



RESEARCH PAPER

Historical Context of Minority Rights of Pakistan: Theory and Practices

¹Sidra Awan*, ²Dr. Tahira Mumtaz and ³Dr. Syed Raghav Ali

1. Ph. D Scholar, Department of Politics & International Relations, G. C. Women University Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Lecturer Department of Politics & International Relations, G. C. Women University Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Executive Director Lahore Institute for Research and Analysis, Punjab, Pakistan

Corresponding Author

sidraawan@gcwuf.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This study explores the development of minority rights from ancient civilizations to the present, providing a thorough historical contextualization of these rights. The study also explores the idea of minority rights in diverse political, religious, and cultural contexts, emphasizing the difficulties and complexities minority groups have encountered across time. Minority groups, such as Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and Ahmadis, have been widely discriminated against and marginalized as a result of succeeding administrations and regimes' frequent failure to follow this ideal. This research used a qualitative approach to historical analysis, drawing on primary and secondary sources such as policy documents, speeches, and archive records. Key informants, including academics, human rights advocates, and historians, participated in semi-structured interviews. This study finds out discriminatory laws and practices have been used to sustain a pattern of institutionalized discrimination against minority populations. Significant obstacles stand in the way of minority groups' access to political, economic, and educational opportunities. The government should take proactive measures to enhance minority rights protections in order to rectify the historical injustices that minority groups in Pakistan have experienced. These measures should include enforcing current laws and policies, fostering interfaith understanding and communication, and giving minority communities access to economic and educational opportunities. Minority groups' cultural legacy should also be promoted and preserved, and their contributions to Pakistan's history and progress should be acknowledged and honored.

Keywords: Minority Groups, Discrimination, Minority Rights

Introduction

Pakistan's rich diversity and multiple identities, encompassing various languages, ethnicities, cultures, and religions, present both opportunities and challenges in the socio-political context. This unique attribute makes the country's socio-political context and institutional setup complex, complicating efforts to ensure representation and address underrepresentation and discrimination (Zaidi, 2014).

As human rights are a vast subject having variant colours. Throughout the global history, the subject has been viewed from multiple prisms; thus, different perspectives have evolved the very concept of human rights over time. Human rights encompass a variety of approaches, including civil rights, liberties, and other natural and socio-political rights and privileges inherent to humanity. The concept of human rights has been discussed since the times of ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Over time, these rights became associated with class distinctions, leading to the formation of groups aimed at protecting their members' rights. This division led to the identification of different groups, which then came to be seen as majorities and minorities, each with distinct identities.

This research article is concluded in light of the framework of Pakistan's Constitution of 1973 and Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's speech of August 11, 1947, which defines certain freedoms and liberties for the citizens of Pakistan - particularly religious minorities. The Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, bears several provisions for vulnerable segments of society that encourage the political participation of religious minorities [*who are 3.7% of the total population*] and further guarantee their representation in civil services and administration (Ahmed, Arsalan, & Mustafa, 2020)

Table 1
Polpulation Distribution of Pakistan

Religion	Population	Percentage (%)
Muslim	124,462,897	97.75
Christian	2,458,924	1.93
Hindu (Jati)	228,559	0.18
Ahmadi/Qadiani	140,512	0.11
Scheduled Castes	21,157	0.02
Sikh	5,649	<0.01
Parsi	358	<0.01
Others	15,249	0.01
Total	127,333,305	100

Source : Pakistan Bureau of Statistctics Census 2023

During the time of independence, a considerable number of non-Muslims lived in Pakistan, especially in Sindh and East Bengal. The rampant violence in Punjab caused thousands of minorities to migrate from the west Punjab region to India. Similarly, the whole Muslim community was forced out of Indian Punjab and Haryana into Pakistan resulted in the minimal presence of minorities in West Punjab. It is to be noted that until the breakup of Pakistan in 1971, the minorities were treated properly and enjoyed constitutional rights, as the joint electorate system allowed them to participate in national and political life with reserved seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies (Hemnani, 2024). In addition to this, during the Ahmadiyya Movement of 1953, martial law was imposed to counter agitation against minorities. However, things started to change after the 1971 war.

