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Administrative Decentralization and Power Devolution: A Case for New Provinces in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan's administrative apparatus, inherited from British colonial heritage and based on centralization, has been proven inadequate to meet the country's diversity and developmental needs. Though there was constitutional reorganization by way of the 18th Amendment of 2010 for decentralization of power to provinces, the persistence of large administrative units like Punjab and Sindh enabled continued inefficiency in delivering services, encouraged continued unequal resource allocation, and consolidated ethno-regional cleavages. Marginalized groups like South Punjab's Seraiki-speaking group and Hazara province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continue to aspire for province status to attain political autonomy and balanced development. Administrative decentralization through the creation of smaller provinces is here offered as an equitable response to such issues, with localized powers and ensuring national unity. By relying on comparative experience like India's state reorganization, Germany's cooperative federalism, and Nigeria's subnational pluralism, the book illustrates how subnational division can ensure participatory government, better channel resources, and control identity conflict. Political resistance, constitutional checks (e.g., Article 239), and fragmentation dangers are strong hurdles to reform, though. The writer believes that provincial reform is not merely a political imperative but a constitutional imperative to align Pakistan's administrative master plan with its plural realities so inclusive growth may become possible and federal integration may be strengthened.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The political and administrative structures of the country have traditionally been shaped by a colonial experience of centralization. The state-ship, with the passage of time, has suffered from endemic weaknesses, regional imbalances, unevenness in the allocation of resources, and concentrated rule—and thus occasioned popular resentment and demands for change. Backed by this context, the new provinces proposal has come to be suggested as a feasible route towards the creation of an improved, more responsive and equitable system of governance. This research places in the forefront the possibility of administrative decentralization towards addressing inefficiency in the governance system and requiring socio-economic growth through reorganization of provinces.

Decentralization is called for by the extremes of provincial diversity found in political representation as well as service delivery. The big administrative divisions, especially provinces such as Punjab and Sindh, will have to be sluggish in responding to their scattered and spread-out population. Small administrative divisions will respond more effectively and be in a situation to be localized to the local socio-cultural context. Through more balanced distribution of assets and power among newly reorganized provinces, restructuring will render the government more participatory, eliminate tensions ethnically based, and render policies more responsive to local contexts without disintegrating national unity.

This study situates its work comparatively, learning from what has happened to other federal systems such as India, Germany, and Nigeria. The above given examples are useful to sketch both possibilities of change as well as risks of decentralization. General aim of this study is to put forth a set of policy proposals that will assist in creating an inclusive and effective administrative framework for Pakistan.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Pakistan's system of government, from colonial-era centralization and prolonged post-independence government drift, has not been able to tackle the nation's economic and sociopolitical complexities. Bureaucratically organized central government and excessively populous provinces have resulted in systemic inefficiencies, compounded disparities, and increased ethno-regional tensions, both diluting governance effectiveness as well as national integration.

1.3 GOVERNMENT INEFFICIENCY AND SERVICE DELIVERY

The most populated province of Pakistan, Punjab, contains over 52% of the population of the country, while Sindh, Baluchistan, and KP differ from each other in area size and types of population. Such larger administrative apparatus put pressure on provincial governments to offer first-level services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

For instance, South Punjab, comprising 40% of the area of Punjab, lags 15% behind northern Punjab in literacy due to neglect by the government. Similarly, the physical vastness and sparse population of Baluchistan render central government rule ineffective and distant parts inaccessible to developmental activity.

Local governments continue to be ineffective despite the devolution of the federation's powers by the 18th Amendment (2010) because the same top-down structure is being replicated at the subnational level by provinces.

1.4 UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT DIFFERENTIALS

Federally weighted economic policies like the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award over-represent the more populous provinces, e.g., Punjab and Sindh. The less populous parts, i.e., the Seraiki belt or Gilgit-Baltistan, receive very little for contributing a great deal of national revenue (e.g., natural gas resources in Baluchistan). Urban-rural cleavages also accentuate imbalances. Karachi, that is the origin of more than 60% of revenues of Pakistan, still suffers from chronic under-investment in state infrastructure, whereas rural Sindh is one of the most backward areas of Pakistan. Imbalances produce feelings of exploitation by the weaker classes of society.

1.5 ETHNO-REGIONAL TENSIONS AND POLITICAL MARGINALIZATION

Administrative divisions barely respect cultural, linguistic, and historical identities, which creates resentment among minorities. Seraiki-speaking groups in South Punjab, Hazara in KP, and Baloch have long been demanding separate provinces so that they could achieve political representation and access to resources.

Centralization also has not yet extended to post-conflict zones. The 2018 FATA-KP merger is a case that hasn't reduced governance loopholes since tribal areas remain lagging behind in development and inclusion. Abandonment has also encouraged separatism (e.g., Baloch insurgency) and drained national cohesion since groups equate administrative marginalization with systemic disenfranchisement.

