This research paper focuses on the emergence of the Saraiki ethnonational movement and the Bahawalpur Province Movement in Pakistan. The movement is getting stronger especially after the 18th amendment and it is getting more visible and discussed in the national political discourse. It is essential to understand the roots of this new ethnonational movement which can create disturbing ripples for the official Pakistani nationalism project. For this purpose, this research paper utilizes an historical and descriptive approach to analyse the dynamics and origin of Saraiki movement. Saraiki is a linguistic identity, but it is becoming more of an ethnic identity with passing time. The demand of new Saraiki or South Punjab province can also end the numerical majority of Punjab province in state institutions thereby creating multiple political implications. This research paper also focuses on the socio-economic and cultural grievances of Saraiki people and other peoples of South Punjab which has led to political mobilization on ethnic or regional lines. Finally, in the concluding section, there would be a brief mention of the possible promises and challenges of the Saraiki movement.

Key Words: Language, Identity, Pakistan, Saraiki Movement
Introduction

Saraiki ethno-linguistic movement is one of the recent developments in national politics of Pakistan, though its origins can be traced back in the early history of Pakistan. The core demand of this movement is the establishment of South Punjab or a Saraiki province or Saraikistan as the fifth province of Pakistan. There is also a demand for the restoration of the Bahawalpur province in Pakistan which was amalgamated into West Pakistan in the one-unit scheme but was never restored and was made a division of Punjab by the Legal Framework Order (LFO) of 1970. It is imperative to differentiate the demand of restoration of Bahawalpur province from the demand of creation of new Saraiki province.

The causes of the emergence of the Saraiki movement are many, however, economic grievances and low socio-economic development in the South Punjab region are the biggest factors. Saraiki people are aggrieved by the suppression of their culture and linguistic identity by the Punjabi-Muhajir establishment and the political elite. Saraiki was not accorded a status of a separate language till the 1981 census and still Saraiki is regarded as a variant of Punjabi. Saraiki people make a counterclaim of Punjabi as a regional variant of Saraiki language.

Saraiki people call for the separate province including the three divisions of Punjab i.e., Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan and Multan comprising eleven districts and some Saraiki ethno-nationalists also call for inclusion of adjoining districts of KPK, Baluchistan and Sindh. It is essential to keep in mind that Saraiki identity is not a pure ethnic identity based upon actual or imagined blood-ties or common ancestry. There are many Baloch, and Pashtun tribes living in the Saraiki belt and speak Saraiki language. Saraiki is mainly a linguistic identity, though the prospects of becoming an ethnic identity in future cannot be ignored.

The national establishment and the political elite are wary of Saraiki movement just like it was and has been of other ethno-linguistic movements in Pakistan as a threat to the project of national integration and official Pakistani nationalism. This can give a spark to the emergence of latent or new ethnic or linguistic identities and movements in Pakistan. Although, all the political parties agree on the formation of a separate province in South Punjab, their versions on the nature of the new province are different which is obvious because of their different political considerations and vested interests.
Literature Review

Dr. Khalid Manzoor Butt and Burhan Ahmed write, using socio-economic indicators, that economic grievances and lack of educational, infrastructure facilities are the prime reasons for the demand of the Saraiki province. Such grievances affect Punjabis and other ethnic minorities living in the Saraiki belt.¹

Muhammad A. Z. Mughal has blamed cultural and economic marginalization of people living in the underdeveloped Saraiki belt for the social construction of the Saraiki identity. This has allowed mobilization of people on an ethno-linguistic base who are demanding for a separate province.²

Tahir Abbas and Dr. Shuja Ahmed Mahesa have worked on cultural exclusion of Saraiki people. Saraiki people are becoming more alienated with their language and cultural heritage thinking their core identity as inferior because it is not respected by other dominant groups. The authors have also correlated the rise of religious military in the area with the decline in the Saraiki cultural identity.³

Saqib Aziz and Saiqa Intiaz Asif identify the role of Saraiki newspapers and editorials in creating and strengthening of the Saraiki ethnolinguistic identity. The authors give examples of different literary styles and tones of newspaper editors in emphasizing the Saraiki historical and cultural identity.⁴

Mr. Sana Ullah, Mr. Ijaz Khalid, and Dr. Shazia Hassan believe that the issue of a separate province in Southern Punjab has become more prominent after the 18th amendment and economic grievances of the people is an important contributor to it. They have also shed light on the viewpoint of political parties on this issue.⁵