As per the data of the Election of Commission of Pakistan (ECP), in 2018 there were 120 political parties registered with the Election Commission of Pakistan. Most of them have a mechanism to include non-Muslims in the affairs of Political Parties by introducing Minority Wings. Such arrangements ensure non-Muslim participation in practical politics (Mariam Mufti, 2020). The practice of wings is a mechanism devised by the political decision-makers for passing the gesture of inclusiveness. Regarding it, the minority wings are established by the political parties for accommodating the religious minorities in the mainstream of politics.

There is no doubt, that most of the time in the political history of Pakistan, the powerhouse has been controlled by the military rulers that have contaminated the political culture and weakened the democratization in Pakistan. The history of Pakistan has witnessed four regimes of military dictators i.e. Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan 1958-68, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan 1969-71, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq 1977-88, and General Pervez Musharraf 1999-2008 (Advocate C. N., 1997). It is quite astonishing that whenever the military rulers assumed power, they established a local government system that accommodated the religious minorities in practical politics. Contrary to it, the democratic governments always avoided establishing such arrangements as decentralization of powers, resultantly, a huge portion of the population - particularly religious minorities, are excluded from mainstream politics (Malik D. A., 2018).

The provisions in the Constitutions of 1956, 1963 and 1971 of Pakistan provide for the safeguard of minority rights. These included the right to profess their religion freely, to protect them from any form of and their representation in the legislative bodies at national and provincial level. Moreover, only religious minorities are the spotlight in the constitutional provisions of Pakistan and no linguistic or ethnic minorities are specified. However, the Islamization of the constitution by Zai ul Haq made certain amendments in the constitution which halted the freedom of religion and faith of the Ahmadiyya community. The blasphemy laws introduced several complications for the minorities of Pakistan. In addition to this, the role of judiciary has proven to be biased and pressurized under the islamic groups. This has created an insecure atmosphere for the minorities, who are at the mercy of the majority population.

Literature Review

The domain of the Socio-Political context is directly related to civil and political liberties. The concept of fundamental rights can be traced back to the seventeenth century or even earlier, especially when the social contract theory was propounded as a basis of political society. Regarding it, James Miller in his publication 'Can Democracy Work?' defines that the states emerging in the twentieth century significantly had different socio-political complexion. The fundamental rights were practically to be found in every Constitution as those were deemed essential to protect the rights and liberties of the citizens of a state. Later, because of debates on the proposed United Nations Charter for Human Rights, a new trend was set to include such rights in the Constitution because a fresh and modern democratic world was born (Miller, 2018)

Pakistan's ideology emerged as the driving force behind the creation of a nation that would allow Muslims in South Asia to live in freedom and protect their rights inside an Islamic State. This study aims to identify the fundamental principles and rights of minorities that were incorporated into Pakistani ideology. Similarly, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's theories are integrated to comprehend the rights of Pakistan's minorities. The study's findings demonstrate that one of the tenets of Pakistan's ideology was to govern the country in accordance with Islamic law. This study conducted in this area to present the real picture of Pakistan, which is now dealing with both constitutional and minority-related societal challenges (Umbreen, 2023)

Every citizen of a state is equally entitled to fundamental rights and privileges. Similarly, the country's Constitution in general and several laws in specific guarantee the fundamental rights of religious minorities. Although Pakistan gained its independence in the name of Islam, the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal protection for the many minorities who have settled here. However, the nation as a whole, and minorities in particular, are impacted by the present wave of terrorism in the country. Attacking minorities or their places of worship and educational institutions was a convenient way for fanatic groups, non-state actors, and self-declared religious organizations to demonstrate their power and carry out horrible atrocities (Mahmud, 1995)

The context of Pakistan – in terms of rich diversity and socio-political context to accept it, is unique and sometimes makes it complicated to define. As accord to Rasul Bux Rais, the existing system either socio-political or socio-economic is imperative to consider in the context of social inclusion of vulnerable groups. Additionally, the reserved seats for religious minorities are further a domain that has spawned several new debates around the representation of minorities. With respect to it, Naeem Shakir – a political activist of left-wing politics and advocate supreme court, afforded a narrative of democracy that is based on pluralism in his article 'why the reservation of seats for minorities in Pakistan's assembly is ridiculous (Shakir N., 2016).'

As a nation, it is self-evident to have questions about our identity or identities because we cannot speak for very long with any exactness. As one's experience and identity, without acknowledging its other side—the ruptures, and discontinuities. These ruptures and discontinuities are as important an ingredient of history as are the success and victories. Such honest accounts then become the fundamental basis of the cultural identity of a nation. None can define their identity if one's history is effaced as identity. Whether religious or ethnic, it is linked to history and culture (Diana Brydon, 2000).