1.6 CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL STAGNATION

Although Article 239 of the Pakistan Constitution outlines a constitutional method for the formation of new provinces, political parties are reluctant to carry out the procedure because it may impact their parliamentary majority. Punjab politicians, for example, are against the province being divided so they can continue ruling its vote bank. It is a federalism paradox: the provinces want freedom from the centre but not reciprocal freedom for the sub-provincial areas, thus promoting centralization.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTION:

The primary research question guiding this study is: *"To what extent can administrative decentralization through the creation of new provinces address the structural governance challenges, regional disparities, and political marginalization in Pakistan?"* This central inquiry is supported by several sub-questions that explore different dimensions of the issue:

- What have been the previous trends of centralized governance that produced inefficiencies and socio-economic disparities in Pakistan?

- What are the key problems and challenges involved in delegating authority across new provincial borders?

- How can international experiences of decentralization in other countries like India, Germany, and Nigeria be used to guide the design and implementation of such reforms in Pakistan?

- What type of fiscal and institutional reforms would make new provinces fiscally viable, fair, and likely to sustain inclusive growth?

1.8 THE CORE CHALLENGE

Pakistan's governance crisis stems from a mismatch between its administrative design and its sociocultural diversity. The centralized model, designed for colonial control, is ill-suited to address modern demands for participatory governance, equitable development, and inclusive nation-building. Without restructuring into smaller, administratively viable provinces, Pakistan risks deepening public disillusionment, entrenching regional conflicts, and weakening the federal compact that binds its diverse populace.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES OF PAKISTAN WITH DEVOLUTION:

The history of devolution predates the creation of Pakistan. The British colonial administration created municipalities in the 19th century, although they had extremely limited functions, but never had substantial powers and were dominated by appointed officials. It was the deputy commissioners, who emerged as the main actor at the local level during the colonial period. While the rise of the nationalist movement in the early 20th century led to growing demands for wider political space at the national and provincial levels, little importance was paid to the need for strengthening political ownership of government at the local level.

After independence, under the 1958 martial law Pakistan's first attempt to focus on local governments occurred. This period emphasized representative politics at the local level while disbanding central- and provincial-level assemblies. During Ayub Khan's term local government system was administered by the bureaucracy and the offices of the deputy commissioner. Another military-led government under General Zia-ul-Haq reestablished the local government system from 1977 to 1988. Zia centralized political authority at the federal and provincial levels while also implemented electoral representation at the local level. However, the growing significance of local governments did not coincide with the decentralization of federal or provincial administrative functions nor the delegation of substantial financial powers to local governments. Local bodies continued to lack constitutional protection, and their creation and maintenance remained subject to the discretion of the provinces, which retained suspension authority. (Maheen Hassan et al. 2021)

During the democratic period of 1988–99, four democratically elected political governments assumed power in Pakistan. However, no one prioritized the local government system. Instead relied on provincial elites and their local patronage systems to maintain power. The next significant attempt at devolution occurred under General (later President) Pervez Musharraf. He aimed to legitimize centralized rule by focusing on creating local governments on a non-party basis rather than devolving power from the federal level to the provincial level. The Local Government Ordinance (LGO) 2001, introduced early in Musharraf's tenure, which was ambitious in scope. It provided constitutional protection to local governments and reserved a 33% of local government seats for women and, to a lesser extent, for religious minorities and other marginalized communities, such as peasants and workers. Additionally, it facilitated citizen involvement in social service delivery through the establishment of citizen community boards, which collaborated with local governments to implement community development projects. (Andrew Wilder 2010)

Under the LGO 2001 framework, two rounds of local government elections were conducted in 2001 and 2005. The next local government elections were scheduled for 2009; however, following the general election in 2008, mainstream political parties decided to delay elections until they could revise the local government system. In July 2009, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP)-led government dissolved the local governments, and the bureaucracy took over management responsibilities until a new local government structure could be established. (Hussain Ansari and Bajwa 2019)

The 18th Amendment in 2010 represented a significant legislative step towards a more decentralized federation by devolving substantial power to the provinces. However, the subsequent devolution of governance to the district level by provincial governments has been inconsistent, raising questions about the depth and effectiveness of this decentralization. Thus, Pakistan's governance history reveals a strong and enduring pattern of centralization, with decentralization efforts often facing political and institutional headwinds. (Ayesha Jalal n.d.)

