

## **Making of New Provinces in Punjab and Its Implications on Federal Structure of Pakistan**

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### **Abstract:**

Pakistan is a federal state having four provinces. Punjab is the largest province of the country with regard to population diversity. The ethno-regional, socio-economic, linguistic and institutional diversity in this region is bifurcated. The province is ethno-regionally and linguistically divided; socio-economically gulfed and institutionally marginalized. This unequal and marginalized development in the past led to the spectrum of intra-regional movement for making of new provinces in Punjab. The intra-regional movements are based on ethnic lines supported by the regional political parties. Political elites in the mainstream political parties advocate/advocating administrative, institutional, bureaucratic as well as ethnic baseline for making of new provinces in the province of Punjab. Based on the historical trends, this paper will address the constitutional, administrative, political, socio-economic, ethno-linguistic and institutional baselines for making of new provinces in Punjab. This restructuring will affect the federation of Pakistan in constitutional, administrative and institutional way. It will also study the implications of restructuring of Punjab on federal structure of Pakistan. This paper will be an important document for further policymaking in this realm.

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Punjab, Federation, Political Parties and Elites, Ethno-regionalism

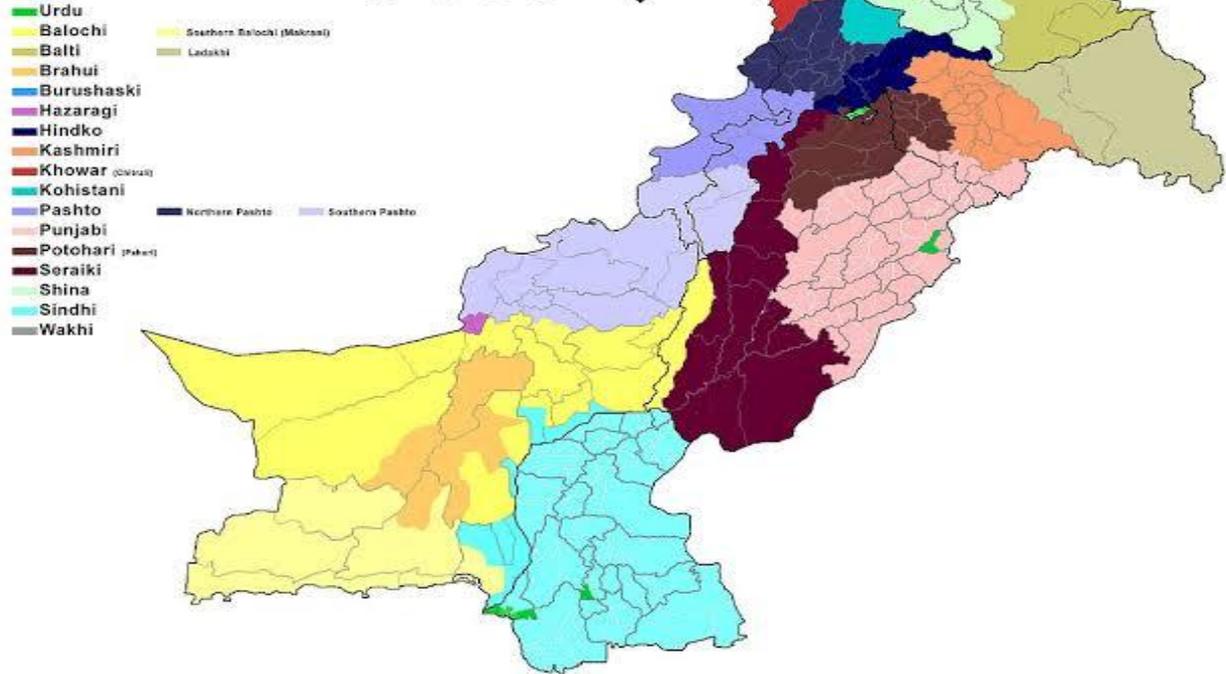
### **Introduction:**

Pakistan incorporated a federal form of government from its very beginning. After attaining independence from the British colonial masters; the leadership of the state and its territorial units, political parties and the state institutions hailed to adopt the federal form of government. The constitutional structure under the 1956, 1962 (previous constitutions) and the 1973 (current constitution) find the basis of federalism. In a federation, sovereignty is shared between the federal government and its territorial units (Adeney, 2007). This sovereignty is shared on the basis of constitutionalism, administrative provinces and political commitment.

