



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Politics of New Provinces in Pakistan: A Historical Analysis**

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**ABSTRACT**

Although provincial autonomy was given to provinces of Pakistan through the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010 to pacify the political unrest, yet this amendment did nothing for the true socio-political assimilation of various sub-national identities of different regions such as Saraikis in Punjab, Hazaras in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Mohajirs in Sindh and the Pashtoons in Balochistan and Gilgit Baltistan as well. Therefore the demand for creation of new provinces in Pakistan by the afore-mentioned communities prevailed in their respective regions particularly after renaming the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) as KP. The said demand has currently been discarded in other federating units of Pakistan, yet it is prevailing with full momentum in Punjab with respect to the creation of South Punjab province. In that background, the core objective of this study is to inquire about history of these demands for creating new provinces as well as to shed light over the role of various political parties and the constitutional procedure regarding the creation of new provinces. Qualitative method of reasoning is applied to conclude the results. The study finds that division of Punjab at least into two provinces would not only result in administrative convenience but governance and service delivery would also be improved for the general public residing in the province.

**KEYWORDS** Demand for New Provinces, Federalism, Pakistan, Politics of Ethnic Identities

**Introduction**

Although Pakistan emerged over the map of the world as a federal state, yet the federation had to face precarious threats to its survival because of the grievances emerged due to the monopolistic control of the center over the resources of the federating units. The federation even disintegrated in 1971 owing to the said grievances when East Pakistan became Bangladesh. In post-1971 Pakistan, over-centralized system once again stretched for rather prolonged periods of time which created further rift between the center and the provinces. Provincial disharmony, uneven distribution of resources, economic backwardness and marginalization of sub-national identities were the logical products of asymmetric federal system of Pakistan which hindered the process of national integration.

In early phase of the history of Pakistan, there were five distinct regional identities i.e., the Baloch, Bengali, Punjabi, Pashtoon and Sindhi. The Saraikis of South Punjab too emerged as an ethno-regional identity after sometime which later demanded for their own new province claiming their self-separate ethnic identity from Punjab. From the north-eastern part of KP, people living there were called Hazarawall and they spoke the Hindko language. In 1987, for the first time they claimed themselves as a separate community but that demand could not get popularity at that time although there were some solid reasons behind the said demand for new provinces like political, economic and social disparities. In KP, Pashtoon is a major ethno-linguistic community which holds a firm control over governance and economic resources of the province. So it might be observed that same

major ethno-linguistic cleavages, conflicts and issues are prevalent in all provinces of Pakistan. However, these sub-national groups differ in their demands. Some want to get new province on linguistic bases and others are willing to get that on administrative grounds. In 2010, a landmark constitutional amendment was incorporated by federal government in which NWFP province was renamed as KP. This step of the government instigated Hazara community to raise their demand for separate province more vigorously.

The decision to rename a province on linguistic grounds was clearly open for debate and objection from other smaller provinces which also resulted in a strong and fresh demand for administrative recognition and autonomy from different other ethnic identities. The Hazara community speaking the Hindko language stood against the province's new designation, arguing that this act proved for the Hindko speaking community an utter disregard and disservice. They argued that by neglecting the broader Hazara, Hindko and Chitrali communities, the term Khyber Pakhtunkhwa implied an ethnic idea that represented the Pashtoon community alone. Right from the birth of Pakistan, one of the most demanding concerns has been the push for the Hazara province, which now added a fresh current to the already lengthy list of requests made by smaller regions and people. The founder of Pakistan, M.A. Jinnah, correctly recognized the risks associated with this problem and cautioned the populace and decision-makers to maintain objectivity and unity as one nation.

Similar demands have been made for splitting Sindh into two different provinces and creating a separate Saraiki province from the southern portions of Punjab. Nonetheless, a vast number of towns and areas have complained and asked for their separate provincial identity or acknowledgement of their rights and contribution to the nation's wealth and resource pool based on the number of their respective population. They also had numerous other problems and concerns over representation issues and the distribution of resources and cash outflows. Conflicts in Pakistan's provincial structure are generally linguistic and cultural-based in nature.

