

# ***Federation of Pakistan and Creation of New Provinces: A Case of Bahawalpur Province***

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Pakistan inherited federalism from the British colonial rule; however, its true spirit was lost for trivial vested interests. A vicious circle of mistrust and lack of coordination resulted in creating a chasm of political differences between the centre and the provinces and among provinces that led to political instability in the country. The real spirit of federalism was not achieved because of this distrust. A perpetual inflight was going on between the centre and provinces concerning distribution of resources and powers that further restrain the centre-province relationship. The demand to have new provinces is not a new demand. This demand has been raised from time to time on the basis of ethnic grounds, distribution of national resources and sometimes on the basis of socio-economic backwardness of the relevant areas. The demand of a 'Bahawalpur Province', 'Saraiki Province', 'Hazara Province' and the division of Sindh into two parts on the basis of ethnicity are the most pressing issues which are faced by the centre. This study offers a thorough analysis of the politics of Bahawalpur and the*

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*demand for Bahawalpur Province. The study also incorporates the impediments in the path of creation of 'Bahawalpur Province' followed by suggestions to resolve the issue amicably.*

### **Introduction**

In a landmark decision in 2010 the formerly known North West Frontier Province was renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by the Federal Government of Pakistan on the pretexts of empowering and recognizing provinces and respective ethnic communities. This decision was hailed as a step towards addressing the grievances of smaller provinces. But soon the decision stirred a wave of fresh and strong demands from various ethnic factions. The Hindku speaking and Hazara community raised their voice against the new name of these provinces on the grounds that the newly given name is a sheer injustice to their communities. The name entails an ethnic notion representing the Pushtun community while ignoring the larger Hazara, Hindku and Chitrali communities. Consequently, the movement for Hazara<sup>1</sup> province was launched adding a new demand to the already long list of demands made by smaller provinces and communities. The issue of ethno-nationalism and representation of such communities has been one of the most pressing and daunting issues since the inception of Pakistan. M.A Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, rightly realized the dangers of this issue and warned the people and policy-makers of the country to remain impartial and fuse into one nation. However, due to various grievances and issues pertaining to representation and allocation of funds and resources a number of regions and communities have registered complains and demanded separate provinces or recognition of their rights and contribution to the national wealth and resource pool.

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1 Zulfqar Syed, "Politics of New Provinces in Pakistan: Prospects: Prospects and Challenges," *Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) Journal* 12, no. 2 (2012).

The region of Gilgit-Baltistan is yet another case of outstanding demands. The people of the region have long been demanding recognition of their region as the fifth province of Pakistan, but so far this demand has not been met. Likewise, demand for a separate Saraiki province from the southern parts of Punjab, and the demand for dividing Sindh into two separate provinces. The demand for a separate province comprising Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has become very much popular. On the other side, a mushroom growth of parties and factions have emerged on the political stage claiming to be representing the unrepresented and unheard communities. In this way the demand for new provinces has become a tool in the hands of demagogues and self-interest seeking leaders.

### **Rationale behind the Creation of New Provinces**

Pakistan is a federal state with an overwhelmingly diverse ethno lingual and religious outlook. Federalism in Pakistan, hence, is a *sine qua non* for the survival and integrity of the state. Unfortunately, the true spirit of federalism has not been followed. Federalism requires strong federating units with a comparatively weak central government occupying primarily the role of regulator and taking care of the major sectors like foreign affairs, defense and currency. The smaller provinces have been complaining about the dominating role of the center by the bigger provinces like Punjab and Sindh. The central government owing to various reasons and issues preferred to adopt a very passive and indifferent response further estranging such communities. The creation of new provinces is also halted by the very nature of the constitution of Pakistan which sets a very hard procedure for the purpose.

### **Mechanism of Constitutional Framework**

Pakistan's constitution clearly sets a very difficult procedure for creation of new provinces. Article 239 of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 states a complete constitutional mechanism for the creation of new provinces. The Article states that, "a bill to amend the constitution which would

have the effect of altering the limits of a province shall not be presented to the president for assent, unless it has been passed by provincial assembly of that province by the votes not less than two thirds of its total membership."<sup>2</sup> For the demarcation of provincial boundaries, it is obligatory to get the approval of Provincial Assembly.