This historically centralized administrative system has given rise to a multitude of current challenges that impede effective governance and equitable development across Pakistan. One of the most significant issues is the **overburdening of provincial governments**, particularly in large provinces like Punjab, which, with its vast population, presents immense administrative complexities. The sheer scale of these mega-provinces strains their administrative capacity, making it difficult to effectively plan, manage, and deliver services to all regions and segments of the population. Furthermore, the **poor service delivery** in critical sectors such as health and education are a direct consequence of this overextension and potential mismanagement. Data indicates significant disparities in healthcare access and outcomes across provinces, with rural areas often lagging far behind urban centres. For instance, the upper-tier districts in Pakistan are over 16 times healthier than the lower-tier districts, highlighting a severe inequity in resource allocation [1]. Similarly, education indicators reveal substantial provincial variations in literacy rates, enrolment, and the availability of basic school facilities. Baluchistan consistently shows the lowest literacy rates and the highest percentage of out-of-school children [2]. Access to necessities like safe drinking water and sanitation also exhibits significant disparities between urban and rural populations and across different provinces. For example, access to better sanitation is significantly lower in remote areas compared to urban areas, and provinces like Baluchistan have considerably lower access to flush toilets compared to Punjab [3]. Infant and maternal mortality rates also vary significantly by province, with Baluchistan having the highest maternal mortality rate, indicating severe health inequities. These disparities underscore the failure of the centralized system to ensure equitable access and quality of essential services for all citizens, particularly those in marginalized regions [4].

Furthermore, Pakistan's centralized governance has contributed to **ethnic and regional marginalization**, fuelling grievances and social unrest in various parts of the country. The perception of a monopoly on power, profit, and patronage by the Punjabi majority has historically created deep resentments in

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[1] *Pakistan's Healthcare System: A Review of Major Challenges and the First Comprehensive Universal Health Coverage Initiative - PMC, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10548490/*

[2] *Education in Pakistan | Where We Work | Global Partnership for Education, https://www.globalpartnership.org/where-we-work/pakistan*

[3] *Offering Solutions: An Appraisal of WASH Sustainability Challenges in Pakistan - Unicef, https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/11811/file*

[4] *Subnational region: Pakistan Data - World Health Organization (WHO), https://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.searo.NODESUBREGchildmortality-PAK?lang=en*

smaller provinces like Sindh, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Ayesha Jalal n.d.). This sense of marginalization is often linked to the unequal allocation of resources and the lack of adequate political representation for ethnic and regional minorities (Murtaza and Imroze 2025). For example, Baluchistan, despite being rich in natural resources, remains the poorest province in Pakistan, with many Baloch feeling that their resources are exploited by the central government without benefiting the local population [5]. This has fuelled a long-standing insurgency in the region, driven by demands for greater autonomy or even independence (Dr. Yunas Samad 2025). Similarly, the Hazara community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been demanding a separate province due to their distinct linguistic and ethnic identity and a perceived lack of representation within the Pashtun-majority province. The demand for a Karachi Metropolitan Province also stems partly from a desire to ensure better representation and address the needs of the city's diverse linguistic and cultural groups (Latif n.d.). The historical precedent of East Pakistan's secession to become Bangladesh serves as a stark reminder of the potential consequences of failing to address such regional and ethnic grievances within a centralized system. The inability of state institutions to reliably provide peaceful ways to resolve these grievances further encourages marginalized groups to seek alternative, sometimes violent, means of expressing their discontent [6].

The governance failures in **mega-provinces** like Punjab further illustrate the limitations of a centralized administrative model in a large and diverse country. With its vast population and geographical expanse, Punjab faces significant challenges in ensuring effective administration and equitable service delivery across all its regions. The distance of far-flung areas from the provincial capital in Lahore, coupled with the perception of inequitable spending of funds favouring central Punjab, has fuelled demands for the creation of new provinces like South Punjab and Bahawalpur. The sheer size of these mega-provinces can stretch administrative capacity, leading to a disconnect between the provincial government and the needs of its diverse population, particularly in more remote and less developed areas. This can result in a lack of responsiveness to local needs, delays in service delivery, and a general sense of neglect, further highlighting the case for administrative decentralization through the creation of smaller, more manageable provinces.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research uses the doctrinal research method, and qualitative in nature, the research is based solely on secondary sources and seeks to comprehend the legal, constitutional, and institutional framework managing administrative decentralization and the establishment of new provinces in Pakistan.

Under this methodology, the research is based on the gathering, interpretation, and analytical examination of legal texts and authoritative literature. This includes the Constitution of Pakistan—particularly Article 239 which governs the creation of new provinces—legislative records, government policy documents, academic journal articles, historical documents, and reports from national and international institutions.

3.1 KEY FEATURES OF THIS DOCTRINAL RESEARCH APPROACH INCLUDE:

1. **Legal Framework Analysis:** The research comprehensively discusses the legal and constitutional framework for the establishment of new provinces in Pakistan. It encompasses the procedural aspects of Article 239, legislative and administrative division of power, and the evolution of decentralization post-18th Amendment.

2. **Doctrinal Comparison:** The thesis appropriates comparative analyses of the different countries, such as India, Germany, and Nigeria, to study how other plural states have applied constitutional provisions in a manner that has helped them decentralize power effectively.

3. **Legal Studies:** The research extensively engages with legal literature, policy papers, and academic commentary to explore scholarly views on decentralization, the creation of provinces, and their implications for governance and national integration.

4. **Analytical and Prescriptive Approach:** In addition to examining the current legal framework, the study tries to critically analyze its sufficiency and suggest doctrinal reform. This includes the identification of legal loopholes, the raising of constitutional barriers, and the proposing of amendments or institutional devices to make administrative reorganisation in accordance with the constitution.

