

SUBJECTIVE PART

Q No: 03

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

ANSWER

INTRODUCTION

The formation of new provinces remains a recurring and sensitive issue in Pakistan, often fuelled by concerns over governance inefficiency, ethnic marginalization, and uneven development. Demands for South Punjab, Hazara, and Mohajir Provinces reflect struggles for fair representation and resources. Supporters view it as a path to decentralization and efficient governance, while critics fear ethnic division and fiscal strain. Seen through the lenses of elite capture, federalism imbalance, and fiscal federalism, the debate reveals tensions between identity politics and national cohesion. The need is for institutional, evidence-based reform that strengthens cooperative federalism and promotes unity through equitable governance.

II: Hurdles In the Formation of New Provinces

(i) Constitutional and Legal Rigidity

The 1973 constitution's rigid amendment process, requiring a two-third majority and provincial consent, makes boundary changes extremely difficult. This inflexibility, seen in the failure of the South Punjab Bill 2019, hinders responsive governance and regional reforms.

(ii) Ensure constitutional stability but slows administrative progress.

- (b) Political Polarization hampers bipartisan consensus.
- (c) Limit regional autonomy and fair resource distribution.
- (d) Leaves demands for new provinces unresolved.

(ii) Political Elite capture provincial restructuring threatens to entrenched political ~~wellbeing~~ interests. Dominant parties resist change to preserve vote banks. This reflects elite capture dynamics where political self-interest outweighs public welfare. Instead of rational administrative reform, the status quo is maintained to secure electoral dominance.

(iii) Fiscal and Economic Fragility
Creating new provinces requires enormous financial resources for new assemblies, capitals, and bureaucracies. Pakistan's fiscal deficit (7.4% of GDP, Fyp 2024) and dependence on IMF assistance indicate limited fiscal space. Without fiscal autonomy and sustainable revenue systems, new provinces risk becoming economically dependent, undermining the logic of decentralization.

(iv) Ethnic and Linguistic Sensitivities.
Pakistan's ethno-linguistic diversity - over 70 languages and multiple ethnic groups make re-districting extremely delicate. The Saraiki, Hazara and Mohajir movements are rooted in identity politics. Such demands, often exploited through ethnic marginalization of political gain, risk deepening ethnic polarization in a society already struggling with cohesion.

(v) Centralized Bureaucratic Structure
Pakistan's administrative model follows a Weberian hierarchical system, characterized by central control and bureaucratic inertia. Civil servants resist decentralization.

as it dilutes authority. The Incomplete implementation of the 18th amendment (2010) highlights how bureaucratic control at the center continues to undermine functional federalism.

(vi) Resource distribution Conflicts

The NFC Award and IRSA allocations already generate dispute among provinces. New provinces would demand recalibration of shares, creating new conflicts over tax revenues, water rights, and development funds. The absence of inter-provincial trust amplifies fears of resource deprivation, particularly in Sindh and Balochistan.

(vii) Absence of Objective Criteria

Pakistan lacks defined parameters for creating new provinces - Population, administrative convenience, or linguistic identity. This allows subjective, politicized decision-making. In contrast, India's State Recognition Act 1956 applied demographic, linguistic, and administrative efficiency criteria - an evidence-based approach missing in Pakistan's framework.

(viii) Weak Local Governance and Devolution.

The failure to enforce Article 140-A has weakened local governments. The World Bank (2023) ranks Pakistan below 35th percentile for governance effectiveness. Weak devolution pushes people to demand new provinces for representation and access to resources that could instead be ensured through empowered local councils.

(ix) Risk of Ethno-political Fragmentation.
Dividing provinces along ethnic lines may aggravate centrifugal tendencies. In regions like Balochistan and Karachi, new boundaries could spark ethnic tensions, as per the conflict dynamics of fragile federations without institutional safeguards, administrative restructuring may intensify rather than resolve regional grievance.