In 2012, National Assembly of Pakistan passed a unanimous resolution in support of a new province in Punjab and consequently constituted a commission to submit a report on the feasibility and implementation of the plan. The resolution asked Provincial Assembly of Punjab to take necessary measures.<sup>3</sup> The Punjab Assembly passed two resolutions on May 9, 2012 proposing the creation of two new provinces, the South Punjab province and the restoration of Bahawalpur province.<sup>4</sup>

The legal and constitutional formalities were apparently initiated but soon it was revealed that these were political delay tactics and the intentions of the ruling elite were not in favour of the creation of new provinces. The whole process ended up in a deadlock, wherein the Provincial Assembly of Punjab refused to accept the commission that was constituted to look into the issue of creating new provinces.<sup>5</sup> The commission however, submitted its report to the Parliament on January 28, 2013.<sup>6</sup>

### **Structure of the Provincial Administrative System**

The administrative system in Pakistan tends to tilt in favour of the central government as it has more financial powers and control over economic resources. The central government collects revenues and redistributes among the

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2 "The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan", 1973.

3 A Chandio, "Seraiki or a Bahawalpur Province?", *Weekly Pulse Magazine*, 2012.

4 Chandio, "Seraiki or a Bahawalpur Province?"

5 U Ghani, "New Provinces Debate," *Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI)*. 10, no. 1 (2006).

6 Ghani, "New Provinces Debate".

provinces. The redistribution process and the criteria of allocating funds to the provinces has remained one of the most contentious issues in the history of center-province relations in Pakistan.

The provinces in Pakistan have always demanded greater political autonomy and larger share in resources and income. The disagreement over the National Finance Commission (NEC) and the distribution of river waters has become a permanent grievance of the smaller provinces. The main reason behind such complains are alleged unequal distribution of resources, the urban-rural discrimination, and the dominating role of the Punjab province at the cost of smaller provinces.

### **Complications in the Creation of New Province**

The issue of the creation of new provinces has its brighter and darker sides. The first impact of this step will directly affect the economy. The supporters of the new provinces argue that the creation of new provinces will bring forth the hitherto underdeveloped and ignored areas since the new provinces will be allocated more resources than have been given in the past.<sup>7</sup> The budgetary needs will compel the new provinces to search new economic basis and overhaul the existing ones.

South Punjab, for instance, is the major producer of cotton. After having a provincial status, the new provincial governments will develop industrial zones and introduce innovative agricultural techniques. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can now develop hydroelectric projects with its water resources. It is feared, however, that the creation of new provinces will also increase non development expenditure which will ultimately create a burden on the taxpayers and will add to the plights of the poor populations of these regions.

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7 Bhadera S F, "Sikander's View,"  
<http://bhadera.blogspot.com/2010/04/movement-for-restoration-of-bahawalpur.html>.

Another fear is the hype in already deteriorating ethnic differences that stems from strong ethno-nationalist outlook of the provinces expressed through the very nomenclature of the existing provinces.

It is, therefore, incumbent upon all the stakeholders to make sure that new provinces are created exclusively on administrative basis and not on ethno-lingual basis. The provincial set up is a colonial legacy and territories as well as the nomenclature bear a colonial imprint except Khyber Pakhtunkhwa(KP). Since KP also entails and projects Pushtun identity, the step incited strong opposition among the ethnic Hazara community.

In this way the movement for the creation of new provinces has been dominated by the ethno-lingual groups. Karachi also experienced a meagre but radical movement for a Mohajir province following the trend of asserting ethno-lingual identities. The same trend was followed in Sindh where division of Sindh and creation of Southern Sindh province came to surface. This move was vehemently opposed by ethnic Sindhi factions and a rally of "Sindh lovers" was held chanting slogans against the division of Sindh which resulted in clashes and casualties were reported.<sup>8</sup> On May 30, 2012, a Sindh Solidarity Conference was held that was attended by mainstream and nationalist political parties in order to adopt a resolution unanimously condemning any plan that envisages the division of Sindh.<sup>9</sup> Such types of movements will result in parochial ethno-nationalist movements that support the boundaries of new units on ethno-nationalist basis. Pakistan's weak governance systems and nascent institutional basis cannot afford such type of infighting and division within the country and spread of such ideas will ultimately weaken the state itself.