Dr. Iftikhar H. Malik (Malik D. I., 2002) is another name that defined the religious minorities and summarizes the current massacres of religious minorities. The writer provides an attentive consideration of the dilemma of religious minorities which is based on the thinking that the Muslim majority in Pakistan is homogeneous. This summary is provided a comprehension introduction to the religious minority and highlights its ironic cultural diversity. In Pakistan, there are five regional communities such as Baloch, Muhajir, Punjabis, Pashtuns, and Sindhis and in addition, numerous smaller groups exist in Pakistan. Furthermore, religious and denominational groups for instance Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, Kalasha, Parsis, and Sikhs, and Shia Muslim divisions including Ismailis and Bohra's.

Human rights are the most contentious topic in the modern era. People all around the world want their human rights, or the amenities that are necessary for people to live good, peaceful lives. Islam introduced the idea of human rights in the seventh century A.D., but in the West, it is associated with Magna Carta, which was signed in England in 1215. Western academics assert that the idea of human rights originated in the West, however the first human rights charter was actually the Holy Prophet's final lecture. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the full human rights charter, sometimes known as the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," in December 1966. Human rights are now guaranteed by the constitutions of practically all democratic states, although regrettably, minority rights have not received enough attention. Regardless of caste, color, race, or religion, every citizen of Pakistan, a democratic nation, is entitled to all fundamental rights. This study examines and evaluates the concepts of human rights in the West and Islam, as well as the rights of minorities under the Pakistani constitution and Islam (An'Naim, 2022)

In Pakistan, minority rights are still a major concern even with constitutional guarantees. The legislative structure of the nation, which includes Articles 20, 25, and 36 of the Pakistani Constitution, guarantees religious minorities equality and freedom. Particularly in Sindh, Christians and Hindus experience attacks on their places of worship and forced conversions. Implementation varies despite court rulings and certain government programs, like establishing a National Commission for Minorities and rebuilding places of worship. Human rights organizations and other members of the international community have expressed concern and urged Pakistan to strengthen its protections for minorities. The ability of these people to fully exercise their rights as citizens is nonetheless restricted by a number of legal, social, and political reasons. This study recommends guaranteeing genuine equality, justice, and safety for Pakistan's religious minorities, considerable work remains necessary (Iqbal, 2025)

Material and Methods

The historical background of minority rights in Pakistan was investigated in this study using a qualitative historical research methodology. An extensive examination of primary sources, including as speeches, policy documents, and archive documents, was carried out in order to collect information on the evolution of minority rights in Pakistan between 1947 and the present. To add context and insights, secondary sources like books, news stories, and scholarly journals were also examined. To find trends and topics pertaining to minority rights, including the function of important players, occasions, and laws, a thematic analysis was carried out. Additionally, 20 significant informants including

academics, human rights activists, and historians were interviewed in a semi-structured manner to get their opinions and thoughts on the background of minority rights in Pakistan.

Results and Discussion

Minorities Defined by Pakistan's Legal Framework

Pakistan has been regarded as a multicultural society which incorporates different flavors of diversity in cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic domains. The constitution or legal framework of Pakistan does not provide definite explanation of what constitutes to be a minority. However, certain provisions within the constitution and the legislative framework of Pakistan provide a vague description of the minorities in the state of Pakistan. In Pakistan, mostly minorities are referred to the non-Muslim community who are lesser in number as compared to the Muslim majority population of Pakistan. These religious minorities have their own sects and culture, and demand the safeguard of their legitimate interests.

International Legal Framework for Minorities

The United Nations has been regarded as one of the most significant and essential components of the international landscape for the protection of Human Rights after the end of the Second World War. Article 27 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights guarantees the protection of economic and cultural activities of the people, especially referring to the indigenous people, such as fishing and hunting. In addition to this, a Human Rights Committee of ICCPR was formed to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the convention by member states. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights is yet another remarkable contribution to protecting the right of socio-economic participation of people. Although the term 'people' has not been defined thoroughly, it incorporates the rights of ethnic communities that can be regarded as minorities. For instance, it has stressed the right to development and safe and healthy living conditions as well as the socio-economic rights of Ogoni people in Nigeria. Furthermore, it has been emphasized that the Ogoni people should benefit from the resource operations done in their territory. It also focuses on the rights of the black population in Mauritania and the Katangese population in Zaire. Although the European Union does not have specific provisions to address the rights of minorities, it is related to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which aims to promote arms control, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. International Labor Organization provided various instruments to eliminate discrimination on the basis of color, religion and race in international labor practices. Moreover, special references had been made in the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention for migrant workers in 1958. The Minority Rights Group International has been regarded as another apparent Human Rights International Organization that works for the protection of the rights of religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities as well as of indigenous people at the international level. It focuses on the cultural, social and economic participation of minorities and criticizes the discriminatory policies of the state in providing education, healthcare, employment and property rights of minorities. Therefore, the primary goal of Minority Right Group International is to promote and safeguard the rights of minority communities, with special focus on their development and protection (Weller, 2010).

