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Current Affairs

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Q:3

The Formation of new provinces is a recurring discourse in Pakistan. Critically evaluate the hurdles and give recommendations.

Formation Of New Provinces: Hurdles And Recommendations

Introduction:

Questions about the distribution of resources and equitable allocation of budget have always been the part of Pakistan's political tensions. Since the creation of Pakistan, debates have been going on among representatives and citizens of provinces about unfair distribution and allocation of resources and inequitable say of some provinces as compared to others in shaping the political outcomes of the country. Today, this debate has led to another new dimension of debate, the formation of new provinces. This debate has raised several questions about is this a feasible idea, if so

does Pakistan possess the policy and finances, enough to execute this idea into a tangible form; and the major question, will formation of new provinces solve the issues of disparity among provinces, which provinces themselves claim or will it increase ethnic and linguistic tensions and divide the nation.

What does History of Pakistan Suggest?

At the time of partition Pakistan had 15 administrative units, to decide the future for:

East Pakistan

West Pakistan



1 unit

14 units

Province of Bengal

3 ⇒ Provinces (Ainjab, NWFP, Sindh)

1 ⇒ Chief Commissioner province of Balochistan

10 ⇒ Princely states

→ While, the administration and budget of these 15 provinces / administrative units were being decided during the early years of Pakistan, some princely states, especially Khairpur displayed remarkable example of how properly managed and via the help of visionary leadership.

→ Dr. Yaqoob Bangash in his book "A Princely Affair" explains how Khairpur through its administrative capabilities, was able to generate

a revenue of 300% in 1947-1955. Furthermore, the article added in 18th amendment (2010) in the constitution of Pakistan "right to education" had already been given by Khairpur in 1948. The budget allocated by Khairpur for education was 24%. Hence, all such standards of conduct taken by Khairpur made it an example of how, if properly managed provinces and states can flourish. Visionary leadership and good/efficient reforms can stabilize a small unit within no time.

Need for New Provinces

The demand for new provinces have been raised in last few years due to specific reasons, which include:

(1): Large Size of Existing Provinces:

→ Existing units of Pakistan span over large geographical areas, making equitable distribution of resources and facilities for some substandard than those for others. It is extremely difficult to manage huge provinces efficiently, especially if the population of province is also at an alarmingly exceeding rate. **for example,**

- The population of **Punjab** is approximately **120 million** almost equal to that of Japan. To ensure the provision of basic life facilities to such a large population, all under one province is almost impossible and **impractical**.

→ Hence, large geographic size and the hurdles it creates in the allocation of resources among citizens is a major reason for demand for a new provinces.

(2): Disparity among Provinces:

→ Due to distribution hurdles and inequality felt by some provinces in terms of share and say in national issues and resources, constant conflicting dialogues among provinces prevail. Not only are such tensions among provinces a source of political unrest but they also eventually lead to ethnic and linguistic divides.

• for example:

Seats of Punjab in national assembly are 173, whereas seats of Balochistan are 20. This has been presented as a major argument by Balochistan on numerous fronts on how such disparities in terms of representation of provinces gives rise to tensions and unequal chances.

(3): International Best Practice In Modern World:

Modern world has adapted to the formation of several small units instead of large ones, and this model has proved successful for them, as managing numerous small units is far easy and practical than managing large units.

• example:

Japan has 34 units. Similarly, Turkey has a population of 80 million and has 80 units. France has 17 units.

All these countries are managing their provinces in a smooth manner, a model Pakistan needs to adopt if it wants to solve resource allocation issues.

(4): Performance of former Princely States:

Princely states display an excellent example of how, if leadership is visionary and administrative structure doesn't have implementation gaps, units can be easily managed.

example: Khairpur and Sindh both, through firm policies and their implementation ensured revenue generation and improved their education system efficiently.

(5): Backwardness of Remote areas:

→ Remote areas of Pakistan face several hurdles in terms of basic health, education and other basic facilities. The reason for which is them being away from center of province. Geographical distance becomes a huge constraint in their access to resources. By being marginalized, remote areas are often left behind in all progress projects, and citizens of such areas lag severely behind the citizens of main cities.

