

Examining the Causes and Consequences of Ideological Divides and Ethnic Rifts Within the Left

Dr. Muhammad Qasim Sodhar^a

Abstract

The Left played a significant role in various political uprisings in Sindh; however, it did not achieve the same level of popularity as some other parliamentary and feudal parties. Several factors contributed to the Left's inability to gain traction, with ideological divisions (pro-China versus pro-Russia) and ethnic rifts (Sindhi versus Urdu-speaking Left) being major influences. This paper explores the underlying causes of these splits and conflicts, as well as their consequences, particularly regarding the impact on the Left's presence in Sindh. In doing so, it addresses the question of why, despite being a leading force in political uprisings from 1954 to 1991, the Left could not transition into a politically mainstream entity in Sindh. This inquiry only partially answers the question, acknowledging that while these factors played a significant role, other elements also contributed to the Left's lack of success. This paper draws on both primary and secondary sources, including interviews with current and former leaders of the Left. The perspectives gathered from these interviews serve as crucial sources of information on the topic.

Keywords: left, ethnic rifts, pro-China & pro-Russia, political uprisings

Article history:

Received on: April 6, 2025

Revised on: June 21, 2025

Accepted on: June 22, 2025

Published on: June 30, 2025

^a Assistant Professor, Faculty of Heritage, AROR University of Art, Architecture, Design & Heritage, Sukkur, Sindh – Pakistan | email: qasim.faculty@aror.edu.pk

How to Cite

Sodhar, M. Q. (2025). Examining the Causes and Consequences of Ideological Divides and Ethnic Rifts Within the Left. *Journal of History and Social Sciences*, 16(2), 104-113. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16582604>

INTRODUCTION

The history of Left politics and the movements it has inspired remains largely underserved in academic discourse. This presents a significant research gap that warrants the attention of scholars focused on political movements. Concurrently, a critical element that has been largely overlooked is the examination of the Left's failures, which can be attributed to various factors. This paper aims to address some of the key causes behind this lack of success. The Left, not only in Sindh but throughout the entire country, was initially represented by the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) shortly after partition, which originated as an extension of the Communist Party of India (CPI) prior to the division. Subsequently, an alliance of various Left and ethno-nationalist parties formed the National Awami Party (NAP) in 1957, which was active until the regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. In the 1970s, Leftist parties saw electoral success; for instance, the Jugtu Front (United Front), a Left-wing alliance, won the 1954 election in East Pakistan, and the Awami League, promoting a progressive agenda, emerged victorious in the 1970 election.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) adopted a socialist stance in its manifesto and achieved electoral success in Punjab and Sindh, while the NAP, aligned with Leftist ideology, won in Balochistan. However, following the secession of East Pakistan and the dismissal of the NAP government in Balochistan, the PPP adjusted its platform to emphasize "Islamic Socialism" rather than traditional socialism, and the CPP was banned under the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case. Despite the CPP's continuation of underground activities, along with its affiliated groups, such as the Democratic Students' Federation (DSF) and the Sindh Hari Committee, new formations like Awami Tehrik emerged in 1970. Ultimately, Leftist parties were unable to displace the parliamentary dominance of feudal and capitalist parties. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the presence of the Left in Sindh significantly diminished. This study examines the factors contributing to the challenges faced by the Left, including state suppression and other key influences, while highlighting the historical context of the National Awami Party (NAP) and the ideological differences that arose within the Left during its unified period.

National Awami Party

The ban on the Communist Party of Pakistan, imposed following the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case, represented a significant setback for the Pakistani Left. However, in July 1957, a broader coalition of Leftist and Nationalist groups in Pakistan was formed under the banner of the National Awami Party (NAP). At that time, the term "socialism" was considered controversial, prompting the NAP to use phrases such as "social welfare" and "welfare state" in its manifesto and constitution instead of terms like "socialist revolution" or "communist state" (Afzal, 1998, p. 76). Subsequently, in 1965, the party adopted the term "socialism" as part of its economic program (Ibid).

