

## **Creation of New Provinces: It's Socio-Political Implication for Pakistan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The existing political and administrative structure of Pakistan was inherited from British Empire which was crafted keeping in view the population and area of the entire subcontinent; and fundamentally constituted with an objective of retaining foreign control and promote imperialistic interests. Thus demand/ voices for new provinces have sound historic roots and vivid genesis emanating from ethnic and demographic makeup of Pakistan. Successive governments tried to put the country on a smooth track of development but could not achieve political and economic stability. Domination of few ethnic groups, sense of alienation, lack of justice, corruption, un-equitable allocation of development funds and unwieldy federating units in terms of population and area have been the intrinsic factors giving periodic impetus to the demands of new provinces in Pakistan. Each province has its peculiar dynamics; therefore, its historic, demographic and socio-political perspectives have been emphasized in the article to establish linkages with the genesis of demands for creating new provinces. Commonly debated issues are highlighted to explore as to why there is a requirement of creating new provinces in Pakistan. National concerns are also outlined to signify that disparity and discrimination driven movement may not be termed as linguistic or ethnic otherwise anti state notions may get stimulated. Towards the end, socio political implications have been analyzed and few recommendations have been made to address the issue of creating new provinces in Pakistan.

**Key Words:**        **Socio-Political implications, Pakistan political environment, Provinces**

### **Introduction**

The primary demands of more provinces in Pakistan can be sketched back to the politics of British era. Till official establishment in 1858, Indian Region existed as a loose federation, attached with district administrative centres through the system of taxes and the concept of adherence to the empire. British introduced hierarchically political and administrative system with imperialist outlining while keeping village as basic stage under tehsil and then district and finally the province. The demarcation of provinces was done keeping in view the area and nature of population of whole subcontinent. Pakistan inherited the similar structure of colonial rule, which was profoundly established with an objective of promoting imperialistic interests. The inherited structure was not suitable for an independent state with apparent dissimilarity in population vis-à-vis area. After independence new challenges appeared for the federation due to fast growing population together

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with disparity, inequality, injustice and barring of poor community. Successive governments tried different political systems to put the country on a smooth way of development but could not accomplish political and economic stability.

With proliferation in population, more administrative divisions were made by other countries of the world to ensure better management in the affairs. On the contrary, One Unit was formed in Pakistan thus increasing the power of few districts or societies over the others. Broadening division between haves and have-nots aggravated the situation coupled with unrealistic economic policies, intermittent break down of democratic governments and parochial vision of political leadership. Considering population as the major consideration for bigger political decisions and allocation of resources further accentuated dissident and despair amongst masses and between provinces. Hence, demand for creating new provinces were raised occasionally ever since independence of Pakistan. The forces behind these ideas, sensitive about their identity; and vocal about economic and political rights are gaining power de-novo, thus stirring fissiparous tendencies. Therefore, a holistic national focus is deemed essential to address this national concern.

## **Factors stimulating notions of new provinces in Pakistan**

### **Punjab province**

Huge and fast proliferating population tied with management inefficiency is an overarching reason for intra province grumbles in Punjab. Provincial capital at Lahore is extraordinarily problematic for the people living in distant parts of Punjab. Thus, unfavorably affecting the performance and making the system progressively complicated.

Developments are concerted in few areas and service supply is poor. The poverty ratio is 43% in Southern Punjab as compared to 27% with rest of the province. Out of 12 least industrialized districts of the province, 10 are in Southern Punjab. Lowest one third poor segment of population lives in these areas (Dawn, 2012).

People living in Seraiki belt express their reservations occasionally for not getting due share of developmental funds as focus has always remained at Lahore. Less representation of people from Southern Punjab in bureaucracy is another complaint articulated by political representatives from that area. The issue of language and traditional identity also enhances their case for a separate province.

### **KP province**

The dispute of new provinces in KP is very sensitive due to its historic linkages, strategic location; and structure and nature of population. The historic events, demographic composition and cultural makeup left impact on its politics, economy

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and society. The region persisted turbulent during British Empire, post-independence and contemporary periods.

Erstwhile NWFP (now KP) was demarcated by British Empire in 1901, during which different cultures, ethnicities and languages were mixed. The prime motive of British Empire to combine different types of areas and population was to have strong control over Pashtun region specifically during Great Game Syndrome and placate Durand Line matter.