Since the last two decades, the debate was heated up to restructure the federation in Pakistan. The political parties, regional ethnic groups in different provincial units and the administrative segments demanded for creation of more provinces. In Punjab, the elites asked for Bahawalpur and South Punjab or Seraikistan, In Sindh, urban centres demanded a separate provincial territory, In Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pashtun and Hazara groups also have similar demands. On the other hand, it is also an important demand by the people of Gilgit-Baltistan to frame the constitutional package and declare that territory as federating units of Pakistan (The Express Tribune, May 29, 2019).

# Languages of Pakistan

## پاکستان کی زبانیں



The federal structure in Pakistan is very diverse, and making of new provinces in Pakistan and especially in the province of Punjab in Pakistan is termed as a crucial issue from the 1970s (Cohen, 2011). Despite many debates in the policy circles; a consensus based approach to create new provinces in Punjab has never been attained. Although, many resolutions were adopted by the provincial assembly of Punjab, political debated were propagated, but a rational political consensus has not been framed so far.

Based on the historical trends, this paper will address the constitutional, administrative, political, socio-economic, ethno-linguistic and institutional baselines for making of new provinces in Punjab. This restructuring will affect the federation of Pakistan in constitutional, administrative and institutional way. It will also study the implications of restructuring of Punjab on federal structure of Pakistan. This paper will be an important document for further policymaking in this realm.

### Debating New Provinces in Punjab

Punjab is the most populous province of Pakistan. It is also termed as the over-developed province by the smaller provincial units. From the very beginning, this province remained as the home of decision-making and policy making in the federal structure of the country. The military and bureaucratic dominance of the Punjabis inflicted ethnic consciousness in the smaller provincial territories. In Punjab, not a single ethno-political movement for the ethnic rights was emerged (Alvi, n.d). However, after the dissolution of One Unit in 1970, the movement for restoration of Bahawalpur province initiated and Seraiki movement for a separate province on the basis of Seraiki ethnicity started. Followed from many phases, these two movements are still finding their path to proclaim their demands. A brief description of the two movements is given as following:

## **Bahawalpur Province Movement**

Bahawalpur was a princely state and joined the Pakistan in October 1947. In 1951, an agreement was signed between the Nawab of Bahawalpur and the Federal government of Pakistan. Under this agreement, it was an obligatory commitment for the federal government that the state of Bahawalpur will be treated similar to province-like status as like the other provinces of Pakistan (Javaid, 2018). But, Bahawalpur was merged with One Unit in 1955 and in 1969, when the One Unit was restored; this territory was merged with the province of Punjab. Since 1970s, the movement for restoration of Bahawalpur is in process.

## **Seraiki Sooba Movement**

The seraiki Sooba movement was also started in the early phase of 1970s. The objective of the movement was to demand a separate province for the seraiki speaking population of South Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (former NWFP) (Sandhu, 2015). From 1970s to mid-1980s, the movement approached to the political circles and was shortly declined in the next two decades. In 2008, Yousaf Raza Gillani from seraiki belt became the prime minister of Pakistan; the movement again approached to the political circles. Several regional political parties from South Punjab took the demand to the national leadership but then, Pakistan People's Party declined the demand of formation of new province in Punjab due to lack of political will.

So far, the demand for making of new province(s) in Punjab is worth considering at the political level. This has become an important piece of discussion in the public media as well. An indefinitely number of research articles, books, newspaper columns and monographs are also available. But the real issue is that how to disintegrate this province to create more provinces. Following is the brief description about the possible narratives to divide the Punjab province into more provincial territories.

### **i. Ethno-regionalism**

Ethnically, Punjab is a diverse province in Pakistan. The province is mainly divided into three important geographical regions such as North Punjab (Rawalpindi, Chakwal divisions) central Punjab (Gujranwala, Lahore divisions) and In South Punjab (Bahawalpur, Sahiwal, Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan Divisions). Faisalabad division is divided between central Punjab and South Punjab. In North Punjab, Punjabi and Hindko speaking population lies in majority. The central Punjab is home of Punjabi speaking people while South Punjab have seraiki speaking population. The regional political factions from South Punjab largely based in Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan demand the division of Punjab on ethno-regional tendency to create at least one more province in the federation of Pakistan. The mainstream political parties such as Pakistan People's Party in her 2018 election manifesto demonstrated such provision. Shah Mehmood Qureshi who is an important political leader of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leads such demand (Dawn News, May 27, 2015). There is no demand of separate province from the North Punjab on the basis of ethno-lingual or any other such perspective (Mushtaq & Alqama, 2009).