The National Awami Party (NAP) was an alliance of political parties with varying ideological motives, yet they shared a common goal of challenging the status quo. Jam Saqi (1944–2018), a prominent Communist leader, described the formation of NAP to the author, stating, "NAP was a multi-class alliance of Leftist, Nationalist, and Democratic parties, established on July 1, 1957. It is important to understand that the strategy of creating a united front, not only in Pakistan but globally, had been adopted by Communists to mobilize the oppressed people of the world, bringing them together on a single platform" (Interview with Jam Saqi, January 30, 2016). However, prior to the military takeover in 1958, NAP was not as organized as it later became, leading to some

differences among the allied parties. M. Rafique Afzal notes, “Before October 1958, the NAP functioned as a loose association of regional autonomists and leftists, committed to the dissolution of the One Unit, regional autonomy, radical economic reforms, and a non-aligned foreign policy. Various factions within the party prioritized different aspects of its agenda, which often resulted in significant internal tensions” (Afzal, 2012, p. 175).

The idea of socialism regained traction in Pakistan during the anti-Ayub movement, primarily through the efforts of the National Awami Party (NAP), which championed this concept across the country. Z.A. Bhutto later played a significant role in openly expanding the notion of socialism. Initially, however, the NAP was active for a brief period, from July 1957 to October 1958 (Afzal, 1998, p 77). Following the military coup led by Ayub Khan in October 1958, the NAP became inactive due to military actions targeting the Left. The NAP reemerged in 1964, but by then, the socialist movement had split into two ideological camps on the international stage, pro-China and pro-Russia. Although the NAP initially remained united despite internal differences, it ultimately fractured in 1967 into two factions: NAP (Bhashani), which aligned with the pro-China perspective, and NAP (Wali Khan), which leaned towards the pro-Moscow stance.

Pro-China and Pro-Russia Division in NAP

The division within a party or ideology can be highly detrimental as it fragments the party's ideological cadre and divides them into opposing factions. This initial schism tends to escalate, leading to further divisions. In this context, the ideological split within the National Awami Party (NAP) not only weakened the party but also had a broader impact on the Left movement in Pakistan as a whole. While such divisions were not exclusive to Pakistan, they were a common phenomenon in the international socialist movement of the 1960s. In Pakistan, this division severely undermined Leftist movements, while simultaneously enabling Bhutto to attract the pro-China or Maoist elements of the Pakistani Left, who subsequently joined his party, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Prior to the establishment of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the National Awami Party (NAP) was the sole political party with substantial mass support, enabling it to confront the military dictator Ayub Khan. This was a key reason why Zulfikar Ali Bhutto sought to join the NAP. In an interview with Zamir Sheikh, Mairaj Muhammad Khan, one of the founding members of the PPP, stated, “Mr. Bhutto wished to join the NAP on the condition that he would be appointed as General Secretary, a request that the party ultimately declined” (Sheikh, 2014, p. 91).

Socialism serves as an international ideological phenomenon, meaning that changes or challenges within ideology influence movements globally. A notable writer, Ishtiaq Ahmed, articulates the split in the Communist movement, noting that “the 1960s marked a period during which the longstanding political and ideological animosity between the Sino-Soviet bloc reached its peak. This tension culminated in an irrevocable division within the international Communist movement in the early 1960s. In nearly all countries outside the Soviet sphere, Communist factions divided into pro-Moscow and pro-Beijing parties. While the pro-Moscow groups advocated for peaceful strategies to promote the socialist cause, their pro-Peking counterparts supported militant armed struggle” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 4). Due to divisions within the international Communist Movement, internal conflicts within the National Awami Party (NAP) persisted, ultimately leading to a split in 1967 into two factions: a pro-Beijing faction led by Bhashani, known as the NAP (Bhashani Group), and a pro-Moscow faction led by Wali Khan, referred to as the NAP (Wali Khan Group).

The NAP (B) was more active in East Pakistan, largely due to Bhashani's identity as a Bengali, although it also maintained some presence in West Pakistan.

The NAP (B) adhered to a pro-China ideological stance, which was relatively acceptable to the Pakistani government, given the cordial relations between the two countries. Additionally, China had adopted a confrontational position against India since the Sino-Indian War of 1962. This alignment benefited Punjab, which was ruling Pakistan through its military establishment. As a result of the China-India rivalry, the pro-Moscow faction was not perceived as patriotic in Pakistan, while the pro-China faction was viewed more favourably. Conversely, in India, the perspective was quite the opposite—pro-China groups were deemed unpatriotic, while those aligned with the Soviet Union were considered patriotic (Ibid, p. 4). In 1967, when the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was established, it embraced a Maoist-inspired ideology. Ishtiaq Ahmed describes the PPP's ideology as a fusion of radical rhetoric drawn from Maoist terminology, nationalist fervour directed against India, a commitment to democracy, and the principles of Islamic socialism (Ibid, p. 5). However, some Maoist factions, which advocated militant strategies, resisted certain policies implemented by Bhutto upon his rise to power. In response to this resistance, the Bhutto government initiated strict measures against these Maoist elements in various regions of Sindh and Punjab (Ibid, p. 5).