The region once again came into the world's focus during 'Operation Enduring Freedom' in Afghanistan and current law enforcement operations. Changing name of the province from N.W.F.P to KP also stirred the demand of creating separate province for the people of Hazara (Dawn, 2012).

### **Sindh province**

Dynamics of Sindh are different. It is the cradle of ancient civilization and famous as Bab-ul-Islam. Sindh endured demographic changes due to the arrival of migrated Muslims from India at the time of independence.

Khairpur was a princely state recognized by the British Empire in 1832 and certified to retain its political existence after the annexation of Sindh in 1843. This princely state acceded to Pakistan on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1947. Until establishment of One Unit in 1954, the state was administered autonomously. Khairpur had excellent system of administration with marvelous economic development, free health care facilities for citizens, highest per capita expenditure on education i.e. 22% of budget, free education up to matriculation level and compulsory primary education (Sindh Talks, 2009).

Population from all parts of the country shifts to Karachi for jobs and business. Resultantly, demographic makeup of Sindh especially major cities is rapidly changing. Urdu speaking community is largest in Karachi and Hyderabad, whereas, rest of the Sindh is dominated by Sindhi speaking people. Therefore, Sindh is a multi-cultured and multi-ethnic region. All these factors intrinsically affect security and administrative situation of the province.

### **Baluchistan province**

Baluchistan has a diverse structure constituting 44% of area and 5% of population of Pakistan. It is a multilingual province, where Balochi, Pashto and Brahvi are the main languages and other languages are Seraiki, Punjabi, Persian and Urdu. Three popular cultural and linguistic features affect the politics of the province. North is ruled by Pashto language and culture. This Pashto controlled area (Pishin, Sibi, Loralai, Zhob and Quetta) was incorporated in Baluchistan in 1879, as a result of Treaty of Gandmk among the British Empire and the Amir of Afghanistan. In South, the coastal area of Mekran is led by another cultural entity which is different from Pashtuns and Balochis. Central Baluchistan is predominately the supporter of Baloch culture and traditions inherited from their Baloch Sardars.

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Multi-ethnic and multilingual features have shaped strong difference among socio-political outlook of these areas.

The extra ordinary large area of Baluchistan has administrative, economic and political implications. Due to its huge size and less established infrastructure, government authority is thinned out thus resulting in week management. Impact of development is dissipated, implementation of law and order is difficult and traditional hold of sardars resists socio economic development. Government departments' inefficiency to reach to the distant areas and lack of security unfavorably affects economic activities. The heterogenic culture, uncontrollable size, discordant political environment and poor service delivery promote fissiparous activities in Baluchistan.

### **Rationales - debated**

After independence, other countries of erstwhile Indo-Pak subcontinent increased the number of states or provinces to absorb evolving challenges of fast growing population. Conversely, Pakistan continued with the same structure despite fast increasing population. Successive governments kept on seeing existing model of federation as unchangeable and never taken worthwhile steps to evolve a better system. This generated irregularities, hatred and misunderstanding among federating units. Commonly intoned demands and justifications are covered in subsequent paragraphs.

### **Population factor**

The biggest province anywhere in the world does not exceed 25% of its country's population. In Pakistan, Punjab province has more than the sum of combined population of other three provinces (56%) and Baluchistan province has below 5% of the country's population. Due to population centered electoral system, the provinces having more population get advantage in national matters and influence policies in their favour (Real Politique, 2009). This ascendancy is further affected by their dominant representation in the parliament and establishment. These issues along with alleged consumption of major portion of national resources upsurge apprehension of population wise smaller provinces.

### **Big Administrative Units**

Four provinces of Pakistan are like countries within a country. These provinces are big administrative units creating inter provincial disharmony, friction and remain at loggerheads.

### **Unequal distribution of developmental funds**

Remote parts of the country remain deprived of their share; as main part of resources is spent in big cities. Therefore, urban areas are developed whereas people living away from main cities do not have even basic facilities like health, education and clean drinking water. The effects of developmental work undertaken by the government do not trickle down to grassroots level.

