

Regional Identities in Quest of Separate Provinces: A New Challenge for the Pakistani Federation

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Abstract¹

Historically, the centre-province relationship in Pakistan has remained problematic. However, the federation has made an effort to satisfy the numerous autonomy demands of smaller provinces through the 18th amendment in the constitution. This development has underpinned the mobilization of minority groups in certain provinces for the creation of new provinces in their respective regional bases. The majority groups of related provinces seem reluctant to endorse such demands. Equally, the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan have discarded the creation of new provinces for certain reasons. Sadly, the issue has been politicized for the petty constituency politics by certain political parties.

The federation seems hesitant to fulfil the demands as it might open the Pandora's Box of representation and distributional issues that would be unaffordable for the turbulent federation which is already experiencing numerous problems. However, the demands for new provinces that have considerable popular support should be materialized. This paper suggests that the issue should be resolved rationally through dialogue and consensus.

The analysis reveals that many demands are difficult to be fulfilled by the federation. However, it appears that the demand for a new province in south Punjab is relatively reasonable. It seems that the division of Punjab would dilute the perception of Punjabi dominance in politics of Pakistan. Therefore, this paper contends that the division of Punjab on administrative basis will improve the capacity of federation to manage ethnic diversity.

Keywords: Separate Provinces, Regional Identities, Federation, Pakistan

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Introduction:

Managing ethnic diversity has remained a challenge for the Pakistani federation since its inception in 1947. Even after the separation of East Pakistan in 1971, the autonomy movements in minority provinces have remained alive. Resultantly, the federation adopted the eighteenth constitutional amendment in 2010 to satisfy the numerous autonomy demands of the smaller provinces. However, after this development, the demands for the creation of new provinces by the provincial minorities in certain regions of the state have got momentum. These demands have shaped another challenge for the turbulent federation. This paper examines the demands of regional identities and investigates how these demands have been politicized for the constituency politics. Subsequently, the paper examines how the proposed new provinces would contribute to federal stability in Pakistan.

1: The Federal Experience in Pakistan

Following the partition of India, Pakistan came into being on August 14, 1947. It was composed of the provinces of East Bengal, Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly North-Western Frontier Province — NWFP) and a number of princely states. Pakistan inherited the colonial institutions and political practices. Between 1947 and 1956, the new state adopted the Government of India Act 1935 with certain amendments as interim constitution. The Act had certain federal provisions such as the division of legislative and administrative powers between the centre and provinces. However, the centre had a commanding position vis-à-vis the provinces.

A constituent assembly² was set-up which was assigned the task to formulate a constitution for Pakistan. The first major step towards constitution-making in Pakistan was the passing of the Objective Resolution in 1949. The resolution laid down the principles that were to guide the constitutional process in Pakistan. One of the key principles agreed upon was that the system of the government in Pakistan would be federal. However, there was disagreement among various constituent units over certain issues. The divergence of opinion among provinces upon the federal structure of the state delayed the process. The major challenge for the federation was to design an acceptable modus operandi of representation in the national legislature that had become a bone of contention among the federating units. Equally, there was a lack of

²Constituent assembly was composed of the members who were elected, in the elections of 1945-46 in British India, from the regions that were now part of Pakistan and the members who migrated to Pakistan.

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consensus on how much powers should be given to the second chamber in the parliamentary federal structure of the state. To deal with this disagreement, a unicameral legislature was organized. Furthermore, the provinces and states of the western wing were merged into a combined province of West Pakistan. Although the province of East Pakistan had more population (nearly 54% of the total) than the West Pakistan, the bipolar federation provided representation in federal legislature on the principle of parity. In the constitution of 1956, the federation adopted unicameral legislature — a very unusual practice in federal states. The first constitution of Pakistan proved short-lived and the martial law was imposed in October 1958.