The influence of Maoist elements was on the rise within trade unions and educational institutions. As Ishtiaq Ahmed notes, "The Pakistan International Airlines trade union was firmly aligned with Maoists, and their student wing, the Nationalist Students Federation (NSF), emerged as a significant force on the Karachi University campus" (Ibid). According to Professor Jamal Naqvi, migrants from India to Punjab and Karachi often exhibited heightened animosity toward India, which contributed to the predominance of Maoist factions, particularly in these regions (Naqvi, 1989, p. 37). Naqvi further observes that the CPP-Sindh played a leading role due to the relatively limited impact of Maoist elements within the Sindh party (Ibid, p. 34). This ideological discourse intersects with the broader national question. The Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP), which became part of the National Awami Party (NAP) following its ban in 1954, faced criticism from some leftist elements in Sindh who claimed that the CPP's stance on the national question was unclear. However, the former leader of the CPP, Jam Saqi, refuted this assertion and delivered a speech addressing the national question, which was subsequently published in booklet form. In his remarks, he recalled that in 1952, when the language issue emerged, it was the CPP that clearly articulated the existence of five national languages in Pakistan: Bengali, Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashto, and Balochi. The CPP maintained that Urdu should be designated only as a language of communication (Saqi, 1987, pp. 4-5).

Regarding NAP's position on the national question, Jam Saqi discussed the party's stance prior to its division into two factions. He noted that it was within NAP, which included the CPP, that resistance to the One-Unit scheme was organized. Notably, in 1958, the NAP passed a resolution against the One-Unit formula in the East Pakistan Assembly (Ibid, p. 6). In discussing the debate surrounding the national question, Bakhshal Thalho, the former General Secretary of the Awami Workers Party, remarked, "The communists in Punjab hold the view that the emphasis on the national question—rather than the class question—has weakened the communist movement in Pakistan. Conversely, in Sindh, Balochistan, and to some extent in KPK, a differing perspective prevails that the neglect of the national question has led to significant challenges for the Left" (Interview with Bakhshal Thalho, February 2, 2016).

The National Awami Party (W), adhering to a pro-Soviet stance, was influenced by Leftist factions that supported socialism while also placing a strong emphasis on ethnic identity (Afzal, 1998, p. 87). On one hand, the NAP (W) opposed the One Unit policy; on the other, it advocated for the establishment of additional provinces based on linguistic and cultural identities within Pakistan (Ibid, pp. 89-90). This position led to internal conflicts within the NAP (W) in Balochistan, particularly when Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, a Pashtun leader, proposed the creation of a separate province for Pashtuns, called Pakhtunistan, which would include certain areas of Balochistan where Pashtuns were in the majority (Ibid, p. 91). Achakzai's demand intensified tensions within the party, ultimately resulting in a split into two factions: the Baloch group, led by Khair Bakhsh Mari, and the Pakhtun group, led by Achakzai. The central committee of NAP (W) officially recognized the Mari faction, prompting Achakzai to establish a separate entity known as NAP (Pakhtunkhwa). However, the situation in Sindh was notably different.

In Sindh, as stated by Jamal Naqvi, Maoist or pro-China elements were predominantly found in Karachi, largely due to the city's migrant population. Conversely, the left faction, apart from the Communist Party, particularly represented by the Awami Tehrik led by Rasool Bux Palijo, embraced a pro-China stance and became increasingly focused on the national question. Following the establishment of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), which also adopted Maoist ideologies, the Left in Sindh gravitated towards the pro-China perspective, rendering it more influential than the pro-Soviet viewpoint. However, the division between pro-China and pro-Soviet ideologies had a detrimental impact on the Left, contributing significantly to the decline of the Communist movement in Sindh and Pakistan. Former president of the National Student Federation (NSF), Chaudhri Latif Ahmed, highlighted this in an interview with Zamir Sheikh, stating, "In my opinion, the division between Moscow and Peking was a key factor behind the Left's failure in Pakistan. Otherwise, we had our own serious shortcomings that led to our irrelevance in contemporary politics. We uncritically accepted that division, although some individuals resisted it, and they were likely justified in doing so" (Sheikh, 2014, p. 137). During this period of ideological rifts and divisions, ethnic conflicts within the Left also emerged, particularly between the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) and Awami Tehrik, alongside some Sindhi intellectuals. This conflict between Sindhis and Urdu-speaking leftists within the Left in Sindh, akin to the pro-China and pro-Moscow divisions, further contributed to the overall weakness of the Left.

