

Models of Federalism

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Academicians and leaders of different political parties have presented various models of federalism independently for discussion. Geographer Dr, Pitamber Sharma has proposed 6 federations and 19 districts¹. He has proposed 6 states: Purbanchal (eastern), Madhyamanchal (central), rajdhani (the capital), Paschimanchal (western), Karnali, Sudurpaschimanchal (far-western). He has given emphasis to availability of the natural resources and means. He has argued that federal structure should be built on the basis of possibilities of future development and the interrelation of the hills and the Tarai rather than on the basis of ethnicity.

on the issue of democracy, sovereignty of the people and development, he mentions three important issues for defining federal regions: "The first basis is the ethnicity and language, second is economic capacity and feasibility, and the third is interregional complimentary economic activity" (Sharma 2063:34-35). he further writes that economic potentiality of a particular region should be able to make the economy of the region dynamic and vibrant. He writes, "The key factor for this is the interdependence between the regions (Sharma 2063 -2007:35)". In this way, Sharma has argued that the determination of federal regions in Nepal should be directed by the objective of regional development.

The political scientist professor Krishna Khanal has suggested that the determination of units of regional or federal rule on the basis of ethnic, language and cultural affinity. He has put forth the proposal of 14 election constituencies with multi-members. Basically, this proposal is focused on election and representation. Khanal has not pointed out categorically that this should be the regional or administrative structure. But later he has suggested that 10 to 13 such regions can be formed.²

The Nepali Congress leader Narhari Acharya has proposed that regional structures can be formed on the basis of main rivers of Nepal by maintaining ethnic identity as far as possible. He has argued that the main regional language can be made the official language in addition to the Nepali language. Acharya has presented that the geographical location and convenience, language and cultural specialty, natural resource and economical feasibility and population density and ethnic mixture (historical settlements) as the bases while forming federal structures.

"The Tarai appears uniform due to geography, local dress, and climate but it is usually divided by major rivers, local language and dialects into five regions: 1) Mechi to Koshi, 2) Koshi to Bagmati, 3) Bagmati to Narayani, 4) Narayani/Gandaki to Rapti, and 5) Rapti to Mahakali. The new division of regions will be according to

¹ For detail see Mulyankan Monthly

² Working paper of Prof Khanal presented in "National Peace campaign' in Pokhara

the geographical and natural division of the country. In addition, linguistic and cultural specialty should also be an important basis for determining the states. Apart from this, potential natural resource to enhance the economic viability of the region must be explored. (Acharya 2062:35)”.

The UML leader and central member Shankar Pokharel has put forward a proposal of 15 regions.³ he lists them: Tamor, Birat, Koshi, Janakpur, Sunkoshi, Simraungadh, Kathmandu, Narayani, Annapurna, Kaligandaki, Lumbini, Rapti, Karnali, Khaptad, and Bhawar. Different caste and ethnicities are majorities in these provinces: Birat (hill Brahmins 15%), Koshi (Rai 27%), Janakpur (Yadav 17%), Sunkoshi (Tamang 33%), Simraungadh (Muslim 16%), Kathmandu (Newar 36%), Narayani (hill Brahmin 21%), Annapurna (Gurung 28%), Kaligandaki (Magar 28%), Lumbini (Dalit 14%), Rapti (Chhetri 25%), Karnali (Chhetri 41%), Khaptad (Chhetri 54%), Bhawar (Tharu 35%).

He has made geographical location, ethnic density and settlements, use of mother language and other languages, socio-economic situation, economic relations and situation, administrative accessibility, availability of natural resources and means, and historical aspects as the bases for the provinces. Pokharel's concept is similar to the UML's concept. Another leader of the UML Rajendra Shrestha has brought the concept of 14 regions.⁴ Shrestha has made geographical accessibility, population, ethnic relation and socio-economic relation as the bases: Yakthung, Khumbu, Sesant (Tambasaling), Nepalmandal, Tamugandak, Magargandak, Bheri, Karnali, Mahakali, Koshi (Kochila), Janakpur (Mithila), Bhojpur (Simraun), Gautambuddhapur (Awadh), and Tharuhat.