3.2 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS:

This doctrinal research is neither an empirical field study, questionnaire, nor interview based. It has its scope confined to theory and normative legal and policy issues. Although the research relies on socio-economic and political statistics to validate its claims, such data is interpreted through a legal-analytical lens rather than subjected to statistical or empirical analysis.

4. THE CASE FOR NEW PROVINCES IN PAKISTAN

4.1 BACKGROUND

The discussion for administrative decentralization through the creation of new provinces in Pakistan is compelling, particularly when keeping in view the limitations and challenges associated with the current centralized system. One of the significant benefits of creating smaller provinces is the potential for **improved governance and service delivery**. With smaller provinces, management can be more focused and responsive to the specific needs and

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[5] *State Repression Is What Fuels the Conflict in Balochistan - Jacobin, https://jacobin.com/2024/01/balochistan-pakistan-state-repression-history*
[6] *The Current Situation in Pakistan | United States Institute of Peace, https://www.usip.org/publications/2025/02/current-situation-pakistan*

challenges of their regions. This proximity can lead to enhanced accountability, as citizens have more direct access to their representatives and administrators, this will help to keep better oversight and feedback mechanisms (Maheen Hassan et al. 2021). Localized governance allows the policies and services to be tailored to the unique cultural, social, and economic contexts of specific region, and potentially leading to more improved governance and service delivery in crucial sectors like health, education, and infrastructure development (Hussain Ansari and Bajwa 2019). The division of mega-provinces like Punjab into smaller units could lower the administrative burden, allowing for more focused attention on the specific needs of each region and a more equitable distribution of resources.

Besides this, the establishment of new provinces could result in additional political powers to the minority groups. The regional and ethnic minorities are politically marginalized and are silenced in the broader political unit within larger provinces. This can empower the minority by giving them an increased stake in politics and an amplified voice in decision-making processes directly affecting their lives if the expansion of additional provinces on an ethno-linguistic basis occurs with one group in charge (Murtaza and Imroze 2025). Representation can lead to policies that are critical to the singular needs and desires of such erstwhile marginalized communities, leading to more inclusion and belonging within the federation. For instance, the creation of a Seraiki-majority province of South Punjab can grant the Seraiki nation more control over their administration and development, mending centuries-old feelings of marginalization in the larger Punjab province.

New and smaller provinces can also play a important role in **mitigating ethnic conflicts through localized administration** (Murtaza and Imroze 2025). Granting higher autonomy to areas of unique ethnic or cultural identity can eliminate the source causes which relentlessly lead to inter-ethnic tensions. Where individuals are freer to look after their own affairs, there will be less likelihood that they will be oppressed or overlooked by a remote central state, and the risk of social unrest and confrontation will be reduced. Decentralised administration is better placed to spot the particular needs and issues of various ethnic groups, and can formulate policies and solutions tailored to local culture and conducive to peaceful coexistence. For example, the settlement of the historical injustices of the Baloch by introducing a more decentralized governance that allows them greater autonomy over their resources and governance has the potential to, at least theoretically, ease the Balochistan insurgency (Dr. Yunas Samad 2025).

Among the newly emerging provinces of Pakistan are such as represent the different desires for greater administrative freedom. These are South Punjab, the Seraiki-dominated region which always aspired to become a separate province so that they could fulfill their respective socio-economic and cultural aspirations. The **Hazara** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, with its distinctive Hindko-speaking identity, also saw a historic struggle for the formation of an independent Hazara province. Requests have also been made to form a **Karachi Metropolitan Province**, as the city is economically significant and cosmopolitan in character, with the reasoning that a new province would allow more focused administration and better address the special issues of the city (Latif n.d.).

Development of new provinces in Pakistan is made available under Article 239 of the Constitution. This article is that a bill to change the Constitution with a perspective of changing the size of a province will be agreed upon with a two-thirds majority in the provincial assembly. Subsequently, for transmission to the President for signing, two-thirds majority vote in both national parliament houses is required. This process reveals additional constitutional hurdles to the creation of new provinces in Pakistan by requiring mass political agreement at federal and provincial levels. (Qadir 2021).

4.2 COMPARATIVE LESSONS FROM COUNTRIES WITH SMALLER PROVINCES/STATES:

Examining the experiences of other countries that have adopted or undergone provincial restructuring can provide valuable lessons for Pakistan as it considers the case for new provinces.