Likewise, in KP, the Hindko-speaking people are quite distinct who do not represent Pashtoon community. On the other hand, in Punjab, Saraiki people were demanding for separate province in the southern parts of Punjab. In Sindh, Urdu speaking people called Mohajirs, the Balochs, Pashtoons, and Punjabis were considerably separate population groups because they were not Sindhis. Islam is the religion on which Pakistan was founded and Islam teaches to live together and stay connected. It doesn't teach people to get separate from their own people. Furthermore, religious parties are not willing to accept ethnic and lingual identities because they have been promoting ideological outlets against ethno-lingual identities.

As mentioned earlier, in 2010, NWFP was replaced with KP under the garb of 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment. This change stimulated the other ethnic groups living in different parts of the country to demand new provinces on behest of their language and racial identity. At that time the government formulated a commission to handle such kind of issues but unfortunately its scope of authority was reduced to Punjab province alone. Indeed, the same demand was made by Balochistan, Sindh and KP's smaller ethnic identities to revisit the provincial map of these provinces on ethnic grounds. They were of the view that major ethnic group controlled the resources or revenue of whole province and it marginalized others. Such kind of grievances provoked them to initiate ideological as well as physical clashes against the monopolistic ethnic group. In this regard the smaller ethnic identities united for their survival and to save their coming generations from deprivation. In fact, Pakistan and India had to face ethnic issues at the time of their inception. On the one hand there was major challenge of self identities and ethnic groups for Pakistan since its creation and on the other hand political recognition of distinct cultures and languages, centre-provincial harmony, inter-provincial assimilation, distribution of resources on equal basis made huge rift among provinces and established separatist movements in the country.

## Demands for the Creation of New Provinces in Pakistan

Each province of Pakistan is consisted of different cultural identities. Punjab is associated with Punjabi culture, Sindh is associated with Sindhi culture, KP is associated with Pashtoon culture and Balochistan is associated with Balochi culture.

The following table shows the percentage configuration of various ethnic identities in every province of Pakistan.

**Table 1**  
**Composition of Ethnic Identities in Various Provinces of Pakistan**

Provinces	Urdu	Punjabi	Sindhi	Balochi	Pashto	Saraiki	Others	Total
Punjab	5.1	75.1	0.1	0.8	1.1	17.1	0.7	100
Sindh	22.1	7.1	60.1	1.5	4.1	1.0	4.1	100
KPK	0.9	1.2	0.2	0.1	74.0	4.0	19.6	100
Baluchistan	1.7	3.0	6.9	59.0	23.1	2.7	3.6	100

Source: (Khan, Shaheen & Ahmad, 2019)

Various distinct ethnic identities living in four provinces of Pakistan like Saraikis in southern part of Punjab, Hazara community of KP in Hazara region, Pashtoons in north Balochistan and urban Sindh comes under Mohajirs community (Khan, Shaheen et al. 2019). Almost all of these communities are aspirant of getting their separate administrative unit in existing federal structure of Pakistan for their respective regions. In that regard, the Saraikis, too, had initiated their movement for creating new province of South Punjab. Similarly, in Hazara region, the Hazarawals are very much willing or demanding for a new province of their region consisting of six districts of KP. Moreover, the Mohajir community of urban Sindh is also demanding new province that would comprise of Karachi and Hyderabad. The same is the stance of Pashtoons of Balochistan i.e. to create separate province consisting of northern part of Balochistan. In this regard the movements of Saraikis and Hazaras are more effective and vibrant as compared to the other ones. In Hazara and Saraiki regions the demand for new provinces has got more popular support because of unequal distribution of resources and their meager political participation. Therefore, the major identities (Punjabi & Pashtoons) of these two provinces are more active against the said demand of new province. Likewise, two other provinces of Pakistan like Sindh and Balochistan have their own reservations regarding creation of new provinces in KP and Punjab as well (Mushtaq, 2009).