• example: Rajanpur a remote area of Punjab has to access Lahore for basic resources and to directly access authorities. Such hindrances have caused many remote areas including Rajanpur to lag behind in terms of access to basic facilities and progress in general.

→ Such remoteness creates frustration among citizens and furthers the tensions and conflicts among citizens of cities sharing visibally different access to

to resources.

(6): Hindrances to access the seat of Government:

Large-sized provinces makes access of citizens to the seat of government extremely difficult. Similarly, it becomes difficult for authorities to access citizens as well, hence resulting in hindrances in the process of resource allocation.

Obstacles In the Way Of Formation Of New Provinces

1: Lack Of Consensus Among Political Parties:

Political parties, who govern, all these major provinces have yet to agree on the decision of how and why the creation of new provinces is to ensured.

→ Lack of consensus exists among political parties due to their conflicting interests in terms of distribution of resources and geographical division i.e how to divide territory and on what basis.

2: Financial Constraints:

A major hurdles in creation of new provinces is the weak economy of Pakistan. Lack of finances will make it difficult to ensure the smooth administrative running of new provinces.

Example: The change in the name of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from NWFP alone costed Pakistan 8 billion rupees.

- Hence, territorial division of provinces, allocation of new administrative offices, changes in files and system these all steps require finance, which Pakistan's economy, at the moment, can't afford.

3: Lack of Consensus At National Level about Resource Distribution:

There exists a lack of consensus among representatives and citizens of Pakistan about if new provinces are to be formed, how can equitable and fair distribution of resources can be ensured. This raises questions like who will get access to dams, rivers, regional offices etc and on what basis will they be divided and allocated.

4: Ethnic and Linguistic Issues:

Pakistan is already vulnerable to ethnic and linguistic divisions, and any further divisions of provinces will further add to the ethnic and linguistic tensions. This will eventually be a threat to Pakistan's nationalism. Hence, to curb ethnic based tensions a steps and decisions like new province formations need to be tackled very carefully in a way not to disturb such sensitive issues.

5: Conflicting Interests Among Provinces:

Each province of Pakistan has its own interests and a major reason for rise in tensions among provinces is

due to these conflicting interests among provinces. Questions and arguments about resource allocation and disparities give weight to such conflicting ideas and interests and moulds the narratives of citizens of the provinces accordingly.

6: Requirement of Constitutional Amendment for Creation of New Provinces:

- If new provinces are to be established, first a 2/3rd majority in provincial assemblies is to be required, under Article 239 (4).
- After that, Constitution can be amended under Article 238 to include new provinces in the constitution of Pakistan.

→ Hence, any obstacle in this constitutional process can delay process of creation of new provinces.

Short run Alternatives

Until the questions about territorial division and resource allocations are answered, other steps can be taken to immediately resolve the very root cause of issues the demand for new provinces, were arose due to.

1: Strengthening Local Governments:

Local governments, if efficient, reduce the gap between government and citizens, even if they are in remote areas. Direct access of citizens to local government representative will ensure the solution of many day to

day issues citizens have to face.

2: Equitable Resource Allocation:

By ensuring provinces get equal and fair share in terms of resources and the chance to further their stance and opinion in state decisions. This would help reduce disparity concerns provinces put forward. This would also solve the issues of differences among living standards of citizens of provinces.

3: Focus on Remote Areas:

Budget should be allocated to ensure the progress and development of remote areas is necessary to ensure that the citizens of such areas do not lag behind other citizens of Pakistan in terms of basic rights and facilities required to sustain a standard life.

4: Decentralization: and Distribution of Power:

By strengthening local and provincial authorities and institutions, the disparity among provinces and gap between citizens and government could be addressed. It will make management process smooth and hurdle-free, and will ensure timely solution of problems of citizens.

5: Regional Offices of Provincial Institutions:

Governmental institutions which have offices in main cities should expand their offices at regional level to

to increase their access to citizens.

6: Promotion of E-governance:

E-governance in the form of citizen portals will make it easy for respective authorities to timely address the concerns of citizens. This initiative will help bridge the gap between citizens and government.