Historical Context of Minorities in Pakistan

Over several years of the policy formation of Pakistan, communal domination has remained a significant element in the decision making process and legislative measures taken with respect to the freedom and rights of religious and ethnic minorities of the state. This has not only damaged the feelings of the national and religious minorities of the country, but has further threatened the very existence of them through the dominance of religious majority that commend limitations to the minority community to practice their

religion and culture. This reflects the socio-political context of Pakistan in breach of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN which grants freedom of conscience, thought and religion and has been given the right to freely profess their religious beliefs and to observe their religion as per their own teachings and worship rituals (United Nations, 1948). Pakistan came into being after decades of long oppression at the hands of British colonialists, and became a homeland for the Muslims of Indian subcontinent, which were regarded as minority in the undivided state of India. The founder of Pakistan as well as the leaders of that time visualized for a more secular country that incorporate various elements of ethno religious minority and majority communities. However, with the passage of time, Pakistan found itself tangled in sectarian violence and religious intolerance that shook the fundamental core of the country. nities and groups, festivals were openly shared and widely celebrated throughout Pakistan.

After seventy eight years of independence, noticeable transformation can be seen in the context of religious minorities' rights and freedom in Pakistan. Under the regime of Zia ul Haq, the Jewish synagogue was destroyed in 1988. During the time of independence, Karachi comprised of almost a large number of Jewish population. However, after the dictatorship of Ayub Khan in 1960s, the Jews started to migrate out of Pakistan. Moreover, the destruction of Jewish Synagogue was yet another event that has been marked as a significant factor in the decline of Jewish population and culture in Pakistan (Salman, 2023).

Specific laws and policies have been designed by the legislative framework of Pakistan which plays a significant role in downgrading the religious minorities' rights and freedom. The blasphemy law has been the most crucial one that has enabled the majority population hatred against the religious and sectarian minorities to be supported under the rubric of legal framework. The religious, ethnic and sectarian minorities face discrimination and marginalization by the legal and social context of Pakistani society. In recent decades, the religious minorities have been a subject to organized and well planned violence at the hands of extremists. Anti-Ahmadi laws had been introduced to deal with the Ahmadis separately and have declared them non-Muslims under the law of the state. Moreover, the sectarian violence against the Shia community and religious minority initiated under the rule of General Zia. This is due to the fact that Zia utilized and strengthened the Sunni extremist for his own purpose to contain Soviet in Afghanistan and to get a hold of Kashmir. However, these extremists are implicated in the violent assault on the minorities of Pakistan ever since. Nevertheless, the aspects of immoderation and intolerance in the religious matters of Pakistan can be linked to the birth of the nation in 1947.

This must be noted that the founding fathers of the state of Pakistan wanted a secular state where politics and religion would be dealt as separate matters. Muhammad Ali Jinnah held Muslims and non-Muslims citizens to be at the same level and should enjoy the citizenship rights equally. During his time, his cabinet was comprised of people belonging to different religious community and reflected a secular and diverse perspective in the politics. However, in today's political realm, the representation of minority community is minimal and insignificant in the parliament and cabinet of Pakistan, depicting a symbolic representation. During the time of Pakistan's founding, Jinnah held secular views and guaranteed that no one would be discriminated for their caste, color, creed or religion and should be given equal citizenship rights of the state. In his famous speech of 11 August, 1947, he declared freedom of religion and practice before the Constituent Assembly and ensured the separation of religion from the state. However, the dream of the founder remained unfulfilled as the later political leaders of Pakistan Islamized the political framework of the country, including laws, constitutions and objective resolution of the state. During the time of independence, the minority of Pakistan comprised of 23 percent of its population. After 78 years of its establishment, Pakistan has almost 3 percent of minority community left, which depicts the decline of minority in the state of Pakistan.