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8 "Eleven Killed in Karachi Following Firing on Political Rally," *Dawn* May 22, 2012.

9 "Bill for New Province Tabled in Senate," *Dawn* February 09, 2013.

### **Bahawalpur Province at a Glance**

In Southern Punjab, Bahawalpur is the biggest division in terms of area covering 18,000 sq. miles. According to 1998 census, its total population is 7.518 million, which is 10.3 percent of the total population of Punjab province.<sup>10</sup> Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan and Bahawalnagar are the three districts in this division.

### **History of Bahawalpur**

Bahawalpur was a princely state and was governed by Abbasi rulers who ruled the region for almost 228 years.<sup>11</sup> The Bahawalpur state stretches along the southern bank of the Sutlej and Indus Rivers and was a prosperous state at that time. Nawab Mohammad Bahawal Khan Abbasi founded the state of Bahawalpur in 1802 after the breakup of Durrani Empire.<sup>12</sup> His successor Nawab Mohammad Bahawal Khan Abbasi III signed the state's first subsidiary alliance with the British on February 22, 1833, guaranteeing the internal rule of the Nawab under British suzerainty.<sup>13</sup>

The agreement made the British incharge of the external affairs of the Bahawalpur state but the region never came under the complete possession of British Crown.<sup>14</sup>

The British suzerainty status ended with the end of the British Colonial rule in India and the State acceded to Pakistan on October 7, 1947, as a princely state of Pakistan and became the first princely state acceding to Pakistan.<sup>15</sup> Although, Pundit Nehru had approached the Nawab of Bahawalpur and offered him various incentives to

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10 Umbreen Javaid, "Movement for Bahawalpur Province," *Journal of Political Studies* XV(2009).

11 Javaid, "Movement for Bahawalpur Province,".

12 Javaid, "Movement for Bahawalpur Province,".

13 Javaid, "Movement for Bahawalpur Province,".

14 S. M. Abbasi, *Quaid-i-Azam Aur Riasat Bahawalpur* (Bahawalpur: Sahibzada Mohd Qamar-ul-Zaman Abbasi, 1999).

15 Abbasi, *Quaid-i-Azam Aur Riasat Bahawalpur*.

join India but were turned down by the latter.<sup>16</sup> On October 7, 1947, he signed an agreement with Pakistani government. Hence the Bahawalpur state joined Pakistan first.<sup>17</sup> After Pakistan came into being, Nawab of Bahawalpur —Sadeq Mohammad Khan-V showed great generosity towards government of Pakistan.

An amount of seventy million rupees was given to the government of Pakistan by the Nawab of Bahawalpur and salaries of one month of all government departments were drawn from the treasury of Bahawalpur.<sup>18</sup> Also, his private property was donated to the University of the Punjab, King Edward Medical College and the Mosque of Aitcheson College Lahore was built as a gift.<sup>19</sup>

In 1951 an agreement titled Supplementary Instrument of Accession was signed between Amir Sadiq Muhammad-V and the Government of Pakistan. The agreement was approved by the then Governor General of Pakistan Khwaja Nizamuddin. The treaty made it clear that in matters of administration and issues pertaining to legislation, the state shall be treated same like a province.<sup>20</sup> According to the agreement the subjects mentioned in central list of Act of 1935 were transferred to the government of Pakistan which included defense, foreign affairs and currency.<sup>21</sup>

“Both the Federal and the State legislature in respect of subjects mentioned in the Concurrent List but the Federal Legislature will have precedence over the State legislature which created a conflict between the two.”<sup>22</sup> In future the State shall be treated as a province in the matters of grants

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16 Abbasi, *Quaid-i-Azam Aur Riasat Bahawalpur*.