Asia Saif Alvi has traced the historical roots of Saraiki ethno-linguistic movement, its aims and objective and highlighted the socio-economic conditions of people living in the underdeveloped Southern Punjab using various socio-economic indicators from different sources.⁶

Muhammad Farooq, Zahoor Hussain, Mohammad Ajmal, and Mohammad Saeed have gone through the role of Saraiki literary movements in creating political consciousness among Saraiki people. They have also written on the socio-political movements of Saraiki people in history of Pakistan and their aims and objectives. Interestingly, major themes of Saraiki poetry play a key role in strengthening the ethnolinguistic identity and economic grievances.⁷
Muhammad Mushtaq and Misbah Shaheen have shed light on the prospects and challenges of the movement for a separate Saraiki province. The challenges are quite significant and there are different social, historical, and political dynamics at play. The authors recommend a change in strategy and objectives for the Saraiki movement to succeed.8

Conceptual Framework

Instrumentalist and modernist theories of ethnicity and nationalism have been utilized to comprehend the origins and dynamics of the Saraiki ethno-linguistic movement in this research paper.

Instrumentalist school of thought negates the thesis of primordial school of thought of nations having historical roots. It posits that ethnicity or nationalism does not have much to do with human nature but people rallying and uniting under a banner of common ethnic identity is useful for fulfilling economic and political interests and to get a share in the state resources. Ethnic leaders can mobilize the members of their groups and economic and political grievances can urge people to participate in the ethnic movement.9

Modernist school of thought holds that modern nations or ethnic groups do not have any historical roots, but they are social constructions and a modern phenomenon. Benedict Anderson considers nations as imagined communities which emerged because of print capitalism and industrialization in Europe.10 Different names for different variants of Saraiki language were used in history in different regions like Multani, Riasti and Derawali etc., though the usage of the word Saraiki for all these variants/languages is a recent phenomenon and can be traced back to the literary and cultural movements of 1950s and 1960s before it became a political movement. The role of literary and cultural organization as well as print media in propagating Saraiki language is essential in understanding and analysing the construction of new Saraiki ethno-linguistic identity.

Significance of the Research

Saraiki movement has resurfaced in the discourse of national politics among both the political elites and the common citizens especially after the 18th amendment. This movement has the inherent potential to become full scale ethno-linguistic movement which can pose a serious challenge to the project of national integration in Pakistan and can breed other ethno-linguistic movements. For a common and avid reader, this research paper
would provide a comprehensive analysis of the origins, development and causes of the Saraiki movement. This can be fruitful for readers from other areas of Pakistan especially from industrial areas of Central Punjab to become conscious of the economic underdevelopment of South Punjab.

Policy makers and civil bureaucrats who are responsible for administration can find this paper beneficial to understand local culture, political culture and the economic problems and administrative problems faced by the local people. This can help to devise innovative policies to mitigate the disintegrating effects of Saraiki ethnonationalist movements and resolve economic and cultural grievances of local people which are the cause of dissatisfaction in the first place.

This research paper would also provide a framework for other researchers and social scientists to work on other aspects of Saraiki movement. For example, possible areas of research can be the study of Saraiki identity and movement in northern Sindh and adjoining districts of KPK and Baluchistan or the local politics, origins, and workings of Saraiki nationalist parties.

Research Methodology

A descriptive and historical approach is adopted in this research paper to understand the dynamics of Saraiki movement in Pakistan and the interplay of language politics and identity. Secondary sources of information like e-books, online research papers from e-journals and newspaper articles are used.

Saraiki Movement in Pakistan

Saraiki movement in Pakistan can be traced back in the early political and constitutional roots of Pakistan, though Saraiki ethno-linguists trace back their identity, culture, and language in colonial and pre-colonial history. Saraiki ethno-nationalists are vocal about the suppression of their cultural and linguistic identity; however, the real cause of their grievances is the low socio-economic development, low access to state resources and lack of representation, and participation in state structures, roles, and decision-making process. This research paper will focus on the historical developments of Saraiki linguistic identity and movement as well as an analysis of the socio-economic indicators of the South Punjab region.
Pre-Partition history

Saraiki has been called by various local names in history reflecting the variations in language e.g., “Bahawalpuri/Riasti, Derwali, Multani, Shahpuri, Muzaffarghari, Jhangvi, Hindko, Uchi etc.”11 There is also a reference of Saraiki language in the writings of historians who travelled with Alexander the Great.12 Abul Fazl in his book Ain-e-Akbari written during the Mughal period have written names of 13 regions where separate languages are spoken by the people. One of them is Multan which was also a separate province in Mughal rule.13 Multan remained a separate province until it was conquered by the Sikhs under Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1818 and was made part of the Punjab.14 The British annexed Punjab by defeating the Sikhs in the second Anglo-Sikh War in 1849.