### **ii. Socio-economic basis**

Socio-economically, southern part of Punjab province is considered as the poverty stricken geographical entity. South Punjab is considered as least developed as compare to Central and North Punjab. Multiple socio-economic indicators strives more poverty in districts of South Punjab than the rest of the Punjab. The demand for making seraikisooba is usually based on this strongest argument that most of the annual budget is spent on central and north Punjab while South Punjab receives only meager economic resources which are not sufficient to meet the socio-economic demands of the people of South Punjab. A literary conference which was held in 1975 stressed the demand to create new province in South Punjab due to prevailing socio-

economic deprivation in the region. Seraiki Sooba Mahaz (a political movement based in South Punjab) also has similar motives (Sana Ullah, Khalid & Hassan, 2017).

### **iii. Linguistics basis**

According to the 2017 census report, about 20.68 percent in Punjab are Seraiki speaking people while 69.67 percent are Punjabi speaking. The division of Punjab on linguistics basis set political momentum in 2010, when NWFP was renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The linguistic division of Punjab was also demanded by the regional political elites from the South Punjab. In this context, an informal proposal was also tabled during the prime ministerial tenure of Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani who turned down it by arguing that Pakistan People's Party had no such manifestation in his 2008 party manifesto and hence we will ponder upon this proposal in the next election.

### **iv. Administrative Basis**

On administrative line, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf are the two proponent political parties which demands the division of Punjab on administrative lines. While Pakistan People's Party shares the same footprint with some kind of politico-lingual reservations. In 2013, Pakistan People's Party-led federal government constituted a parliamentary commission to study the possibility of making new provinces in Punjab. In its final report, the commission recommended the formation of new province with the name of Bahawalpur Janoobi Punjab Province with its capital in Bahawalpur. The commission also rejected the demand for restoration of Bahawalpur as separate province by making argument that any such demand will pave the way for granting similar status to Swat, Khairpur and several other regions. It also recommended that the new province will consist of Multan, Bahawalpur and Dera Ghazi Khan divisions and districts of Mianwali and Bhakar. It also has been advocated to provide 30 percent economic resources and civil-military service quota to the new province (Dawn News, February 01, 2013).

Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) rejected the report of parliamentary commission and a separate resolution in the Punjab assembly was moved by the party to restore Bahawalpur as a provincial territory. Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf and Pakistan Muslim League (Q) also advocate to establish Bahawalpur as a separate province on administrative lines.

From the above description it may be argued that Punjab is ethnically divided, linguistically segregated, socio-economically marginalized and politically diverse province. There are two major provincial movements in the province. In the following, we analyze the tendency of different political parties/factions/elites for creation new provinces in Punjab.

### **Voice of Political Parties/Factions/Elites**

On the issue of re-making of new provinces in Punjab, the political parties, factions and elites are divided. The debate is not homogenous on the political grounds. Some demands ethno-regional demarcation, others are in favor of administration division while some others find the base on lingual lines. The voice of different segments of the Pakistan is sum up in the following lines;

1. The mainstream as well as the regional political parties/factions and elites are homogenized that Punjab is needed to be re-framed into more provincial territories.
2. The mainstream political leadership and political parties, civil-military leadership want to create new provinces in Punjab on administrative basis.
3. The regional political parties based in Seraiki region of South Punjab and the leadership in the mainstream political parties originated from South Punjab demand lingual base division of Punjab into two provinces. They demands Seraiki Sooba.
4. PTI, PMLQ and the people from Bahawalpur division wants separate provincial identity.

## **Creation of More Provinces in Punjab**

The present debate for creation more provinces in Punjab was approached in the aftermath of 18th amendment in 2010, when the name of NWFP was changed to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This amendment heated a political influx in Hindko speaking areas of the province to demand for separate province on the lingual and ethno-regional identity. Similar demands were approached in South Punjab, Sindh and Pakhtun areas of Balochistan. The discussion on creation of new provinces in Punjab was also warmly highlighted in the print and electronic media and hundreds of thousands of research articles were written in this context. The PPP-led federal government also formed a parliamentary commission in 2012 to provoke the provisions for creation of new provinces in Punjab. The commission provided a detailed report on the creation of Bahawalpur Janoobi Punjab province and also drafted constitutional amendment in this context. In the aftermath of parliamentary commission's report, PTI, PMLN, PMLQ and regional political groups from Bahawalpur rejected the recommendations. In 2018 election scenario, all the mainstream political parties included the formation of seraikisooba while PTI and PMLN strongly advocated the restoration of Bahawalpur province in their electoral manifestos. Although, the debate of creation of new provinces in Punjab is still in progress so far, but strong institutional, constitutional and administrative reforms in this context have never applied yet. This issue is seemed to be transferred to the next general election.

