

BIRADARI ROLE IN INTEREST ARTICULATION IN PAKISTAN

**Dr. Mughees Ahmed*

Introduction

In Pakistan interest groups pay particular attention to influencing political parties and political system. Distinctive and well-resourced pressure groups are to be found at provincial and district level. Interest groups in Pakistan are constituted mainly along occupational and economic interests, such as trade unions, peasant groups, student- teacher groups, *biradari*-based and religious groups. *Interest groups* are formal or informal associations that magnify group influence over public policy. Their primary purpose is to influence public policy rather than recruit, nominate, and elect public officials,¹ but in Pakistan they want to do this. Here an attempt is made to present a general view of such elements which influence Pakistan political system, with appropriate examples from different areas and their political influence. Such a study can provide a preliminary base to extend the boundaries of comparative politics and a little detail on the role of pressure groups and *Biradari* (caste fraternity, clan) as a major pressure group particularly in Pakistani political system.

The offspring of one ancestor belong to the same caste and the collection of castes is called *Biradari*. The word '*Biradari*' is derived from the Persian word '*Biradar*', which means brother.

The process of interest articulation takes place in every political system around the world. Interest Articulation is "The process by which individuals and groups make demands upon the political decision makers. It marks the boundary between the society and the political system".² In the developed

* Department of Political Science, Govt. College Samanabad, Faisalabad.

countries/political systems, the political parties along with advantageous groups do this job. Interest group is a group of individuals who are linked by particular bonds of concern or advantage, and who have some awareness of these bonds.³

Political parties are a way where people with similar political and social ideas can join with others to express their opinions. Every political system has its own culture and political parties work according to the culture. Culture is the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in a political system. It encompasses both the political ideals and operating norms of a polity. Political culture is thus the manifestation in aggregate form of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics. A political culture is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of the system and thus it is rooted equally in public events and private experience.³ Factions and parties form because not all people think alike; conflict and differences of opinion seem to be natural to humanity. Suppressing disagreement, or prohibiting peaceful forms of conflict, can often lead to a loss of liberty. If dissenting views are denied the right to be heard, violence can be the alternative. This process exists in every system according to the behavior of its culture, and the political education. As Andrew Haywood says about British political parties "Class is the basis of British party politics. The group is seen as a party within a party".⁴ Gulmina Bilal writes, "Thus, we have in Pakistan a politicalised society with a strong mistrust of political parties. Political scientists believe that parties are essential to any political system, particularly a democracy. Parties are necessary because they are believed to serve as a platform for public

expression primarily because they do it through Interest Articulation and Interest aggregation. Interest Articulation implies that parties define and express a group's needs and wants in a way that the public and political system can understand. Interest aggregation means the process by which a party brings together various viewpoints on an issue. It is unfortunate that parties in Pakistan have not been allowed to nor have been able to do neither Interest Articulation nor aggregation.”⁵

In Pakistan systematic attempts at de-politicisation of society, hanging, arresting of political leaders and members occurred, leading many political workers to either go underground or leave the country. Persecution of parties in the name of accountability, ban on student politics, conducting even non-party general elections, frequent military interventions are all factors that posed challenges to parties. Anwar Syed writes that “The military in Pakistan is also disapproving of political parties. It has banned them, or excluded them from the electoral process, during periods of its dictatorship. But eventually it had to restore them. Ayub Khan not only permitted them to reappear but agreed to be the head of one of them. Ziaul Haq barred them from participating in the 1985 elections. But soon Mr. Junejo, his nominee as prime minister, discovered that the National Assembly could not function effectively in the absence of parties. The Muslim League was then revived both within and outside the legislature and so were other parties. They were barred, once again, from the local elections held in 2001, but they are active in the elected councils, even if informally”.⁶

Thus, it is not surprising that given the extreme straitjacketing of political parties, parties are dominated by either a few family figures or have become personality cults. Nevertheless, in every era, *biradari* groups seem to be active in

this process. Like other under developed systems, in Pakistan the organized groups (Army &Bureaucracy) have been very influential. Army is more active among other institutional interest groups. Khaled Ahmed explains army and bureaucracy role as interest groups in these words; "The army was the first dominant interest group after 1947. It became strong because of its symbiotic relationship with the bureaucracy that held the key political and judicial positions in the country. The earliest policy decisions were taken by bureaucrats who, like all bureaucrats in the world, thought that the politicians were unruly. The state-security policies the civil servants adopted brought them close to the army. This was the beginning of the most powerful interest group in Pakistan, known vaguely as the establishment?. The pivot of the worldview of this grouping was an epochal conflict with India. The nation-building process initiated after 1947 favoured the military-bureaucratic combine. Pakistan was meant to be a state that would oppose the fundamental principle of the Indian state. Born out of communal conflict, Pakistan represented a negation of India's secular nationalism. If one succeeded, it would mean the failure of the other. The first war with India began in 1947. The danger it presented to the state of Pakistan strengthened the military lobby. In 1951, a group of army officers tried to overthrow the civilian government. The grievance was the government's willingness to cease fire in Kashmir and move towards negotiations with India for a plebiscite. This pattern of internal conflict of interests has been repeated many times in Pakistan. The army as an interest group was brought down in 1971 by its compulsion to operate the state on the basis of conflict with India. In the next phase, the growing power of the clergy and the deprived industrial groups enabled the army to stage a comeback. The army under General Zia

combined three interest groups: the army, the clergy and the industrial elite. The army broke from the past secular tradition of professionalism by adopting ideology as its strong plank. This gradually led to the Islamisation of the army and the industrial elite. The democratic institutions opened up by him allowed a fuller Islamisation of the law followed by Islamisation of society.⁷