Bahawalpur was a princely state, and it had autonomous status even in the Mughal period. It was formed in 1727 by Ameer Sadiq Muhammad Khan Abbasi. It also had an autonomous status even during the Sikh rule, British rule, and early years of Pakistan. It was finally amalgamated in the West Pakistan province in 1955.15

Emergence of Saraiki Cultural Movement 1950s and 1960s


Bahawalpur Province Movement in 1970

Bahawalpur acceded to the state of Pakistan on 3rd of October 1947. “Ameer Sadiq Muhammad Khan signed another Instrument of Accession (IOA) with the Government of Pakistan on 5th October 1948 which transferred the powers of defence, communication and foreign affairs to the Government of Pakistan which was followed by another agreement on 2nd
September 1949 which made the Nawab the constitutional head of his state." A Supplementary IOA was signed in 1951 which gave the Bahawalpur state the status of a province as determined in the Government of India Act 1935. A legislative assembly also came into existence after the 1952 elections in the state. Bahawalpur was a very developed state which offered student scholarships and stipends. “In fact, in the FY 1954-55, it posted a budgetary surplus; a net balance of 4,09,20,612.”

Bahawalpur was amalgamated into West Pakistan after the one-unit scheme which was designed to achieve parity with East Pakistan. This proved economically detrimental for the state as its development budget faced a big cut from 70 million to 25 million. On 22nd November 1969, news began to circulate in newspapers of the end of One-Unit Scheme, though Bahawalpur as a province shall not be restored. This led Allama Arshad to call a joint session of various political leaders from national political parties, Bahawalpur bar association and Chamber of commerce to adopt a 10-point resolution.

Many groups emerged afterwards notably the Bahawalpur United Front or Bahawalpur MuttehdaMahaz (BMM) which contested the 1970 general elections. The one-unit scheme was abrogated on 30th March 1970 under General Yahya Legal Framework Order, though Bahawalpur province was not restored to its previous status, instead it became a division of the Punjab province. This led to demonstrations including the including the infamous killing of 2 protestors by police shots on 24 April 1970. BMM won 80% of the vote in the Bahawalpur division and got 4/8 and 8/18 national and provincial assembly seats, respectively. However, the East Pakistan crisis put the Bahawalpur province movement on the backburner and the movement fizzled out in the 1970s. “After the separation of East Pakistan most of the Seraiki MNAs and MPAs including Khosas, Legharis, Qureshis, Mazars, Wattoos and Nawabs of Bahawalpur joined the PPP and saved their fiefs and the fear of the radical agrarian reforms subsided.”

Saraiki Province Movement 1970-2000

One of the features of Bahawalpur province movement that it was not a Saraiki ethnolinguistic movement and it mentioned Saraiki as one of the local languages. However, this laid the foundations of the Saraiki movement in coming years because the 1973 constitution also did not establish a separate Saraiki or Bahawalpur province. It made Saraiki people a provincial minority. A new cultural renaissance of Saraiki language took
place just like the 1950s and 1960s but this time it had the political elements of ethnonationalism.

Saraiki Literary Conference conducted during mid-March 1975 in Multan. The Saraiki SobahMahaz (SSM) was created in Multan in 1984 by the political leaders of the Saraiki belt from different political parties and different branches of it opened in different districts of the South Punjab. Riaz Hashmi created an organization of the same name in 1973. SSM supported Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) in 1988 elections, however, PPP did not fulfill the demands of Saraiki province afterwards. “PPP might not want to upset the Punjabi political elite and military establishment.” A number of publications notably Sanhiya, Sanjh, Sochan, Siraiki Majlis, etc., were launched. Saraiki Lok Sanjah was established in 1985 which aimed to promote Saraiki language and culture, creating political consciousness among Saraiki people and to demand for a provincial status for the Saraiki region. Many such other Saraiki cultural and social organizations emerged in the 1980s.

