

# The Dynamics of Pakistan's Intra-national Security: The Role of the New Provinces

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## Abstract

The debate and discourse to change the provincial map of Pakistan by creating new provinces is not a new phenomenon and is considered as a major challenge to intra-national security and to the centripetal forces who still want Pakistan to be a unitary/*centralised* state instead of a federal state. What is intra-national security and how can the issue of creating new provinces have a major impact on the dynamics of national security at different levels? When compared with national security, which deals with the whole country, intra-national security relates to contradictions and variations in the security dynamics and paradigms in different parts of the country. Pakistan as a multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural and multi-religious state can effectively deal with issues of security if intra-national security is accepted as a reality and is beyond the scope of national security. Matters and issues relating to different regions of Pakistan located in its provinces can at best be understood in terms of intra-national security. If the approach of major power stakeholders in Pakistan is positive, and they wish to peacefully address issues that cause friction, instability, chaos, disorder and violence in different provinces because of social, economic and political injustices, they must seriously consider proposal to upgrade existing divisions of Pakistan into provinces. For that matter, proper brainstorming by the concerned stakeholders including civil society groups needs to be done so that consensus is reached on the methodology to create new provinces in Pakistan.

## Keywords

Council of Common Interests, National Finance Commission, 1973 constitution, Balkanisation

## Introduction

The demand for the creation of new provinces in Pakistan is a source of both positive and negative transformation of intra-national security. For a long time, demand for redrawing the provincial map of

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Pakistan is a source of national political debate and discourse which got an impetus with the passage of the 18th amendment by the parliament and the election campaign of May 2013 general elections.

Two schools of thought exist in Pakistan on the issue of creating new provinces. The first school of thought, which represents those favouring a centralised administrative structure of the country, holds the view that the very demand to redraw the provincial map of Pakistan will open a Pandora's box and unleash violent conflicts in the country, that Pakistan is an ideological state and cannot permit the promotion of ethnic identities and create provinces on ethnic or lingual grounds (Ahmar, 1998).

The second school of thought arguing for a decentralised administrative structures of Pakistan holds that recognising the sub-provincial identities will have a positive impact on transforming the country's age-old conflicts related to lingual, ethnic and cultural groups. The demand for a Hazara province in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Seraiki and Bahawalpur provinces in Punjab and province of southern Sindh composed of Karachi and Hyderabad divisions reflects the undercurrents in Pakistani society having far-reaching implications on intra-national security. The division of Balochistan on Baloch and Pashtun lines is another issue causing friction and conflict in the volatile political landscape of Pakistan.

Yet, there is another view about the fallout of creating new provinces. It is argued that '[a]dministratively ... having 20–25 provinces will ensure decentralization and improved public services. In reality, it could increase decentralization. Most administrative benefits from having more provinces can be gained at lower cost by empowering local governments, which provinces are currently avoiding' (Murtaza, 2014). The writer is of the opinion that

perhaps the strongest administrative reason for making new provinces relates not to the impact locally but to the incongruence of the overall federation where Punjab comprises 55 percent of the population and Balochistan 40 percent of the landmass. Dividing Punjab especially could reduce ethnic power disparities, but only if divided units vote differently. Otherwise, Punjab's proportion and clout in the Senate will increase. (Murtaza, 2014)

Punjab's dilemma as the biggest province of Pakistan in terms of population is twofold. First, central Punjab, which controls the power structure of the province in particular and Pakistan in general will lose its clout if the southern divisions of Punjab separate and form separate province of *Junobi* (southern) Punjab composed of Seraiki speaking areas and Bahawalpur. Second, the conflict between Seraiki and Punjabi speaking population in southern Punjab may be unavoidable if Punjab is divided on ethnic/lingual grounds.

As far as the neighbourhood of Pakistan is concerned, the eastern neighbour of Pakistan, India has 29 states and seven union territories, whereas Afghanistan, its western neighbour, has 34 provinces. Hence, it is argued by the supporters of creating new provinces in Pakistan that, when Afghanistan and India can have several dozen provinces, why can Pakistan not follow its western and eastern neighbours, particularly when there exists a legitimate case for redrawing the provincial map of Pakistan? Yet, in the case of India, issues about redrawing state boundaries remain unresolved. The latest case is the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh state into Andhra and Telangana according to the Act of Indian parliament in 2014, which became a cause of conflict as the earlier version of Andhra Pradesh reorganisation act had been rejected by the assembly of Andhra Pradesh on 30 January 2014.