Throughout the political history of Pakistan, the successors of Quaid e Azam made few decisions and policies that deteriorated the religious tolerance and inclusivity in the country. The Objective Resolution has been marked as the first and the most essential aspect of this argument that was declared by the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in 1949. According to the Objective Resolution of Pakistan, the constitution of Pakistan would be based on the principles of Islam and the fundamental rights of every citizen, including minorities, shall be guaranteed under the provisions of Islam. This was widely criticized by the non-Muslim members of the parliament as Islamic Resolution and recommended few amendments to make the objective resolution more inclusive. However, the plebiscite to conduct amendments was held and the non-Muslims minority was overpowered by the majority Muslim members. In addition to this, the declaration of Pakistan as an Islamic Republic in the constitution depicts its commitment to upholding Islamic principles while governing the country, and neglecting the values of other religious minorities. Subsequently, the Islamization policy of General Zia ul Haq further deteriorated the peaceful living conditions for the minority community members in the 1980s. The rise of armed militias and terrorist organizations tried to implement their own Islamic teachings and policies over the population through violent and aggressive methods. Similarly, the draconian law of blasphemy provides little air for the religious minorities to survive in the state of Pakistan among the majority Muslims population. This has resulted in various incidents and violent attacks on the minorities and their infrastructure in the 21st century (Newberg, 1995)

Laws and Policies Relating to Minorities

The constitutional and legal framework of Pakistan impose certain restrictions on the basic fundamental rights of minorities. The Islamic constitution of Pakistan segregate the society and marginalize the religious minorities in the state, by limiting the morals, public order and fundamental rights as per the provisions of Islam.

The government of Pakistan has failed to take into consideration the atrocities and violence perpetrated by the extremists against minorities. Islam has been given the foundational position in the state constitution of Pakistan and has been declared the religion of state, disregarding the religious identity of minorities. This signifies that the state laws and legislative policies be in line with the provisions of Islam and does not take into consideration the minorities' religious laws and preferences. Although the constitution of Pakistan provides freedom of religion and its practice in the state of Pakistan, in practice these provisions are just theoretical and have been limited owing to several structural and social factors. Similarly, the notion of freedom of speech has been narrowed down in accordance with the dignity and respect of Islam.

Similarly, the second amendment made in the constitution of Pakistan in 1974 excluded the Ahmadis from the circle of Muslims and were declared non-Muslims and religious minorities. It further highlighted the definition of Muslims and non-Muslims in the state of Pakistan. Likewise, the Ordinance XX of 1984 enforced anti-Ahmadi laws and regulations where all the activities of Ahmadis and Qadiani groups were declared anti-Islamic introduction of Section 295 B and C in the Penal Code of Pakistan put fuel to the

in 1990 to protect and safeguard fire of religious intolerance and hatred experienced by minorities of Pakistan. According to these blasphemy laws, the use of derogatory remarks against the Holy Prophet, Quran or Islam was made punishable for life long incarceration or death penalty. The minorities bear the brunt of these laws who easily become subject of violence under these provisions by the extremist section of the society. In addition to religious minorities, several vulnerable Muslims and members of different sectarian communities have been accused of blasphemy. These people are killed before reaching the judiciary premises and no strict penalties have been made to investigate the case properly. Therefore, the discriminatory laws and legal framework of Pakistan has been regarded as the root cause of the vulnerable condition of the minorities in the country.

However, in 2001, the ordinance was passed to protect the communal properties of minorities. National Commission of Minorities was established the rights of minorities. Moreover, the Protection of the rights of Religious minorities Act of 2020 undertakes several provisions that protect the rights and interests of the minorities in Pakistan. This act ensured the prohibition of forced conversion and forced marriages of members belonging to minority communities. Similarly, the freedom of religion to profess and practice it was ensured. Moreover, several penalties were made for hate speech, discrimination, violence and destruction of religious minorities' heritage by extremists.

National Legal Framework for Citizenship

To analyze the state of Pakistan and its relation with the citizens, it is essential to provide an overview of the historical development of the modern nation state system. The emergence of the modern-day state system has its origin back to the treaty of Westphalia of the 19th century. It was recognized after decades of long wars based on nationality which resulted into the formation of an idea of legitimate government based on the principles of national self-determination. This idea became the fundamental element behind the establishment of a nation on the basis of shared history, language, culture and other common traits among a group of individuals. This principle of nationality was recognized as the basic right of sovereignty among different nations and became the basic factor behind the strengthening of state-citizen relationship.