### The Demand for South Punjab Province

Although Pakistan's largest province in terms of population i.e. Punjab is very prosperous and generating huge amount of revenues yet its southern part has been deprived from development and prosperity. The south Punjab is consisted of three renowned divisions i.e. Dera Ghazi Khan, Bahawalpur and Multan. In fact the people of this region had their own cultural and political history and identification. If one looks into the political history of Multan, he/she may find that it was given provincial status in Mughal era and merged in Punjab during Sikh reign. Moreover, Bahawalpur was one of those princely states that were annexed to Pakistan after partition and were conferred provincial status. After the merger of Bahawalpur with West Pakistan Province in 1954 and the abolishment of One Unit Scheme in 1970, Bahawalpur was granted divisional status in Punjab. Dera Ghazi Khan before merging with Punjab tended towards a Baloch identity (Abbasi & Kalhor, 2022). Saraiki speakers have different accent of language now such as in major areas of Bahawalpur people speak Riyasti language, in Multan people speak Multani language, and in Dera Gazi Khan and surrounding areas, people speak Derewal. Saraiki people feel very proud of their language, cultural values and identities. The three main Divisions in South Punjab i.e., Multan, Bahawalpur and Dera Gazi Khan, occupy approximately 48.5% of the total area of Punjab and accommodate 28.23% of the state's total population (Mushtaq & Shaheen, 2017).

Majority in the region are Saraiki and Punjabi speaking. Similarly, the Urdu speaking tribes are also common in urban and rural areas of the region.

Most of the time, the Saraikis argued in favor of a distinct province for socio-economic reasons. In past, the Saraiki people desired to get favorable recognition of their Saraiki language by which they could have equal treatment in all aspects of the body politic of the country. In the middle of 1970, they demanded for the creation of a Saraiki province by proposing the division of Punjab. The divisions of Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, along with districts of Jhang and Dera Ismael Khan were included in proposed province which would be named as Saraikistan (Langah, 2011). After surveying about the feasibility of the proposal, it was found that there were different point of views about creation and boundaries of the proposed province. The new proposed province, based on Saraiki identity was demanded by Saraiki nationalists. Other arguments were made for the creation of the province of South Punjab on administrative grounds. On the other hand, the people of Bahawalpur were demanding for their separate province rather than being part of the proposed Saraikistan province. It was noticed during various elections that the issue of Saraiki province was an important and sensitive agenda item for the political parties of that region. During the general elections of 1988 and 1997, Punjabi speaking people cast their votes to PML-N and Saraiki speaking people cast their votes in the favor of Pakistan People's Party (Mushtaq, 2016).

### **The Demand to Reinstate the Bahawalpur Province**

As discussed earlier, Bahawalpur was granted the status of a province prior to its merger with West wing of Pakistan under the garb of One Unit Scheme of 1950s. After the end of the said plan the status of Bahawalpur was not reinstated as a separate province. In 1970, a movement was launched by the dwellers of said area for restoration of the state of Bahawalpur. However, after the demand for new provinces by several other ethnic groups in Pakistan the movement to restore Bahawalpur province regained real momentum. In terms of area, Bahawalpur occupies the largest part of Punjab province consisting of 10.3% population of the province. Therefore, Bahawalpur Awami Party supported the demand to make Bahawalpur as a separate province (Javaid, 2018). Although in this region, the Saraikis outnumber the other segments yet Punjabis are also living in sufficient number in this area.

**Table 2**  
**Ethnic Composition of Bahawalpur Division**

<b>Linguistic Identities</b>	<b>Bahawalpur</b>	<b>Bahawalnagar</b>	<b>Rahimyar Khan</b>
Saraiki	64.3	1.5	63.0
Punjabi	28.2	95.0	27.0
Urdu	5.7	3.5	2.8
Other	1.8	0.5	7.2
Total	100	100	100

Source: (Javaid, 2018)

For establishing a Saraiki province on behalf of a distinct ethnic identity of Saraikis was not supported by the other ethnic groups living in Bahawalpur. Similarly Saraikis themselves were divided into two groups; one was supporting the restoration of Bahawalpur and second was against it.

