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Q3//

Introduction:

The debate over creating new provinces in Pakistan resurfaces periodically, particularly in response to demands for better governance, equitable resource distribution, and representation. The issue reveals a deeper administrative and political imbalance.

However, despite its apparent benefits, the process faces multiple legal, political, and socio-economic hurdles that continue to stall practical progress.

Rationale behind the demand:

The demand for new provinces stems from multiple intertwined factors. Administratively, smaller provinces are seen as a means to enhance governance and improve service delivery, ensuring decisions are more closely aligned with local needs. Politically, historically underrepresented regions seek greater participation in decision-making to address their manipulation.

Economically, provincial restructuring is viewed as a tool to ensure fair resource distribution and promote regional development. Cultural and linguistic identity also motivate calls for autonomy, as communities aim to preserve their heritage within an administrative framework.

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Hurdles in the formation of new provinces:

① Constitutional and legal complexities:

The constitutional framework presents significant barriers creating new provinces. Article 239(4) of the constitution mandates a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority in both the national and provincial assemblies, making the process exceptionally challenging.

② Political polarization and power struggle:

Political consideration often overshadow the national interest in debates over new provinces. Major parties frequently view the issue through an electoral lens, fearing a loss of voter base or political influence. As a result, discussions tend to become regional or partisan slogan rather than constructive dialogues aimed at reform, creating a deadlock that hinders meaningful progress.

③ Ethnic and linguistic sensitivities:

Pakistan's ethnically diverse regions add another layer of complexity. In provinces such as Sindh and Balochistan, proposals for new provinces are often perceived as threats to cultural cohesion and unity. Ethnic minorities may fear domination or further marginalization, while majority groups worry about losing influence within redefined provinces.

④ Administrative and financial constraints:

Creating new provinces requires establishing new bureaucratic structures, assemblies, courts, and administrative departments, which entails significant financial outlay. In a resource constrained economy, the fiscal burden is substantial, making the proposal politically sensitive and economically challenging.

⑤ Lack of consensus among stakeholders:

The absence of consensus among political elites, provincial assemblies, and civil society members create an environment of mistrust. Political leaders often exploit the debate for short-term gains, and without genuine consultation and dialogue.

⑥ Fear of further fragmentation:

Policymakers also fear that creating one new province could set a precedent for other regions, potentially leading to a proliferation of provinces and weakening national integration. This fear of fragmentation discourages decisive action, even when demands are legitimate and well-reasoned.

Implications of ignoring provincial restructuring:

Failing to address the demand for new provinces carries serious consequences. Administrative inefficiency

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and bureaucratic over-centralization are likely to persist, impeding service delivery. Regional alienation and resentment may intensify, particularly in historically neglected areas, deepening socio-economic disparities.

Recommendations:

① Constitutional reform:

Amending article 239 of the constitution could simplify the procedure for creating new provinces while ensuring transparency, representation, and legal clarity. Constitutional reform is essential to provide a clear, standardized process for provincial restructuring.

② Establishment of national commission:

A neutral national commission on provincial restructuring should be created to study population, geography, economic viability, and administrative feasibility. Evidence based recommendations from such a commission would prevent arbitrary decisions and provide legitimacy to the process.

③ Consensus building and dialogue:

Meaningful dialogue among political parties, provincial assemblies, and civil society is crucial. Building consensus through broad-based acceptance of any restructuring plan.

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④ Strengthening local governments:

Before creating new provinces, decentralization within existing provinces should be enhanced.

Strengthened local governments can improve service delivery, address administrative inefficiencies, and provide a testing ground for governance reforms.

⑤ Economic Feasibility studies:

Cost-benefit analyses must be conducted to assess the financial sustainability of proposed provinces. Understanding the economic implications ensures new administrative units are viable and do not impose undue fiscal burden on the state.

⑥ Promoting ethnic harmony and awareness:

Public awareness campaigns should emphasize that administrative restructuring does not equate to ethnic division. Promoting national unity and inclusive governance can reduce fears of marginalization and foster acceptance of new provinces.

Conclusion:

The formation of new provinces in Pakistan is a structural necessity aimed at promoting governance efficiency, equitable development, and political representation. However, without constitutional

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clarity, political maturity, and stakeholder consensus, the issue risks remaining rhetorical. By approaching provincial restructuring as an opportunity rather than a threat, Pakistan can strengthen its federation, advance decentralization, and address historical grievances while ensuring inclusive governance.

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Introduction:

On 17th September 2025, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed the so-called "Strategic mutual defence agreement", under which both declared that any act of aggression against one would be treated as an aggression against both. The pact marks a significant upgrade in the longstanding security relationship and has drawn attention for its potential regional consequences.

Causes of the Defence Pact:

① Historical strategic ties and mutual dependencies:

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have enjoyed close military, economic, and ideological ties for decades. Pakistan has provided training and even deployment of its forces in Saudi Arabia, and Riyadh has provided financial support, oil credit and economic investment to Islamabad. This background lays the foundation for a formal pact.