In this state of Pakistan, the lack of equilibrium between the authoritarian bureaucratic governance in the state of Pakistan and the fragile and ineffective citizenship rights of the society to enable the state for the fulfillment of their demands and necessities. (Muzaffar, et. al., 2024; Muzaffar, et. al., 2023; Muzaffar & Choudhary, 2017). These include the political elites, business or capitalist elite groups and the state bureaucracy or administrative apparatus (Alavi, 1972). In most of the cases, the state rules and governs the society not by force but by the imposition of ideological perspective on the society. This ideological perspective can be originated from the national identity, linguistic, ethnic or religious characteristics that have been employed by the state as a deceptive act for power dynamics and social control over the citizens of the society.

Marginalization of Minorities and Challenges to Citizenship

One of the most significant factors contributing to the marginalization of minorities and the challenges to their citizenship rights has been regarded as the domination of the majority, including ethnic, religious or sectarian domination. In a democratic society, the domination of a specific group poses serious challenges to the fundamental democratic principles of the state. As per the democratic principles, equal rights and equal status before the government of the state is the basic foundation of the principle of democracy. The realist perspective of minority rights with respect to international and national legal framework illustrates the principle of power and protection of national sovereignty. All these instruments and legal provisions provide for those minority rights that do not damage the sovereignty of the state.

Organizational and Policy Infrastructure: Tools of Majority Domination

According to the work of Marc Weller and Katherine Nobbs on Political Participation of Minorities, there are five significant ways to preserve majority supremacy by the dominant communities in a democratic society. The task has been accomplished via the political strategies and organizations which include demographic hegemony, influence over the political institutions, electoral supremacy, lawful and authoritarian dominance, and control over the territory.

Demographic Hegemony

A majority exerts its domination over the minority in the democratic society when it surpasses the minority in citizenship and control of the Electoral College. Although the demographic hegemony of the members belonging to the majority community may lead from ecological reasons, the role of the state has been significantly apparent to strengthen the foundation of the majority community to establish their dominance over the minorities. This includes right sizing the jurisdiction of the state to enable the majority community to consolidate their authority over the region. For instance, Israel did not annex the territories of West Bank and Gaza in the 1980s to confine the Palestinian population within these territories. Similarly, in Pakistan, Muhammad Zafarullah Khan was dejected from holding key positions in the political infrastructure of Pakistan and was coerced into resignation, which compelled him to leave the country in 1954. A different approach has been adopted by democratic states around the world to cut back the role of the minority community by shrinking their contribution in the citizenship of the country. For instance, the denaturalization of Russian speakers by the Estonian Law related to citizenship after independence in 1992 disregarded their citizenship rights. Such policies related to denaturalization are often referred to as soft and indirect exclusion of minority communities from the state.

Electoral Supremacy

Members belonging to the majority community parties have an edge in the electoral process of the state, where their victory depends on the ethnically influenced politics and the unification of dominant community's political actors. Such tactics are utilized by the dominant community members to influence the elections and to contract the role of minority in the electoral systems. There are different strategies employed by the states to shrink the representation of minority political parties, which include lowering minority voting power, electoral frameworks that marginalize and underrepresent minorities, establishing electoral boundaries and limitations to disadvantage minority votes, developing unfair competition tactics limiting minorities' access to compete, and the discriminatory strategies adopted in the aftermath of the elections.

Lowering the minority votes

Apart from not giving citizenship rights and naturalization to the members belonging to minority communities, there are numerous measures taken by the state to reduce the share of minority votes in the election. Pakistan the segregation of Ahmadis in electoral processes highlights the discriminatory systemic approach carried out by the majoritarian government. This is due to the legal status of Ahmadis as non-Muslims who declare themselves having Muslim identity. The laws and policies adopted by the government for the Ahmadi communities play a significant role in suppressing their votes in the election. Since the 1974 declaration of Ahmadi community as non-Muslims, the government took precarious measures in order to outcast the members belonging to Ahmadi community. This include the 1985 introduction of separate electoral voters list, where the Ahmadis had to specifically declare themselves as non-Muslims for the sake of their registration as voters which is totally opposite to their religious beliefs. Therefore, Ahmadi had only two choices, either to practically denounce their faith or to remain excluded from the right to vote. This resulted in the 167,000 registrations of Ahmadi community as voters in 2018 elections, while the total population of Ahmadi community living in Pakistan exceeds 500,000. Hence, the Ahmadis were caste out or invalidated from voting, which reduced their share in the political process. Such policies affect the turnout of minorities indirectly.