17 Abbasi, *Quaid-i-Azam Aur Riasat Bahawalpur*.

18 Abbasi, *Quaid-i-Azam Aur Riasat Bahawalpur*.

19 Javaid, “Movement for Bahawalpur Province”.

20 Javaid, “Movement for Bahawalpur Province”.

21 Javaid, “Movement for Bahawalpur Province”.

22 Javaid, “Movement for Bahawalpur Province”.



and loans. Even during the years of merger into the One Unit, the Ameer of Bahawalpur was to retain his status.<sup>23</sup>

Soon after the recognition of the state as a province elections were held in the Bahawalpur province in the next year. A legislative assembly of 49 members was formed headed by Makhdoomzada Syed Hassan Mahmood who became the first elected Chief Minister of Bahawalpur province.<sup>24</sup>

The year 1954-55 marks the approval of surplus budget by the Bahawalpur province which still remains the only surplus budget presented in any legislative assembly of federal or provincial government.<sup>25</sup> But unfortunately the provincial assembly remained functional from 1952, till October 14, 1955 when it was merged into the West Pakistan province as a consequence of One Unit scheme.<sup>26</sup> Bahawalpur entered One Unit on the condition that when the scheme is abolished, Bahawalpur would regain its provincial status.

As it is clearly evident that Bahawalpur's merger into the One Unit scheme was conditional, hence it was obligatory on the federal government to ensure that it regains its status as province when One Unit scheme was dissolved. But to the utter disappointment of the people, Bahawalpur was merged into Punjab Province on March 30, 1970 through an illegal and immoral executive order by General Yahya Khan ignoring and unilaterally setting aside all the previous agreements.

### **Land of Bahawalpur**

From agricultural and defense points of view, it is one of the most significant regions. Cotton, pulses, sugarcane, wheat

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23 Javaid, "Movement for Bahawalpur Province".

24 Javaid, "Movement for Bahawalpur Province".

25 Javaid, "Movement for Bahawalpur Province".

26 Government of Pakistan, *District Census Report of Bahawalpur* (Islamabad: Statistic Division, Government of Pakistan, 2000).

and oilseeds are its important agricultural crops. Cotton with 23 percent contribution and wheat with 10 percent contribution to the total production of the country are the most important crops of the region. It is one of the important regions of Pakistan from the defense viewpoint. Having a three hundred miles long frontier with India, Bahawalpur requires especial defense manoeuvres seemly to desert warfare. In the National Assembly, 15 MNA and in the Punjab Assembly, 31 MPA represent the region.<sup>27</sup>

The Indus Water accord between Pakistan and India again turned out to be harmful for the region because the Sutlej River that irrigated the agricultural land of region was given to India with far reaching negative consequences on the economy of Bahawalpur. After the treaty, Bahawalpur province was to get water from the other rivers of Punjab and it was allocated a share. But it is an unfortunate and harsh fact that Bahawalpur did not receive more than 30 percent of its allocated water in any year since then.<sup>28</sup> In the 1991 Water Accord, 70 percent of Bahawalpur's water was given to other regions.<sup>29</sup>

### **Significance of Bahawalpur**

Bahawalpur region has special significance with respect to defense and security of the country. It has a three hundred miles long border with Indian state and since the border area encompasses the desert land of Cholistan, special tactical and defense equipment is required to monitor the area that suits desert warfare.

Bahawalpur province is also famous for its bio-diversity. The most commonly seen animals in the region are hog deer, raven deer, black buck and blue bull. Fox, jackals, hares,

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27 Punjab State Gazetteers, "Bahawalpur State" (Lahore: The Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1908).

28 Riaz Hashmi, *Brief for Bahawalpur Province* (Karachi: Bahawalpur Subah Mahaz, 1972).

29 Riaz, *Brief for Bahawalpur Province*.

wild boars, porcupines, mongoose, arks, owls and hawks are also found in large numbers.

