

Creation of new provinces in Pakistan: Challenges, Implications and Way forward

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A penchant for creating new provinces in Pakistan is not new. It has long been debated. The major political parties have expressed interest in creating new provinces due to their various reasons from time to time. In most regions especially a bustling city of Karachi, Hazara in KPK and the region of South Punjab, multiple ethno-linguistic movements have also demanded for separate provinces. Keeping in view the population of Pakistan and vastness of their constitutional units, the issue of governance and crisis management can not be neglected. In most of the countries across the world especially the developed world, the countries are divided into small administrative units for better governance and administration. Pakistan's neighbouring countries are a case in point. India has been divided into 28, Iran into 31 and China into 34 for better management and administration. In Pakistan too, the case for small

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administrative units often come to light from time to time. However, it has never been materialized in Pakistan, the issue of governance is directly linked to the large size of provinces. So for better governance, two different points of view are present. The one side of people considers the creation of new provinces for improved governance in the country, while the other side proposes the devolution of power through robust local government system. As far as the making of new provinces in Pakistan are concerned, there are multiple challenges in this way. The constitutional and legal challenge is the foremost one the way of restructuring the administrative units. Any changes in the boundaries of provinces require a two-third majority from the parliament of that province. Furthermore, it demands the approval from the both houses of the federal government through two-third majority. Similarly, another

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obstacle in the way of creating new provinces is the ailing economy of Pakistan which is not able to support this uphill task. For running of new units, separate CMs, cabinets, civil secretariates are required which they cannot support on their own. It will put a large burden on already shrinking economy of the country. In addition to that, the issues in division of resources especially water and deeply-entrenched ethnic issues cannot be ignored. Despite multitude of such a grave issues in creation of new provinces, it will have a severe repercussions also if not handled meticulously. The country is already grappling with intense polarization and chronic issue of terrorism. Hence, creating a new provinces on the ethno-linguistic basis can give rise to national politics and exacerbate the current instability in the country. There is a strong likelihood that such issues can plunged the country into another chaos. Therefore, in order to solve the

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long-standing issue of governance and save the country from the chaos, the devolution of power and authority through a strong local government is the need of the hour. The establishment of Local government has not been materialized in true letter and spirit. According to article 140A of the 1973 constitution, every province is mandated to establish and legislate for the local government. For the flourishing of democracy in the country, local government at the grass root level representation is mandatory. The authority from the centre to provinces has been devolved through 18th amendment, but provinces are hesitant to further devolve their power to local government. Hence, for the better governance and overall prosperity of the country, the provinces should take a pragmatic step to transfer their power to local government in which every citizen got an opportunity to participate in the betterment of the country.