Ayub Khan, the then chief martial law administrator, framed the second constitution in 1962. A highly centralized system of government was set up under this constitution (Khan, 2005). Again, a unicameral legislature was adopted in this constitution. When Ayub Khan stepped down in 1969, he abrogated the constitution of 1962 and handed over the government to Yahya, the then Commander-in-Chief of the army. During the martial law, in March 1970, one-unit scheme was abandoned and the West Pakistan was divided into the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, N.W.F.P (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Balochistan³. After the separation of East Pakistan in 1971, the National Assembly of Pakistan enacted the 1973 constitution of Pakistan. The constitution of 1973 was considered as a broad-based consensus document. The constitution provided more autonomy to the provinces and adopted bicameral legislature. Regardless of their population size, the provinces were provided equal representation in the Senate. However, the Senate was provided secondary role viz-a-viz the popularly elected National Assembly. It had been argued that although the constitution of 1973 had formal federal features, yet mostly it had operated more like a unitary system. Resultantly, “the political centralization caused a sense of marginalization and alienation in the smaller provinces of Pakistan” (Mushtaq, 2009). Soon, the minority provinces began to raise demands for more autonomy by abolishing the concurrent legislative list. The demands also included the extended role of the Senate and recognition of identity through renaming the province of NWFP as Pakhtunkhwa. The Movement for Restoration of Democracy during Zia period (1977-88) and ‘Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement’ demanded more autonomy for the provinces.

Several of the autonomy demands were endorsed in the Charter of Democracy signed by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif in 2006 in London. Subsequently, the 18th constitutional amendment provided more autonomy to

³ Balochistan got the status of a province for the first time.

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the provinces and strengthened the shared rule. In addition, the formula for distribution of funds was revised to make it more acceptable for the minority provinces. These steps of the federation were regarded as a move towards inclusive federalism (Adeney, 2012). But, soon after the enactment of 18th constitutional amendment, the provincial minorities/regional identities had started demands for the creation of separate provinces. The next section discusses the several demands for new provinces in detail.

2: Demands for the Creation of New Provinces

It is generally acknowledged that each province of Pakistan is associated with a certain ethno-linguistic group— Punjab with Punjabis, Sindh with Sindhis, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with Pashtuns, and Balochistan with Balochs. However, the ethno-linguistic composition of each province demonstrates a substantial minority group.

Table # 1: Ethnolinguistic Composition of Pakistan

Language	Punjab	Sindh	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Balochistan	Pakistan
Urdu	4.5	21.1	0.8	1.6	7.8
Punjabi	75.2	7.0	1.0	2.9	45.4
Pashto	1.2	4.2	73.9	23.0	13.0
Sindhi	0.1	59.7	-	6.8	14.6
Balochi	0.7	2.1	-	58.5	3.5
Siraiki	17.4	1.0	3.9	2.6	10.9
Others	0.9	4.9	20.4	5.1	4.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: (Kennedy, Pakistan: Ethnic Diversity and Colonial Legacy, 2002)

The provincial minority groups are concentrated in a particular region of the respective provinces: the Siraikis in southern Punjab, Hazarewals in Hazara region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Pashtuns in northern Balochistan, and Mohajirs in the urban Sindh, particularly in Karachi and Hyderabad. The provincial minorities are demanding separate provinces for their groups in the respective provincial regions. The Siraikis have launched a movement for the creation of Seraiki province comprising of the south Punjab. The Hazarewals are demanding the province of Hazara consisting of the six districts of Hazara

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division of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Similarly, the Mohajirs of urban Sindh are asserting for Mohajir province consisting of Karachi and Hyderabad. Similarly, the Pashtuns of north Balochistan are demanding a separate province or merger of Pashtun Balochistan with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In addition, the people of Bahawalpur division that is situated in the south Punjab have been demanding the restoration of the provincial status of the region. Furthermore, the people of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are also demanding the province of Qabalistan.

