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Creation of New Provinces

1. Introduction

According to ISSRA;
"New provinces will allow efficient administration and better distribution of resources."

2025 → KP Assembly → passed resolution
for creation of Hazara province (239)

The demand of creation of new provinces re-emerged after 18th Constitutional amendment in 2010, which devolved 47 subjects to provinces yet were reclaimed by government through budget manipulation, bureaucratic non-compliance and extra-constitutional military oversight. The debate of creating new provinces in Pakistan is historic issue i.e. Bahawalpur's non-restoration & Saraikistan in 1970, after One Unit (1955) Dissolution; Remaining of NWFP to KPK (2010) for Hazara province yet it began in 1957; Urban Sindh's demand since partition, MQM's Jinnahpur province creation efforts; Balochistan's Pashtun Belt; (FATA) merger with KP after 25th Constitutional (2018) Amendment; GB's demand for provisional provincial status, not enshrined in Constitution of Pakistan.

2. Basis of persistent demand for Creation of New Provinces in Pakistan

2.01. Administrative Inefficiency and Distance from Governance;

"A citizen in Rahim Yar Khan or Rajanpur has to travel almost 700 km to reach the provincial capital Lahore for resolution of administrative matters."

- Centre for Development & Stability, 2025

- ① Kashmir to Karachi: 600 km
- ② Lahore to Multan: 300 km

Distance from Headquarters.

- ③ Gwadar to Quetta: 910 km.

2.2. Inequity in Resource Distribution And Fiscal Disparity;

→ 5.94% Baloch population
→ 36.7% Punjab population and areas

The NFC Award distributes federal revenues to provinces primarily based on population and that too is skewed. Inequitable resources distribution to South Punjab (agrarian), Karachi (Rs. 6.5 trillion revenue generation), Hazara Division (rich hydropower, mineral potential), Balochistan (massive reserve of natural gas, coal, copper in Rako Dig, gold and 760 km coastline with CPEC).

7 th NFC (2010)
Punjab-51.7
Sindh-24.5
KPK-14.6
Baloch-9.08
Before 7 th Punjab-57.5-60.0
Baloch-3.8-5.08

2.3. Ethnolinguistic Exclusion and Under-Representation in Politics;

Pakistan's electoral system gives weight to populations. Punjab with 53% population dominates Parliament. Furthermore, double marginalization faced by sub-provincial groups on their

2016 → Sindh Assembly → passed resolution
rejecting dividing Sindh

ethno-linguistic basis are; Saraiki speaking community; Hazara's Hindkow speaking (56%) dominated by Pashtun government (20.7%), Urdu-speaking (Karachi and Hyderabad), Pashtun speakers (34%) population from Balochistan.

Development Deficit in Peripheral Regions;

Human Development Index (HDI)

data consistently shows that the poorest districts are those at the geographic peripheries of provinces.

South Punjab → 43%+ poverty

Interior Sindh → malnutrition

Hazara Division → Below national HDI

Balochistan (Makran) → 15% Literacy

205- Demographic Dominance of Punjab: Domino Effect.

Punjab receives greater share in NFC Award i.e. federal transfers, federal civil services (50%+) and competitive advantages in education.

'Globally, no country has province whose population exceeds 25% of the national total. In Pakistan, Punjab accounts for 53%.'

-ISSRA, 2025.

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3. Positive Aspects of the Creation of New Provinces in Pakistan;

"Turkey has over 80 provinces, why cannot Pakistan have 12 to 15?"
- Ahsan Iqbal, FPM (2025)

3.1 Enhanced Administrative Efficiency and Proximity of Governance;

1. 2023 ADB simulation suggested dividing Punjab into three provinces could cut administrative times by 30%.

2. Governance Expert Mian Amir (2025) observed that reduced Bureaucratic size in new provinces will help enhance efficiency and increase the accountability of elected representatives, due to easier access to courts, justice delivery would also improve?

→ New Provinces could provide more durable form of decentralisation because the provincial transfer to local bodies has declined since 18th Constitutional Amendment.

→ Indonesia's 38 provinces for 280 million people, India's 28 states for 1.4 billion; all reflect this.

3.2 Equitable Distribution of Resources and Reduction of Regional Deprivation;

1. 7th NFC Award (2010) under Article 160 of the

Constitution, govern resource distribution between federal government and four provinces; only negotiated in past 15 years, clear violation of constitution 5-year cycle. It allocates resources with 82% weight to population.

2- Balochistan sits atop immense natural wealth, yet structural injustice sustained over seven decades e.g. possesses 450M tonnes of iron ore and \$500B Reko-Diq's gold-copper.

→ ISSRA analysis (2024) notes that 'a gradual phase-wise process should be employed to create smaller units, giving local government more control over finances, thus improving governance and structurally redistributing more resources towards neglected regions.

→ India's Telangana⁽²⁰¹⁴⁾ after gaining statehood has pursued autonomous policies, is directly relevant here.

3.3. Greater Political Representation and Democratic Inclusion;

1- Central groups' dominance; political representation is structurally limited in South Punjab (30-40M), Hazara KPK (4-5M), Southern Sindh, and GB.

2- Hazara province would be autonomous in its policies against Pashtun dominant politicians.

3- GB would grant constitutional rights and democratic representation.

* Local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science, they

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put it within the people's reach," as
Tocqueville said in 'Democracy in America'.

3.4 Strengthening National Unity + Diffusing Militarism;

1- Federal system accommodating ethnic and regional diversity through autonomous units are significantly more stable than those that suppress diversity through centralised governance.

2- The Interior Ministry's 2024 cited 25% reduction in military following the merger thus validating the stance of constitutional inclusion resulting in reduced security threats.

→ India's creation of new states demonstrated that flexible federation restructuring itself to accommodate diversity is more stable.

3.5 Accelerated Regional Economic Development and Industrialisation;

1- Instead of one-size-fit-all policies, new provinces would allow regional economies to be governed by policies tailored to specific comparative advantage.

2- Smaller provinces would accelerate CPEC implementation.

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3- Poverty Reduction Through targetted Governances, with dedicated health budgets and to prioritize rural health investments.

4- New provincial governments would become economic centres, attracting private investments.

→ Indonesia's experience in creating new provinces for the aforementioned aim in Papua region is a lesson for Pakistan.

4. Hurdles in Creating New Provinces;

"More provinces would also be cost-bearing on an already squeezed kitty."

- The Express Tribune.

4.1) Constitutional and Legal Hurdles

- a- Two-third majority (Article 239)
- b- Provincial Assembly's Consent (Article 239(4))
- c- Legislative Deadlock

4.2) Political Hurdles

- a- Vested interest of PPP and PML-N
- b- Nationalist Resistance in provinces
- c- Lack of Consensus

4.3) Socio-cultural and Ethnic Hurdles

- a- Ethnic polarization
- b- Identity politics

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4.4) Economic and Administrative Hurdles;

- a- Non-development Expenditure
- b. Reforms in NFC
- c. Dispute of Resource division

5- Conclusion;

Thus, new provinces are necessary because they would improve administrative, political, democratic, financial, ethnic and economic conditions of currently marginalised regions. The precedents are overwhelmingly positive: Indonesia, India and Turkey's creation of new provinces and Pakistan's own experience with FATA's merger validate the argument that smaller administrative units serve more efficiently.

"If done right, new provinces can strengthen the federation, promote unity and bring the government closer to the people. If mishandled, they may open new wounds in an already divided society."

- CDS, 2025.