(x) Lack of National Consensus and Trust Deficit

The Council of Common Interests (CCI) designed to foster inter provincial coordination, remains under-utilized. Persistent political polarization and mistrust prevent constructive dialogue on provincial restructuring. The absence of cooperative federalism mechanisms keeps the federation divided along partisan lines.

III Recommendations for Provincial Restructuring

(i) Establish a Federal Restructuring Commission.

A Federal restructuring commission, under parliamentary oversight, should define objective criteria - population, area, fiscal capacity and administrative viability - for new provinces. This institutional mechanism, modeled on India's State recognition Commission, would depoliticize the process and ensure evidence based policy

(ii) Strengthen Functional Federalism

Empower provinces through true implementation of the 18th Amendment, particularly in education, health, ~~to~~ and taxation. Decentralization frameworks suggest that provinces enjoying real autonomy, the demand for further fragmentation diminishes.

(iv) Revise the NFC Formula for Equity

Introduce a multifactor NFC formula incorporating Poverty, backwardness, and population density rather than population alone. Fiscal decentralization ensures fair resource allocation and strengthens provincial sustainability, reducing structural disparities.

(iv) Empower local Governments.

Implement Article 140-A in letter and spirit to devolve fiscal and administrative authority to local councils. Evidence from Punjab's local govt Act (2019) shows that localized governance enhances accountability and reduces administrative overload at the provincial level.

(v) Institutionalize the role of council of common interests.

The CEI should hold quarterly mandatory meetings with binding resolutions on resource sharing, planning, and provincial disputes. Such reforms can cultivate cooperative federalism, bridging the trust gap among provinces.

(i) Adopt a Phased Decentralization Model.
Instead of abrupt divisions, adopt ~~incremental~~ incremental decentralization by establishing regional secretariats and development councils, such as South Punjab Secretariat (SOSU). Gradual power transfer minimizes conflicts and allows assessment of administrative efficiency ^{before} ~~granting~~ granting full provincial status.

(ii) Promote Data-driven Governance

utilize empirical data such as Human Development Index (HDI), fiscal gaps and infrastructure density to identify genuine administrative needs. For instance, South Punjab's (HDI) ~~value~~ ^{value} vs national average highlights justified grounds for administrative ~~and~~ focus and development.

(iii) Enhance Public Dialogue and Civic Literacy.

Launch academic and civil society led policy dialogues to reframe the debate from identity politics to governance reform. Informal public discourse mitigates populism and encourages rational consensus aligned with deliberative democracy principles.

(iv) Build Political Consensus through Parliamentary Forums

Establish a parliamentary committee on national cohesion to bring together all parties for structured negotiations. Political consensus and institutional dialogue ^{not} populist pressure, should guide constitutional

amendments on provincial boundaries.

Pakistan (x) Learn from Comparative Federal models. Pakistan can draw lessons from India's Nigeria, where administrative restructuring improved service delivery. India's creation of Telangana (2014) after systemic consultation demonstrates how managed provincial division can enhance governance and representation without instability.

IV. Conclusion

Pakistan's challenges reflect federal imbalance on over centralized structure unable to accommodate regional aspirations. The hurdles are rooted in elite capture, fiscal fragility and bureaucratic inertia, while solutions lie in fiscal federalism, functional autonomy, and institutional coordination. Empirical indicators such as the 2023 Census, NFC Award data, and HDI disparities reinforce that the demand for new provinces stems from governance failure rather than identity assertion alone.

Q No: 08

Pakistan Saudi Arabia have signed a historic defence pact. Critically evaluate the causes and implications of the deal.

ANSWER

I: Introduction.

The signing of the Pakistan - Saudi Arabia historic defence Pact (2025) marks a transformative phase in regional geopolitics, committing both states to treat aggression against one as the aggression against both. While hailed as a strategic breakthrough, it also raises questions about regional balance, security realignments, and Pakistan's strategic autonomy. The deal reflects shifting regional power evaluations aimed at diminishing US influence and emerging multipolarity in the middle-East - South Asia nexus.

II: Causes of the Defence Pact

I Strategic realignment and US - Retrenchment with US reducing its traditional security footprint in Gulf, Saudi Arabia seeks diversified security partners. Pakistan with its experienced military and capability offers a credible substitute.

a move rooted in realist balancing behaviour.