Of the several demands for new provinces, the movement for the Siraiki and Hazara province seem more vibrant and effective. The demands for these two provinces have considerable popular support in their respective regions. However, the majority groups of related provinces, Punjabis and Pashtuns seem uncomfortable with these demands. Equally, the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan have certain reservations over the creation of new provinces in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The movements for creation of new provinces have been analysed in the following sections.

2.1: The demand for Siraiki Province

Punjab is the most populous and relatively prosperous province of Pakistan. However, the southern part of the province is relatively underdeveloped and poorer. This region is comprised of three divisions, i.e. Multan, Bahawalpur, and Dera Ghazi Khan. Historically, the people of South Punjab had distinctive identity and political history. Multan had a provincial status during Mughal period. Subsequently, it was made a part of Punjab during the Sikh era. On the other hand, Bahawalpur was a princely state that acceded to Pakistan and was granted a provincial status in 1953. Under the one-unit scheme in 1954, Bahawalpur was merged with the province of West Pakistan. However, when the one-unit scheme was abolished in 1970, Bahawalpur was granted a status of a division in the province of Punjab. Dera Ghazi Khan had remained a part of Balochistan before its merging into Punjab and had 'tended toward Baloch identity'(Ahmed, 1998). The people who are now 'deemed to be Siraiki-speaking' had different languages: 'Riyasti' had remained the language of majority in the state of Bahawalpur, Multani in Multan, and 'Derewal' in Dera Ghazi Khan and its surroundings. However, since 1970s the people identify themselves as Siraiki and feel more pride for the Siraiki language, culture, and identity. The South Punjab (Bahawalpur, Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan Divisions) makes almost 48.5% of the total territory of the Punjab and inhibits 28.23% of the total population of the province (Shaheen, 2015). Majority of the people are Siraiki speaking. However, there is a considerable Punjabi speaking population in the region. Equally, Urdu-speaking population has quite significant presence in the urban centres of the region(Pakistan, 1998).

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Mostly, the case for separate province has been presented by the Siraikis on socio-economic grounds (Zulfqar, 2012). Previously, “the demand for improved recognition of the Siraiki language has remained a vehicle for Siraikis to express their desire for a more equitable treatment” (Mushtaq, 2011). However, since mid-1970s they have started demanding the creation of a “Siraiki province by proposing the division of Punjab”. The areas mentioned in the proposed province of *Siraikistan* include the divisions of Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, and the districts of Jhang and Dera Ismael Khan (Langah, 2011). Evidence reveals that there are different perspectives regarding the name and the boundaries of the proposed province (Mushtaq, 2011). The nationalists demand a Siraiki province based on the Siraiki identity, namely Siraikistan. Others argue for the creation of a province on administrative grounds, namely the province of South Punjab. Moreover, the people of “Bahawalpur are demanding for Bahawalpur province outside of the proposed Siraiki province” (Mushtaq, 2011). The Siraiki nationalist parties have no appeal for the Siraiki electorate. However, it has been observed that “the Siraiki issue is an important factor in the politics of region”. The data of general election results between 1988 and 1997 revealed that the Punjabi speaking voters of the region tended to support PML-N and the Siraiki voters to the PPP at several polling stations (Wilder, 1999).

2.2: Demand for Bahawalpur Province

As it has been discussed above, before its merging into the Province of West Pakistan under the one-unit scheme, Bahawalpur had a provincial status that was not restored after the termination of the scheme. So, the people of this region had launched a movement for the restoration of province in 1970. The movement lost its appeal with the passage of time. However, the movement for Bahawalpur province has once again got momentum after the demands of new provinces by certain regional groups of Pakistan. Bahawalpur Awami Party has been organized to put forward the case of Bahawalpur province.

Bahawalpur is the largest division of the province in terms of area. It has 10.3% of provincial population (Javaid, 2009). Siraikis are the majority group in the division. But, Punjabis also have significant presence in the region.