When one unit was dissolved by the then martial law regime of Yahya Khan in 1970, provinces in West Pakistan were restored, namely, Punjab, Sindh, Northwestern Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan. After the disintegration of Pakistan in December 1971, four provinces in the western wing of the country along with the disputed Northern Areas and Azad Kashmir formed the successor state of Pakistan. With the demographic transformation in the provincial landscape and the assertion of lingual, ethnic and cultural identities in post 1971 Pakistan, demand for a new social contract by redrawing the provincial map of the country shaped a new political discourse, thereby having a significant impact on intra-national security.

This article will examine intra-national security in the context of demand and movement for a new provincial map of Pakistan by responding to the following questions:

1. What is the basis of *debate* to create new provinces in Pakistan?
2. How can intra-national security have positive and negative *transformations* if new provinces in Pakistan are created?
3. Why there exists a lack of *consensus* on creating new provinces in Pakistan and how delay in redrawing the provincial map of the country can augment the national security predicament?
4. Can new provinces in Pakistan be created by *upgrading* existing divisions?

Furthermore, the article also examines the perceptions of major stakeholders on the demand for creating new provinces and the possibility of developing consensus among them for a peaceful transition from a quasi-centralised to a decentralised administrative set-up of Pakistan. After all, Pakistan is a federal state but needs to transform its federal units so as to accommodate realities, which exist in post 1971 Pakistan.



**Figure 1.** Provincial Map of Pakistan

**Source:** [https://www.google.com/search?q=provincial+map+of+pakistan&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjK7JWcm\\_zjAhVFvhQKHcE0DpQQsAQIHA&biw=1366&bih=631#imgrc=\\_CeNavkiyWdACM%3A](https://www.google.com/search?q=provincial+map+of+pakistan&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjK7JWcm_zjAhVFvhQKHcE0DpQQsAQIHA&biw=1366&bih=631#imgrc=_CeNavkiyWdACM%3A) (accessed on 27 December 2015).

## Intra-national Security and the Debate on New Provinces

The debate and discourse to change the provincial map of Pakistan by creating new provinces is not a new phenomenon and is considered as a major challenge to intra-national security and to the centripetal forces, which still want Pakistan to be a unitary instead of a federal, if not a confederal state. What is intra-national security and how the issue of creating new provinces can have a major impact on the dynamics of national security at different levels?

When compared with national security, which deals with the whole country, intra-national security relates to contradictions and variations in the security dynamics and paradigms in different parts of the country. Pakistan as a multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural and multi-religious state can effectively deal with issues of security if intra-national security is accepted as a reality and beyond the scope of national security. Matters and issues related to different regions of Pakistan located in its provinces can at best be understood in terms of intra-national security.

The concept of intra-national security means security affairs within different provinces and regions of a particular state. Since the term national security is quite common and is used frequently to denote security affairs at the traditional and non-traditional level, intra-national security appears to be a new concept separate from national security but focusing on security challenges and issues within different regions, emanating from ethnic, lingual, cultural, sectarian and religious contradictions (Cohen, 2005). As a result of status quo maintained since the year 1970 when the provinces in the western wing of Pakistan were restored till today, the debate on creating new provinces got an impetus with the passing of 18th amendment to the constitution of Pakistan in 2010. Granting of more financial autonomy to the provinces of Pakistan and the renaming of NWFP to KPK had a profound impact on the Hazara division, where the demand for creating a Hazara province gained ground. If Pashtun nationalists felt jubilant and thanked the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led regime of President Asif Ali Zardari for giving a sense of identity to Pashtuns by renaming their province, within KPK the demand arose that Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) should be merged with KPK because of the similar ethnic composition of FATA and the KPK.

Likewise, the demand for creating the provinces of Bahawalpur and Seraikistan also got an impetus and made inroads in these two divisions of *southern* Punjab.

Furthermore, renaming Northern Areas as Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) by the regime of People's Party in 2010 also provided a sense of empowerment to the people of GB by electing their representatives for their assembly. However, GB has no representation in the parliament of Pakistan because of the disputed nature of the territory and it cannot be granted a provincial status because of the same reason. Reforms introduced in GB by the then PPP regime were aimed to alleviate a sense of deprivation which loomed large because of insecurity and lack of proper human development in the strategically located region controlled by Pakistan. It is yet to be seen to what extent renaming of Northern Areas as Gilgit-Baltistan has empowered local people in the realm of governance.

Threats to intra-national security, if new provinces are formed, cannot be undermined. Already nationalistic feelings in the Hazara division of KPK for seeking a separate provincial identity are quite strong inasmuch as in Bahawalpur and Seraiki belt of Punjab province. Such threats are related to the outbreak of violence against ethnic minorities if new provinces are created, and the redistribution of resources is made in the new provincial set-up. As far as the demand for Hazara province is concerned, two major realities should be taken into account. First, Pashtun nationalists led by Awami National Party (ANP) are not supportive to divide KPK and create a new province at their expense. Second, local stakeholders who are spearheading the movement for Hazara province are unable to transform their demand into a reality because of divided leadership and are restricting their endeavours only for election purposes.