### **Rationalism is imperative**

Ethnic, language and regional tendencies are on rise in the existing unwieldy federating units of Pakistan. Friction within the provinces and with the federation is on increase. Unfortunately, the successive governments have followed a parochial approach to pacify ethnicity and placate linguistic tendencies. The obstinate arguments crafted to realize political benefits are not in the national interest. Therefore, rationalism is imperative in mitigating fissiparous notions.

### **Exploitation by anti state elements**

Pakistan is facing widespread corruption and insignificant developments are undergoing due to inefficient generation and ineffective management of resources in unmanageable provinces. These issues are further intensified by political instability in the country. With every passing day rich is getting richer and poor is going poorer. This leads to resentment and dissatisfaction of grieved community. Therefore, the abhorrence developed amongst the grieved community is targeted and exploited by the anti-state elements to weaken the federation.

### **Regional schism and parochialism**

Over centralization by the successive governments is resulting into unawareness of people's rights of meaningful participation in the political process at grass roots level. Sense of deprivation, discrimination and alienation adversely impacting national unity. Unscrupulous local politicians having no wisdom of national integration, tend to exploit the situation, thus further worsening prevailing tensions for their own minor individual interests, thereby promoting regional schism and parochialism in Pakistan (Sehgal, 1999).

### **Inconvenience to masses**

People from Sadiqabad, Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur or Dera Ghazi Khan have to come to Lahore for settlement of their problems. Similarly, Hub is next to Karachi and those living in coastal areas of Baluchistan have to come to Quetta. Hazara region is nearer to Islamabad than Peshawar; therefore, it is easier for Hazarewals to get their issues resolved from Islamabad. Likewise, the public in Rawalpindi,

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Jhelum and Attock etc, finds it convenient to get their problems solved from the Federal Government instead of Provincial Government at Lahore.

### **Provincial autonomy**

Despite maximum political authority and provincial autonomy, given after 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the regional governments have not been able to alleviate poverty and improve state of governance; rather situation got deteriorated. The change in the existing structure will alter political outlook of the provinces, thus having better impact on the governance.

### **Disparity and domination**

Pakistan is facing racial, ethnic and linguistic disparity and discrimination. One racial group dominates the other and feelings of unequal partners are primarily affecting equivalent developments in parts of the country. These neglected segments are victim of geographical and ethnic injustice and are not afforded equal opportunities in jobs and educational institutions. They claim that in existing provinces their constitutional and social rights are ignored.

### **Poor management from existing provincial capitals**

Efficient management of huge provincial system with rigid and inept bureaucratic machinery is impossible. The issue of ruling Punjab from Lahore, Baluchistan from Quetta, KP from Peshawar and Sind from Karachi, is often expressed by the people living in the unfriendly areas. Creating more provinces will placate this issue and address the sense of disparity and discrimination prevailing in these areas.

### **Uneven distribution of development budget**

Quality of living and standard of infrastructure declines as we start moving away from the provincial capitals and major cities. This is because of uneven distribution of developmental budget resulting in resentment in far flung areas (Khalid, 2011). With more provincial capitals development will take place in different areas and developmental budget will be spent homogenously; and fairly and squarely.

### **Seraikis' concerns**

People living in Seraiki belt expressed their concerns time and again for not getting adequate share of developmental funds as the concentration of development had been at Lahore. Relatively less representation of the people from Seraiki belt in bureaucracy is another grievance articulated by political

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representatives from that area. The issue of linguistic and cultural identity also substantiates their case for a separate province.

#### **Persistent stability**

In 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the provinces have been given more autonomy, but due to large structure in terms of population and area, the administration is still not being realized efficiently, resulting in persistent instability in the country.

#### **Accommodating political and socio-economic realities**

The nations that are alive to the changing socio-economic and political conditions have managed such issues at highest priority. Numerous states in Asia, Africa and Latin America have reorganized their political structures with the sole idea of accommodating the emerging political and socio-economic realities instead of confronting destabilization of the system (Zakir, 2009). The idea has successfully delivered world over. Relevant lessons can also be gleaned from USA, China and India; that manageable and empowered administrative units are important feature for the national unity.

#### **Security, economic progression and development**

The people of East Pakistan were claiming for provincial autonomy and due share of revenue. Their concerns were ignored, resulting into freedom and creation of Bangladesh. Similar voices are now being heard from KP, Southern Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan that they are not receiving due share of revenue. Therefore, creation of more provinces is better for security, peace, economic progression and development in Pakistan.