Table # 2: Ethno-linguistic Composition of the Bahawalpur Division

District	Siraiki	Punjabi	Urdu	Other linguistic groups
Bahawalpur	64.3	28.4	5.5	1.8
Bahawalnagar	1.2	94.6	3.7	0.5
Rahimyar Khan	62.6	27.3	2.9	7.2

(Population Census Organization, 2001)

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It has been argued that the demand of Siraiiki province has no appeal for the majority of people in Bahawalpur. Only a section of Siraiiki speaking people has supported the idea; the rest of Siraikis demand for restoration of Bahawalpur Province. In addition, Punjabis and Urdu speaking people are “totally against” the demand of Siraiiki province (Javaid, 2009).

2.3: The Demand for Hazara Province

The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been famous for the Pashtun nationalist politics even before the partition of India in 1947. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who was ruling what is now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, had launched a movement for Pashtunistan--a separate homeland for Pashtuns. This movement remained popular in Pashto speaking areas of Peshawar valley and in its surroundings. However, the people of Hazara supported All India Muslim League to win the referendum that was conducted to decide the political fate of the then N.W.F.P.

Historically, the people of Hazara region have well-preserved their distinct identity. They had distanced themselves from the Pashtun nationalist politics and Pashtunistan movement. When the NWFP was renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through 18th constitutional amendment in 2010, the Hazarewals protested against this decision. Resultantly, they demanded for a separate province for Hazarewals comprising of the Hazara region. The activist groups of Hazara province movement include the Tehreek-e- Sooba Hazara, Tehreek Huqooq-e-Hazara, and Hazara Qaumi Mahaz.

Hindko-speaking Hazarewals are the second largest group of the province. They are mostly concentrated in the Hazara region. This region consists of six districts: Haripur, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Batgram, Kohistan and Torgrah. The Hazarewals make up 87% of the population of the region. The ethno-linguistic composition of the region is given in the following table.

Table # 3; Ethno-linguistic composition of Hazara Region

Linguistic Group	Kohistan	Mansehra	Abbottabad	Haripur	Batgram
Hindko-speaking	95.98	72.9	94.26	88.5	18
Pashto-speaking	3.86	26.6	2.22	8.9	81.65
Others		0.5	3.52	2.6	0.35

(Population Census Organization, 2001)

2.4: Demand for Mohajir Province

The province of “Sindh is the most ethnically diverse province of Pakistan”. Sindhis are mainly inhabited in the rural Sindh and towns. Conversely, the migrants that came from India in 1947 mainly reside in the main urban centres like Karachi and Hyderabad. Along with the Mohajirs, a large number of Balochs, Pashtuns, and Punjabis have also settled in Karachi. Because of its diversity, Karachi is called “Mini Pakistan”.

Table# 4: Ethno-linguistic Composition of Karachi

District	Urdu	Sindhi	Pashto	Balochi	Punjabi	Siraiki	Others
Karachi Central	73.57	1.59	4.56	0.77	8.63	2.3	8.58
Karachi East	60.75	3.8	5.95	1.64	14.72	2.11	11.02
Karachi West	39.64	6	24.55	5.29	12.95	2.05	9.52
Karachi South	25.65	11.37	7.95	9.77	18.84	1.82	24.6
Malir	15.87	25.08	20.67	8.51	17.46	2.36	10.06

(Population Census Organization, 2001)

After partition, the Mohajirs had got privileged positions and they dominated the civil bureaucracy and political decision making centres (Jaffrelot, 2002). They feel more pride for Pakistani nationalism and remained antagonistic towards the regional or ethnic identity (Alavi & Harris, 1989). However, they began to assert their Mohajir identity (Samad, 2002) in the 1970s when their representation declined significantly in the civil bureaucracy due to the introduction of rural-urban quota system in the province of Sindh. The Mohajirs organized Mohajir Qaumi Movement (Mohajir National Movement) that was renamed as Muttahida Qaumi Movement (United National Movement) in 1997. This political party has achieved a notable electoral support in Karachi and Hyderabad in several general elections and has appeared as the sole representative of the urban Sindh. Like the provincial minorities of other provinces, the Mohajirs are demanding a separate province. MQM had demanded a separate province for Mohajirs. Mr. Kamran Akhter, a member of MQM, argued during the session of Sindh Assembly that “the Urdu-speaking people of Sindh are subject to discrimination therefore we demand a separate province for them” (“Muttahida MPA demands”, 2014).