### **Demand of Bahawalpur Province**

Unlike most of the movements in Pakistan, Bahawalpur province movement is not an ethno-lingual movement for a specific ethnic community as the demand in this case is not about creation of a new province. The creation of new province demand entails the compulsory condition of getting approval from the province that is to be divided for creating the new province. In the case of Bahawalpur, there is no threat to Punjab province, or to its interests, and historical demarcation of the borders of this province. The demand is mere restoration of the previous provincial status as per the agreements and promises of the federation of Pakistan prior to One Unit scheme.

A number of development projects like construction of railway tracks, hospitals, colleges, a university, and scholarships to nonlocal scholars were initiatives of the Nawab's. In the same way canals were dug and Sutlej Valley Project was accomplished to provide water for irrigation of the Bahawalpur region.<sup>30</sup> The State had its own efficient administrative and legal system and now the situation is worse than ever it was, Bahawalpur is one fourth of Punjab in terms of area, and accounts for approximately 13 percent of Punjab's total population. 51 percent of its population lives under the poverty line, which is highest in any region of Punjab.<sup>31</sup>

On the contrary, it was among the higher per capita income regions in India before partition. Today it is Punjab's poorest region by far. Also the sole river that irrigated Bahawalpur was given to India under the Indus Water Treaty. The infant mortality rate in Bahawalpur is 142 for every 1000 births, highest in Punjab. As compared to that in rest of the Punjab it is 72 deaths per 1000. Literacy rate of

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30 Riaz, *Brief for Bahawalpur Province*.

31 "Bahawalpur Will Resist Seraiki Province," *Daily Tribune* April 17, 2012.

Bahawalpur is 34 percent, whereas in the rest of Punjab it is above 57 percent.<sup>32</sup> This is the literary situation of that region where literacy was very high and even scholarships were offered to the needy students. These are some harsh realities which are being faced by the people of Bahawalpur and because of these irritants people of this region are demanding the status of Bahawalpur province as it was when the region was flourishing with peace and prosperity.

### **Movement of Bahawalpur Province**

Recently, two political movements have been observed in Bahawalpur region; Saraiki Soba/Province Movement and restoration of Bahawalpur Province Movement.<sup>33</sup> In Bahawalpur region, the majority still supports Bahawalpur Province upon Saraiki Province. The people are of the view that by sponsoring the formation of later they will indeed forgo the claim for Bahawalpur Province. Currently, the movement of Bahawalpur Province is again in full vigour owing to the growing sense of alienation and rising unemployment under the name of "Bahawalpur Soba Movement" and "Movement for Restoration of Province of Bahawalpur."

On April 30, 1951, the federation of Pakistan and the Ameer of Bahawalpur concluded "an agreement which put the State on the same status as provinces under the Government of India Act of 1935 in affairs of administration and legislation."<sup>34</sup> Ameer Sadiq Mohammad-V signed the contract that was approved by the Governor General of Pakistan titled Supplementary Instrument of Accession. According to the agreement, ruler of Bahawalpur consented to deliver the subjects mentioned in the federal list i.e. defense, communications and foreign affairs administered by

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32 Fatima Ahmed, "Economic Impact of the Creation of New Provinces," *Pakistan Today*, August 30, 2011.

33 Shah Zulfiqar, "Battle Takes a New Turn," *The News International* June 03, 2012.

34 Qayyum Hayam, "Nawab of Bahawalpur Committed to Bahawalpur Province," *Daily Tribune* February 17, 2013.

the center as per Government of India Act (1935). "All the other subjects included the other list in the Government of India Act, called provincial subjects, would continue to be administered by the State. Both the Federal and the State legislature in respect of subjects mentioned in the Concurrent List but the Federal Legislature will have precedence over the State legislature should there occur a conflict between the two."<sup>35</sup>

Also the government made it clear that the plan established for the state of Bahawalpur would not apply to all ten states in Pakistan due to the fact that all were very unlike in their geo-political and socio-economic outlooks. In matters of grants and loans, the state would be dealt as a province. The Ameer of Bahawalpur would remain as a constitutional head of the state, even after signing the agreement.<sup>36</sup>

Historically, Bahawalpur had a provincial status before One Unit. At the time of One Unit, Bahawalpur got merged with a status of a province with West Pakistan. When on March 30, 1970 the One Unit was demolished, Bahawalpur joined Punjab Province. Although, it was agreed that when the One Unit scheme is abolished, Bahawalpur will be restored to its previous provincial status<sup>37</sup> but the agreement was not honoured and hence, the Bahawalpur Province Movement emerged.