4.2.1 CASE STUDY 1: INDIA

India's State Reorganization Act of 1956, and subsequent reorganizing, was based primarily on culture and language. Establishing states such as Telangana and Uttarakhand demonstrates India's commitment to addressing diversity in terms of fresh administrative units along lines of common language and culture. The good lessons Pakistan can learn from the Indian experience are many. First, it proposes that diversity can actually strengthen national unity by providing varied linguistic and cultural groups with a greater feeling of representation and self-governance [7]. Second, the division of India into smaller states has often been linked to enhanced grassroots development because the government comes closer to becoming localized and responsive to the particular needs of the population [8]. The linguistically based reorganization also fostered administrative convenience and the growth of vernacular languages, which may perhaps be especially appropriate for Pakistan's multilingual environment. India's achievement in this context suggests that satisfying Seraikis' and possibly others' linguistic ambitions in Pakistan by forming new provinces could prove to be a step towards national integration and enhanced administration.

4.2.2 CASE STUDY 2: GERMANY

Germany has a strong federal structure consisting of **16 Länder** with considerable local autonomy. The most striking aspect of German federalism is **cooperative federalism**, where there is extensive coordination among policies between the federal state and Länder (Bernd Spahn 1997). Besides,

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[7] *Reorganization of States - The States Reorganisation Act, 1956 - BYJU'S, https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/reorganization-of-states/*

[8] *State Reorganisation Act 1956, Provisions, Significance, Limitations - Vajiram & Ravi, https://vajiramandravi.com/quest-upsc-notes/state-reorganisation-act-1956/*

Germany also has an advanced system of financial equality called **Länderfinanzausgleich** that seeks to balance disparities in the fiscal capabilities of the states so as to allow all Länder to provide equivalent public services (Stehn and Fedelino 2009). Pakistan can learn a lot from Germany's model. The focus on cooperative federalism is to formalize and strengthen intergovernmental coordination and relations between the federal government and the province governments in Pakistan, especially in the context of new provinces. The Länderfinanzausgleich model provides a worthwhile lesson on how a federal nation can target fiscal imbalances between its units so that even weaker province economies receive the appropriate resources to grow and provide services. This model would be useful in solving likely issues of resource allocation that can occur with the establishment of new provinces in Pakistan.

4.2.3 CASE STUDY 3: NIGERIA

There have been several experiments in state creation in Nigeria, culminating in today's 36 states, primarily in efforts to contain its complex ethnic diversity and confront issues of control of resources (Ota, Ecoma, and Wambu n.d.). Though the aim of the creation of states in Nigeria was to bring administration close to people and drive away specter of domination by ethnic minorities, the experience has been diversified. One of the major lessons for Pakistan from the Nigerian experience is that there must be sub-national autonomy alongside preservation of robust federal control to avoid disintegration and maintain national unity (Ota, Ecoma, and Wambu n.d.). Further, Nigeria's experience reveals that the formation of states by itself is not enough to reduce inter-ethnic tensions or foster balanced development without adequate modalities that guarantee balanced resources allocation, inclusive politics, and remedies to existing political and economic injustices (Abdulkadir 2024). At other times, the creation of states in Nigeria has been faulted for taking on the role of ensuring ostensibly political and economic hegemony by specific groups at the expense of real empowerment of marginalized groups. This is a lesson for Pakistan that its provincial reorganization needs to be done with caution and on principle towards equity and inclusiveness so that it does not adopt the ills of Nigeria.

The key takeaways from these comparative case studies are that while creating smaller administrative units like provinces or states can indeed **enhance participatory governance** by bringing government closer to the people and allowing for more localized decision-making, it is crucial to have **constitutional safeguards and robust mechanisms** in place to prevent fragmentation and ensure national unity. The experiences of India, Germany, and Nigeria underscore the importance of addressing diversity, fostering intergovernmental cooperation, ensuring fiscal equity, and carefully managing the process of restructuring to achieve the desired outcomes of improved governance and greater national cohesion.

4.3 CHALLENGES TO PROVINCIAL RESTRUCTURING IN PAKISTAN:

Whereas there are some latent advantages of forming a new province in Pakistan, some basic obstacles need to be overcome to make such a change practical and fruitful.

One of the strongest among them is political opposition from entrenched political elites. Current political parties, both in the federal and provincial structure, are bound to consider the formation of new provinces as challenging their current vote banks, patronage connections, and political interests in general. Local political parties, especially, will resist bitterly the splitting of their historic strongholds and the diluting of their own influence, dispersing power among the political contexts. To overcome such profound opposition, there will have to be significant political will, strong consensus-building among various stakeholders, and compelling representation of new provinces' long-term gains for the entire citizenry and national progress. The various stakes and prospective costs to current power grids pose an intimidating challenge which will require intelligent negotiation and strategic action to be dealt with effectively (Asif n.d.).

The formation of new provinces in Pakistan is governed by a cautious and purposely strict constitutional and legal process, chiefly outlined in Article 239 of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Constitution. It is a step-by-step process undertaken for the amendment of the Constitution, a condition-precedent for any change in the current provincial boundaries or the establishment of new units of administration at the provincial level. It is obligatory upon the two houses of the federal Parliament, i.e., the National Assembly and the Senate, to enact a Constitutional Amendment Bill for the establishment of a new province by a two-thirds majority under Article 239. But a particularly important proviso, contained in Article 239(4), requires that a bill which will have the effect of altering the boundary of an existing province may not be presented for the President's assent unless it is passed by the Provincial Assembly of such a province by not less than two-thirds of its total membership. This situation really gives the concerned provincial assembly a veto on any proposal for the creation of a new province within its current territorial scope.