Consequently, one can see a lull as far as the movement for Hazara province is concerned. The same is true as far as the movements for Seraiki and Bahawalpur provinces are concerned, as the concerned leadership in both cases is unable to exert their influence on Lahore and Islamabad for the acceptance of their demand. It means that issues which trigger insecurity and conflicts in the provinces of Pakistan would remain unresolved because there is neither political will nor determination on the part of different stakeholders to seriously resolve matters that augment disharmony and tension.

Four major factors will shape intra-national security if the provincial map of Pakistan is redrawn. First, the exercise of tolerance and peaceful coexistence by different stakeholders, both representing minority and majority sides, will help unleash positive thinking in order to address unresolved security issues. If there has been no change in the provincial map of Pakistan since 1970, it is because of the fear prevailing in some circles that violence and bloodshed may take place if new provinces are created on ethnic grounds.

Second, intra-national security will become a source of cooperation rather than conflict if will of the people, instead of the interests of various political parties and groups, is taken into consideration. Holding of referendum to determine whether the voters belonging to a particular region in a province want a separate provincial identity will also go a long way in inducting a sense of ownership if a new province is created. Third, the transition from centralisation to de-centralisation by creating provinces on administrative grounds will cause minimum security threats than provinces established on ethnic or lingual basis. Intra-national security will be highly threatened if a de-centralised power structure is not established in new provinces. Finally, institutions such as Council of Common Interests (CCI) which presently represent four provinces will play a better role to promote intra-national security and harmony if more provinces are created through a democratic process. Issues which trigger insecurity leading to violence can be properly handled when there are autonomous federating units interacting with each other without the fear of domination and exploitation by a particular province.

## **Pakistan's Security Predicament**

Pakistan's predicament in terms of intra-national security is two-pronged. First, mistrust and suspicion exist between and among provinces on the issues of water, developmental funds and energy. While the National Finance Commission (NFC) did try to allocate funds to provinces according to their requirements, yet, grievances among the smaller provinces of Sindh and Balochistan remain. Second, sharing of information by provinces with each other on terrorism, crimes and smuggling can help tackle security threats, but in practice there exists not much cooperation among provinces in this regard.

One can observe a marked transformation in Pakistan's landscape in the post 1971 era in terms of redrawing the provincial map of the country. When Mr. Z. A. Bhutto assumed the reins of power on 20 December 1971 following the break-up of united Pakistan, he took keen interest in formulating a constitution of Pakistan based on strong centre and strong provinces (Wolpert, 1993). The 1973 constitution of Pakistan which was proclaimed after months of deliberations and hard work of the concerned stakeholders provided a federal set-up having bicameral legislature: national assembly as the lower house and senate as the upper house having equal representation of all the four provinces of Pakistan. Although Bhutto was an ardent advocate of strong centre, yet at the same time, he believed that given the past bitter experiences faced by Pakistan because of East–West Pakistan cleavages, the only way one can keep the country together was by having a federal structure. Unfortunately, the 1973 constitution was suspended when martial law was imposed by General Zia-ul-Haq on 5 July 1977 and when it was lifted on 31 December 1985, the 1973 constitution was also restored. Enormous damage was

done to the federation of Pakistan during more than 8 years of martial law as the country's provincial autonomy was compromised because of the military rule and the centralised decision-making structure. In the absence of parliament and a ban on political activities during the martial law regime, the vacuum was largely filled by ethnic forces who argued that the suspension of 1973 constitution meant an end to the federal form of government. It was in mid-1980s that the former chief minister of Balochistan, Sardar Ataullah Mengal along with a former stalwart of PPP from Sindh, Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto demanded a 'new social contract' based on the confederal form of government.

The restoration of democracy after the death of the president General Zia-ul-Haq in an air crash on 17 August 1988, however, failed to reverse most of the policies of military dictator, particularly the one dealing with Islamisation which negated the concept of provincial autonomy. Since 2 December 1988 when Benazir Bhutto's first government came to power and 12 October 1999 when Nawaz Sharif's government was overthrown in a military coup, no legislation has been done to enhance provincial autonomy or create new provinces because the regimes of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif remained under the constant pressure of military establishment; they felt insecure and were involved in political wrangling against each other rather than dealing with issues which deepened the level of inter- and intra-provincial disharmony at various levels. The issue of Kalabagh Dam became the bone of contention in Pakistani politics and depicted sharp polarisation at the provincial level. If Punjab was supportive to the construction of Kalabagh Dam, Sindh and NWFP expressed their strong opposition because of different reasons. The provincial assemblies of NWFP and Sindh passed resolutions terming Kalabagh Dam detrimental to the interests of two provinces. If NWFP feared that a part of its province will be inundated because of the construction of Kalabagh Dam, Sindh argued that as a lower riparian province it will be deprived of its share of water because Kalabagh Dam was located at the upper riparian site of the province of Punjab. The rural-urban divide in the province of Sindh reflected the sharp ethnic polarisation between native Sindhis forming majority in rural areas of the province and the non-Sindhi speaking ethnic and lingual groups particularly those representing Urdu speaking 'migrants' from India, Punjabis and Pashtoons from their respective provinces.