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2.5: The demand for province of Afghania

The Pashtuns settled in the northern part of Balochistan are the second largest group in the province. They are a majority group in the northern part of the province. They have been demanding for a separate province or merger of Pashtun belt with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PKMAP (Pakhtunkhwa Mili Awami Party) has demanded a new province called "Afghania" for the Pashtuns of Balochistan. They have recently demanded a separate province for Pashtuns stretching from Chitral to Bolan ("Pashtuns Must Have a Separate Province", 2015).

3: The Politics of New Provinces

It has been argued that the movement for restoration of Bahawalpur province in 1970 triggered the nationalist sentiments in south Punjab. Although, this movement failed to accomplish its primary objective, it laid down foundations for the Siraiki province movement. The people of south Punjab have been demanding a separate province since mid-1970s (Langah, 2011). Since then, it appears that the "Siraiki-speaking people have made a conscious and explicit attempt to distance themselves from the dominant group in Punjab" (Samad, 2007, p. 116).

The Siraiki nationalist groups were demanding the Siraiki province since 1970s (Langah, 2011) and the "Hazara Qaumi Mahaz was asserting for the creation of Hazara province since 1987" (Shaheen, 2015). But, the demand for separate provinces in south Punjab and Hazara region of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa got momentum after the 18th constitutional amendment in 2010.

Yousaf Raza Gillani, the then prime minister of Pakistan, started demand for the creation of Siraiki province. Himself a Seraiki-speaking from Multan, he, however, could not manage to include the demand for creation of a Siraiki province in the agenda of the constitutional reforms committee. Therefore, it has been asserted that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) raised the issue publicly only to strengthen its vote bank in the region (Yusufzai, 2012). Pakistan Muslim League (Q) also supported the demand of Seraiki province for constituency politics. Siddiq (2011) has rightly pointed out that the primary objective for PPP and PML-Q remained to "push the Sharif brothers" of Pakistan Muslim League (N) that has stable electoral support in the province of Punjab. Similarly, MQM put forward the demands of new provinces for certain purposes. MQM aims to divide Punjab "that would reduce the power of the larger province and the Sharif brothers as well". Furthermore, it expects that this "division will also set the principle of more divisions elsewhere which,

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in turn, supports MQM's plan to carve out something for itself in urban Sindh" (Siddiq, 2011).

MQM submitted a constitutional amendment bill in the National Assembly secretariat on January 02, 2012 pertaining to the formation of new provinces of Hazara and South Punjab in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab respectively. The bill suggested a referendum for the south Punjab to decide whether they desire "Seraiki province or more than one province" ("MQM submits bill", 2012). Moreover, the bill sought 'abrogation of article 239 (Clause 4)' of the constitution to provide major role to the National Assembly in the process for the creation of new provinces.

The proposed bill was opposed in the Assembly by Awami National Party (ANP) and PML-N. ANP and PML-N were ruling parties at that time in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab respectively. Responding to the demand of Hazara Province, Ghulam Ahmad Bilour of ANP protested that "it is not fair to bring a provincial issue in National Assembly for debate. It is right of the concerned provinces to decide about the creation of new provinces, not the right of National Assembly". He maintained that MQM has no representation in my province at any level, how it can discuss the division of my province. He said, "I will never discuss the division of Sindh or Punjab and will never allow anybody to discuss the division of my province" (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012). The opposition leader, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan of PML-N said that "a party that has no representation in the provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa intends to divide these provinces: who has given them this mandate; this is the mandate of Punjab Assembly and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly only" (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012).

