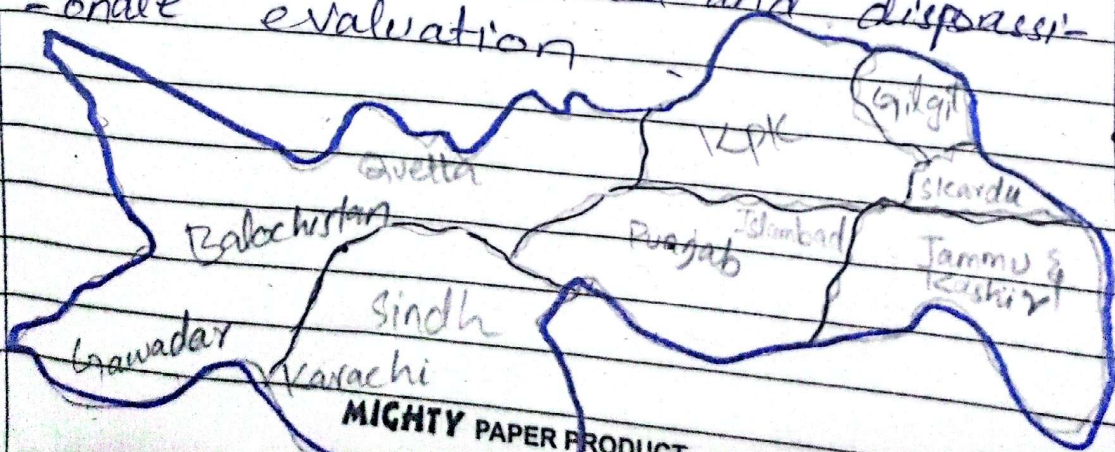


Q:-No.3 The formation of new provinces is a recurring discourse in Pakistan. Critically evaluate the hurdles give recommendations?

Answer:-

Introduction:-

The discourse on the formation of new provinces in Pakistan is a persistent and potent political issue, reflecting deep-seated grievances related to administrative inefficiency, political marginalization, and socio-economic disparity. Demands for provinces such as **South Punjab** (Saraiki / Southern Punjab), **Bahawalpur**, **Hazra**, and even a separate **Karachi** province underscore the failure of the current provincial structure to adequately address the needs of all its constituent regions. While the creation of new provinces promises better governance and localized development, the path is strewn with formidable constitutional, political, and administrative hurdles that require a critical and dispassionate evaluation.



A Critical Evaluation of the Hurdles:

1. Critical Evaluation of the hurdles:

The most significant legal hurdle is embedded in the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan. Article 239 outlines a rigid and nearly prohibitive procedure for altering provincial boundaries. The process requires:

- A **two-thirds majority** in the national Assembly.
- A **two-thirds majority** in the provincial Assembly of the province to be bifurcated.

This constitutional barrier is Herculean.

In Pakistan's fragmented political landscape, where governments rarely enjoy such overwhelming mandates, achieving this consensus is exceptionally difficult. Political parties often oppose such measures not on merit, but to deny a political victory to their rivals. For instance, creating a South Punjab province requires a constitutional amendment that must pass the Punjab Assembly, where members from Central & Northern Punjab may resist diluting the province's political & economic weight.

2: Political Resistance and Polarization:

The issue of new provinces is intensely politicized, creating a major impediment.

* Power Dynamics:

Dominant political parties in existing provinces view the creation of new provinces as a direct threat to their power base. For example, the division of Punjab is perceived by some as an attempt to break the political backbone of the country's most populous province.

* Ethnic Sensitivities:

In Sindh, the demand for a separate Karachi province (or a Jinnahpur) is vehemently opposed on ethnic grounds. It is seen as a move to divide the Sindhi nation and is a political red line for Sindhi nationalist and major political parties. This makes the issue not just administrative, but existential, triggering fierce resistance.

* Chain Reaction:

There is a legitimate fear that acceding to one demand will trigger a cascade of others. If South Punjab is created, what stops the demand for a separate Siraili-speaking

province province from Bahawalpur or a separate Gilgit - Baltistan? This could lead to endless fragmentation and destabilize the federation.

3- Administrative and Financial Viability

A critical, yet often overlooked, hurdle is the practical viability of new provinces.

* Financial Burden:

Establishing a new province is a costly affair. It requires a new provincial capital, a new assembly building, a full-fledged initial setup cost and the recurring expenses of duplicating bureaucratic structures would place a massive burden on the federal exchequer, which is already strained.

* Revenue Generation:

There are serious concerns about whether proposed provinces like South Punjab or Hazara would have their own revenue generation (from taxes, resources etc) be sufficient to cover their administrative and development expenditures, or would they become permanently dependent on federal transfers?

4. Demarcation & Resource Disputes:

The process of drawing new boundaries would be highly contentious.

* Demarcation of Boundaries:

Deciding which districts fall into the new province would lead to intense political lobbying and conflict. Districts on the proposed borders might have mixed populations with divided loyalties.

* Control of Resources:

Major disputes would arise over the division of water rights (from rivers like the Indus), control of mineral resources, and ownership of key infrastructure and industries.

For example, how would the waters of the Indus River be allocated between "Central Punjab" & South Punjab?

Recommendations:

To navigate these complex hurdles, a pragmatic and phased approach is necessary.

1. Build a National Political Consensus:

The first and most crucial step is to depoliticize the issue.

A non-partisan Parliamentary commission comprising members from all major political parties should be formed. This commission's mandate would be to:

- objectively study the technical, administrative, and financial viability of each demand for a new province.

- Propose potential maps and frameworks.

- Suggest a roadmap for a constitutional amendment.

This would help build a cross-party consensus & prevent the issue from being used as a political football.

2: Adopt a Phased Approach:

Grant Maximum Provincial Autonomy.

Instead of immediately pursuing the politically explosive path of creating new provinces, a more achievable first step is to implement the 18th Amendment in letter and spirit and go even further.

* Decentralize to the Divisional Level:

The state can grant administrative & financial autonomy to the divisions (e.g., D & Khan Division, Bahawalpur Division, Hazara Division). This would involve

empowering these units with their own budgets, development authorities, & control over local departments like health & education.

* Establish provincial sub-Capitals:

The punjab government's initiative to set up a sub-capital in Bahawalpur is a step in the right direction. This model can be replicated, making the seat of power physically closer to the people.

This approach would satisfy many governance-related grievances without triggering a constitutional battle. It would serve as a practical test of whether smaller administrative units lead to better governance.

3: Focus on Governance, Not just Geography:

The primary narrative of new provinces should be improved public service delivery and administrative efficiency, not just ethnic or linguistic identity. Proponents must present a clear, costed business plan demonstrating how a smaller province would be more responsive and effective in tackling poverty, illiteracy, and healthcare shortages.

Date: _____

4. Long-Term Constitutional Reform
for the long term, political parties must consider amending Article 239 to introduce a more democratic & less rigid process. One proposal is to require a simple majority in the National Assembly and a referendum in the affected region, along with a simple majority in the concerned Provincial Assembly. This would give the people of the region a direct voice, making the process more legitimate and less vulnerable to political blockades in assemblies.