Previous attempts in the past in history to form new provinces of Pakistan have consistently run into this very same constitutional hurdle. For example, attempts at the formation of South Punjab and the revival of Bahawalpur province, which picked up considerable political momentum in the early 2010s, ran into serious roadblocks on the premise of insufficient two-thirds majority backing in the Punjab Provincial Assembly. Whereas the National Assembly did adopt resolutions in favor of these new provinces and went so far as to set up a commission to examine their viability, the lack of such a consensus as well as that needed majority in the Punjab Provincial Assembly eventually foiled such endeavors. This episode of history illustrates the fact that Pakistan's constitutional mechanism for the creation of new provinces is deliberately complicated in order to protect the autonomy and territorial integrity of the already created provinces. It requires broad political consensus not merely at the federal but also, and more importantly, in the provincial assembly whose boundary is to be altered. This was previously an important challenge, frequently operating to hinder the fulfillment of demands for new provinces in light of local needs (Hafeez n.d.).

Distribution disputes regarding resources is another important challenge that needs to be faced within the matter of provincial readjustment. Division of existing assets and liabilities, and future federal funds distribution under the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award are also going to be issues of

dispute between existing and proposed provinces. The NFC Award, which dictates distribution of the federation revenues, would have to be altered for the new provincial provinces, something that may create controversial negotiations and disagreements over the respective allocation of financial resources. In the same way, the partition and administration of vital natural resources, such as water, already a source of inter-provincial friction, may become even more complicated with new administrative divisions. An equal, just, and transparent mechanism of distribution of resources to cater to the needs of all the provinces, new and old, would be the key to the success and stability of any provincial restructure program.

Lastly, there are indeed ethnic Balkanization dangers involved in the creation of new provinces, especially if reorganization seems mainly ethnic. Although the intention of creating new provinces could be to prevent some ethnic groups from being marginalized, there is a very real danger that it will be guilty of causing even more fragmentation and conflict (Hussain Ansari and Bajwa 2019). The re-definition of provincial boundaries can help form new minorities in the new provinces and would be succeeded by new grievances and demands for future partition on ethnic or linguistic lines (Ahmar 2016). People opposing the establishment of new provinces have overwhelmingly contended that in a nation as ethnically fragmented as Pakistan, emphasizing ethnicity by way of administrative reorganization could be the most efficient way to promote ethnonationalism and eventually destroy national unity. Thus, any attempt at establishing new provinces has to be made with utmost caution, keeping considerations of administrative efficiency, economic viability, and broad-based governing arrangements safeguarding the interests and rights of all ethnic and linguistic minorities in the new and old provinces alike.(Nazar n.d.).

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS:

Following is an exhaustive list of policy suggestions about how to conceptualise, implement, and control a decentralised Pakistan with additional provinces and a strengthened local government system. Suggestions have been formulated based on comparative federal experiences (e.g., India, Germany, and Nigeria) as well as Pakistan's own devolution experience. They are structured into strategic areas of constitutional reform, administrative reform, fiscal decentralization, and institutional building, and this is then followed by a step-by-step specific process of devolution of power.

5.2 CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK:

5.2.1 Constitutional Reforms to Facilitate Decentralization

- **Amend Article 239:** Reform the constitutional process so a less political, less time-consuming process is employed to change provincial borders. This could be in the shape of setting up a special commission or autonomous body tasked with taking into consideration and reporting on new provinces and thus lower the need for two-thirds majorities at different stages.

- **Codify Local Autonomy:** Strengthen legal provisions to mandate specifically more autonomy for local governments—not representation but also administrative, financial, and service-delivery powers. Enshrine protection provisions for local elected institutions so they will not be exposed to ad hoc political restructuring.

5.2.2 Inclusive Legislative Processes

- **Broad Stakeholder Consultations:** Ensure that any constitutional amendment or legislative reform encompasses extensive consultation with members of government, national and provincial political elites, civil society, and citizens (including their linguistic and ethnic margin counterparts).

- **Transparent and Participatory Debate:** Incorporate public hearings and transparent debates in the legislative process, ensuring that policy decisions have grassroots legitimacy and are less prone to partisan resistance.

5.3 ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURING AND INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN

5.3.1 Creation of New Provinces on Responsive Grounds

- **Cultural and Demographic Alignment:** Recommend that new provinces be designed to align with ethno-linguistic identities or distinct regional socioeconomic characteristics (e.g., a Seraiki-majority South Punjab province, a Hazara province in KP, or a distinct Karachi Metropolitan Province). This alignment can enhance the responsiveness of governance and improve representation for historically marginalized groups.