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② Pakistan's economic and strategic imperatives:

Pakistan faces persistent economic fragility, burdens of debt and the need for significant foreign investment and support. By upgrading the defence relationship with Saudi, Pakistan seeks both strategic relevance and economic gain.

③ Saudi Arabia's changing security calculus:

For Saudi Arabia, the pact reflects a shifting security environment, growing uncertainty over US commitments, heightened threats in the region, and an interest in diversifying defence partners beyond the traditional Western umbrella.

④ The Israel factor and regional power balance:

The perceived threats from Israel, particularly after recent attack on Doha and its alignment with India in defence and intelligence sectors, has heightened Saudi security concerns. The pact allows Riyadh to send a strategic message of deterrence, signaling that any aggression or intervention against Muslim would invite a coordinational response.

⑤ Iran-Saudi rivalry and Gulf security dynamics:

This deal is also shaped by Saudi's rivalry with Iran and its network of regional proxies, including the Houthis in Yemen. Pakistan, by formalising

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defence cooperations, positions itself as a potential security guarantor in Gulf affairs, balancing ties between both Tehran and Riyadh while safeguarding its strategic neutrality.

⑥ Symbolic and reputational motivations:

For both countries the pact has symbolic values. Pakistan claims the role of a security provider and gains enhanced status in the Islamic world; Saudi Arabia seeks to display independence and bolster its strategic credentials under Pakistan's nuclear umbrella.

Implications of the deal:

① Positive impacts:

② Enhanced deterrence and military cooperations:

The pact formalise security commitments and give both states a stronger joint deterrent message.

③ Economic and strategic gains for Pakistan:

With deeper Saudi ties, Pakistan may attract more investment, secure favourable oil deals and deepen defence industrial collaboration.

④ Diversification of Saudi defence partnership:

For Saudi Arabia, dependence on a single security patron, the U.S., is reduced, and it strengthens ties with a Muslim majority nuclear armed state.

① Potential regional security:

The pact may signal the formation of a new "Islamic" or regional defence architecture, less dependent on Western frameworks.

② Risks and Challenges:

Ⓐ Increase entanglement and exposure to conflict:

Pakistan may risk been drawn into Saudi regional conflicts. The pact may reduce Islamabad's freedom of manoeuvre.

Ⓑ Implications for India and South Asia:

India has expressed concerns, viewing the pact as a strategic setback since Saudi has been deepening its relationship with India. The agreement complicates India's security environment.

Ⓒ Nuclear and proliferation concerns:

Although the pact does not explicitly mention nuclear weapons, Pakistan's status as a nuclear armed state and the concept of all military means, raise questions about nuclear sharing.

Ⓓ Strained relations with other powers:

Western countries may view this shift with caution, which could affect military aid, arms supply and diplomatic ties for both.

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Conclusion:

The defence agreement marks a turning point in their bilateral relations and carries significant regional implications. The causes behind it are rooted in economic necessity, strategic realignment, and changing threat perceptions. The implications span potential security gains and deepened cooperation, as well as considerable risks of entanglement, strategic distraction and proliferation sensitivity. This part ^{maintains} balance in a complex geopolitical environment.

Q1,

Introduction:

The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has long been complex, fluctuating between cooperation and confrontation. Despite mediation efforts by China, tensions persist. These strains manifest in border clashes, mutual accusations of harbouring militants, refugee issues, disrupted trade and logistical links, and deeprooted historical legacies.

Major Factors:

① Historical and border dispute legacy:

One of the foundational issues is the unresolved status of the Durand line. The 2600+ km

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Frontier demarcated during British era, which Afghanistan has never fully accepted as an international boundary. This creates a latent sovereignty and identity conflict: many Pashtun tribal areas straddle the border and Pakistan's fencing and border-barrier efforts along the Durand line have been opposed by Kabul.

② Cross border militancy and security concerns:

A primary driver of contemporary tensions is Pakistan's recurring allegation that Afghan territory harbours or allows sanctuary to the TTP and allied militant groups, who carry out attacks inside Pakistan. Furthermore, Pakistan's cross border strikes and air operations have generated intense diplomatic backlash from Kabul.

③ Refugee migration and trade disruptions:

Pakistan has long hosted millions of Afghan refugees. In recent years, Islamabad's stricter stance on undocumented refugees, mass repatriations and border closures have aggravated tensions. At the same time, frequent closure of Torkham border disrupts trade.

④ Geopolitical and external influences:

The relation is also affected by broader regional dynamics. Pakistan perceives an increasing influence of

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India in Afghanistan and fears ~~en~~ encirclement, while Afghanistan sees Pakistan's strategic ambitions as interfering.