Dr. Buddhi Prasad Bhandari has proposed 14 provinces. “It is appropriate to have five provinces in the Madhes that constitutes 17% of Nepal based on ethnicity, language, and regions, and 9 provinces in the hills and mountains. Instead of big east-west or north-south oriented provinces, smaller rectangular/square provinces will be easier to form based on ethnicity, language and regions and allow for easy access to the provincial centres. Reduction in the number of provinces based on economic consideration is not appropriate. These autonomous regions can independently manage their resources and through the centre can achieve economic prosperity” (Bhandari 2064:149).

Development expert Dr. Harka Gurung had proposed 25 development districts. Giving emphasis on economic viability, he has given importance to reduce the administrative expenses in his proposal. “The number of government offices in the districts has excessively increased. Apart from this, because of the extension road and air transport and telecommunication, the geography of Nepal has contracted in terms of access. It has become easier to run administration. It would be wiser to decrease the administrative expenses by reducing the number of districts” (Gurung 2006:184).⁵ he has suggested amalgamating two to four present districts into one in his proposal. The names of the provinces in his proposals are based on rivers (10), mountains (7), historical place (5), religious place (3).

³ Working paper of Prof Khanal presented in "National Peace campaign' in Pokhara

⁴ Shrestha's article for detail

⁵ Fragile districts :futile Decentralization by Harka Gurung

Leftist intellectual Govinda Neupane has proposed eight provinces based on ethnicity. His proposed eight provinces incorporates the present districts: Kirant (Taplejung, Panchthar, Ilam, Tehrathum, Dhankuta, Sankhuwasabha, Okhaldhunga, Solukhumbu, Khotang, Bhojpur, and Udayapur), Tambasaling (Ramechhap, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Kavrepalanchok, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Dhading, Makawanpur, and Sindhuli), Nepa: (Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur), Tamumagarat (Kaski, Lamjung, Manang, Gorkha, Mustang, Palpa, Tanahu, Syangja, and Myagdi), Khasan (Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, Arghakhachi, Gulmi, Baglung, Dolpa, Pyuthan, Parbat, Jajarkot, Surkhet, Dailekh, Jumla, Mugu, Kalikot, Humla, Darchula, Baitadi, Doti, Bajhang, Bajura, Dadeldhura, and Achham), Tharuwan (Kapilvastu, Dang, Banke, Bardia, Kailali, and Kanchanpur), Bhojpuri (Bara, Parsa, Rautahat, Chitawan, Nawalparasi, and Rupandehi), and Mithila (Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, and Sarlahi).

He states that historical background (place of origin of different ethnicities), geographic feasibility, language use, and ethnic presence should be the bases for any federal province, which can bring into existence ethnic provinces. Neupane's proposal gives more primacy to historical-cultural background and historical settlements besides ethnic presence and language use. Bhawani Baral's proposal is not much different from Neupane's. He proposes 11 provinces based on ethnicity, language/culture and regions. Mahendra Lawati also proposes ethnicity-based 13 provinces.

Mangal Siddhi Manandhar, Shobha Shrestha, and Pushpa Sharma have also proposed 12 provinces based on ethnicity and regions. "[...] federal restructuring should take into account ethnic/language density and majority, cultural and historical background, as well as regionalism as important bases. Geographic accessibility and economic capacity should only be taken as complementary factors. Geography does not have the same decisive role anymore as the reach of transportation and communication has increased more nowadays" (Manandhar et al. 2065:12).

Jana Morcha (People's Front) leader Pari Thapa has proposed 9 regions:⁶ Khas/Khasan, Khambu/Khambuwan, Gurung/Tamuwan, Tamang/Tambasaling, Tharu/Tharuhat, Newar/Newa Khala, Magar/Magarat, Maithili/Madhesi, and Limbu/Limbuwan. He has said the bases should be ethnic population, local geography, and linguistic areas.

He later changed the number of provinces to 11. "On these bases (population, geography, and language), eight provinces in the hills including mountainous regions and three in the Tarai could be proposed for discussion" (Thapa 2065:131). His latter proposal of autonomous provinces include: Limbuwan, Khambuwan, Tamangsaling, Nepa:mandal, Tamuwan, Magarat, Khasan, Western Khasan, Mithila-Tharu, Bhojpur-Awadhi, and Tharuhat. The latter three lie in the Tarai region.