Critical Analysis:

The formation of new provinces, in the long run, has the potential to solve disparity conflicts among provinces and will address the concerns of citizens regarding delay in access of resources. But for now, keeping in view the economic condition of Pakistan, and some other political conflicting interests, it is better to shift towards short-run alternatives, the major one of which is strengthening of local governments.

This will give Pakistan due time to resolve obstacles in the creations of new provinces and will meanwhile strengthen the access of resource allocation to citizens.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the debate for new provinces will continue till hurdles in its way are addressed first. But once resolved, new provinces will prove to resolve resource allocation and financial constraints of provinces, just like the issue has been resolved.

in developed countries.

Q:4

There is a dangerous revival of militancy in KP and Balochistan. Critically evaluate the reasons and give recommendations.

Revival Of Militancy In Pakistan

Introduction:

In 2008 Pakistan fought Rah-e-Raast in Malakand. In 2009 Pakistan fought Rah-e-Nijat against terrorist organizations in South Waziristan. In 2014 Pakistan fought Zarb-e-Azab in North Waziristan. From 2017-18, Pakistan fought Rad-ul-Fisad against terrorists. All these efforts resulted in displacement of terrorists from parts of Pakistan and resulted in peace for some brief period of time. But since the last few years, a revival of terrorism in KPK and Balochistan is yet again becoming a concern. Attacks on citizens and military forces has once again started, creating unrest and political and security instability in Pakistan, again.

Types Of Terrorist Groups In Pakistan:

(1): Sectarian Terrorist Organizations:

These have resulted in sectarian based carnalities in Pakistan. These include Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi representing Sunni militants. Whereas, on the other hand, Sipah-e-Muhammad and Fatimoon represent Shia militants.

(2): Terrorist - Islamist (extremist) organizations:

These include 3 major terrorist organizations who use religion as a cover for their attacks.

TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan), QGG (Qari Gulabadi Group), ISK (Islamic State of Khorasan)

(3): Separatist Terrorist Organizations:

These are responsible for terrorist attacks in Balochistan and include BLA (Baluch Liberation Army), BLE (Baluch Liberation Front), Bl Majeed Brigade, BLA's subgroup of suicide bombers.

Tactics Used By Terrorists

- Guerilla tactic → These militants are using the guerilla war tactics which include Hide, Hit, Run or Ambush to target both soft power (citizens) and hard power (military).
- They have access to \$1.3 billion worth weapons.

left by NATO and US forces in Afghanistan.

Revival In Three Major Areas

There has been an alarming rise of terrorist attacks in three areas:

- 1: Merged District (Ex-FATA)
major attack is ~~to~~ on military, FC (paramilitary) and citizens.
- 2: Bannu:
Lakki Marwat district of Bannu is witnessing revival of TTP attacks especially on counter terrorism departments (CTD).
- 3: Malakand Division:
'Swat is also witnessing a rise in militant attacks and unrest in the area.

Expansion To Other Parts Of Country

- 1: Terrorism's rise in major cities:
Terrorism has also expanded to South Punjab especially in Mianwali which is adjacent to Lakki Marwat and DG Khan since it is adjacent to DI Khan. Many other cities have also witnessed terrorist attacks recently.
- 2: Rise of Terrorism In Balochistan:
BLA has conducted several terrorist attacks in Balochistan. Majeed Brigade has also been involved in suicide attacks. They are responsible for the

Separatism in the province.

3: Sectarian based Conflict and Attacks

A rise in sectarian based terrorism is visible in areas especially in those cities which have different sects and ethnic groups under one province i.e. Karachi, Rawalpindi, Quetta, Peshawar, etc.

Target Of Militants

(1) Target of TTP:

- TTP majorly targets military forces, paramilitary (frontier corps), police, Counter Terrorism Departments.
- Chinese citizens and developers of CPEC
- Citizens, religious places, Administrative representatives.