Sindhi vs. Urdu-speaking Leftists and the National Question

Ethnic tensions emerged immediately following the partition, coinciding with the mass exodus from India. Although leftist movements existed prior to the formation of Pakistan, it was the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP)—led by figures such as Sajjad Zaheer and Sibte-Hassan, along with several other Urdu-speaking leftists who migrated from India—that took the forefront. While the central committee of the CPP included a few Sindhi leftists, their numbers were relatively small. This study primarily relies on secondary data; however, it also incorporates primary data gathered through interviews with senior Sindhi members of the Communist Party. According to these interviews with both former and current CPP members, no ethnic conflicts between Sindhi and Urdu-speaking workers in the CPP were reported. In contrast, some Sindhi leftist leaders, like Rasool Bux Palijo (1930-2018), as well as intellectuals like Rasheed Bhatti, held differing views, perceiving Urdu-speaking leftists as anti-Sindh and anti-Sindhi. This section analyzes the reasons behind the prevailing conflicts within the Left in Sindh, supported by

secondary data and interview insights, and explores how these tensions have impacted or undermined the Sindhi Left.

The debate centers on the issue of the ‘national question,’ as some Sindhi politicians and intellectuals argue that the Communist Party lacks clarity on this matter. In his book "Siyasi Adab-3 (Political Literature-3)," Rasool Bux Palijo identifies six forces he considers detrimental to Sindh. These forces include: 1) a coalition of Sindhi landlords and bureaucrats, 2) the military and bureaucracy that has dominated the country's systems, 3) the landlord and capitalist class from Punjab and Karachi, 4) religious leaders, particularly Moulana Maududi, 5) the so-called progressive factions from Punjab and Uttar Pradesh (UP) that exploit the people of Pakistan under the guise of socialism and revolution, and 6) imperialist forces, notably represented by the United States (Palijo, 2007, pp. 158-159). Palijo deems the progressive elements from UP and Punjab as the most insidious among these six anti-Sindh forces. He points out that while Urdu-speaking progressives may criticize exploitation by Punjab and advocate for the rights of smaller nations within Pakistan, they tend to promote internationalism and oppose ethnic nationalism when the exploitation of Sindhi people by the Urdu-speaking population in Sindh is discussed (Ibid, pp. 159-160). Furthermore, despite ostensibly supporting the oppressed Sindhi people against the Punjabi and Mohajir elite, these progressive elements from Punjab and Mohajir backgrounds often urge Sindhi people to direct their efforts against the landlord and capitalist class within Sindh, effectively distracting them from confronting the Punjabi-Mohajir coalition (Ibid, pp. 159-160).

Rasool Bux Palijo suggests that the objectives and interests of the so-called progressive elements in both migrated from Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Punjab are aligned. Both groups reject the existence of small nations within Pakistan and are actively opposing nationalist movements (Ibid, p. 169). In contrast, another Sindhi Leftist leader, Jam Saqi, a member of the Communist Party, presents a differing perspective. He asserts that the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) recognizes the significance of the national question and has adopted various strategies aimed at addressing this issue effectively. Saqi delivered a speech on the 'national question,' which was subsequently published in booklet form. In this address, he noted that movements like the defense of the Sindhi language and the opposition to Urdu being designated as the national language of Pakistan were initiated by the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) in 1952, immediately following the emergence of the language issue (Saqi, 1987, pp. 4-5). He cited the Sindh Hari Committee as an example, describing it as a sister organization of the CPP that advocated for the rights of landless Sindhi Haris, pushing for land distribution among them (Ibid, p. 5). Furthermore, Jam Saqi emphasized that the Communist Party was the first political entity to challenge the lack of sufficient provincial autonomy in the 1973 constitution (Ibid, p. 11).

In an interview with the author, Jam Saqi addressed the conflict between Sindhi and Urdu-speaking Communists, stating, “I believe that if there were a greater number of Sindhis within the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP), they would have been more active in organizing among the Haris. However, the Urdu-speaking comrades effectively mobilized factory workers and made significant strides in that area. I do not perceive the Urdu-speaking members of the CPP as hostile towards Sindhis. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that our Sindhi nationalists were often opposed to Urdu-speaking students. During the 1960s, some Sindhi nationalist students would even assault their Urdu-speaking counterparts while chanting the slogan ‘Jeay Sindh!’” (Interview with Jam Saqi, January 30, 2016).