⑤ Lack of trust and institutional mechanisms:

Underlying many of the tensions is the breakdown of trust and weak bilateral institutional mechanisms for dialogues, verification and joint action.

How can it be improved:

① Establishing joint border and security mechanisms:

They should create bilateral framework with clear roles for border management, intelligence sharing, verification and cooperative counter-terror operations. The mechanism should include third-party observer for transparency and confidence building.

② Reviving economic connectivity and trade:

Re-opening and security border crossings is vital. Transit trade for Afghanistan through Pakistan should be decoupled from security disputes so that trade flows and economic cooperation becomes stabilising factors.

③ Addressing refugee issue humanely:

Pakistan could coordinate with Afghanistan to manage refugee flows, gradually regularise long-term Afghan

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residents, and ensure repatriation is voluntary and safe. This would reduce populist backlash.

④ Confidence building measures and dialogues:

Both states should resume high-level dialogue forums, perhaps under China's mediation, focusing on non-security issues first to build goodwill. These could then extend to more sensitive areas like shared intelligence on militants.

⑤ Legal and institutional recognition of border arrangements:

A long-term solution may involve agreeing on how to manage the Durand line issue while full formal recognition may be politically difficult. Both sides can adopt interim arrangements to allow for cross-border tribal movements, shared administration of adjacent zones, and joint patrols.

⑥ Linking security to economic incentives:

Pakistan can make security cooperation conditional on tangible economic cooperation from Afghanistan. The mutual payoff can help align interests.

Conclusion:

The tensions are deep-rooted and multi-dimensional, arising from unresolved border disputes and militants

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safe havens to trade, refugee flows and regional rivalries. While mediation by China opens an opportunity, sustainable improvement requires a combination of security cooperations, economic integration, institutional trust building and create diplomacy. If both countries shift from a zero-sum mindset to a shared interest approach, they can turn their long suffering frontier into zone of connectivity rather than conflict.

Q4 //

Introduction:

In recent years, Pakistan has witnessed a worrying resurgence of militant activity, especially in KP and Balochistan provinces which had seen some of the most intense efforts at counter insurgency and stabilization. According to data, over 95% of terrorist related fatalities in the country during 2024 occurred ⁱⁿ ~~into~~ these 2 provinces. The causes are multiple and inter-linked and response must be equally multidimensional.

Reasons:

① Historical grievances and governance deficits:

In Balochistan, militancy is deeply rooted in long

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standing feelings of political, economic, and ethnic marginalization. Despite being rich in natural resources, the province remains the poorest and many locals feel that the benefits of resource extraction are captured by the center. In KP's tribal and former FATA areas, decades of conflict, weak governance, and under investment in infrastructure and education have created conditions in which militant narratives regain purchase.

② Cross-border sanctuaries, regional spill-overs and weak frontier control:

KP remains vulnerable given its border with Afghanistan and the porous nature of the frontier. Militant groups such as TTP have exploited sanctuary, regrouping, and relaunching attacks. In Balochistan, its long border with Iran and Afghanistan, and the rugged terrain allow militant and smuggling networks to operate with relative impunity.

③ Organizational resurgence and renewed tactics:

Militant groups are no longer fragmented and weak. They have regrouped, adopted new tactics, formed alliances. In Balochistan and KP, the TTP has incorporated multiple ~~to~~ splinter and refined its operational capabilities.

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④ Weak institutional capacity:

In KP, complaints have been raised about the provincial counter-terror infrastructure, delays in funds, weak police and slow judicial processes.

⑤ Exploitation of economic vulnerabilities:

Militants increasingly exploit economic despair, unemployment, illicit trade, smuggling routes and mines.

⑥ Heavy handed security responses:

In both provinces, large scale military operations, reports of disappearances, civilian casualties and limited local ownership have caused backlash. Where the state is seen as an arm of coercion rather than governance, militant groups exploit the legitimacy deficit.

Recommendations:

① Political and governance reforms:

The first step is to address the root grievances. In both provinces, the developed police, local bodies, and tribal inter~~ference~~^{face} mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure legitimacy of state authority.

② Border management and regional cooperation:

Improve border controls, surveillance and joint operations along the frontier in KP and along Balochistan's borders, while also negotiating with neighbour countries.

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to deny militants safe havens.

③ Economic inclusion and counter illicit measures

Develop job creation, skills, infrastructure and investment programs in affected districts to reduce recruitment pools for militants. Make sure that anti-illicit operations are paired with regular economic opportunities.

④ Protect strategic assets and major projects:

Given that militants have targeted infrastructure, Pakistan should ensure adequate protection of such assets while ensuring local participation in benefits.

Conclusion:

The resurgence of militancy in both provinces is a symptom of deeper structural faults, weak governance, border sanctuaries, revival of militant groups, neglected economies, and alienated communities. While security operations remain important, they are insufficient on their own. Only by combining these can hope to turn the tide and secure its frontier provinces against the vicious cycle of resurgence.