Needless to say, it was not the priority of civilian governments from December 1988 to October 1999 to bring qualitative changes in the mode of governance and in the 1973 constitution of Pakistan so as to address the issues of provincial autonomy, except during the second term of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (from February 1997 to October 1999) when reforms through NFC and CCI were launched so as to provide adequate financial resources to provinces.

When General Musharraf seized power on 12 October 1999 after toppling the elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, he emphasised upon focusing on inter-provincial harmony but failed to come up with a plan to address the grievances of sub-provincial groups demanding a separate provincial status. Throughout his rule, he maintained status quo in the provincial map of Pakistan. On the contrary, it was during the later part of Musharraf's government that the issue of Balochistan took a serious turn with the assassination of Baloch nationalist leader Nawab Akbar Bugti in August 2006. The feeling among smaller provinces of Balochistan, Sindh and NWFP (now KPK) of sense of deprivation continued.

The end of Musharraf rule in 2008 and the restoration of democracy led to the installation of fourth PPP government. It was during PPP's regime (2008–2013) that the promulgation of the 18th amendment took place which tried to address grievances of smaller provinces by launching an ambitious programme for protecting the rights of the people of Balochistan and renaming the province of NWFP as KPK. Furthermore, the 18th amendment ostensibly tried to empower provinces. During the PPP regime, debate on creating new provinces got an impetus so as to provide a sense of identity to those communities which felt marginalised. The demand to divide Punjab and KPK also got a boost in the later phase of PPP

government and became a major election issue during May 2013 polls. All the mainstream political parties, including Pakistan Muslim League (N), called for the creation of new provinces in Pakistan but lacked the political will and determination to transform their pledge into a reality.

New provinces, if created, can have both positive and negative transformation in the domain of intra-national security because of two reasons. First, without establishing a mechanism for crisis, conflict and violence management, new provinces will be vulnerable to severe security threats and challenges, thus having negative implications. Second, with better cooperation, linkages and commitment for a developed and prosperous Pakistan, old and new provinces of Pakistan will excel in human security and human development.

## The Politics of Consensus

The state of Pakistan was created as a result of an understanding reached between the Muslim majority states of the northwest and northeast parts of the Indian subcontinent. Interestingly, states had created Pakistan and not vice versa to the extent that there was a referendum in the NWFP and Sylhet in East Bengal to determine whether they want to join Pakistan or India. According to the Lahore resolution of 23 March 1940, northwestern and northeastern Muslim majority provinces of the Indian subcontinent were to be grouped as independent states. However, on 9 April 1946, in a meeting of the Muslim League held in Delhi, it was decided to drop the word 'states' so as to establish the sovereign state of Pakistan composed of the Muslim majority provinces of northwestern (Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and NWFP) and northeastern parts (Bengal and Assam) of the Indian subcontinent. Following the creation of Pakistan and the subsequent disappointment which occurred in the then East Pakistan, Sindh, Balochistan and NWFP about the perceived domination of Punjabi-Mohajir elite in the power structures of the country provided space to centrifugal forces who called for a de-centralised system (Rahman, 2012). The surge of Bengali nationalism following the language movement since 1952 in the then East Pakistan deepened suspicions, ill will and hatred between the two wings of Pakistan ultimately leading to the disintegration of Pakistan in December 1971 (Lambert, 1959).

Unfortunately, Pakistan became the first post-colonial state to have disintegrated when East Pakistan became Bangladesh as a result of a bloody civil war in 1971 (Jahan, 1994). In 1956, the provinces of West Pakistan were merged as 'one unit' to deal with the numerical strength of East Pakistan. But 'one unit' which established so-called 'parity' between East and West Pakistan failed because smaller provinces such as Balochistan, Sindh and NWFP since the beginning never accepted the disappearance of their provincial identities and consistently demanded the restoration of provinces. In 1970, during the martial law regime of General Yahya Khan, provinces in West Pakistan were restored and these provinces became the successor state of united Pakistan after the emergence of Bangladesh.