#### **Demand for new provinces is not anti-state**

Rejecting the genuine demands of masses on the belief that these calls are anti-state and unjustified. The demand for new provinces on administrative basis is trusty and may not be considered anti-state. Even, if smaller administrative units or provinces are crafted on ethnic or language basis with central economy, defence and foreign policy; having real and effective management system, will not have negative impact on national unity. Rather, existing ethnic and linguistic polarization will be curtailed due to justifiable development and better governance. Moreover, the marginalized areas will get merited representation, thus further strengthening the federation.

Having discussed the rationales for creating new provinces in Pakistan, the issue of more provinces in Pakistan is analysed in the subsequent paragraphs.

### **Administrative efficiency**

With current structure it is difficult to manage socio-economic development and political concerns of ever increasing population. One province of the country i.e. Punjab is having over 56% of the population. Whereas, Baluchistan is area wise the largest province (44% of total area), but has only 5% of total population (Dogar, 2012). No country in the world has any province or state with over 25% of its total population. Smaller provinces having manageable population and area would help the Government to perform its functions in a better way.

### **Smaller administrative units strengthen national unity**

Smaller administrative units facilitate smooth functioning of federation as the impact of developmental steps trickles down in a better way to grass root level. Disconnect between the rulers and the ruled is reduced. This helps in diminishing tension and disharmony amongst the provinces and capital, thus firming the national unity.

### **Quick development in the entire country**

If smaller provinces are evenly created and impartial allocation of budget is ensured specially in isolated areas and favoritism of development is shifted from main cities to lesser developed areas, improved results will be achieved in undertaking quick advance in the faultless country.

### **Structural justification**

More provinces would diminish pompous influence of bigger provinces over smaller provinces in Pakistan. Their apparently prevailing role in National Assembly in creation of the government and policy making affairs and unjustified consumption of resources will be reduced.

### **Mitigating the ethnic polarization**

Adequate illustration from all parts of the country in national policy making affairs will help in task justifiable development. Therefore, better governance will be achieved through restricted bureaucracy, thus curbing the sense of scarcity and consequently mitigating the cultural division.

### **Reduced space for anti-state elements**

Smaller provinces will have a better check on corruption, ineffective resource cohort and inadequate development. Therefore, resentment and frustration of



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grieved civic will be addressed. Therefore, space for anti state elements to further their agenda will be reduced.

#### **Rights of alienated community**

More decentralization will provide better opportunities to deprived and alienated community to participate in political process giving due rights at grassroots level. Consequently, space will be reduced for unscrupulous local politicians to realize their trivial individual interests instead of national interest.

#### **Convenience to the people**

Large distances involved in travelling to the existing provincial capitals, is like going to another country. In smaller provinces provincial capitals will be in easy reach of the masses. Hence, prevailing inconvenience of access, to resolve the problems, will be reduced to a great extent.

#### **Political impact on Baluchistan**

In Baluchistan local strong man wins elections based on the clan power. Therefore, creation of more provinces in Baluchistan will provide better opportunity to the people living in distant areas to have their genuine representation in policy making affairs. This will also create environment better for ultimately improving the security situation of the Baluchistan.

#### **Better generation and management of resources**

Under 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the provinces have been given more powers. In case more provinces are made with suitable demarcation, provincial governments will be able to generate more resources and manage the governance in a better way.

#### **More effective and viable federation**

If disparities, real and / or perceived, are removed and a feeling of being equal partners is created by new provinces, the change will make federation more effective and viable. This will help in achieving unity through the will of the people without feeling of domination of one ethnic group over the other.

#### **Management from provincial capitals**

It is extremely difficult to run huge provinces from existing provincial capitals through creaky bureaucratic machinery. In smaller provinces with localized bureaucracy and administration, the probability of spending the resources at the right place will be more. Local bureaucrats and administrators would be more aware of the intricacies of the problem.

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### **Linguistic, ethnic and cultural identities**

In a multilingual, multi-ethnic and multicultural country, different factions have vested interest in a strong federation. Creating more provinces through undisputed demarcation of provincial boundaries giving due recognition to linguistic, ethnic and cultural identities, will help in mustering support for national unity.