(2) Target of BLA:

- Security Personnels (military, Navy, Paramilitary, Police, Counter terrorism department)
- Chinese citizens and CPEC developers
- Punjabi and AJK citizens
- Administrative representatives
- State infrastructure i.e. railways, institutions

Reasons Of Rise Of Militancy (BLA)

- (1) Centralist School of Thought
- (2) Federalist School of Thought
- (3) Main Reasons

Centralist School Of Thought

- Centralists favor a strong center and weak units and they are of the view that rise of militancy is because:
 - 1: Hurdles created by Sardars in the control of Balochistan, weaken the hold of government. Further, these sardars don't allow rise of middle class because doing so might weaken their position in province.
 - 2: Tribal Militia created by Tribal Chieftains to fight among provinces, own tribes also have sometimes been used against state.
 - 3: Involvement of India and the links of Tribal Sardars (e.g. Harbiyar Mari) with RAW, has become a reason and solidified path for rise of militancy in Balochistan.

Federalist School of Thought

- Federalists are those who favor "strong units" and weak/decentralized "center" they are of the view:
 - 1: The Sardars of Lasbela i.e. Jam family is pro state, then if Sardars are reason of removal of terrorism in province, how does Lasbela still face terrorist attack repeatedly.
 - 2: Weaponization is not the issue of Balochistan, alone, KPK and Punjab as well have numerous weaponized groups. Then how can rise of militancy be restricted to Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa only.

- 3: Federalists believe the real reason is state's decision and policy to take part in Afghan Jihad (1979-89) and War on Terror (2001-2021).

Main Reasons for Rise of BLA in Balochistan

- 1: Alienation of Baloch citizens:
- Margin-lization and alienation of citizens of any place results in increasing void between the government and citizens, and this void is filled by extremist groups which can take the form of terrorism and rise of militancy.
- Baloch citizens argue that they have been alienated in the past in terms of Sui gas, reko diq minerals, PSDP fund allocation, NFC awards allocation, lack of health and education facilities. Hence, created a gap between Baloch citizens and government.
- 2: Involvement of RAW:
- Kulbushan Jadhav has claimed and verified RAW's financial and intelligence support to fund and execute terrorist attacks in Balochistan. This is a major threat to national security of Pakistan and a hurdle in Balochistan's safety and prosperity.

Reasons for Revival of TTP

- (1): Revival of Taliban regime in Afghanistan convinced TTP to challenge writ of State of Pakistan.
- The loss of US and NATO in the 20 year war on terror in Afghanistan, their subsequent withdrawal and rise of Taliban once again in Afghanistan in 2021 resulted in infiltration of Afghan Taliban and TTP militants from the porous Pak-Afg. border.
 - 5000 prisoners Taliban were also allowed to enter Pakistan on terms of dewaterization, but they again got access to weapons in Pakistan.
- (2): Ambiguous Policies of Government:
- Policies of government in terms of border of Afghanistan and negotiations with TTP have led to a rise in issue instead of solving it.
- (3): Loopholes in Policing System In KP and Ex-FATA districts:
- Ex-FATA was being controlled under Frontier Corps Regulation (FCR). Khasadars and Levies were assigned the duties for security. In the ~~1st~~ 2018 ~~amendment~~ FATA reforms were introduced and policing system was introduced in merged districts. But due to ill-trained and loopholes in policing system vacuum of security was created, that is filled by militants, hence rise of terrorist attacks.

Solutions:

(1): Intelligence Based Operations:

Instead of military operations of huge scale, terrorist based attacks can ensure safety of citizens and efficient results to curb terrorism.

(2): Reforms to fill the Void:

Reforms in police system are urgently required to resolve this issue of terrorism.

(3): Dewatering of Provinces:

This is a crucial step to ensure long term safety of citizens and a step towards terrorist free state.

(4): Capacity Building of Provinces:

Balochistan especially needs institutions and provision of job opportunities, health and education facilities to its populations to make the province self sufficient and less vulnerable to extremist groups.

Critical Analysis:

The revival of Taliban regime in Afghanistan has resulted in revival of TTP in Pakistan. Similarly, RAW's involvement in Balochistan has resulted in BLA's rise in the province. Intelligence based operations, negotiations with Taliban government to step in and stop TTP, fencing of Pulk-Atg border and taking steps to curb RAW's involvement and terror

Financing in Baluchistan is the need of the hour if Pakistan is to resolve its security issues.

Conclusion:

Pakistan's fight against terrorism has been a long and exhausting one. Revival of terrorism in Pakistan will create hindrance in Pakistan's path towards prosperity. Critical decisions and policies are required to tackle this issue.