Ms. Hameeda Ghanghro, a former leader of the Communist Party and the widow of Nazir Abbasi—who was killed in jail during the Zia regime—asserted that the division between Sindhi and Urdu-speaking communities was engineered by secret agencies and the military establishment to undermine leftist movements, and they succeeded in this endeavor (Interview with Hameeda Ghanghro, May 15, 2016). Additionally, she noted that Rasool Bux Palijo, the leader of the Awami Tehrik, criticized the Communist Party of Pakistan for its lack of clarity on the national question, claiming that his own party was more straightforward on this matter. Nevertheless, if that is the case, why has Rasool Bux Palijo and his party failed to secure a single seat in elections? Why are the nationalists of Sindh, who profess to advocate for the rights of the province, consistently rejected by the people of Sindh and remain absent from the assemblies? (Interview with Hameeda Ghanghro, May 15, 2016).

Similar to Jam Saqi, nearly all Sindhi members of the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) interviewed by the author expressed that there was no inherent hostility among Urdu-speaking communists towards Sindh and the Sindhi people. Iqbal Mallah, a senior journalist and former CPP member, highlighted the solidarity between Sindhi and Urdu-speaking comrades during the Sindhi-Mohajir riots. In an interview with the author, he stated, “I do not believe there was any conflict between Sindhi and Urdu speakers within the CPP. I recall that during the Sindhi-Mohajir riots, we participated in study circles in Latifabad (an area in Hyderabad predominantly populated by Urdu speakers). Similarly, in areas of Hyderabad with a Sindhi majority, we saved the lives of numerous Urdu speakers” (Interview with Iqbal Mallah, January 30, 2016). Given this context, one must consider why figures such as Rasool Bux Palijo and Rasheed Bhatti condemned the Urdu-speaking left if the Sindhi and Urdu-speaking members of the CPP hold the perspective that the Urdu-speaking leftists were not antagonistic towards the Sindhi community.

Professor Jamal Naqvi, an Urdu-speaking Leftist and member of the Communist Party, discusses the chauvinistic attitudes displayed by certain Urdu-speaking Leftists who ultimately departed from the party. He addresses the Communist Party of Pakistan's (CPP) demand for Bengali to be recognized as the national language, highlighting that the CPP also advocated for the inclusion of other languages spoken in Pakistan. According to Naqvi, this demand was met with resistance from some Urdu chauvinists, leading to their exit from the party. He further mentions Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, who was among those Urdu chauvinists and later transformed into a Pakistani nationalist, famously promoting the idea of conquering Kashmir (Naqvi, 1989, p. 23). This debate is quite intriguing, yet it is evident that the conflict has led to a division within the Left, splitting it into urban and rural factions. The Communist Party was particularly active in the urban areas of Sindh, especially Karachi, due to the influence of industrialization. Although the Sindh Hari Committee, as a sister organization to the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP), engaged with the Haris, it struggled to maintain its role as an effective mobilizing force after the 1970s. Since that time, the Awami Tehrik has taken a more prominent role in the rural regions of Sindh, working to mobilize peasants, laborers, students, and women. Simultaneously, it has positioned itself against the CPP, specifically criticizing the Urdu-speaking leadership of the party, which it labeled as anti-Sindh and opportunistic elements within the Left.

Rasheed Bhatti, a prominent writer and active member of the Awami League in West Pakistan, notes in his jail diary, "Despite being a Communist, a Mohajir identifies first and foremost as a Mohajir, and then as a Communist. He (the Mohajir) made every effort to undermine the Sindhi nationalist movement. Mohajir Communists have asserted that they assimilated into Sindhi

culture, yet the reality is that most of them, despite having lived in Sindh for the past twenty-two years, are unable to speak even a single word of the Sindhi language."(Bhatti, 2014, p. 28). In response to the perspectives of Rasool Bux Palijo and Rasheed Bhatti, Bakhshal Thalho, then General Secretary of the Awami Workers Party in Sindh, stated, "In Pakistan, the national question has remained highly relevant among Leftist factions as well. Regarding Rasool Bux Palijo's stance, while he criticized the leadership of the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) as a conspiratorial group using the term 'Naqvi-Nazshi-Sazshi Tolo,' he simultaneously expressed harsh criticisms towards both communists and Sindhi nationalist elements. This dual approach ultimately harmed both Leftist politics and nationalist movements. Moreover, Palijo's position has had detrimental effects on his party, evident in the leadership of his son, Ayaz Latif Palijo. Ayaz is not as anti-establishment as the Awami Tehrik was in the past, and the Qomi Awami Tehrik seems to be moving toward becoming part of the political status quo" (Interview with Bakhshal Thalho, February 2, 2016).

