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Qno.2 The creation of more provinces is a persistent demand from some circles in Pakistan. How do you see the creation of more provinces in Pak; as benefited or harmful for the people? Explain your views with solid justification.

ANSWER:

The debate on the creation of new provinces is as old as the country itself. It became all more pronounced in 1955 when Pakistan experimented with the notorious one unit scheme, wherein subnational identities were suppressed to create a semblance of stability in the newly-born nation. The provinces in the then West Pakistan (Punjab, Sindh + Balochistan + NW/F) were merged into a single province to counterbalance East Pakistan. This agitated the East Pakistan the most because it changed their demographic majority and Urdu was imposed on them, ignoring their majoritarian language (Bangla). This ultimately led to the secession of East Pakistan in 1971.

"Centralized decision-making is the primary metric against which bad governance is measured" — Naeem Saadig.



## Recent Debates on Creation of New Provinces

If history is any guide, it shows that new provinces should not be created along ethnic and linguistic lines. Rather, on pure administrative grounds, the debate should initiate to retain the spirit of federation in the country. Thus, in federal scheme of things, sub-national identities should be promoted to ensure their participation as co-creators in good governance, along with the centre, rather than merely as consumers. This collective sense of national ownership will ultimately foster unity in diversity.

## Benefits of New Provinces

### (1) To Right Size the Existing Units

Punjab is the largest province of Pakistan by population, which alone has more people than Sindh, KP, and Balochistan combined. It is even larger than around 80 countries. Thus, right sizing it would ensure administrative efficiency without triggering any ethnic sensitivities. ✓

### (2) To Reduce Disparity among the Existing Units

Smaller provinces often feel underrepresented in parliamentary seats and policy-making.



## (A) On Political Front

Punjab alone has 173 seats in the National Assembly, while the combined total of Sindh, K.P. and Balochistan is 150. This is why political parties focus heavily on Punjab during election. ✓

## (B) On Economic Front

The lopsided economic distribution under the 7<sup>th</sup> NFC Award favors Punjab over all the other small provinces. Punjab receives 51.74% federal revenue. Whereas, the other three federating units only get 48.26% federal funds. ✓

## (C) On Social Front

Punjabi culture and Urdu language make smaller provinces feel culturally sidelined. Ethnic nationalist movements are gaining traction and call for greater provincial autonomy against an over-centralized system. ✓

"Each province has an equal share in the country's politics as a legitimate stakeholder in the shared future" — Ishaq Hussain. ✓



### (3) Performance of Former Princely States

The sweeping statement against the formation of new provinces is this that they cannot perform better. A relevant case in point is Khairpur

(now part of Sindh). It generated significant revenue for the central government due to its relative political autonomy??

### (4) Lessons from Developed Countries

In line with international best practices, creation of new provinces has gathered enough consensus. For instance, Turkey has 81 provinces despite the fact its population is almost two-thirds of Punjab's population alone while Pakistan has only four provinces.

### (5) To Bridge the Core-Periphery Divide

Creating more provinces would bring the federating units closer to the capital. This will balance the power between the center (core) and marginalized regions (periphery).

"Despite being a federal state, Pakistan has not fully evolved the spirit of federalism" — IPRI Journal.