### **Aftermath of the Division of Punjab**

Punjab is a populous province. The policymakers have worth opinion that there is need to restructure the federation of Pakistan by creating more provinces. They focus on the province of Punjab due to its geography, ethno-regional and lingual composition and administration as well. So, sooner or later, the province will be divided into more provinces. After such restructuring of the province of Punjab some important changes will have implication on the federal structure of Pakistan. These implications are analyzed as following;

#### **i. Demographic Implications**

The restructuring of the province of Punjab will firstly affect the demography of the province. For new demarcation, a provincial boundary commission with constitutional mandate is required to be established. The new demographic division requires an administrative working in the bureaucratic machinery as well. This hectic task requires time, resources and consistency.

#### **ii. Political Implication**

For making new provinces in Punjab, the formation of a parliamentary commission on the creation of new provinces is very important. This commission should have representation from the major political parties and stakeholders. The commission also must have constitutional mandate to decide the demarcation of the boundaries of the new provinces. This commission should also consider the voice of the people of the province of Punjab in the broader spectrum.

#### **iii. Constitutional Implication**

For restructuring of the provincial territories of Punjab, constitutional amendment will be required. For constitutional amendment draft bill for the creation of new provinces in Punjab, Articles 1, 51, 59, 106, 175 and 218 of the constitution will be amended. Then, the constitutional draft bill will move to the national assembly and the senate for its passage with 2/3 majority vote. Apart from this, it also requires to pass by the provincial assembly either through resolution or another draft bill on demarcation of provincial boundaries.

#### **iv. Socio-economic Implications**

For making new provinces, socio-economic study is very important. To resolve these matters, NFC award and the role of CCI will be exemplary. For division of socio-economic resources an institutional mechanism will be required. New NFC award will be constituted.

#### **v. Administrative Implications**

After the demarcation of the boundary of the new provinces in Punjab, the arrangement of bureaucratic machinery will be required. Apart from this, the allotment of seats in the senate and national assembly of Pakistan is very important. The seat composition of the provincial assemblies of the new provinces would also be decided.

#### **Restructuring of Federation in Pakistan**

The present phase on restructuring of federation in Pakistan was started in 2010 when the 18th constitutional amendment (Bukhari & Faisal, 2013). The creation of new provinces in Punjab in this phase of federation requires institutional working of different stakeholders of the country. The polity of centralism will be transformed into decentralization after establishing new provinces in Punjab. This trend will also open new avenues to ratify such issues in the other provinces of Pakistan. Under the restructuring of federation following developments are seemed to occur;

- Constitutional solution of the various issues will be valued by the stakeholders
- Institutional mechanism will be strengthened
- Provincial equality, rule of law will be emerged
- Transformation will be occur on the administrative level
- People's confidence on political and public institutions will strengthened

#### **Findings**

From the above discussion, following main findings are highlighted;

- Punjab is ethno-regionally and linguistically heterogeneous region in Pakistan
- All major stakeholders are united on the division of Punjab into more federating units
- The stakeholder politicized the creation of new provinces of Bahawalpur and Seraiki Sooba in the Past
- The Local governance set-up lacks consistency in Pakistan
- The restructuring of federation in Pakistan will affect the federalism in Pakistan

#### **Recommendations**

- Following recommendations are proposed for creation of new provinces in Pakistan;
- A parliamentary commission would be constituted to restructure the Punjab provinces and constitutional mandate must be given to this commission
- The division of the provinces must be based on the findings of the commission
- Local governance system must be consistent
- The restructuring implications should be tactically approached in an institutional way
- Creation of new provinces in Punjab must strengthen the people confidence on state institutions

The incumbent federal government in a recent move has decided to introduce the new province bill in the national assembly. While speaking to a press conference, foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that; "Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf has not a clear majority in the national assembly and in the Senate. We hope that Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim (Nawaz) will join PTI on this particular issue. The new province of South Punjab will ease the tensions of the people (Pakistan Today, 2020). The Punjab government has also decided to allocate 35 percent of its economic resources for the south Punjab in the provincial budget (2020-2021).

#### **Conclusion**

The ethno-regional, socio-economic, linguistic and institutional diversity in the province of Punjab is bifurcated. The province is ethno-regionally and linguistically divided; socio-economically gulfed and institutionally marginalized. This unequal and marginalized development in the past led to the spectrum of intra-regional movement for making of new provinces in Punjab. Creation of new provinces in Punjab is required a parliamentary consensus. The stakeholders must debate this issue in the public domain and should also calculate the people's opinion in this context. The new scheme will affect the formation of the federation and impact deep rooted consequences on the institutionalism in Pakistan. This task needs to be calculated on lingual, ethno-regional, administrative and political domains in a more detailed way.

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