### **The Demand for Hazara Province in KP**

Before the partition of India in 1947, NWFP was popular in terms of Pashtoon nationalist politics. The prominent Pashtoon leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan had started the separate homeland movement demanding for Pashtoonistan which would have to be especially for the Pashtoons. With the passage of time, this movement became famous in Peshawar valley and in its surrounding areas where majority of people spoke Pashto

language. The second largest group of the province was Hazarawals who speaks Hindko language. They were mainly settled in the region of Hazara comprising 6 main districts i.e., Haripur, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Batgram, Kohistan and Torgrah. The total population of that region contains 87% of Hazarawals. Historically, when pre-partition elections were held to decide about the fate of NWFP, the All India Muslim League was supported by the dwellers of Hazara. As the residents of Hazara region had maintained the specific identity hence they isolated themselves from politics of Pashtoon nationalists and movement of Pashtoonistan. In 2010, under the 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment, NWFP was renamed as KP. As a consequence of that move, the Hazarvi people put the demand for separate province for Hazarawals which consisted of Hazara region. Some groups such as Hazara National Movement, Rights for Hazara Movement and Hazara Province Movement were the chief proponents of that demand (Ahmar, 2013).

**Table 3**  
**Composition of Hazara Region in Terms of Ethnic Identities**

Districts of Hazara Region	Hindko-Identity	Pashto-Identity	Others
Kohistan	96.0	3.90	.10
Mansehra	73.0	26.5	.05
Abbottabad	94.30	2.20	3.5
Haripur	88.50	9.5	2.0
Batgram	18.34	80.66	1.0

Source: (Ahmar, 2013)

### The Demand for Creation of Mohajir Province in Sindh

Sindh is a culturally diverse region of Pakistan. The native residents of Sindh are called Sindhis, living in different towns of Sindh. After the partition of 1947, the migrants from India started living in the main urban areas of Karachi and Hyderabad. In Karachi most part of these settlers comprised of Urdu-speaking Mohajirs, a significant number of Baloch people, Pashto speaking and Punjabis. That's why Karachi is called Mini Pakistan.

**Table 4**  
**Composition of Karachi in terms of Ethnic Identities**

Ethnic Groups	Central Karachi	East Karachi	West Karachi	South Karachi	Malir
Urdu	74.0	61.0	40.0	26.1	16.0
Sindhi	2.0	4.0	6.1	11.3	25.5
Pashto	4.6	6.0	24.5	8.1	21.3
Balochi	1.0	1.6	5.30	10.2	9.0
Punjabi	9.0	15.1	13.0	19.0	17.4
Saraiki	2.4	2.3	2.5	1.8	2.35
Others	7.0	10.0	8.6	23.5	8.45

Source: (Mushtaq, 2009)

After 1947, the Mohajirs secured different high-ranked specialist jobs in different fields hence they dominated the civil bureaucracy and political decision making centre particularly of Sindh (Mushtaq, 2009). Initially, they were proud nationals of Pakistan and remained antagonist towards the regional or cultural identity, nevertheless, in 1970, they began to assert their identity of Mohajirs, when their number in civil bureaucracy started significantly decreasing after the introduction of the rural and urban quota system in the Sindh province. In 1980s, they further organized themselves and launched a political movement called Mohajir Qaumi Movement which was later named as Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). In Karachi and Hyderabad, this political party successfully secured high level of support from the general public and achieved a notable electoral support in several general elections and in urban Sindh appeared as the sole representative of people. Afterwards, the Mohajirs, represented by the new political party of Sindh (MQM) started demanding a separate province for them as well like the provincial minorities of other provinces. A member from MQM, Mr. Kamran Akhter, during the session of Sindh Assembly

urged that the Urdu speaking People of Sindh are subject to discrimination therefore they demanded a separate province for them (Ahmad, 2014).