From many angles, Pakistan was a unique state because the only bond which united the two parts of the country was religion. Separated by 1,000 miles of Indian territory, geographical links between East and West Pakistan were by air and by ship. When India imposed an airspace embargo on Pakistani planes flying over India in January 1971 following the hijacking of an Indian plane to Lahore, the air travel time which used to be three hours increased to six hours as flights from Karachi to Dhaka had to be diverted through Colombo, Sri Lanka. Cultural, lingual and economic contradictions between East and West Pakistan deepened with the passage of time and ultimately led to the breakup of the country. The legacy of the separation of East Pakistan continued to haunt the Pakistani people and the rulers because of the threat of the surge of ethnic and lingual conflicts. In fact, the first lingual and ethnic riots which

took place in post December 1971 Pakistan were in July 1972 in Karachi and other cities and towns of Sindh between native Sindhi and Urdu speaking community who had migrated from India following the partition of the Indian subcontinent in August 1947 (Ahmar, 2002).

During 1980s and 1990s, Karachi witnessed ethnic riots involving Mohajirs, Sindhis and Pashtuns in which hundreds of people were killed. The demand to establish Karachi as a province is, however, considered lethal because of its serious backlash in Sindh as native Sindhis are united to oppose such a demand. Unlike Punjab, where Central Punjab is against the division of province but will reluctantly agree to accept the province of Junobi Punjab, the case of Sindh is totally different. Sindhi nationalists have threatened to go to any extreme in order to prevent the division of their province. Although the Muthahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) is not calling for the division of Sindh, but it is extending its fullest support for the creation of Hazara province and the division of Punjab with a hope that once the process of creating new provinces is unleashed in Pakistan, it will surely create conditions for claiming a separate province of Karachi.

The 1973 constitution was called as a landmark achievement to seek consensus among the provinces of Pakistan on vital issues ranging from autonomy, economy, role of armed forces and civilian control over the mode of governance. Consensus on having a bicameral legislature by creating an upper and a lower house of parliament helped in protecting the rights of smaller provinces as Senate, the upper house contained equal representation of all the four provinces. The debate over creating new provinces raises a fundamental question: to what extent the 1973 constitution has a provision to establish a new provincial map of Pakistan? Therefore, it is rightly asserted by a Pakistani author that

the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan provides a road map for creating new provinces in the country. For instance, Clause 4 of Article 239 of the Constitution specifies the procedure to have more provinces. The particular clause says that a bill to amend the constitution would have the effect of altering the limits of a province shall not be presented to the President for assent unless it has been passed by the provincial assembly concerned by the votes of not less than two-third of the total membership. This means that after the passage in the two Houses of the Parliament, such a bill would have to be approved by the provincial assembly concerned with 2/3 majority before the presentation to the president. (Ahmar, 2013, p. 9)

More than 40 years have passed since the promulgation of 1973 constitution; yet, no change in the provincial map of Pakistan has taken place. Maintaining status quo in terms of not creating new provinces indicates two major realities. First, there exists no political will on the part of Pakistani state and society to provide identity to subregional territories present in all the provinces of Pakistan. Second, those demanding the creation of new provinces either lack the capability to seek a practical application of their demand or the centripetal forces are still strong. Sometimes, those opposing the creation of new provinces argue that there will be 'Balkanisation' of Pakistan in the event change in the administrative set-up of Pakistan takes place or they argue for a strong center as a deterrent against forces who want to destabilise the country on ethnic grounds. Still, the most plausible way out to deal with the debate on creating new provinces is by seeking a solution within the ambit of 1973 constitution. Surely,

making new provinces within the federation is a constitutional solution of many constitutional issues. Pakistan is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society but is held captive in a straightjacket by a totalitarian center that exploits the misguided idea of national ideology. By dividing and reconstituting, Pakistan can give expression to its diversity fully. As a state, Pakistan can go forward only by the consensus and participation of all stakeholders. Gone are the days of central rule and one unit. (Hamdani, 2012)



### *Demand for New Provinces*

With the fragility of a centralised state structure to cope with issues present in a multilingual, multi-cultural and multiethnic state, the way out to deal with the issues of ethno-nationalism is to follow the approach of decentralisation with proper rights and responsibilities of centre and the provinces. Therefore,

the need for new provinces has been felt and discussed in the past as well, but the debate didn't generate hatred even if some point-scoring did take place. This time around, certain politicians first made an issue out of a non-issue and then started warning that not creating new provinces could lead to Balkanization-like situation in the country. (Yusufzai, 2012)