Kumar Yonjon Tamang has suggested 11 regions. Among them, he has defined eight provinces on the basis of ethnic population, land or region while the remaining three regions are formed as autonomous on the basis of linguistic area of linguistic dominance⁷. The eight regions based on ethnic population, land, and region are Kirant, Tamang, Newar,

⁶ In this, language and ethnicity of autonomous region and ethnicity and geography are the main bases.

⁷ Khas/Khasan, Khambu/Khambuwan, Gurung/Tamuwan, Tamang/Tamsaling, Tharu/Tharuhat, Newar/Newa/ Khala, Magar/Magarat, Maithili/Madhesi and Limbu/Limbuwan are proposed by him.

Bhote-Tamuwan, Magarat, Tharuwan, Jadan, and Khasan. Similarly, the three based on linguistic dominance are Maithili-speaking region, Kochila-speaking region, and Bhojpur-speaking region. He has also emphasised the possibility of provinces based on regional oppression, though he has not given so much on emphasis on regional basis alone.

K B Gurung has proposed 11 autonomous regions and 6 autonomous areas. He has advocated for ethnic-regional autonomy in his proposal. According to him, the autonomous regions of Tamu(Gurung), Magarat, Tharuhat, Limbuwan, Khambuwan, Tamasaling, Newar, Far Western and Western Khasan are based on ethnicity and geography while Maithili-Tharu and Tharu-Bhojpuri autonomous areas are based on primarily language and ethnicity. Similarly, the basis for Awadhi, Maithili, and Bhojpuri-Bajji autonomous regions is language; Bhojpuri-Tharu also language and ethnicity; and Sherpa and Rajbangsi autonomous areas are based on ethnicity and geography.

“The central structure of the nation should be semi-federal consisting of the feature of both unitary and federal state and should be all-inclusive and participatory. The main basis of such structure should be ethnic-regional autonomy. [...] The structure of ethnic-regional autonomy should be considered the basis of state restructuring for the full autonomy of all castes, ethnic people, language groups, region and communities in their respective areas”⁸(Gurung 2062:91).

Analyst Shyam Shrestha has suggested a maximum of 15 autonomous regions and defined four basic conditions and bases: “ethnicity or language density, geographic proximity, administrative convenience, and availability of natural resources” (Shrestha 2065:42).

MJF chairperson Upendra Yadav has stated that Nepal could be restructured into seven provinces. “the region east of Sunkoshi could be one and there have been proposals to call it Kirant. Karnali could be one province, which has been oppressed for centuries and if the people have access to their natural resources, their condition could be ameliorated. Other provinces could be centred around Pokhara, Kathmandu, and others, and this will be finalised through extensive discussion in the Constituent Assembly” (Yadav, 164). Amaresh Narayan Jha has proposed four regions and 10 administrative units. According to this proposal, in the Madhes region, there will be Birat, Mithila, Kapilvastu, and Awadh; North-eastern will include Kirant, Sailung, and Trishuli; Kathmandu will be separate; and North-western will include Dhaulagiri and Karnali.

He argues, “by defining Madhes and Kathmandu valley and the rest of the hilly regions into eastern and western regions would be appropriate. Based on language and ethnic majority and glorious history, Madhes could be restructured into Birat, Mithila, Kapilvastu, and Awadh administrative units; Kirant, Sailung, and Trishuli administrative units in the eastern hills; and Kathmandu will be a separate administrative units with due respect and place for people of all ethnicity, indigenous and language groups. Thus, it would be appropriate to restructure Nepal into North-eastern, North-western, Madhes, and Kathmandu regions with 10 administrative units” (Lal, 68).

⁸ Basic aspects of Tamu (Gurung), Magarat, Tharuhat, Limbuwan Khambauwan, Tamsaling, Newar, Far west Khas autonomous regions are ethnicity and geography.

Paramendra Kumar Bhagat has proposed three provinces based on the major river basins. He has proposed Koshi, Gandaki, and Karnali provinces with Udayapur, Chitawan, and Surkhet as the provincial capitals.