- **Geographical Manageability:** Restructure the new provinces in a way that the administrative units are not large in size and distance from the citizens to centers of administration. This would make it easier to enhance public delivery services and enable quicker decision-making.

5.3.2 Enhancing Administrative Capacity

- **Empowered Local Governments:** Reorganize and empower the position of local governments such that they are entrusted with decision-making power in significant spheres such as health, education, water and sanitation, and local infrastructure.

- **Decentralized Planning:** Set up provincial planning commissions in each province for coordinating development priorities at the local level. These commissions will also facilitate coordination between the municipalities and districts, following the experience of India's reorganization of states which prioritized local development.

5.3.3 Building Robust Institutions

- **Intergovernmental Coordination Mechanisms:** Create permanent institutions for facilitating cooperation among the federal and provincial governments (e.g., interprovincial councils, regional advisory boards). This German model can also be created through cooperative federalism mechanisms where policies and resources are jointly developed.

- **Judicial and Administrative Oversight:** Create institutions with checks and balances. An independent monitor committee can facilitate whether and how devolution processes and administrative decisions are implemented uniformly, thereby ensuring accountability.

5.4 FISCAL DECENTRALIZATION AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

5.4.1 Revising Fiscal Arrangements

- **Update the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award:** Reform the NFC Award regime to be applicable to new provinces in a way so as to transfer resources on a need- and revenue-basis. Introduce a progressive or multi-level equalization regime, like Germany's Länderfinanzausgleich, to offset economic disparities between provinces.

- **Local Revenue Generation:** Strengthen the capacity of provinces and local governments to mobilize revenues in the form of charges, intergovernmental transfers, and local taxes. Fiscal decentralization enhances the sustainability and accountability of decentralized governments.

5.4.2 Equitable Resource Distribution

- **Transparent Asset and Liability Division:** Establish clear rules of re-allocation of current assets and liabilities with objective of new provincial boundaries. Independent auditing and publication are to be introduced.

- **Shared Management of Natural Resources:** Establish cooperative management systems in valuable resources like water and resolve conflicts at collective federal and regional levels. Not only does this prevent resource conflict, but it also promotes stronger sustainable management systems.

5.5 SOCIAL INCLUSION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND CONFLICT MITIGATION

5.5.1 Enhancing Political Representation and Participation

- **Guaranteed Minority Representation:** Adopt legal measures that mandate electoral systems of new provinces and local governments to provide reserved seats for women, religious minorities, and underrepresented ethnic groups. These measures will correct historical political representation disparities.

- **Community Involvement:** Enshrine institutions—such as citizen community boards or local councils—through which ordinary citizens can participate in decision-making. Such bottom-up participation can act as a check against elite capture and facilitate decisions that are made in the interest of the locality.

5.5.2 Conflict Prevention and Ethnic Harmony

- **Conflict-Sensitive Redistricting:** Ensure that while the creation of new provinces eradicates past marginalization, processes are carefully crafted not to enable ethnic balkanization. Measures would include raising multiethnic advisory councils and forums of conflict resolution to the provincial level.

- **Capacity-Building in Governance:** Invest in governance capacity-building training for the newly elected provincial and local leaders in good governance, ethical leadership, and conflict management. Buffering against any regional or ethnic tensions arising from restructuring will be important.

5.5.3 Monitoring and Adaptive Governance

- **Feedback and Evaluation Mechanisms:** Put in place observation systems that regularly audit the performance of newly decentralized setups, monitoring service delivery, financial prudence, and public satisfaction metrics.

- **Adaptive Policy-Making:** Put in place a system of regular review and amendment of decentralized systems. This allows for reform should some measures be seen not to work or produce unintended effects by being amended in a coherent, evidence-based way.

5.6 STEP-BY-STEP ROADMAP FOR EFFECTIVE DEVOLUTION

5.6.1 Initiate an Inclusive Policy Dialogue:

o   Set up a National Commission on Decentralization of Administration comprising federal, provincial, local government politicians, party politicians, civil society, and academics.

o   Initiate public consultations and regional forums for eliciting opinions on new provincial boundaries and administration.

5.6.2 Legislative and Constitutional Preparation:

o   Prepare amendments to Article 239 and other constitutional provisions.

o   Establish solid parliamentary support by engaging regional political leadership and providing comparative evidence of experience (India, Germany, Nigeria).

5.6.3 Pilot Decentralized Governance Initiatives:

o   Pilot decentralization introduction of administrative responsibilities in a group of regions. Pilots would focus on decentralizing specific tasks in health, education, or local economic development.

o   Pilot and test, and subsequently apply learning to mass roll-out.

5.6.4 Fiscal Reforms and Resource Management:

o   Formulate for proposals to modify the NFC Award and establish provincial revenue streams.

o   Provide transparent processes for asset and natural resource management prior to provincial reorganization.

5.6.5 Institutional and Capacity Building:

o   Establish training of newly appointed provincial and local authorities in fiscal management, democratic governance, and delivery of public services.

o   Establish institutions of intergovernmental coordination to ensure continuity of communication and conflict resolution in transition.