### **Pashtoons' Demand for Separate Province in Northern Balochistan**

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan in terms of area. The northern side of the province is inhabited by people belonging to Pashtoon ethnic identity where they are treated as a majority party. When the voices were being raised to create new provinces in different corners of Pakistan, the Pashtoons of north Balochistan started their demand to establish separate province for Pashtoon community. They also demanded that either there should be separate province or merger of Pashtoon community with KP. For the Pashtoons of Balochistan, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) demanded a separate new province which was known as "Afghania". In recent past, the Pashtoons of Balochistan had been demanding a new province which would also include Chitral and Bolan (Mushtaq, 2016).

### **The Role of Mainstream Political Parties in Politics of New Provinces**

The movement to revive the province of Bahawalpur in 1970 sparked the nationalist sentiments in southern Punjab. Although, the movement failed to achieve its main purpose, yet it laid the foundation of the Saraiki province movement. People of Southern Punjab were demanding for the new province since the middle of 1970. At that time the Saraiki community considered themselves to be a separate identity from Punjabi speaking people living in central Punjab. In 1970, the Saraiki ethnic groups initiated the demand for a separate province and, along with it, the Hazara National community led by National Hazara Party also demanded for Hazara province in 1987. But after the 18th constitutional amendment in 2010, calls for separate provinces in the southern Punjab and Hazara regions of KP gained momentum (Mushtaq, 2016).

### **Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)/Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam)(PML-Q)**

To establish Saraiki province the Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani (2008-2012) belonging to PPP and Saraiki belt raised his voice. Unfortunately, he could only successful to process the said demand at the forum of a committee called Constitutional Reforms Committee. After failure to fulfill that demand, the PPP decided to raise the issue publically only to strengthen the party narrative for elections. The same political stunt was adopted by PML-Q to enhance its vote bank from Saraiki belt. Siddiq believes that the political stunt taken by PPP and PML-Q was only to push Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) out from Saraiki belt although PML-N was a strong party in terms of vote bank of Punjab. Likewise, MQM started the demand for setting up a new province in Punjab for its own objectives relating to their demand for Mohajir province in Urban Sindh. MQM wanted to secure the division of Punjab province for the setting up a precedent to achieve the division of Sindh into two split provinces known as Sindhi and Mohajir (Siddiq, 2011).

### **Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)**

A constitutional amendment bill was submitted by MQM to the National Assembly Secretariat on 2<sup>nd</sup> of January, 2012, seeking the formation of new provinces of Hazara and South Punjab within KP and Punjab, respectively. The bill proposed for a referendum to decide whether or not the southern Punjab want a Saraiki province. The bill also called for the "abrogation of Article 239 (Clause 4)" of the Constitution of Pakistan and to give Parliament an extended role in the process of creating new provinces. The bill provoked outrage and political protests among Sindhi-speaking population of the province. The mainstream national political parties called for protest and managed rallies across the province. (Waseem, 2012).

Sindhi nationalists claimed that the creation of new province would undermine their interests. They felt that Punjabis and Saraikis shared similar views on representation and distribution issues, especially of water resources. The creation of Saraiki province would stimulate the people of Hazara, Bahawalpur and Mohajirs of Sindh to create their separate provinces in their respective regions. The Sindhi people compelled themselves to think that if Sindh would be divided then what would be the worth of native Sindhi people? The proposal of new province in Punjab was also opposed by the Balochistan Assembly. Its members had the stance that if Punjab would be split into two provinces then this precedent would engulf the other provinces of Pakistan as well where the demand for new province was already surfacing. The demand for creation of South Punjab province was also vehemently rejected by Mr. Aslam Raisani, the then Chief Minister of Balochistan. Although at that time a member of Balochistan Assembly made a conscious statement that if South Punjab province would be established then the two major areas of South Punjab i.e., Rajanpur and Dera Gazi Khan would be the part of Balochistan since the said areas remained under the supervision of Balochistan in most part of their pre-partition history (Baloch, 2011).