Sohail Sangi, a former CPP worker and one of the victims of the Jam Saqi Case, acknowledges that the Urdu-speaking leadership of the CPP was largely unaware of Pakistan's political landscape; however, he emphasizes that they were not antagonistic towards Sindhis. He stated, "I have no doubt about their sincerity. I spent time in jail with Professor Jamal Naqvi and lived quite close to him, yet I never perceived him as being anti-Sindh or anti-Sindhi. Regarding Palijo Sahib, he self-identified as pro-China, which inevitably put him at odds with the pro-Moscow Left. It is accurate to say that the CPP failed to grasp the problems and conditions of Pakistan, particularly when they made the strategic error of aligning with Bhutto at the end of the 1960s" (Interview with Sohail Sangi, January 31, 2016). Sangi firmly asserts that this issue is not rooted in ethnic conflict, such as the divide between Sindhi and Urdu-speaking left leadership. Instead, it represents a clear ideological division within the Left, characterized by the rivalry between pro-Moscow and pro-Peking perspectives.

Despite the denial by the Sindhi leadership of the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) regarding conflicts between the Sindhi and Urdu-speaking Left, such tensions persisted within the Left in Sindh. This division led the Urdu-speaking Left to limit its activities primarily to the trade union movement, while the Sindhi leadership outside the CPP focused on mobilizing peasants in rural areas. A competing conflict arose over mobilizing different groups—labourers versus peasants. The Communist Party believed the labor class to be the primary potential source of revolution, whereas the Maoists, represented by figures like Rasool Bux Palijo, argued for the importance of mobilizing peasants. This perspective was based on the idea that, given Sindh's reliance on agriculture, the predominantly agrarian population could serve as a significant force for revolutionary change. However, much like sectarian conflicts within religion, these divisions—whether pro-China versus pro-Soviet or Sindhi versus Urdu-speaking—proved detrimental to the Left. Such fragmentation benefited the anti-Left forces, particularly right-wing groups, which sought to exploit the situation for their advantage. Meanwhile, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto astutely capitalized on these divisions. By positioning his party as pro-China, he managed to attract Maoist elements in Pakistan. This maneuver raised the national question but relegated the class question to the background. Ironically, Bhutto was the same leader who, while advocating for Left ideology and claiming to strive for a classless society, also welcomed the elite of Sindh into his party.

Conversely, due to state repression against Communists both before and during the Bhutto era, coupled with divisions within the Left, the Left movement in Sindh weakened significantly.

Consequently, despite being at the forefront of various political movements, the Left in Sindh failed to establish itself as a mainstream political force. This allowed the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) to garner widespread support among the people of Sindh, ultimately becoming the representative party for the Sindhi population. Similarly, in the urban areas of Sindh, particularly in Karachi and Hyderabad, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) emerged as the representative party for the Urdu-speaking population during the 1980s and onwards.

CONCLUSION

Similar to the Left across the entire country, the Left in Sindh faced significant threats and state repression due to its challenges to the status quo and its advocacy for a pro-people political and governance system, which was unacceptable to the elite groups in the country. Consequently, the state apparatus exerted considerable force and coercion against the Left. Additionally, internal divisions within the Left, manifesting as pro-Beijing and pro-Moscow factions, further weakened their influence. In Sindh, the Left encountered an even more complicated landscape, as it was not only divided along these ideological lines but also fractured along ethnic lines, with notable divisions between Sindhi and Urdu-speaking groups. Moreover, criticism of religion by Leftist figures contributed to growing animosity among the masses towards the Left. In summary, the state succeeded in diminishing Leftist resistance by exacerbating these internal divisions. The situation deteriorated further for the Left following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, as even pro-China factions struggled to achieve their goals due to the lack of support from China, which historically aligned itself with the Pakistani state. Despite the Left's ability to foster critical thinking and mobilize thousands for protests, it has struggled to achieve success in parliamentary politics, largely because Sindh's agricultural society is deeply influenced by feudal power dynamics.

Competing Interests

The author declared no known competing interests.

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Interviews

Interview with Jam Saqi, January 30, 2016

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