Beyond the parliament, the proposed bill caused resentment and political protest in the Sindhi-speaking areas of Sindh. A strike was observed and protest rallies were held on the call of Sindhi nationalist parties across the province ("Sindh shuts over", 2012). The Sindhi nationalists stated that the creation of new provinces would undermine the interests of the province. They were of the opinion that Punjabis and Siraikis have similar views on the issues related to representation and distribution, particularly, of water issues. They resent that their representation in the senate would become small undermining their capacity to safeguard provincial interests. They feared that the creation of Siraiki province would result in the proliferation of provinces such as the Hazara province, Bahawalpur province, Fata province etc. They inquired that "if new provinces keep cropping up where we [Sindh] will stand numerically" (Khan, 2012).

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The demands for new provinces produced anxiety in province of Balochistan also. The members of Balochistan Assembly opposed the proposals for the creation of new provinces. They were of the opinion that “the issue will not remain confined to Punjab but also engulf Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan, where people will be likely to demand new provinces” (“All BA members oppose”,2011). The then chief minister of Balochistan, Nawab Aslam Raisani had also disapproved the proposition of new provinces in various press statements¹. Even, a member of the Balochistan Assembly demanded that if the Seraiki province is created in the South Punjab, the districts of Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur ‘should be merged with Balochistan’ because this region had remained ‘historically and traditionally’ part of Balochistan (“Provincial assembly”, 2011).

Despite all these reservations related to the new provinces, the then Federal Law Minister Farooq H Naek, presented a resolution in the National Assembly on May 02, 2012 for the creation of south Punjab Province. The resolution was passed by the majority vote (“Trust reposed in Gilani”, 2012). The opposition opposed this resolution and submitted its own resolution in the National Assembly for the creation of four new provinces of South Punjab, Bahawalpur, Hazara, and FATA (“PML-N submits resolution”, 2012).

Responding to the resolution of PPP and its coalition partners for creation of Siraiki province in the National Assembly, the PML-N passed a resolution unanimously in Punjab Assembly for the creation of South Punjab Province on May 09, 2012. The resolution was tabled by the Punjab law minister, Rana Sanaullah Khan. The Assembly also adopted another resolution for restoration of the provincial status of Bahawalpur (“Punjab Assembly passes”,2012). The resolution for resurrection of Bahawalpur Province by the PML-N was considered as an attempt to weaken the Seraikis demand for separate province. The Siraiki nationalists argued that the case for Bahawalpur province is “political agenda of the establishment and not necessarily the majority public opinion representing the overall Siraiki population residing within Punjab (including Bahawalpur)” (Langah, 2011).

However, there is a considerable popular support for Bahawalpur Province Movement. Bahawalpur Awami Party has been launched by NawabSalahuddinAbbasi (Ameer of Bahawalpur) to restore the provincial status of Bahawalpur on April 14, 2011. Abbasi urged to mobilize the masses to launch a resistance movement. He said, “At an appropriate time, we will give the call for the movement and all our people – men, women, and children - would take to the street and would return to their homes only when the province is restored” (“Nawab launches party”,2011). Equally, it has been argued that the movement for Seraiki province is not popular in Bahawalpur

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region. The majority of the people in Bahawalpur region prefer Bahawalpur Province over Siraiiki Province (Javaid, 2009).

The resolutions passed by the Punjab Assembly were forwarded to the parliament for further process. Afterwards, a commission was constituted by the Speaker of National Assembly on August 16, 2012 for creation of new province(s) in Punjab. In light of the resolutions of the National and Punjab Assembly, the commission proposed the province of “Bahawalpur-Janoobi Punjab with its capital in Bahawalpur”(Government of Pakistan, 2013). The politics of new provinces continued in Pakistan. After the general elections of 2013, PTI has installed its government in the province Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. PTI has managed to pass a resolution in the provincial assembly with majority vote on March 21, 2014 to create Hazara Province. The resolution stated that “the provincial assembly should request federal government to pass a bill from National Assembly for creation of new units including Hazara within the ambit of Constitution with the objective of easing administrative affairs” (“KP Assembly adopts resolution”,2014). However, the resolution was opposed by Pakistan People’s Party, Awami National Party, and Quami Watan Party. These parties have stable electoral support in the Pashtun speaking region of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Recently, MQM has also demanded once again the division of Sindh. In response to this demand majority of the members of Sindh assembly have passed a resolution against the division of Sindh province(“Sindh Assembly passes resolution”, 2014).