It was since the passage of the 18th amendment in April 2010 that the demand to create new provinces seems to have gained ground. As argued by a Pakistani writer that,

since the passage of the 18th Constitutional Amendment, we have seen that voices in support of more provinces became louder. Furthermore, we have also seen that an increasing number of groups and parties seem to be demanding that the existing provinces, if not all of them at least Punjab, should be broken into small units. The problem is that Pakistan has changed manifold and the struggle over resources and physical space has consequently intensified. (Rais, 2012)

He further states,

what has already happened in India is now bound to happen in Pakistan. It is too early to say when the federation will be restructured, since new provinces will require much broader national consensus. Also, when it happens, the change will not be confined to Punjab alone. That said, it will be safe to say that the politics of new provinces will be the defining feature of politics in the coming years and decades. (Rais, 2012)

The years 2010–2013 witnessed back-to-back activities to give the demand for creating new provinces some practical shape.

Particularly the year 2012 saw some major developments in terms of creating new provinces in Pakistan. These developments reflected growing demands particularly in Punjab and KPK for creating Sereika, Bhawalpur and Hazara provinces. On January 3, 2012 the Muthahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) submitted to National Assembly Secretariat a constitutional amendment bill seeking creation of new provinces in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. (Ahmar, 2013, p. 9)

But MQM's drive for creating new provinces in 2011–2013 was primarily restricted to Seraiki and Hazara provinces. In the post 2013 election period, MQM began to raise the issue of new provinces also in Sindh not on ethnic or lingual but on administrative grounds.

In August 2012, the then PPP led coalition government established a parliamentary commission to create new provinces in Punjab under the chairmanship of Mr. Farhatullah Babar, senator and official spokesperson of President Asif Ali Zardari. 'Disregarding the criticism and reservations of PML (N) on the formation of parliamentary commission to divide Punjab on 26 January 2013 the commission approved the draft of a constitutional amendment bill seeking creation of new province to be called as 'Bhawalpur-Junobi Punjab comprising three southern divisions and two eastern districts of Punjab'.

On 8 February 2013, the 20th constitutional bill for the creation of another province in Punjab was tabled in the Senate by the then federal law minister. The amended version of the bill proposed an amendment in Article 198 (3) of the constitution which in its present form reads as:

The Lahore High Court shall have a bench each in Bhawalpur, Multan and Rawalpindi. The bill proposed to strike off Bhawalpur and Multan both to be part of the proposed Bhawalpur-Janoobi Province of the commencement of the Constitution 24th amendment bill (bill for New Province tabled in Senate, 2013). On a resolution which recommended the creation of the proposed Janoobi Punjab from the existing province of Punjab. (Ahmar, 2013, pp. 10–11)

critics regarding new provinces warned of opening a Pandora's Box and the outbreak of violence in the event areas are carved out from Punjab and established as a province. For different reasons, Bahawalpur and Mianwali expressed serious reservations for their inclusion in the proposed province of Janoobi Punjab. Bahawalpur wanted to restore its separate status in the form of a province, whereas district Mianwali rejected its inclusion in the proposed province on administrative grounds.

Therefore, it was argued that

both Seraiki and Hazara provinces are being advocated on ethnic and linguistic basis even if their promoters unconvincingly claim that their move is based on administrative grounds. The Hazara province movement was triggered by the renaming of NWFP as Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa because its leaders mostly Muslim Leaguers felt that Pakhtoonkhwa was parochial as it excluded non-Pashtuns or didn't speak Pashtu. (Yusufzai, 2012).

It is impossible that two-thirds of the members of assembly will vote for separating Hazara from KPK and proclaiming it as a new province unless the Pashtun members also render their significant support in this regard. ANP primarily representing Pashtuns is against the separation of Hazara division from KPK *News International* (Karachi), 10 January 2012. Presently, Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) which rules KPK is not against the creation of Hazara province but has not taken any practical measures in this regard. The same is true in case of carving out the province of Junobi Punjab from the province of Punjab because it is uncertain that two-thirds of the members of Punjab Assembly will approve such an act. According to the 1973 constitution even if Senate and National Assembly approve the creation of new provinces it must be approved by two-thirds majority of the members of assembly of the respective province.

As mentioned earlier, MQM since 2011 is actively advocating the demand for new provinces on administrative grounds. Once itself a strong supporter of what it called 'Mohajir nationalism' MQM transformed its ideology by broadening its scope at the national level and renaming its organisation as MQM (United National Movement). But, in the recent past, MQM has again called for the division of Sindh primarily on urban and rural grounds because it is believed that

for MQM supporters, the demand for Karachi and Hyderabad as a separate province is literally the writing on the wall and the restoration of city district government is considered its foundation. However, Sindhi nationalists promise that their province will only be divided over their dead bodies. (Ebrahim, 2011)

MQM's chief Altaf Hussain and the leaders of that organisation have reiterated several times that they don't want to divide Sindh on ethnic grounds but it is high time that ground realities, such as growing population in the urban centers of not only Sindh but also in other provinces of Pakistan should also be taken into consideration while rationalising the new provincial map of the country.