The Army succeeded for many times in reaching at government sectors (1958, 1970, 1977, and 1999). They have deep relations with politicians in every era. In Pakistan bureaucracy, also succeed in approaching to the parliament, for example Ghulam Ishaq Khan (who latter became Chairman Senate, President of Pakistan). The passion of unity and brotherhood is present in them. They prevented Bhutto from making his legislation according to his own consent. Especially, such interest groups are organized in large institutes; this is why their organization and objects are of same category. These groups present their particular demands and view points with the reference of respective institutions. Army and bureaucracy lead the political leaders and controlled the strings of government in their hands. It is fact that the army is one of the strongest pressure groups in Pakistan. The middle class normally seeks to articulate its interests through the bureaucracy and the army, at least among the two communities of Punjabis and Pathans.⁸ Trivialized through the meaningless and damaging social imposition of caste, class, tribe and *biradari* separations, its common human life stands fractionated and its human resource nullified. In any event, the general tendency is for interest group memberships increases while political party memberships decline.⁹

In the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, the demand of Muslims for an independent state had been made possible to bring to the government authorities by Muslim League. In this way Muslim League had been articulating interest from the demand of Pakistan to the era of Liaquat Ali Khan. The highly compartmentalized Punjabi and Sindhi feudals divided on caste and regional basis unite. The landlords had got what they wanted; the middle class had more jobs. Punjab divided on caste lines, i.e. Daultana leading South Punjab, a Noon group dominating Sargodha a Mamdot/Lahore group representing central Punjab etc. These men did not have the character or independent judgement.¹⁰ At the time of Independence, the political and social elites of Pakistan came from Hindu and Sikh-dominated urban centers of Punjab, while Muslim politics was dominated by rural feudal, large landowners and *biradari* (caste) chieftains.¹¹

Non-associational interest groups are more prevalent in the economically and politically less developed countries of the Third World.¹² Beside these groups, racial groups and kinship based *biradari* groups are also seen along with other groups, in which Jutt Association, Anjuman-e-Araian, Rajput Association, Gujar, Pathan, and other *biradaries* and their Association are prominent. These preserve groups; play the part of an interest group in a political party in actual terms. In the form of support to any party, the success becomes certain. These pressure groups seem to be very active in the days of elections. Every group tries to overcome or succeed to the other in political arena. They pressurize the political parties to give the ticket to their *biradari*, and often they succeed in doing so, though their organizations. Nevertheless, these groups cause a great impact on the results of elections in Pakistan and especially in Punjab province. The

political parties award the ticket to major *biradaries* ¹³. *Briadari* groups chose their M.P (Members of Parliament) with their support and they, then expect to them that they will bring their demands to the government and secure their benefits such as recruitment and transfer of the local officers, police station, and court for the solution of the local problems. Their control seems to be active on provincial and especially on district politics. "In a multiparty system, an interest having a vast mass-support base is likely to mount pressure on a particular party and the party tickets are distributed according to its dictates. Promotional groups are of propagandist type. The members belonging to this type of association seek to promote the cause for which it is constituted."¹⁴ General Zia encouraged *biradari* and feudal politics to keep the PPP out of power. And now General Musharraf's allies are also the land-owning families of the Punjab.¹⁵

Among the interest groups, associational groups seem to be active and organized in Pakistan. In industry and agriculture, trade union seems to be stimulated. The farmer union adopts a protest strategy in the demands of their rights in the agriculture. For instance, in the last days of Nawaz Sharif reign in 1999, the roads had been blocked for increasing the prices of cotton in the western Punjab and the protest processions were continued, that the government of Nawaz Sharif had been suspended, and this group could not continue its protest. The labours have their own organized associations that take the help of strikes and protested in order to bring their demands to the government. Punjab professors and lecturers association protested against the act of giving the government schools and colleges to private sector, in which the boycott, to type black ribbons and to march on roads were included. At last this protest (2003) succeeded in their

protest to abide by their demands. The student unions were also very active in this regard. Nevertheless the students unions are banned in these days (2006). Some student's federations are working in the name of *biradari* for instance Jatt Students Federation, Rajput Students, Gujjar Students. The students unions and lawyer unions are working and playing their roles as sub pressure groups of different political parties. They played a vital role in dealing Ahmadi as non Muslims, and Nizame-Mustafa movement (1977). The recent protests against the cartoon controversy were the part of this process.