In past, for quite two and a half centuries ever since the Bahawalpur State was established, it had maintained its internal sovereignty. Neither it was governed nor ceded by any other ruler, government or province. Even though, when Sikhs took control of entire Punjab, the state of Bahawalpur continued to be out of their influence. After annexing with

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35 Mureeb Mohmand, "Move to Merge Fata with KP Assembly Castigated," *Express Tribune* May 12, 2012.

36 Feroze Anwar, *Aina Dar-ul-Saroor Bahawalpur* (Bahawalpur: Yousaf and Younas Brothers, 1989).

37 Anwar, *Aina Dar-ul-Saroor Bahawalpur*.

Pakistan until merged into One Unit, Bahawalpur maintained its sovereign status.

Its separate and autonomous administrative identity, the underdevelopment and deprivations in Bahawalpur region led the demand and movement of Bahawalpur Province. It was claimed that Bahawalpur to be made the sixth province of Pakistan. For the people of Bahawalpur, the experience of One Unit appeared to be a bad one which compelled the region to use its own resources for its progress.

Moreover, the political and economic deficiencies became the key sources that led towards the Bahawalpur Soba Movement. The state of Bahawalpur had always remained a rich state with abundant resources, self-sufficient to satisfy its own requirement and not reliant on any other outside sources or states. On the contrary, it contributed monetarily to the British first and then to the Government of Pakistan.

The other cause of distress is that the affluence of Bahawalpur State largely rested on waters of River Sutlej, which was given under the control of India according to Indus Water Treaty. This affected the economy of this region. Formerly in Bahawalpur region, executive and judiciary were separate, having its own Secretariat, Public Service Commission, Accountant General, Legislature Assembly, and High Court. One more significant dilemma is that Bahawalpur region, being one of the major producers of cotton crop, the revenues of cotton crop are not spent on the region but somewhere else. Another major agenda is the allocation of government appointees in the region. Due to this, the region suffers left out from mainstream Punjab politics. Also, there is not much representation of Bahawalpur State in varied significant government sectors like WAPDA, Board of Revenue, Agricultural and Industrial Development Corporation etc.

It is more important to have a glance into the budget earlier to the merge of Bahawalpur State in comparison to the same with the budget of other provinces in Pakistan. "On March 25, 1955, Mr. A.B. Khan, the then Advisor to His

Highness the Ameer of Bahawalpur presented a budget. The surplus of the Bahawalpur State budget of 1954-55, after deducting the expenditure i.e. the net closing balance was Rs.4,09,20,612/- (Four Crore, Ninety Lakh, Twenty Thousand, Six Hundred and Twelve).<sup>38</sup>

As mentioned above, the 1954-55 surplus net closing balance of the Bahawalpur was much higher than any other province of Pakistan and the East Pakistan as well. On the other, the Punjab province was in scarcity and inept to maintain its budget.

In past, Bahawalpur was able to maintain its budget and also having a surplus. Additionally, it had the capability to boost its economic resources to reach high development. Financial feasibility is considered a significant criteria bearing on the formation of a new province and this consideration weighed up with other features like history, culture, population, and aspirations of the people go along with the cause of a separate province for Bahawalpur. On November 22, 1969, the newspapers started giving information that the government would terminate the demand of One Unit soon and the preceding scheme of provinces would be restored. It was appraised that Bahawalpur would not be granted a separate identity. Allama Arshad, immediately on November 22, called a joint session of various parties of Bahawalpur to put pressure on the government to ponder over Bahawalpur giving a separate provincial status. These parties included: the Pakistan People's Party, the National Awami Party, the Convention League, the Democratic Party, the Council League, the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam, the Jamat-e-Islami, Chamber of Commerce, and Bar Association. A unanimous resolution was passed by the leaders of all these parties and pressure groups, stating that at the disintegration of One Unit, Bahawalpur should be given a separate provincial