(i) Historical Defence & Cooperation

Since the 1960s, Pakistan has trained Saudi forces, deployed troops during the Gulf war, and protected the holy sites. The new pact institutionalized these historic ties, moving from informal security coordination to structured alliance formation.

(ii) Regional Threat Perception

Escalating tensions with Houthis rebels, Israel's attack on Qatar and its instability in Red Sea push Riyadh toward deeper defense collaboration. Pakistan's combat experience against non-State actors ~~and~~ and recent escalation b/w Indo-Pak enhances its utility in regional counterterrorism and defense architecture.

(iv) Economic Diplomacy and Strategic Bargaining

Amid Pakistan's fiscal crises, the pact is also geo-economic diplomacy. Saudi investment worth over \$20 Billion is linked with enhanced strategic trust. Pakistan's defense cooperation now becomes both a security and economic hedge.

(v) Strategic Diversification for Pakistan

For Islamabad, closer defense alignment provides strategic depth beyond South Asia and reduces overreliance on China. Its position Pakistan as a bridge b/w Gulf and South Asia, enhancing its regional clout.

(vi) Symbolism of muslim unity. politically, the pact appeals to the idea of ummah solidarity - a normative dimension that boost domestic legitimacy for both governments, consistent with constructivist narratives of shared identity.

(vii) Counterbalance to Emerging Regional Bloc. The pact also serves as a counterweight to India-Gulf defense ties and Iran's growing influence in middle East, reflecting balance of threat logic with regional geopolitics.

(viii) Institutionalization of Defense Cooperation. By formalizing joint training, intelligence-sharing and defense production, the agreement represents a step towards institutionalized military integration rather than ad hoc cooperation.

(ix) Technological Modernization. Saudi investment in Pakistan's defense industry could modernize Pakistan's military industrial complex, including joint production of drones and precision weapons.

(x) Symbolic Assertion of Sovereign Autonomy. For both nations, the pact symbolizes a move towards strategic autonomy - less dependent on western allies, more self-reliant within the muslim world.

III Implications of the Pact

- (i) Strengthened Deterrence Posture
The Pact enhances collective deterrence.
Any aggression against one partner
now implies a coordinated
response - projecting mutual resolve across
the ME and SoAsia.
- (ii) potential Nuclear overtones
Analysts suggest Pakistan's nuclear capability
could provide Riyadh with an implicit
umbrella raising proliferation concerns
and altering regional deterrence
equations.
- (iii) Economic and Energy Integration
The Pact catalyzes ~~broader~~ broader
cooperation. Saudi Arabia's oil supply and
investment commitments align with
Pakistan's energy security goals, reinforcing
complex interdependence.
- (iv) Shift in Regional power Balance
This alignment reshapes Gulf - South Asia
strategic architecture, potentially marginalizing
India's Gulf - diplomacy.
- (v) Strategic overstretch for Pakistan
Commitment to Saudi defense may burden
Pakistan's already strained economy
and security apparatus, risking strategic
overextension if regional crises intensify.

(vi) Diplomatic Repercussions.

The Pact may draw Iranian apprehension and concerns among western allies wary of a new security bloc. Balancing relations will test Islamabad's diplomatic fineness.

(vii) Institutional Coordination challenges

Effective joint operations require command integration, interoperability, and logistical synchronization, which may take years to operationalize.

(viii) Enhanced Pakistan's Defence ^{credibility} ~~capability~~.

Globally, Pakistan's role as a professional military power is reinforced - boosting its reputation in defence diplomacy and training.

(ix) Regional Security Polarization

By formalizing military blocs, the Pact risks deepening sectarian and geopolitical divides in the muslim world, particularly b/w Sunni-Shia sphere of influence.

(x) Opportunity for Strategic Leverage.

If managed prudently, Pakistan can leverage this partnership to attract Gulf investment, enhance military technology, and strengthen its bargaining position in multilateral forums.