Q6

How do you see chances of end of Ukrainian war when demands of Russia and NATO are conflicting and poles apart? Elaborate.

Russia-Ukraine War

Introduction:

The war between Russia and Ukraine which has been going on since 2022 is a contentious issue posing threats and hurdles in the world of geopolitics. The tilt of Ukraine towards EU and NATO and the consequent security threat felt by Russia is the reason this war is being waged. The involvement of US, constant failed negotiation attempts by Trump, threat faced by other European countries, these all factors are shaping geopolitics in new ways.

Causes of Russia-Ukraine War:

The major causes of this war are:

- 1: Shift of Ukraine towards NATO and EU since 2014
- 2: The establishment of Pro-West government of Zelensky in Ukraine.
- 3: The annexation of Crimea in 2014 by Russia which gives Russia uninterrupted access to Black Sea - Russia's major source of trade and military presence in sea. This annexation fueled tensions among Russia and Ukraine.
- 4: The attack by Russia on other Ukrainian parts and their annexation i.e. Donetsk, Kostan etc.
- 5: The increase of weapon supply, funds and military support to Ukraine by NATO, US and EU, seen as a threat by Russia.
- 6: Russia does not want Ukraine to be a part of NATO or Westernize because this will bring NATO to its doorstep / immediate territory, which will be a huge threat to Russia's security and territorial integrity.

Hurdles In Peace-Process:

The major hurdles in resolution of peace process are the conflicting demands of Russia and NATO Ukraine bloc, and their continuous firm stance on their respective demands.

Demands OF Russia

Russia has four major demands:

- (1) Ukraine adopts Policy of neutrality, and immediately halt its shift towards an western bloc.
- (2) Russia would not return captured territories of Crimea, Donetsk, Donbas, Luhansk to Ukraine.
- (3) Ukraine denuclearize, because they pose a major threat to Russia's defense.
- (4) NATO should stop its expansion once and for all towards eastern europe.

⇒ Russia has clearly maintained its stance not to ~~return~~ agree on ceasefire until Ukraine and its allies, are willing to accept these 4 demands, i.e until these "root causes" are adressed completely.

Demand of NATO, Ukraine, EU.

- They have 1 major demand and it is a non-conditional ceasefire to end the war immediately.
- Ukraine's president Zelensky has not showed any deniance in the decision of ceasefire and has no decision yet to accept Russia's demand. Even though Ukraine is being faced with serious military and economic challenges imposed due to war.

Future Of Russia - Ukraine War

There are 3 possibilities:

(1): Stalemate:

The most convincing possibility and end near future of this war is that by being heavily faced with economic, military challenges both will resort to a stalemate (frozen conflict). War will continue but its intensity will be reduced until a negotiation or some other major shift takes place.

(2): Russia instills Pro-Russia Government in Ukraine:

In Georgia, 2008, Russia implied the same strategy. Russia reduced intensity of conflict and took that time to corrupt the roots of Georgia's pro-west politics, eventually overthrowing them and replacing it with a pro-Russian government.

This may take time, but Russia might try to give this war some time to instill a pro-Russian and anti-West government to secure its interest in Ukraine longterm.

(3) Negotiation - Success of Peace talks:

The chances of negotiation seem bleak but if Zelensky or NATO/Ukraine decide to accept Russia's demands, this war can be brought to an end. Russia won't take a step back from its demands stance because Russia understands it has an edge in this war due to its strategic capabilities.

Critical Analysis:

Keeping the current state of repeatedly failure of peace talks and the ^{firm} stance of both NATO and Russia, it is highly unlikely that this war might come to an end in the near future. A stalemate is the most visible possibility considering the economic toll this war has caused on both countries.

Conclusion:

Russia-Ukraine war is the matter of concern on many fronts today. It has given rise to an unrest, unstable situation in the buffer zone (Eastern Europe) and has resulted in a security dilemma in the region. Conflicting demands of both sides make it difficult to see a possible end of this war anytime soon until then it will continue to pose economic, military and security threats and tension not only in the region but also at global level.

①8

Pakistan Saudi Arabia have signed a historic defense pact. Evaluate.