Table:

Political Party	Student Group	Lawyers Group
Pakistan Muslim League	Muslim Students Federation	Jinnah, N Group, PML Lawyers Wing
Pakistan People's Party	People's Student Federation	People's Lawyers Forum
Jamaat-e-Islami	Islami Jamiat Talba	N A
Jamiat-ul-Ulma-e-Pakistan	Anjman Talba Islam	N A

Source: Survey Report

Economic interest groups are often disorganized. Besides them, the interest groups are present in trade in which trade union, stock market, industry and trade institutions are important. The government prefers their opinion in deciding policy, for example, to impose taxes, import export etc.

The association of Trade Bureau of Britain and Trade Bureau of America are such beneficial groups. The organizations of labourers are busy to convey their demands to the mill owners. In America, such trade unions help the political parties in elections.¹⁶ Politicians are also striking important deals with influential organizations representing industry, commerce, professions and labor. These are known as interest groups, and about half of the British electorate belongs to at least one of

them.¹⁷ In Pakistan; trade unions seem to be present seldom in local support than financial support. In Pakistan, the union of lawyers, traders, teachers, engineers and doctors are present according to their professions. They look busy in trying to increase their facilities for their profession, for instance permanent job, for servants and increase in salary, etc. The religious sects are not so much influential in Pakistan. These groups are present in the shape of political parties. Generally, these groups help in preventing racial/group distinctions. Nevertheless, they don't play any active part in political demands. The existence of ethnic groups is also present as Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi or Pakhtoon.

Conclusion

The main concern of this study has been the elaboration of role of interest groups in interest articulation in Pakistan. *Biradari* role is discussed briefly. It is concluded that *biradari* is a major pressure group and in the process of interest articulation in Pakistan *biradari* plays primary role whereas army and bureaucracy play pivotal role. It is human nature to exercise ethnic preference for their own group in the form of aggression against others. In Pakistan proud to be a army man, bureaucrat and belongs to elevated caste and to look down upon civil, subordinate and humble birth is a challenge to an actual spirit of pressure groups and their role in interest articulation. Political parties are high-jacked by *biradaries* and process of interest aggregation is limited. It bequeathed a negative, aggressive and violent mode of thinking, behaving and realizing a political objective. Such situations become common if the original problems persevere and no dramatic transformation takes place. In such circumstances, tribal/organizational activists continue to appeal to the sense of insecurity of their group and political

entrepreneurs make use of such a community in their power games. These groups or *factions* are a threat to popular government. *Biradari* impacts can be reduced by the better economic conditions of the formers. The continuity in the elections can become the cause of the reduction in this tendency. Non- political powers and martial law's interruption weaken the process of interest aggregation and interest articulation and the people depend on *biradari* group and move through their local group and *biradari*. The stability of political system depends on the political socialisation which is the most important link between the social and political system by which political culture is maintained and changed. Interest articulation process should be continuing by inter- *biradaries* interest groups because it marks the boundary between the society and the political system. Otherwise people will not find open channels through which they can make demands or express their interests and needs. The resultant dissatisfactions may erupt in violence. Through interest articulation conflicts inherent in the political culture and the social structure become evident.

References

1. Magstadt, Thomas, M. and Schotten, Peter, M. (1993). *Understanding Politics: Ideas, Institutions, and Issues*, Third Edition. New York, St. Martin's Press, p. 312.
2. Almond and Powell (1996). *Comparative Politics: A Developing Approach*. Little Brown and Company, Canada, p. 73.
3. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968), p. 218.

4. Heywood, Andrew (1997). *Politics*, London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., p. 225, p. 230.
5. Gulmina Bilal. *Restoring Public Confidence in Political Parties*. (www.jang-group.com)
6. www.dawn.com Feb. 10, 2002.
7. *The Friday Times*, Sep. 19-25, 2003
8. Mohammad Waseem, February 20, 2002, Dawn, the i.net edition.
9. Iain Mclean (1996). *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*. Oxford University Press, New York, p. 243.
10. A.H. Amin, (Pakistani Politics 1947-1958). *The Politics of Indo-Pak Muslims: A Political and Psycho Social Study*. Globe, May, 2001.
11. Manzur Ejaz (rds.yahoo.com) www.himalmag.com
12. Magstadt, Thomas, M. and Schotten, Peter, M. (1993). *Understanding Politic: Ideas, Institutions, and Issues*, Third Edition. New York, St. Martin's Press, p. 313.
13. Wilder, Andrew, R. (1999). *The Pakistani Voter: Electoral Politics and Voting Behaviour in The Punjab*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, p. 177.
14. Ray, Samirenda, N. (1999). *Modern Comparative Politics: Approaches, Methods and Issues*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India, p. 192.
15. Husain Haqqani, *The Indian Express*. Oct. 10, 2002.
16. Magstadt, Thomas, M. and Schotten, Peter, M. (1993). *Understanding Politic: Ideas, Institutions, and Issues*, 3rd ed. New York, St. Martin's Press, p. 312.
17. Roskin, Michael, *Countries and Concepts: An introduction to Comparative Politics*, 6th ed. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, US, p. 62.