In short, there is a tug of war between the political parties of Pakistan on the creation of new provinces. The proponents of new provinces argue that the creation of new provinces would empower the emergent regional identities. Equally, there is an argument that the issue has been politicized for the petty constituency politics by certain political parties. But, in any case, this situation is a challenge for the federation. Ignoring the popular support for self-rule in peripheries would be problematic and difficult to justify. Conversely, the issues related to the representation and distribution may open the Pandora’s Box if the number of federating units is changed. Hence, the issue requires a careful academic debate to make an assessment that how the creation of new province(s) will contribute to the federal stability in Pakistan. The next sections provide a scientific analysis in this regard.

4: Creation of New Provinces and the Federal Stability in Pakistan: an Assessment

This section probes how the creation of new province (s) will contribute to the federal stability in Pakistan. To make an assessment, it has been examined, “How the size, number, and nature of composition of the federating units effect the federation’s capacity to accommodate diversity”.

4.1: Size of the federating units and accommodation of diversity

The contemporary federations vary in size, number, and the nature of composition of their federating units. The analysts argue that the federation’s capacity to accommodate diversity is connected with the institutional design of the federation.

The constituent units of the federations are always of unequal size; sometimes strikingly. The uneven size of the units is problematic and the “problems are more likely to arise in smaller units” (Schneier, 2006, p. 179). It has been argued that the relative size of the constituent units ‘affects the success of federations in accommodating diversity’. Watts (2000) has pointed out that the relative size of the Punjab has enabled it to ‘dominate central politics’ that caused political instability in Pakistan. Adeney(2007, p. 175) has also noted that “many of the tensions in the federation of Pakistan are related to the fact that one province has the majority of the population. This tension would exist independently of whether or not Punjabis dominated the army and the bureaucracy because it is also related to the issues of representation and resource allocation”. Punjab is the most populous and prosperous province of Pakistan. It inhibits more than half population of the country, has overrepresentation in the civil-military bureaucracy, and has relatively better socio-economic conditions. This relatively advantageous position of the Punjabis has been perceived by the smaller units as the ‘*Punjabisation*’ of Pakistan (Talbot, 2002, p. 215). This perception was later evidenced in a survey of public opinion conducted in 2009. In a response to the question whether or not they think that the relative size of one province (Punjab) is an obstacle in the smooth functioning of Pakistani federation, the majority of respondents belonging to the smaller units agreed with the proposition: 92.5 % Balochs, 80.7% Pashtuns, and 68% Sindhis considered the relative size of the Punjab responsible for the incapacity of the federation to accommodate diversity (Mushtaq, 2011). Although, there is some evidence to argue that the extreme variation in size of constituent units is not necessarily unworkable, the relative size of the Punjab has proved problematic for the Pakistani federation. Adeney (2003, p. 242) has argued for the division of Punjab. Her contention is based on the argument that “splitting of the dominant group provides

conditions in which such a group is less likely to threaten the stability of a federation”.