Addressing his birthday function at the MQM headquarters via video link, MQM chief Altaf Hussain insisted that 'Pakistan would be wiped out from the global map, if new administrative borders were not drawn and that Pakistan was the only country to have a smaller number of provinces despite its large population.' Likewise, speaking from London over phone to a meeting of Punjabi and Seraiki workers of his party in Karachi, Altaf Hussain said that

creating more provinces in Pakistan was in the larger interest of the 200 million people of the country and necessary for good governance. New provinces and administrative units were being created all over the world in view of growing population. In Pakistan, this demand was being opposed just to maintain status quo. People of Bahawalpur are demanding for the restoration of their state, Seraikis want their own province. People of Hazara are demanding a province but no one is paying any head. New provinces should be created on the basis of the province for every 10 million people. (see news item, Altaf (2014))

MQM's predicament on new provinces in Pakistan is twofold: first, it has not enough votes neither in the Senate nor in National Assembly or in the Sindh Assembly to transform its demand into a reality. Second, in the case of Sindh, the demand for new provinces will deepen its conflict not only with Sindhi nationalists but also with PPP as all leader of that party are unanimous in protecting the unity and integrity of Sindh.

To what extent MQM will maintain its perceived national character and deny the allegation on the part of its opponents that it wants to divide Sindh on ethnic grounds and is covertly striving for a separate province of Karachi? In the parliament, MQM has been quite vocal in its demand to create new provinces so as to give empowerment to the marginalised sub-provincial communities in all the four provinces of Pakistan. As mentioned earlier, MQM supports the creation of Hazara province and favours the division of Punjab by creating the provinces of Bahawalpur and Seraikistan. Its stance on dividing Balochistan on ethnic lines is still not very clear but in the case of Sindh, its position is paradoxical. Its equation with military establishment and security agencies is not stable and there exists deep suspicion in state authorities about MQM's resolve of not being in favour of dividing Sindh.

It is not only the MQM which demands the redrawing of provincial map of Pakistan but PPP, ANP and Pakistan Tehrek-e-Insaf also support the creation of new provinces in Pakistan in order to strengthen the federal structure of the country. Therefore, the very concept of intra-national security is passing through a transitory phase in Pakistan because of stalemate which exists as far as transforming the provincial map of the country is concerned. In the absence of consensus between different stakeholders who are in favour or against the creation of new provinces, one can expect the deepening of conflict on issues that are a source of discord.

## The Way Out?

The debate on creating new provinces in Pakistan cannot reach its logical conclusion unless clarity, consensus and consistency are followed by the major stakeholders. Confusion, which has made things complicated for those who want Pakistan to move on instead of maintaining status quo on the question of creating new provinces, needs to be replaced with clarity. Likewise, apart from consensus among political parties and civil society, agreeing on the pros and cons of establishing new provinces is the need of the hour. Furthermore, instead of ad hocism on major issues, which has caused enormous harm to Pakistan, it needs to be replaced with consistency as far as the question of creating new provinces is concerned.

Therefore, it is argued that the

dead issue of creation of new federating units received a lease of life on June 26, 2014 when a parliamentary panel sought the opinion of provincial assemblies on whether redrawing the boundaries of provinces would be subjected to the will of districts affected by this amendment. Senator Mohsin Khan Leghari contended that constitutional amendment is designed to empower the parliament to create new provisions and noted that it is necessary in the backdrop of common threat of most political parties made in their manifesto for election 2013 to create new provinces. Special Secretary Law observed that carving out new federating units through law would be a dangerous omen as this right solely rests with provincial assemblies in their boundaries. (Ahmed, 2014)

The constitution of 1973 which has survived two military coups, that is, of 5 July 1977 and 12 October 1999, needs to be revisited. It is argued that 18th amendment passed by the parliament in 2010 was a landmark in empowering the provinces of Pakistan. That the last government of PPP made a headway in creating the new province of Junobi (southern) Punjab by passing the bill from the Senate but by the time its implementation was required elections were held in May 2013 and the matter was shelved. After a spell of around one year (2013), the issue of new provinces seems to have risen again. Two major issues which have cropped up vis-à-vis the creation of new provinces in Pakistan are as follows: first, the fear that such a change in the provincial map of Pakistan will unleash instability and violence in the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan because in both these provinces the Baloch and Sindhi nationalists have vowed not to allow such a move to take its practical shape. In KPK and Punjab also, there are forces who are against the division of their provinces but those who have launched a movement for Hazara, Bahawalpur and Seraikistan provinces are also strong. Second, there exists the absence of a strong political will on the part of state actors, political parties and other stakeholders to move forward and take practical measures to create new provinces. The debate that whether the new provinces should be created on ethnic/lingual grounds or the existing divisions in Pakistan are upgraded as provinces is also going on but has not reached its logical conclusion.

