Sindh were non-Sindhis (Ziring, 1980) as is indicated in below given figure.

# Sindhis' Representation in District Administration



(Palijo A. H., 1970). The larger proportion of officers other than Sindh combined with their arrogant behavior created resentment among people of Sindh. They preferred their co-ethnic member over Sindhis in provision and distribution of governmental facilities and resources (short term loans, distribution of irrigation water and other basic facilities like electricity, Sui Gass and roads). Such factors engendered in native population a consciousness that they were being ruled by the outsiders and Sindhi nationalist intelligentsia

considered them as foreigners who behaved like masters and treated them as their slaves (Syed, 1995).

# ii) Cultural Grievances

The possible annihilation of distinctive identity due to imposition of One-Unit was the most potent threat which haunted the Sindhi masses as well as intellectual elite. The amalgamation of all areas of West Pakistan ended the Sindh's status as an autonomous province and the name Sindh wasn't allowed to be mentioned for those areas which were earlier part of Sindh province. Sindh had always retained its status as a separate administrative unit throughout history even before advent of British's Raj, whether it was part of large empires or a sovereign state (Khuhro, 1998). British discarded that tradition by annexing it with Bombay presidency. Incorporation in One-Unit province reminded Sindhis of the problems which they had to face after amalgamation with a dominant region. Pakistani authorities couldn't be content with mere administrative unification of West Pakistan rather they intended to achieve cultural harmony which was considered as a prerequisite for transformation of diverse cultural groups residing in West Pakistan into a unified nation. It was presumed that goal of national harmony would be achieved by persuading the population of West Pakistan including native Sindhis to adopt the cultural practices of advanced Muslim community of northern India. The government tried to promote culture, history, heroes, achievements and contribution of Muslims form United Provinces (UP) and Delhi. Indigenous histories and cultures of West Pakistan's areas were ignored (Khory, 1995). It was in accordance with the prevalent perceptions at the international level which considered that task of nation building wasn't possible in situation of cultural diversity (Nimni, 2009).

Language is considered as significant cultural marker, repertoire and conduit of culture (Stergios, 2006). Promotion of culture supportive for government's efforts of minimizing the differences between people of West Pakistan was considered as the principal obligation by decision makers. And consequently, regional languages and cultures were not only neglected but discouraged for the sake of promotion of Urdu. Implication of those policies for Sindhi language and native culture were unpleasant. Sindhi language had achieved the status of official language for centuries ago and the status dates back to colonial era that remains intact after independence till imposition of One-Unit. The advent of One-unit didn't augur well for Sindhi language. Certain decisions taken by government during One-Unit period were castigated by Sindhi nationalists as a planned strategy for elimination of Sindhi culture and identity i.e. Karachi University banned Sindhi language as medium of examination in 1957. Banning of Sindhi as medium of examination by University of Karachi created lot of problems for Sindhi speaking students. They had studied all their subjects in Sindhi language and suddenly they were asked to appear for examinations conducted in a different language. That handicapped situation was like adding insult to injury for Sindhi students (Joyo, 2005). Hyder Bux Jatoi lamented on that discouraging circumstances for Sindhis by writing a pamphlet entitled as 'Will Sindhis remain in Karachi'. He argued that central government dominated by Urdu speaking officials was not willing to permit indigenous Sindhis for getting education in their mother tongue while residing in Karachi. They were forced to make a choice between Karachi and Sindhi language (Jatoi, 1995a).

Educational reforms commission was constituted by Government of Pakistan and the status of regional languages as medium of instructions was reduced to primary level. It further suggested for mandatory introduction of Urdu from class three and to adopt Urdu as sole medium of instruction from sixth grade. Sindhis were not amused because of that decision. Majority of native Sindhis could only communicate through Sindhi. In new situation it became quite hard for them to perform their official responsibilities as majority of them had got their education only I Sindhi language. Data of 1951 census revealed that the ratio of educated Sindhis literate in their mother tongue was five times as compared to speakers of other local languages of West Pakistan (Khan A., 2002). That decision was considered by Sindhi intelligentsia as an arbitrary action taken by small elitist group to impose Urdu culture and language at the expense of Sindhi language (Shah, 1997). So they launched a fierce agitation campaign. Huge public meetings were organized to register protest and vast majority of natives participated in agitation procession. Observance of Sindhi language day on November 9, 1962 was a monumental event in history of Sindhi nationalist movement. A protest memorandum by Sindhi member of national assembly was presented to the President of Pakistan. Media also participated in that vital effort of indigenous population by issuing a press statement supported by almost all the native Sindhis. Government decision was condemned and grave negative connotations for the fate of Sindhis were also highlighted. It emphasized to review the decision. The exigencies of situation united rival personalities like Syed Sardar Ali Shah, A K Brohi and Sheikh Ayaz on a single platform to make resistance more formidable (Bhutto, 1988). Report of commission was even rejected by a Sindhi language newspaper Mehran which was considered a representative of moderate opinion. Editorials of newspaper opposed the proposals of report due its inimical implications for native's interests and negative consequences for Sindhi language (Bhutto, 1988). Agitation compelled the government to revise its decision and status of Sindhi as medium of instructions for Sindh region was restored. Although, the revised decision did not significantly alter the superior status of Urdu and inferior status of Sindhi and Urdu continued to enjoy government patronage and privileged status. A new chain of government schools in the name of comprehensive schools was created in rural Sindh and the medium of instruction in them was Urdu. Sindhi speaking students due to language barriers faced difficulties in passing admission tests of those schools as compared to Urdu speaking students. And in this way, that policy deprived Sindhis of equal educational opportunities in interior Sindh (Joyo, 2005).