Introduction:

Pak-Saudi defense pact is being seen as a geo strategic win for Pakistan and a possibility of a coalition among Muslim states at a security front. The attack by Israel on Qatar on September 9, 2025 shocked the middle eastern countries and made them realize their vulnerability to Israel in terms of security despite being under America's security umbrella. This wave of insecurity will create new alliances in the region, one which has already solidified.

History Of Pak-Saudi Defence Relations:

- Since 1967, Pakistan has been in an informal defense agreement with KSA in terms of protection of Holy places in Saudi Arabia. Both countries share brotherly relations due to religious factor.
- The relations between the two strained in the 2015 when Saudi Arabia asked for Pakistan's military assistance in Yemen war and Pakistan refused due to conflicting interests.
- But, this agreement has again changed the dynamics of relations between the two.



Defense agreement between Pak and KSA was signed on September 17, 2025.

- The major feature of this agreement is:
"Attack ~~Defense~~ against one will be considered as attack on the other"
- This feature of defence pact, is exactly like the Article 5 of NATO ("attack against one is attack against all").
- The details about how far is this defense pact likely to go, does it include tech, financial support, all these detailed are yet to be disclosed.

Causes of Pact:

- (1): Attack by Israel on Qatar makes all middle eastern states who looked upto America for defense, realised their vulnerability and insecurity. This caused Saudia to tilt towards nuclear armed country of muslim world i.e Pakistan.
- (2): Strategic autonomy displayed by Pakistan at international front by defeating India in Operation Buryan-ul-marsoos, has been a major victory for Pakistan's military diplomacy and political diplomacy.
It has shown the world, Pakistan's military capability. Hence, this attracted KSA to choose Pakistan as its strategic defense partner in an insecure middle eastern region.

(3): USA's constant support for Israel at military and diplomatic fronts has made all those dependent on USA realise that when USA's interest regarding Israel is concerned, no state matters even USA's biggest oil exporters.

(4): Saudi Arabia's military vulnerability and Pakistan's economic weakness has further solidified the agreement and its potential in the long term.

Implications Of Pak-Saudi Defense Agreement

1: Increase In Pakistan's International Standing:

A defense agreement with KSA shows the strategic autonomy of Pakistan to the world and will improve Pakistan's diplomatic standing in the world of politics at international level.

2: Increased Alliances with Other Muslim World countries:

Following the footsteps of KSA, chances are that in the near future other muslim world and middle eastern countries are likely to join Pakistan-KSA defense agreement. Which will strengthen Pakistan's ties with middle east and muslim world.

3: Financial Investment and Developmental Projects In Pakistan:

This agreement with KSA is likely to bring financial investment, FDI by Saudi in mineral, technology,

agriculture and other sectors of Pakistan, resulting in job opportunities and economic growth.

4: Loss of USA's standing as a security guarantor.

Attack on Qatar has weakened America's security guarantor status in middle east especially. This might become a reason of strains relations among USA and middle eastern countries.

5: Weakened Israel's Public Profile further.

Netanyahu's decision to attack Qatar might be due to counter the political backlash faced by him in his own country. This attack has weakened his position not only in Israel but also at international level, especially among middle eastern countries and weakened Abraham Accords even further.

6: Pakistan as a bridge between China and Middle East:

Though currently, China has taken no such stance and has not had policy to interfere in middle east but in near future, if Pakistan's agreement extended to other middle eastern countries, chances are that Pakistan might act as a bridge between these two power blocs of global South.

Critical Analysis:

Defense agreement between Pakistan and USA is a major win for Pakistan's foreign policy and diplomatic standing in the world. It has strengthened

Strategic autonomy of Pakistan. In future, this part holds the potential to strengthen Pakistan's alliance with other middle eastern countries and bring financial investment and foreign direct investment in Pakistan which can kickstart Pakistan's economic development.

Conclusion:

This historic pact has many dimensions and has the potential to change the dynamics of region.

It will strengthen some new alliances and might weaken some previous alliances. To what extent is the security guaranteed will be assessed once further details are disclosed. So far, it appears as a promising agreement for Pakistan and start of a new order in muslim world's strategic ties.