Taj Muhammad Langah after getting upset with PPP’s indifference to the Saraiki province issue disassociated himself from the party and formed his own party Pakistan Saraiki Party (PSP) in 1989, though it did not perform well in the 1990 elections. Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement (PONM) came into existence which recognized Saraiki people as the fifth ethnonational group in Pakistan and this once again brought light on the issue of Saraiki province. All the Saraiki nationalist parties and organizations were united under PONM.

Saraiki Province Movement and Bahawalpur Province Movement 2000 and onwards

The 1999 martial law put a hold on all the ethno-nationalist activities in Pakistan. Another interesting feature in the political landscape of Pakistan in the new century was the resurgence of the movement for the restoration of Bahawalpur province. Muhammad Ali Durrani also called for the restoration of Bahawalpur province during the 18th amendment process which was nullifying all the illegal and undemocratic clauses inserted by military dictators during their unlawful and unconstitutional regime.

On 3rd May 2012, the National Assembly (NA) passed a resolution for the creation of a new South Punjab Province. On 8th May 2012, Punjab Assembly (PA) passed two resolutions for the creation of a new South Province and the restoration of the Bahawalpur province.
The Movement for the Restoration of the Bahawalpur Province (MRBP) rejected the proposal of the inclusion of the Bahawalpur province in the South Punjab province on 12 April 2018. On 2nd May 2018, Nawab Salahuddin Abbasi who is the present Ameer of Bahawalpur and the President of the Bahawalpur National Awami Party (BNAP) asked for the restoration of the province or otherwise a full scale movement shall be launched. A few days later on 25th May, he joined PTI, allegedly to get a ticket for his son. This upset many frontline leaders of the MRBP at that time.

Janoobi Punjab SobahMahaz (JPSM) was formed in 2018 by former information minister from PML Q Tariq Bashir Cheema and comprised of former PML N MNAs and MPAs. Later, JPSM merged into PTI led by chairman KhusroBakhtair and contested elections under the banner of PTI in 2018.

Different national political parties have different stances on the creation of a Saraiki province in South Punjab. PPP supports the creation of Saraiki province because it has a considerable vote bank there and want to gain more electoral support to contest the PML N hold over Punjab. However, it is wary that such support for the creation of an ethnolinguistic province can raise voices for a Muhajir province in urban areas of Sindh. PML N is also cautious of expressing support of a Saraiki province as it can divide the vote bank and the Punjab province which is the largest province comprising more than half of the total population of Pakistan. PML N, unlike PPP calls for two provinces in South Punjab on administrative basis i.e., Bahawalpur and South Punjab province to not upset the vote bank in both regions. PTI is also supportive of creating a south Punjab province on administrative basis. PTI has also established a South Punjab Secretariat during its current tenure.

Socio-economic and Cultural Grievances of the people of South Punjab

The main factor behind the voices of a separate province for the South Punjab region is low socio-economic development of the region. This fate of South Punjab can be traced backed to British colonial era when it established canal colonies mostly in Northern and Central Punjab. Furthermore, there was establishment of cantonment areas in this area and recruitment for British army was mostly done from these areas. These spurred socio-economic development in the region and the establishment of industries and factories and infrastructure. Unlike in Sindh, where there is a separate quota for urban and rural areas to facilitate the recruitment of
both Sindhi and Muhajir people in government, administrative services, and educational institutions, hardly any such quota system exists in Punjab to cater the Saraiki people or other people of the impoverished South Punjab.

Literacy rate in South Punjab is also quite low as compared to northern and central Punjab districts. “The average literacy rate of northern Punjab is 65.07%, while that of districts selected for Saraiki Punjab is 48.81%.”46 The number of factories in Northern Punjab is 4202 excluding Lahore and Faisalabad while in the 11 districts of 3 divisions of South Punjab, the number of factories is 2171.47

South Punjab is also a backbone of the agricultural sector of Pakistan. South Punjab takes a lead over North and Central Punjab in producing food and cash crops. The North Punjab districts produce 5,328,000, 2,002,000, 373,000 and 7,084,000 tonnes of wheat, rice, cotton, and sugarcane, respectively. On the other hand, South Punjab produces 8,603,000, 508,000, 7,565,000 and 12,358,000 tonnes of wheat, rice, cotton, and sugarcane, respectively.48 South Punjab province is producing all this surplus even after getting low share of water from irrigation canals.49 The Indus Water treaty gave river Sutlej to India. This had a negative effect for the Bahawalpur region because its agriculture was dependent upon irrigation canals coming from the river.50 Saraiki people believe that their income from production of cotton is not spent on the region.51