## (6) To Improve Grassroots Governance

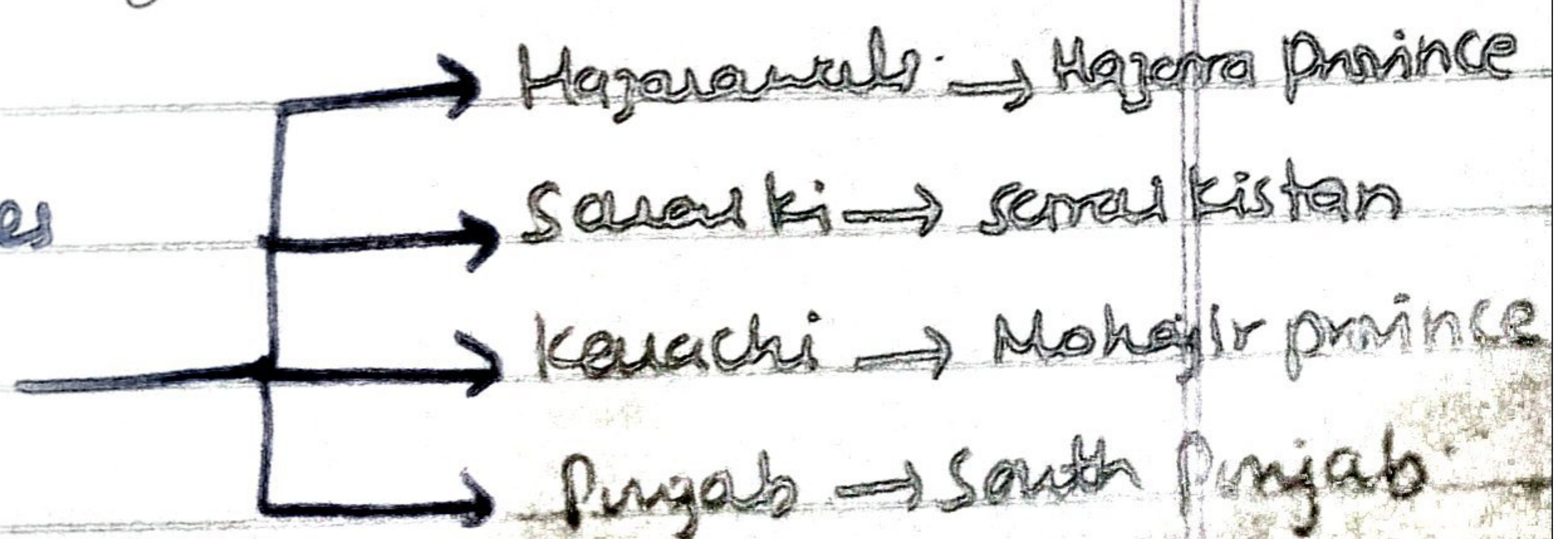
creation of new provinces will ~~some or later ensure~~  
minimum government and maximum governance.  
When governance is brought closer to people, it  
fosters a culture of inclusivity and shared purpose.

"Federalism thrives when federating  
units don't just belong - but feel  
they belong" - Malala Lodhi.

## Harms of New Provinces

Since the benefits of new provinces outweigh the  
harms, the debate has been politicized by regional  
political leaders for vested interests. Also,  
achieving a big political consensus on the creation  
of new provinces is near to impossible, considering  
the diverse ethnic mix in Pakistan. Similarly,  
it will likely open a floodgate<sup>e</sup> for demand of  
more provinces. By the same token, resource  
distribution will also get more politicized  
among the new federating units.

Recent New Provinces  
debate across  
Pakistan





## Culturally Relevant Solutions for a Stronger Federation in Pakistan

Given Pakistan's complex ethnic diversity,

Creating new provinces would ultimately bring unintended consequences in the long term.

Redrawing of boundaries would fuel ethnic tensions sooner or later.

Instead of <sup>organically</sup> artificial districting, it should manage its ethnic diversity prudently and proactively.

- ① Decentralization of power.
- ② Strengthening of LGs (Article 140-A)
- ③ Equitable distribution of resources
- ④ Preferential treatment to backward and remote province
- ⑤ Regional offices of provincial organizations
- ⑥ Promotion of E-governance.
- ⑦ Promote regional entrepreneurship through SMEs
- ⑧ Promote artisan industries (Sindh's Atrak, Punjab's sports goods, KPK's handicrafts, Balochistan's mineral processing, GB's local tourism sector, Papier Marche in ATK)
- ⑨ Encourage regional languages through media literacy
- ⑩ Counter-narrative to "each province for itself" mentality
- ⑪ Strengthen Council of Common Interests (CCI)
- ⑫ Implement 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the letter and spirit



- ⑬ Reverse NFC Award to prioritize inverse population density
- ⑭ Establish village councils in rural Pakistan
- ⑮ Strengthen intergovernmental coordination

## Conclusion

To sum it up, Creation of new provinces <sup>do</sup> outweigh the harms, but considering the complex ethnic mosaic of Pakistan, it would not be feasible and practicable enough to redraw boundaries without invoking ethnic conflicts and violence in the long term. Thus, Pakistan should improve its governance model to bring administration closer to the people. Development thus, is a mass movement and a good governance puts people at the centre of this development process; <sup>and</sup> the rest will naturally fall into order.

"To ensure national integration, governments must be like a hyperactive octopus—its eyes <sup>gain eyes</sup> and tentacles tirelessly serving the interests of the people"— F.S. Aijazuddin