### **Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N)/ Awami National Party (ANP)**

In the KP Assembly, the bill regarding creation of new province in Hazara region was rejected by the ruling coalition of PML-N and ANP. In the National Assembly of Pakistan a bill related to the creation of Hazara province was also rejected by observing that that floor was not suitable forum to discuss such kind of bills. Firstly, it should be presented on the floor of respective assembly and that assembly would take decision over it. Ghulam Ahmad Balour, a member of National Assembly from KP, made a statement that the MQM had no right to debate the issue of his province since the party did not have any significant representation in the provincial assembly of KP. Along with that, Mr. Balour resolved that he would never ever allow such demarcation of the Sindh and Punjab which would split them into new provinces. Apart from that, the then Opposition Leader in the National Assembly, Chaudary Nisar Ali Khan, leader of PML-N, raised a question on the floor of the Assembly that the party (MQM) which did not have significant mandate in Punjab and KP Assemblies, how they had right to demand for creation of new provinces in Punjab and KP?

### **The Resolution for Creation of New Provinces**

Although there were numerous reservations by opponents of the idea of creating new provinces in Punjab, KP and Sindh, yet a resolution intending to establish new province of South Punjab was presented by the then federal minister Farooq H. Naek. The resolution was passed by the majority votes on 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, 2012 nevertheless the opposition parties led by PML-N rejected the said resolution and moved a new resolution demanding the creation of different new provinces in different areas like Bahawalpur, South Punjab and Hazara regions of Pakistan (Hassan, 2012).

On May 9, 2012, the PML-N led government of Punjab unanimously passed a resolution in the Punjab Assembly for the establishment of the province of South Punjab, in response to the resolution of the PPP and its partners for establishing Saraiki province. Punjab law minister Rana Sanaullah Khan put forward the resolution. Another resolution was passed about restoration of Bahawalpur's provincial status. The PML-N's resolution to revive Bahawalpur province was seen as an attempt to weaken Saraikis' demand for their separate province. The Saraiki nationalist leadership argued that the revival of Bahawalpur case was none other than the political stunt of ruling class and was not the voice of the entire Saraiki population living in Punjab including Bahawalpur as well (Langah, 2011).

### **Bahawalpur Awami Party**

For the restoration of the provincial status of Bahawalpur, Nawab Salahuddin Abbasi launched Bahawalpur Awami Party on April 14, 2011 and also urged the general public to launch resistance movement. He claimed that all his people would take to the streets in response to a single call from him and would return only after the restoration of their province (Mushtaq, 2016). It was also argued that the movement for creation of Saraiki province gained no popularity in Bahawalpur region as majority of people residing there preferred Bahawalpur province over Saraiki province. Proceeding further, the Punjab Assembly and National Assembly passed resolutions and a commission was constituted by Speaker of National Assembly on August 16, 2012, for creation of new provinces in Punjab. Continuing in line of the politics of new provinces, the commission proposed for the establishment of the province of Bahawalpur Janoobi Punjab with Bahawalpur as its capital in accordance with the decisions of National and Punjab Assemblies.

After installation of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) government in KP in 2013, the provincial assembly passed a resolution with majority vote on March 21, 2014, demanding for the creation of Hazara province. The provincial assembly further urged the federal government to approve a bill from National Assembly for creation of new units comprising Hazara division for facilitating the people in administrative matters (Ali, 2022). However other parties opposed the resolution in National Assembly since they had Pashtoon speakers from the region of KP in their support. Moreover, in response to MQM's recent demand of Sindh's division a resolution was passed against it by members of Sindh Assembly (Hussain, 2022).

### **Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)**

With the cancellation of notices that reportedly pulled down the powers to be transferred to the people of south Punjab, the controversy surrounding the Punjab government's intentions for creation of an administratively and financially autonomous south Punjab Secretariat came under question which doubts still seemed to be continued. The attention of the general public was more focused on each action the provincial PTI administration took to empower or dis-empower the citizens of south Punjab through the delegation of power to the small bureaucratic set-up established in the name of a separate South Punjab Civil Secretariat. It was seen as first step towards the establishment of a full fledged south Punjab province. The then Chief Minister of Punjab, Mr. Usman Buzdar claimed the issuance of the said contentious notifications as "human error". He annulled the order issued in September to separate the province's three divisions administratively with separate secretariats at regional headquarters. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Imran Khan announced the formulation of a separate ministerial committee to strengthen the administrative structure for southern districts and assigning more departments to the South Punjab Secretariat in order to improve governance by solving the problems locally.