4.2: The number of constituent units and accommodation of diversity

The contemporary federations diverge too in the number of constituent units. Historically, the two-unit federations have faced problems and ceased to exist in many cases. The disintegration of Pakistan in 1971, the break-up of Malaysia-Singapore federation, the separation of Eritria from Ethiopia, and the split between Czech Republic and Slovakia seems to suggest that bipolar federalism “have been notoriously unstable” (Amoretti, 2004). The Belgian federation is composed of three regions namely, the Flemish region, the Walloon region, and the Brussels. Conversely, there are the federations that constitute a large number of units: the number of states in United States has grown up from thirteen to fifty and with the creation of new states the number of states in Indian federation has reached up to twenty eight. Similarly, Nigeria has created new states and the number has reached to 36. Switzerland is composed of twenty six cantons and half cantons. Keeping in view the contemporary federal experiences, Colomer(2001, p. 186)has argued that “a high number of differentiated regional units provide a more solid ground for a federal state than a lower number”. For the case of Pakistan, it has been argued that “the lower number of states within Pakistan has contributed to the federal instability”. Since 1971 Pakistan has survived as a federation with four provinces. This low number of provinces has contributed to tensions within the federation (Adeney, 2003, p. 237).

4.3: Composition of federating units and accommodation of diversity

The composition of federating units in terms of ethnic homogeneity or heterogeneity varies across the cases. There are divergent perspectives about the principle of demarcation of constituent units in a federal polity. Some argue for homogeneous units (Watts 2000, 32-34 ; Adeney 2007) while others for heterogeneous constituent units (Vile 1982 , 222; Horowitz 1985). While consociationalism suggests homogenous units, the centripetalism stresses for heterogeneous units. Some experts have suggested homogenous constituent units for Pakistan (Adeney, 2007). As the provinces of Pakistan’s are heterogeneous, Kennedy(1993) has argued to reorganize Pakistani federal structure by “redesigning territorial boundaries of the constituent units to make them accord more closely with the ethnic landscape of the state”. However, the social scientists like Ishtiaq Ahmad, MonisAhmer, and Mansoor Akbar Kundi proposed the creation of new provinces on administrative grounds(Mushtaq, 2011). Equally, the people of Pakistan prefer the creation of new provinces on administrative grounds. In response to a question of public

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opinion survey in 2009, the majority of the Punjabi, Siraiki, Mohajir, Sindhi, and Pashtun respondents proposed the creation of the new provinces on administrative basis. Only, the Baloch respondents prefer division of provinces on linguistic basis(Mushtaq, 2011). The results are verified by a recent survey in southern Punjab. The majority of people of southern Punjab have suggested the creation of new province in Punjab on administrative grounds(Shaheen, 2015).

Conclusion

The demands for creation of new provinces have become a challenge for Pakistani federation. These demands have considerable popular support in certain regions. Equally, there are serious concerns of certain groups over these demands. Although the provinces have been provided adequate autonomy recently, the centrifugal forces seem unconvinced by the process of decentralization and the role of council of common interests in the post-18th constitutional amendment period. The minority groups are asserting for more consensual and federalized governance. They argue for more powers of the Senate that are incompatible with the parliamentary federal practices. Equally, the Punjab that has remained centralist in its approach, asserts for the majoritarian role of the polity. The smaller groups feel marginalized owing to the dominance of the Punjab in the National Assembly of Pakistan.

In this context, if the federation intends to fulfil the demands of emergent identities for separate provinces, comprising of their respective regional bases, it may perhaps open the Pandora's Box of representation issue that is unaffordable for a turbulent federation which is already experiencing numerous problems.

Hence, the political parties should not politicize the issue for their petty constituency politics. The issue should be resolved through dialogue and consensus. The politicians should not indulge themselves in scoring game. They should extend the message to the masses that they are capable of taking care of supreme national interests. This may strengthen the federation and will boost up the morale of the nation. Conversely, any reckless and hastily reached decision would result in further polarization and unrest in the already turbulent federation.

The analysis reveals that many demands are difficult to materialize for the federation. However, it appears that the demand for a new province in south Punjab has considerable popular support. Equally, the division of Punjab would dilute the perception of Punjabi dominance in politics of Pakistan. It seems that that the minority groups would be more comfortable in absence of

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a dominant majority group. Therefore, this paper contends that the division of Punjab on administrative basis will improve the capacity of federation to manage ethnic diversity.

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