Electoral frameworks that marginalize and underrepresent minorities

Minorities are underprivileged to get equal and unbiased representation from the majoritarian electoral framework if they are widely scattered. Pakistan Muslim League (N)

integrated the Baluchistan National Party and Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf indulged the Awami National Party within their party premises to support the majority parties to get a foothold in the regions where ethnic and minority concerns are significantly high and to avoid alienating minority parties. Moreover, the culture of forming coalition government in Pakistan has been apparent to marginalize the other emerging parties to promote kinship politics in the country (Rueters, 2024).

Establishing electoral boundaries and limitations to disadvantage minority votes

The demarcation of constituency borders and voting districts during the election might pose significant challenge for the geographically concentrated minorities to attain equitable representation in the elections. There are two ways of discriminating the minorities through the demarcation of electoral boundaries, which include the sporadic distribution of minorities over the territorial jurisdiction of the state reducing them in numbers in each constituency.

Discriminatory strategies adopted in the aftermath of the elections

Pakistan, the Ahmadi community members cannot take significant positions in the governmental offices of the state until or unless they denounce their Muslim identity and declare themselves as non-Muslims. Similarly, in the era of Jim Crow, several legal measures were taken by the US South governments to prevent access to the offices for the poor Blacks by granting entry on the basis of expensive financial requirements and conditions. Such measures restricted the African Americans to stand for the office and were forced to back off. Pakistan, the fourth Baluchistan conflict has been an illustrating example of such measures taken by the government to suppress the minority leaders and local governments. From 1973 to 1977, President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto dismissed the provincial government of National Awami Party on the allegations of arms supply and separatist actions. This gave rise to the outbreak of protests in the province of Baluchistan. This led to the incarceration of Baluchistan governor, Akbar Khan Bugti and Khair Bakhsh Marri, an influential leader. Therefore, such acts highlight the discriminatory measures taken by the state to restrain the minority from political participation and from holding offices.

Hegemony over Political Institutions

In Pakistan, the political and governmental institutions are run on the principles of Islamic constitutions and laws that sideline the provisions of other religions of the people belonging to minority communities. Moreover, apart from fundamental rights, neither any provisions have been made in the constitution of Pakistan regarding the human rights nor the Bill of rights has been incorporated in the constitution

Territorial Supremacy

Apparently, the leading and dominant communities strive for dominance over the whole territory of the state due to the fear of secession attempts that could probably escalate if a part of territory fell under the control of minorities. This may also provide a wide range of space to the minorities to develop their own culture and oppose integration of majority cultural and social values. One of the most effective ways adopted by the state to maintain territorial domination has been the administrative de-concentration through centralized political structure. Such unitary state structures prevent the minorities from getting a hold on a specific part of territory and to form a local majority. This highlights the manipulative measures taken by states to promote the domination of majority community members. One of the key examples of this domination has been clearly visible in the case of Baluchistan governance in Pakistan. The state controls the resources and administrative appointments with in the province of Baluchistan and decisions are taken by federal government on behalf

of provincial representatives. This limits the regional autonomy of the Bloch minority community.

Lawful and authoritarian dominance

The utilization of state institutions and security sectors to promote the majority domination in the state has been apparent within several state structures especially with the rise of minority resistance. For this purpose, the state emerges as a police state and uses establishment for fighting against the insurgents. Pakistan the culture of appointing the members of the same ethnic or religious community for top official posts has become a trend in the security, political, social and economic landscape of Pakistan.

Along with security sector domination of majority community, the legal framework has also been apparently biased towards majority community of the state. In Pakistan, the judiciary had been a little independent for the merit based appointment of the Chief Justice; however, the latest amendment passed by the parliament of Pakistan on 21st October, 2024 with the name of 26th Constitutional Bill empowered the Parliament to pick the top Judge (Al Jazeera, 2024). Such measures have the potential to further promote the disproportionate appointment of the judges on the basis of parliament dominated by majority community politicians.