5.6.6 Implementation and Continuous Oversight:

o   Implement decentralization activities step by step in selected districts.

o   Have strong control and feedback mechanisms to track performance, settle disputes, and revise policies when necessary.

6. CONCLUSION:

The case for administrative decentralization by way of new provinces in Pakistan is based on the strong need to respond to Pakistan's long tradition of governance centralism. From the analysis, the system has been attributed to inefficiencies, lack of uniformity in service delivery, and growing ethnic and regional marginalization. The creation of more governable, sane provinces is the promise of better government, greater political representation for minorities, and the elimination of ethnically related violence with greater local government authority.

Later lessons from overseas examples of federalism, such as India's accommodation of language diversity, Germany's cooperative federalism and fiscal equalization, and the cautionary tale of Nigeria's failed experience in attempting to make states, highlight both the potential payoffs and the downside risks of provincial reconstruction. These experiences serve to reinforce that a participatory and well-conceived process would be a blessing for the distinctive Pakistani situation.

Effective provincial reorganization in Pakistan will entail bridging a huge bundle of challenges, some of which are political resistance by established elites, constitutional limitations, potential disputes over the sharing of resources, and ethnic disintegration threats. Pragmatic, inclusive, and consensus-based reform models are the kinds of methods to overcome such challenges. These include the review of constitutional amendments, making the constitutional process logical, formulating extensive political rhetoric with all stakeholders, introducing equitable fiscal provisions, proceeding in a phased manner with implementation, and assigning very high priority to inclusive governance architecture in new provinces for protection of rights of all minorities.

Lastly, decentralization by administrative steps through creation of new provinces can have the potential to create a stronger hold of the rule of law, bring national harmony through redress of historical scores, and more equitable development in Pakistan. Picking the best of global practices and taking its own particular realities into consideration, Pakistan could move towards a practical and inclusive reform plan culminating into an efficient and responsive federal system.

Key Tables:

I.   **Table: Provincial Comparison of Key Socio-Economic Indicators (2010-2023)**

Indicator	Punjab	Sindh	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Balochistan	ICT
Literacy Rate (2023) (%)[9]	66.25	57.54	51.09	42.01	83.97
Out-of-School Children (Primary to Higher Sec.) (2021-22) (%)[10]	32.3	47.5	29.8	69.1	13.0
Infant Mortality Rate (2017) (per 1000 live births)[11]	72.5	60.3	53.2	65.9	No Data
Maternal Mortality Ratio (2019) (per 100,000 live births)[12]	157	157	235	261	No Data
Households with Flush Toilet (2011-12) (%)[13]	78	61	71	37	No Data
Unsafe Drinking Water Sources (2020-21) (%)[14]	49	85	43	59	29

II.   **Table: Comparative Analysis of Federal Systems**

Feature	India	Germany	Nigeria	Canada	Belgium	Switzerland
Number of Units	28 States, 8 Union Territories	16 Länder	36 States	10 Provinces, 3 Territories	3 Regions, 3 Communities	26 Cantons

[9] *Education in Pakistan | Where We Work | Global Partnership for Education, https://www.globalpartnership.org/where-we-work/pakistan*
[10] *Education Insights - The State of Children in Pakistan, https://stateofchildren.com/education-insights/*
[11] *A lifeline for mothers and their babies in Pakistan | Doctors Without Borders - USA, https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/lifeline-mothers-and-their-babies-pakistan*
[12] *Pakistan 2019 Maternal Mortality Survey - Summary Report [SR267] - The DHS Program, https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/SR267/SR267.pdf*
[13] *Housing, Water supply & Sanitation, https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/pslm/publications/pslm_prov2010-11/housing_water_supply.pdf*
[14] *Drinking Water Quality in Pakistan Current Status and Challenges, https://pcrwr.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Drinking-Water-Quality-in-Pakistan-Current-Status-and-Challenges.pdf*

Feature	India	Germany	Nigeria	Canada	Belgium	Switzerland
Basis of Creation	Linguistic, Cultural	Historical	Ethnic, Administrative	Historical, Political	Linguistic, Territorial	Historical
Sub-Unit Autonomy	Significant	Strong	Variable	Significant	Significant	Strong
Fiscal Equalization	Yes	Yes (Länderfinanzausgleich)	Yes	Yes (Equalization Program)	Yes	Yes
Key Lessons for Pakistan	Accommodating diversity strengthens unity; smaller units improve grassroots development; linguistic reorganization can enhance governance.	Cooperative federalism; fiscal equity mechanisms are crucial for balanced development.	State creation alone is not a panacea; balance sub-national autonomy with federal oversight; ensure equity and inclusivity.	Clear division of powers; fiscal transfers for comparable services; gradual and negotiated creation of units.	Accommodation of linguistic and territorial identities; complex fiscal arrangements.	Strong cantonal autonomy; direct democracy empowers citizens; fiscal equalization ensures basic service provision.