It seems, before the holding of the next general elections, which are due in 2018, the issue of new provinces may again arise in order to seek electoral support in those constituencies where there exists enormous support to seek a new provincial identity, whether administrative or ethnic. The way out from years of disagreement and lack of consensus on creating new provinces depends on seeking two major options. First, considering new provinces as a positive contribution in order to empower those regions of the Pakistan where decentralisation is a major requirement. Second, new provinces will strengthen and not weaken intra-national security issues. Conflict over resources and settlement of non-locals can be taken care of if political parties and other stakeholders follow a just and fair approach instead of pursuing a policy of divide and rule. Yet deep down, there exists insecurity, fear and paranoia on the part of those forces who are still haunted by the legacy of the emergence of Bangladesh and the perception that redrawing the provincial map of Pakistan may unleash violence and augment intra national security threats.

Alarmists point out problems and challenges in the event new provinces are created. For them, Pakistan will face the following challenges after the creation of new provinces, namely:

1. Emergence of new administration.
2. Conflict on resource distribution.
3. Formation of new groups which will later on demand for their separate province on lingual basis.
4. There would also be administration personnel and paramilitary force issue.

5. Political forces will also create problems for maintaining their hegemony over each other in newly made provinces.
6. Development prospects can also be affected to an extent.
7. There can be emergence of Turf war (Abro, 2012).

However, alarmists cannot overlook critical issues that threaten the very existence of state because of territorial status quo in the existing provinces of Pakistan. It is argued that when neighbouring countries, such as Afghanistan and India can have more than three dozen provinces/states, why cannot Pakistan decentralise its administrative provincial structures and redraw its borders by creating new provinces. One way to avoid conflict on the basis of race and language is by upgrading divisions in Pakistan as provinces. Currently, there are 29 divisions in Pakistan, of which there are nine divisions in Punjab, seven divisions in Sindh, seven divisions in KPK and six divisions in Balochistan.

Since these divisions have no lingual or ethnic identities, their upgradation in the form of provinces will not cause resentment among ethnic minorities or majorities. Furthermore, intra-national security, which is fragile in view of inter- and intra-provincial discords would remain stable and harmonious if the provincial map of Pakistan is transformed on logical basis. However, some major questions must be addressed before one can think of considering the upgradation of divisions into provinces. First, what will be the financial costs of that upgradation and how will that cost be met? Second, with 29 new provinces based on the upgradation of divisions, what will be the administrative and political composition of these provinces and how can technical and other matters, which may emerge as a result of such a massive change in the map of Pakistan, be handled? Third, since divisions will be upgraded into provinces, what will be the constitutional mechanism to transform such a concept into a reality? Will there be a referendum in such divisions or the parliament will approve such an upgradation? What will be the role of four provincial assemblies in upgrading their respective divisions into provinces? What will be the ethnic, lingual and political fallout of upgrading divisions into provinces and what shall be the responsibilities of federal government in terms of its relationship with proposed 29 provinces? These are the questions that must be seriously examined and answered before one can proceed to change the provincial map of Pakistan.

If the approach of major power stakeholders in Pakistan is positive and they wish to peacefully address issues that cause friction, instability, chaos, disorder and violence in different provinces because of social, economic and political injustices, in that case they must seriously consider proposal to upgrade existing divisions of Pakistan into provinces. For that matter, proper brainstorming by the concerned stakeholders including civil society groups needs to be done so that consensus is reached on the methodology to create new provinces in Pakistan. However, if there is a lack of political will to address issues that are a cause of inter- and intra-provincial disharmony and discord, the present and future may not be different from the past.

The notion that Pakistan will be more stable and secure in the event new provinces are created with consensus, proper homework and professional handling of issues by the concerned stakeholders is pragmatic and logical. The challenge is not the perceived instability, which may occur if new provinces are created, but the existence of corrupt and inefficient system which, if not reformed, will also fail the efforts to meet the requirements of the twenty-first century by creating new administrative units in the form of provinces so as to provide local people a better mode of governance and a sense of empowerment. Political parties, state actors and civil society groups will have to act with perseverance and deal with issues which are contentious in nature and considered as impediments for redrawing the new provincial map of Pakistan so that those segments of society who feel marginalised are empowered in the mode of

governance and political process. Only then can the goals of human development, human security through better education, tolerance and political prudence change the shape of Pakistan for the better.

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