Conclusion

The citizenship of religious minorities in Pakistan has been severely affected by the social exclusion which is regarded as a severe challenge. Owing to the stigmatization and marginalization of minorities in the educational, public and workplace domains, the individuals belonging to religious minorities require enhanced level of regular protection. One of the significant factors that contribute towards the portrayal of negative perception related to religious minorities include the media and television source of information that maximizes the social exclusion of minorities. The lack of positive perceptions and increased negative stigmatization of minorities by these sources of information plays an essential role towards social segregation of minorities from the mass society. The status of religious minorities as a second-class citizen or outsider has been amplified due to their ongoing marginalization in the educational, workplace, residential and healthcare institutions of the society. Consequently, the status of minorities as non-dominant citizens has been reinforced by the social isolation which deteriorates their sense of self and generates negative effects on the minds of minorities.

Recommendations

The government of Pakistan needs to strengthen all existing legal protections against bias throughout educational institutions and workplaces and healthcare facilities and public service organizations. The Pakistani constitution ensures equality rights for everyone yet weak enforcement systems alongside inadequate legal protection allows discrimination against religious minorities to occur.

- Reservation institutions should distribute their seats based on the actual percentage distribution of religious minorities throughout the states and throughout Pakistan. Such an allocation system prevents any one community from surpassing all others since every community gets equal representation which allows focused attention to their distinct needs. The proportional distribution of representation for Hindu along with Sikh Christians and other religious minority groups will allow the entire spectrum of minority viewpoints to be considered.
- Peace and influence in decision processes must be genuine functions of these reserved position appointments. Religious minority representatives should have active roles on

important committees where laws and policies affecting minority communities are planned including prohibition of discrimination and freedom of worship legislation and healthcare system development strategies.

- **Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Legislation:** Both public and private areas need new complete anti-discrimination legislation to protect citizens effectively. The legislation should establish religious discrimination along with caste discrimination and ethnic discrimination and gender discrimination and disability discrimination as explicit criminal offenses throughout public spaces and private life. Each law should establish definitive criteria for discrimination together with immediate and secondary forms of discrimination to prevent exclusion of individuals or groups from social engagement.

Sector-Specific Reforms: *Specific reforms should be introduced in key areas:*

- **Education:** Administrative education policies should ensure religious minority student access to admission in all public and private schools through bias-free admission procedures. The education system must offer minority students a diverse learning program which focused on building understanding between faith communities. Planned scholarship programs established for minority students would enhance their chances of obtaining quality educational opportunities.
- **Employment:** Employment should adopt equal employment opportunities requirements that mandate both public and private sectors to give employment access without consideration of religious affiliation. Businesses which practice hiring discrimination must receive defined punishments.
- **Healthcare:** Minority groups [irrespectively] must obtain fair and equal healthcare service access.
- **Mass Awareness Drives:** It is imperative to invest on public education and public sensitization campaigns for influencing the local trend and tendency of discrimination based on religious identities.
- **Reserved Seats in National and Provincial Assemblies:** Religious minorities need reserved parliamentary seats at every level of governance as the fastest route to boost their political inclusion in Pakistan. The present reservations for religious minorities in National Assembly seats should be strengthened and extended to achieve better national political and demographic representation.
- **Proportional Representation:** Reservation institutions should distribute their seats based on the actual percentage distribution of religious minorities throughout the states and throughout Pakistan. Such an allocation system prevents any one community from surpassing all others since every community gets equal representation which allows focused attention to their distinct needs. The proportional distribution of representation for Hindu along with Sikh Christians and other religious minority groups will allow the entire spectrum of minority viewpoints to be considered.
- **Representation in Local Councils:** Local councils must have reserved seats for religious minorities to achieve minority participation in grassroots-level governance. Local policies affecting communities will gain minority influence through direct participation which ensures their proper representation in regional and local program execution.
- **Inclusive Policy Formulation:** Peace and influence in decision processes must be genuine functions of these reserved position appointments. Religious minority representatives should have active roles on important committees where laws and policies affecting minority communities are planned including prohibition of

discrimination and freedom of worship legislation and healthcare system development strategies.

- **Encourage Coalition-Building Across Groups:** Political cooperation needs to be built simultaneously with protecting the individual representation of religious minorities and majorities. Minority representatives need to develop alliances with non-minority legislators to protect the rights of every excluded group. Such an approach would create an inclusive political culture which brings Pakistan toward national unity.

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