

{ The creation of new provinces in Pakistan: Implications for an integrated Country }

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f) Creation of new provinces would result in the revision of NFC awards.

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The formation of new provinces had been a long and persistent issue in Pakistan. The creation of new provinces is a fascinating demand which could benefit the society however, it could have certain implications for the integration of the country. Historically Pakistan had five provinces. After the separation of Bangladesh there were only four provinces recognized by the constitution of Pakistan 1973. The creation of new provinces would lead to administrative ease. It would provide representation to marginalized communities. It would also result in better development of backward areas. Historical grievances of the communities would be solved and they would have better representation in the parliament. Long standing demands for new provinces would be fulfilled. It would also lead to strengthening of grassroots politics. The downside is that the creation of new provinces can cause implications for an.

integrated country. It could weaken the centre. It could also pave way for more extreme ethnic conflicts. Interprovincial rivalries would also enhance and it could further lead to the dominance of feudal families in politics. Massive economic cost would be required for the establishment of new province which could have a toll on the weak economy of Pakistan. Creation of new provinces would result in the revision of NFC awards and could lead to representational issues in senate. The benefits of new provinces may be large but the implications for an integrated country are even larger.

Historically, Pakistan had five provinces which include Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Bengal. The introduction of one unit system led to the creation of two provinces i.e. East Pakistan and West Pakistan. After the separation of Bangladesh the constitution of 1973 was promulgated. It provided for four provinces which included Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and KPK and federal capital territory of Islamabad. The 18th amendment passed in 2010 merged FATA with KPK. After more than 70 years of independence

Pakistan has made several attempts either creating or dissolving provinces.

In the recent times the demand for new provinces have remerged.

Proponents of new provinces argue that new provinces can have numerous benefits for the country. The most important benefit would be the ease in administration. Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world yet it has only four provinces. As a result there are numerous

complications in administration. In order to solve these administrative complications new provinces are essential. India also created new provinces of Uttarakhand and Chattisgarh in order to improve administrative efficiency.

In addition to that it would also provide better representation to marginalized communities. The Seraiki community in Punjab feels unrepresented. They believe that their culture and language is endangered in Punjab. Similarly, Hazara community with 7 million population feels unrepresented in Pashtun dominated KPK. Creating new provinces would provide representation to both Seraiki and Hazara community.

Along with that it would result in better development of backward areas. The South Punjab is less developed because most of the budget is spent on cities like Lahore and Multan. The people of rural Sindh also complain that most of their budget is given to Karachi and they have to live in poor conditions. The creation of North and South Punjab would solve the grievances of South Punjab. In the same way if Karachi is made a province it would be separated from rural Sindh. It would lead to better development of rural Sindh.

Moreover, the creation of new provinces solve the historical grievances of community. In the words of Hamza Alvi "Historical grievances are not erased by time but they are solved through political accommodation". The people of Bahawalpur demands that it should be created a province. They believed that Bahawalpur was a princely state before merging with Pakistan. Therefore, it should be given autonomy.

Furthermore, the creation of new provinces would enhance the representation of marginalized communities

in parliament. The constitution of Pakistan provides for bicameral legislature. The National assembly is the lower house while the Senate is the upper house. The creation of new provinces would provide better representation in Senate. The national assembly would also be less dominated by Punjab which currently controls 59% of national assembly seats. This political representation would solve the grievances and shall unite the country.

Along with that, the long standing demand of creation of new provinces would be ~~solve~~ fulfilled. This demand has been persistent since 2016. Before this the cry of Pakhtunistan arose but it was more about independence on ethnic lines rather than provincial autonomy. The Constitution of Pakistan also provides for new provinces stating that Pakistan shall be a federal territory. Despite this the exponents of new provinces claim that problems of Pakistan would not be solved by merely multiplying capitals.

Similarly, the proponents for new provinces argue that it would strengthen grassroots politics. New blood

shall be inculcated in politics. It would also strengthen local bodies in Pakistan. It would lead to better political awareness in rural areas. Without the reforms for new provinces the political system of Pakistan would remain in the firm grip of feudal families.

Despite numerous benefits the creation of new provinces may cause certain implications for the integration of the country. The most common downside of this proposal is that it would result in weakening of the centre. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto once said "If you allow provinces to grow into nations, the nation shall collapse". If too many provinces are created would increase the centrifugal force which could collapse the centre. A weak centre may not be able to exercise much influence on provinces. It could lead to provinces demanding independence.

In addition to that, the creation of new provinces could enhance ethnic conflicts. If the provinces are carved out on ethnic lines it would result in devastating consequences. Presently within four provinces the ethnic conflicts are common

if more provinces are carved out on ethnic lines, it could result in civil war. Ethiopia carved out new provinces on ethnic lines and it resulted in Ethiopian civil war. The Kurds in Turkiye comprise of 20% of population but they are not given a separate province because it could lead to conflicts.

Furthermore, the creation of new provinces would enhance interprovincial and rivalries and centre province conflicts. Presently the four provinces are not able to solve their water dispute through IRSA. As a result Kalabagh dam is still limited to a paper project. Punjab and Sindh are often in conflict with each other due to sharing of water from Indus River. In the absence of strong institutions creation of new provinces would further lead to disputes on resources.

Moreover the creation of new provinces would lead to dominance of feudal families. The people who advocate for Seraiki province in Pakistan are those who are already in power. The creation of new province would mean more chief ministerships for them. It would enhance their hold on political system of Pakistan. It

would further strengthen dynastic politics. No sufficient measure would be taken to improve grassroots politics and it would further lead to weak institutions.

In addition to that the creation of new provinces would require massive economic cost. It would result in burden on futile economy of Pakistan. It is estimated that an additional 200 to 250 million would be required for the establishment of a single province. This huge sum would be required for a new Secretariat, salary of employees, establishment of provincial civil services, and training of provincial officers. It would not solve the problems of inflation or circular debt. Weak economy combined with political instability would further threaten the integration of the country.

Along with that the creation of new provinces would lead to revision of NFC awards. The NFC awards were established after 18th amendment. According to it each province would have a share of 47% in financial budget. Suppose six more provinces are created in Pakistan. It would amount to a total

of 10 provinces. The NFC awards for each province would be reduced from 447% to 1%-15%. Due to less area provincial tax would also not be enough to solve problems like inflation, unemployment, and social injustice. If instead of creating new provinces institutions are strengthened, Pakistan would be better able to deal with its problems.

Last but not least the creation of new provinces would lead to representational issues in senate. Hazara community has a population of seven million. Compared to that Balochistan has a population of 27 million. If Hazara is made a province how can it have the same representation as Balochistan despite huge population gap. It would create a situation similar to the one created by the promulgation of one unit system.

To sum it all, historically Pakistan has created and dissolved provinces. The persistent demand of new provinces resurfaced because proponents of this proposal argue that it would lead to ease in administration and provide better representation to marginalized communities.

It would result in enhanced development and historical grievances of the communities would be solved. It would also strengthen grassroots politics and provide better representation in Parliament. The long standing public demand would also be fulfilled. On the other hand the exponents of new provinces argue that it could have implications for an integrated country. The centre would be weakened and ethnic conflicts would enhance. Greater inter provincial rivalries would occur and the dominance of feudal families in politics would be strengthened. The creation of new provinces would require massive cost and the revision of NFC awards. It would also lead to representational issue. The creation of new provinces would not be able to solve issues such as inflation, unemployment, circular debt and social injustices. Instead of creating new provinces strengthening local bodies and institutions would bring more positive results. It would also strengthen the integration of the country.