Majority seats in national and provincial legislatures were won by PTI from the electoral constituencies lying in the proposed regions of South Punjab province on the commitment of creating South Punjab province. Nevertheless, the government did not take any special interest to present the issue of division of Punjab in the provincial legislature but continued to apply delaying tactics. It took two years for the Buzdar government to set up a separate secretariat for the region, providing its officials limited powers to make administrative or financial decisions. After the said move, the frustration ended little bit but it was proved that the division of provinces required much political give and take and was not an easy task at all. It further established that if the intentions were honest, a fully functional and independent South Punjab province could easily be established (Abass, 2021).



## **Formation of New Provinces in Constitutional Perspective**

Article 239 of the Constitution of Pakistan clearly states the plan for establishment of new provinces which, in fact, is a difficult task. In the first place, approval of the respective Provincial Assembly is required for demarcation of provincial boundaries. In 2012, Parliament of Pakistan passed a joint resolution in favor of a new province in Punjab, establishing a committee to submit a report on the feasibility and implementation of the plan.

After taking a few introductory steps in view of the constitutional and legal formalities towards creation of new provinces it was soon exposed that ruling elite is applying delaying tactics and were never in favor of creation of new provinces. The Punjab Assembly abrogated the constitution of a commission for the establishment of new provinces. However, a report was submitted to Parliament by commission on January 28, 2013. Hence the whole procedure ended up in deadlock (Javaid, 2018). Constitution of 1973 states that Pakistan is a federal state comprising of four province whereas Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan even after being a part of Pakistan fall under the control of federal administration of Pakistan. Keeping in view the prevailing situation it can be said that the constitution requires amendments to overcome challenges regarding division of resources.

In the Constitution of 1973 of Pakistan, there is a place for the creation of new provinces. The Clause 4 of Article 239 discussed the procedure of creating new provinces in the country. Clause 4 provides that any bill related to the formulation of new provinces cannot be approved from President until that bill would be approved by the respective assembly of the province. Along with this, any bill related to the redrawing of any provincial boundary must be passed from the respective provincial assembly by two-third majority. On May 2013 although a bill related to the division of Punjab into two provinces like South Punjab or Bahawalpur province was passed yet it was not processed further to take approval of the President.

## **Conclusion**

In a nutshell, the issue of creating new provinces in Pakistan generally and in Punjab particularly has been politicized and become a tug of war among political parties and federal and provincial governments as well. The supporters of the creation of new federating units believe that if new provinces would be established the small ethnic identities would be empowered in their respective regions. Therefore, this issue of new provinces has become a serious challenge for federation of Pakistan which cannot be ignored easily because of the immense public support behind it. Apart from that, the opponents of new provinces are of the view that if new provinces are established in existing federal structure of Pakistan it would open Pandora's box regarding political representation, allocation of resources and revenue generation as well. In fact, this issue needs to be discussed at academic platforms with clarity and sincerity that how formulating the new provinces would be fruitful and valuable addition for national integration of the country. Along with it, a consensus must be made among all stakeholders whether they are political parties or military establishment to overcome the issue. For this purpose, a commission or parliamentary committee must be formulated to revisit the situation and devise some rational mechanism for the proper creation of south Punjab province and to make a mechanism for equal distribution of resources after such demarcation. In consonant with the views of some scholars, the creation of South Punjab province may bring prosperity and development in the lives of regional people and their issues may also be addressed at their doorsteps. Besides, the creation of new province(s) will not only bring a positive change for all regional identities but it would strengthen democracy as well as eliminate economic and political disparities.

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