Despite resistance form native Sindhis, government remain stuck to its goal of cultural unification. The enthusiasm demonstrated by authorities for cultural integration created apprehension amongst Sindhi public that government intended annihilation of Sindhi culture. Those policies were believed as replica of the strategy pursued by Russian authorities during Socialist regime and Tsarist era for cultural genocide of their subject nationalities (Shah, 1997). Government instructed the staff of Pakistan post offices department to avoid delivery of letters if address was written in Sindhi language or name of Sindh was mentioned for places situated in Sindh region. Names of certain towns which previously had word 'Sindh' were changed i.e. Hyderabad Sindh railway station's name was renamed as Hyderabad railway station. Urdu sign board replaced the sign boards written in Sindhi (Shah, 1997). Native population responded that policy by clandestinely rewriting names of railway stations in Sindhi language which were written in Urdu by government officials. All the legislation was printed in Sindhi language during erstwhile era of One-Unit. Most the legislation during One-Unit period was published in Urdu language. Preservation of official record was done in Sindhi that tradition changed during one-Unit (Rahman, 1996). Cancellation of funds by new government which were allocated for Sindhi cultural and linguistic institutions by provincial government of Sindh was another example of nonfriendly attitude of One-Unit administration (Syed, 1995). In a bid to seek concessions from government, a charter of demands was presented by indigenous Sindhi students to concerned ministry. Memorandum pointed out the nonparticipation of any person associated with native Sindhi population in preparation of all language policies implemented by government after independence up till that time. Representative delegation of Sindhi students also demanded solution of language issue through adjudication. They proposed to constitute a commission of impartial experts for that purpose (Joyo, 2005).

Migration of outsiders in Sindh especially after independence shifted demographic balance against native's majority. Karachi's 432% growth of population during two decades of 40s and 50s is an unmatchable phenomenon throughout known human history (Gayer, 2007). Establishment of One-Unit further enhanced the pace of Punjabis and Pukhtoon settlement in Sindh. Settlement of 4.5 million people from other regions in Sindh during One-Unit period is a glaring evidence of phenomenal increase in outsiders' influx. The period witnessed the increase in number of Urdu speaking population by four times and Punjabis as well Pukhtoons by approximately twelve times (Ahmad, 1988). Influx of outsiders was not only limited to Urban centers but a considerable numbers of people chose to settle in rural areas of interior Sindh. Sindhis did not appreciate the settlers' evasive attitude for Sindhi culture as they showed lack of interest for Sindhi culture. They preferred for their children to get education from Urdu medium schools. Government transformed the medium of instruction from Sindhi to Urdu in some of the schools established in the areas which received influx of immigrants i.e. in district Sanghar and Tharparkar medium of instruction for number of schools was changed (Craig Baxter, Yougendra K. Malik, Charles H. Kennedy & Robert C. Oberst, 1988). Transformation of demographic map had detrimental implications for Sindhi culture along with economic and political loss. Especially Karachi became culturally non-Sindhi and Sindhis were haunted by the specter that incessant migration of outsiders would outnumber them and they would be destined the fate of Dravidian of ancient Sindh who were driven out by Arians. Nationalist intellectuals like G. M. Syed propagated that indigenous Sindhis were facing the serious threat of becoming minority in their own native region (Syed, 1991).

### Conclusion

The prevalent sense of deprivation in Sindh due to injustices perpetrated against them during One-Unit period resulted in a sense of alienation amongst indigenous Sindhis. Majority of the indigenous population were not satisfied with economic, administrative and cultural policies of central government. Settlement of outsiders created long lasting resentments in Sindh. Consequently nationalist were able to convince Sindhi masses that their miserable conditions were because of usurpation of Sindh's resources by outsiders. The situation provided a favorable ground for Sindhi nationalism to flourish. It was the period when the slogans like 'Jeay Sindh' (long live Sindh) got popularity and twilight period of 60s witnessed a vigorous popular campaign in Sindh for annulment of One-Unit and restoration of Sindh's provincial status.

It is evident that sense of marginalization developed due to significant socio-economic and political inequalities which existed between Sindhis and non-Sindhis. When socio-economic and political disparities coincide with cultural and linguistic denial by the dominant groups, the situation becomes more fertile to give birth to ethnic conflict and nationalist tendencies that may lead to chaotic situation at later stage. Hence, state authorities need to ensure an equal and due representation of all the ethnic groups in provincial and national power structures.

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