Saraiki people are also upset over the rejection of Saraiki as fully developed language and its treatment as a variant of Punjabi or even Sindhi. Saraiki was included as a language only in the census of 1981 and onwards. There are lot of debates, discourses, scientific and historical researchers done by linguists and historians over the claim of Saraiki as a separate language or not. This research paper will not delve into such linguistic and historical arguments or discourses. It is to be understood that whether Saraiki is a variant of Punjabi language or not or both languages are mutually intelligible or not, the fact that Saraiki people treat their language having a separate existence and history merits attention from social and political scientists. It is the imagined reality or stories by a group of people which is important rather than facts and only this has political implications.

Saraiki people demand an equal and respectable status for their language and to be used as medium of instruction in educational institutions. Saraiki people are upset that their culture and language are considered as inferior by their people, especially the younger generation. There are none or very few Saraiki text books, and one can hardly find mention of Saraiki literature, poetry, prose, poets, and prose writers in Punjabi textbooks52 Saraiki people also faced difficulty in speaking with
other ethnolinguistic groups especially those who belong to lower working uneducated classes and even the educated upper and middle classes face discrimination and embarrassment while speaking Saraiki or using Saraiki accent in the public space.\textsuperscript{53} Saraiki people are also teaching Urdu and English to their children because it can give access to state resources and respect in public urban spaces and also education system is primarily based on these two languages.\textsuperscript{54} This loss of cultural and linguistic identity causes resentment, identity crisis, alienation, marginalization and extremist attitudes among an ethnolinguistic group. “In 1989, Islamia University, Bahawalpur, opened the Saraiki Studies Department to award a master’s degree in Saraiki. The Department now offers PhD programme in Saraiki. Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, also opened the Saraiki Studies Department in 2006.”\textsuperscript{55}

Conclusion

Saraiki people have many economic, political, social, and cultural grievances and they feel marginalized and dejected by the Punjabi ruling elite and state. They face difficulty in accessing the resources of the state, access to public information, governmental institutions, and administrative structures and personnel. South Punjab is lacking behind developed industrial areas of the country in all socio-economic indicators and there is a dearth of infrastructure facilities. South Punjab is also less urbanized than Central Punjab, hence it lacks a robust educated middle class essential to bring social and political change. Landlords and Nawabs are dominant over the political landscape, organizations, political processes, and political movements.

There are many prospects for a new South Punjab province. It can create administrative ease after dividing a large sized and highly populated province. More developmental funds can be allocated for the province and even a share from the NFC award. It can also decrease the impact of Punjab over the national politics by decreasing its population below 50%. It can satisfy the demands of ethnolinguistic group of Saraiki people, and they can protect and promote their culture, language, and identity. Saraiki people having a province of their own can help them gain rightful respect in the federation of Pakistan. It will help to create more political consciousness especially among the lower strata and can strengthen the processes of political development.

On the other hand, there are many challenges involved. The creation of Saraiki province along ethno-linguistic lines can raise the demands of
other such groups in different regions like the Hazaras of KPK and Muhajirs of urban Sindh. It can also create new ethnic or linguistic identities which are latent but have the potential to become a new ethnonational group. This can come at the cost of national integration. It is recommended to create new provinces only on administrative basis. The Bahawalpur province movement is another challenge identified earlier. The Saraiki belt is not ethnically and linguistically homogenous. A good proportion of Punjabis, Muhajirs and Urdu speakers reside in the region. A new ethno-linguistic province can create problems for these regional ethno-linguistic minorities. Furthermore, the constitution requires a two-thirds majority amendment both in the two house of Parliament and in the concerned provincial assembly for the demarcation of provinces. This research provided a comprehensive historical and descriptive analysis of the Saraiki province problem and the origins, roots, development of the Saraiki movement, and identity in both pre-partition and post-partition history. It also separately discussed the Bahawalpur province movement and Saraiki province movement. It also covered the causes of the emergence of such movements and identified socio-economic, political, and cultural grievances of the people of South Punjab in general and Saraiki people in particular.
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