### **Smaller units will strengthen the federation**

Stubborn approach to allow loose federation to function has been breeding the seeds of separation. Therefore, it is important to pay heed to these calls in view of Pakistan's past especially the event of 1971 and the recent notions mooted by Baloch separatists. Smaller federating units will manage government affairs more efficiently and strengthen the federation.

### **Addressing politico-social and economic issues**

The nations where political, social and economic challenges are relegated, institutions stop working and system is destabilized. Addressing these problems at a high priority will strengthen Pakistan.

### **Serving the national interest**

The demands for new or more provinces in every region have their exclusive and intrinsic inspiring factors which stimulate these demands. This will serve the national interest if structures of new provinces are crafted after deliberately addressing these motivational factors of the demands for provinces in different areas of Pakistan.

### **Identifying true motives**

Demands for different provinces in Pakistan are not analogues. Some movements are ethnic, some are linguistic and some are disparity driven. It would be useful to delineate between fundamental validity and justification of each demand. Identifying the true motives behind each demand and corresponding responses are imperative for the national unity. Labeling a disparity driven movement as linguistic and ethnic would not serve the purpose.

## **Recommendations**

The demands for new provinces had been raised intermittently since independence of Pakistan. Ethnic and linguistic disparity, discrimination and loss of identity have been the issues stimulating these demands. However, stubborn and parochial political approach adopted by different governments, to suppress these demands, could not resolve the issue. Any further neglect or suppression may lead to a situation which can catalyze these demands, thus weakening the federation. Therefore, the issue should be given a high priority at national level. In this regard few recommendations are proffered in ensuing paragraphs.

### **Smaller provinces will help government to befittingly administer federation**

Existing size of provinces and ever increasing population are posing enormous challenges for the Government to effectively manage socio-economic development and political affairs. Smaller provinces will help central and provincial governments to befittingly administer the federation.

### **Creating only Seraiki province may breed linguistic cacophony**

Creation of only Seraiki province will breed contagious ethnic and linguistic cacophony. It may stimulate demand for Pashtuns province in Baluchistan, Hazara province in KP, restoration of Bahawalpur State and Muhajir province. Creation of any single province only on ethnic grounds may result into KP like situation which was created on linguistic grounds. Therefore creation of Seraiki province alone is not in the national interest.

### **Creating only Hazara province is not suitable in prevailing environment**

Hazara province is not ethnic and linguistic. It is only disparity driven movement. However, creation of Hazara province alone, though a least probability, is also not in the national interest due to prevailing economic and security situation of Pakistan.

## **Requirement of a flexible approach**

Ethnic and linguistic tendencies have fissiparous brands in Pakistan. These have become recruitment bonanza for anti state elements to realize their interest. Stubborn approach to subdue these issues will weaken the federation. A more flexible approach is recommended to resolve these issues.

## **Understanding the underpinned motives of every issue**

Demands for provinces in various regions are not analogous, each having different dynamics. Applying same formula everywhere will be counterproductive. There is a need to deliberately understand and appreciate underpinned motives of each demand, tehrik or movement; accordingly craft suitable mechanism to resolve the issues.

## **National consensus**

Though the notion of new provinces is supported by majority of political parties, but they are following a parochial approach with the intensions to realize vested interests in various regions. Basis of creating provinces is a bone of contention on which consensus is difficult to achieve. Therefore, national consensus be developed to resolve the issue and national interest be preferred over political parties' interest (Khan, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

The demands for new provinces have their roots in the historic, ethnic and demographic makeup of Pakistan, which were intoned intermittently ever since independence from British Empire in 1947. Domination of particular ethnic groups, sense of alienation, lack of justice, huge size of existing federating units in terms of population, area and inability of the successive governments have been the intrinsic factors giving periodic impetus to these demands.

Pakistan is a country where many ethnic known groups are living since ages speaking different languages. Each demand of a province has its peculiar dynamics; therefore, its historic and demographic perspective has to be explored to

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establish linkages; besides analyzing the genesis of each movement evolving political environment.

Creation of new provinces does have social and political implication, because if these demands get momentum what impact will occur on the national unity of Pakistan? This is a question which merits sincere approach being a serious national security issue.

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