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38 Tariq Rehman, *Language and Politics in Pakistan* (USA: Oxford University Press 1997).

status.<sup>39</sup> For the restoration of Bahawalpur province, several factions were formed. One of the influential groups was the Bahawalpur United Front known as Mahaz. The most significant leaders of this Mahaz included Sardar Mahmud Khan, Mian Nizamud Din Haider, Tahira Masood and Farzand Ali.<sup>40</sup>

In the month of March 1970, the One Unit was dissolved into the province of Punjab, NWFP, Balochistan and Sindh. Bahawalpur was incorporated into Punjab Province. All sections in Bahawalpur felt resented by the decision. Protests, demonstrations and meetings refuting the government's pronouncement to merge Bahawalpur in Punjab began in all over Bahawalpur region.

In the following month when the protests ensued, the police opened fire on demonstrators killing at least two and injuring many other participants. Scores of dissenters were detained. A wave of processions and violent protests started soon after the event. The participants started brick bating the police. Army was called by the local administration. Curfew was imposed. Moreover, varied political leaders were also detained. Maulana Ghulam Mustafa, Allama Arshad, Begum Tahira Masood, Seth Ubaidur Rehman and Syed Ahmad Nawaz Shah Gardezi were among them. As a result, most of the seats went to the sympathizers of Mahaz in the elections of 1970, whether they stood independent or aligned with a political party. In 1970s, General Elections, when the demand of separate provincial status of Bahawalpur was at its peak, its supporters received 80 per cent votes. The candidates, who did not support this movement collectively, got only a small fraction of what the pro-province candidates scored individually.<sup>41</sup> After getting elected, the leaders were unable to organize a concerted effort rather they

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39 Nazeer Ali Shah, *The History of the Bahawalpur State* (Lahore: Maktaba Jadeed, 1959).

40 Stefan Helder, "World Gazetteer, "Bahawalpur","  
<http://www.populationmondiale.com>.

41 Government of Pakistan, "Bahawalpur: Area and Population".



issued declarations in support of a separate provincial status of Bahawalpur. When in 1971 during the East Pakistan crisis, many in the party sensed that it was inappropriate to put weight upon the claim at this delicate time. Gradually, the party lost its strength and divisions within the party surfaced.

### **Cause and Effects of the Restoration of Bahawalpur Province**

If the claim for Bahawalpur separate provincial status is agreed that has approximately 10 million population, Punjab's share in the national population will drop about 48 percent.<sup>42</sup> Such options are thus resisted by what the Saraiki speaking call '*Takht-e-Lahore*' [Urdu: The Throne of Lahore]. The demand to restore the separate provincial status to Bahawalpur region is taking momentum, though gradually. The local leaders and workers of all the political parties have reached to a consensual position that they need a separate province. Perhaps, the only exception to this is the PML-N workers who do not voice on this demand for the sake of political expediency.

### **Bahawalpur Province VS Saraiki Province**

The rift between the two opposing factions supporting Saraiki and Bahawalpur province is seen as a political stunt aimed at jeopardizing the movement for Bahawalpur province. The Pakistan People's Party's support for the Saraiki province in this connection appears to be a political tactic of winning the votes of Saraiki people.

Countless statements of former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani appeared on the issue of Saraiki province. The Prime Minister said consensus would be evolved on the issue of Saraiki province in southern Punjab and the manifesto committee of the PPP would decide the outlines of Saraiki province. In his tour to Multan, President Asif Ali Zardari had pledged that he would direct the government to set up a separate Saraiki bank and invited businessmen in

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42 Government of Pakistan, "Bahawalpur: Area and Population ".

southern Punjab to submit a formal proposal for the project within a week and announced that the Pakistan People's Party's government will clear the path for the creation of a separate Saraiki province. In the wake of the announcement of Saraiki bank, Chief Minister Punjab Shahabaz Sharif said the new bank was going to be established for looting ploy.<sup>43</sup>

In response to the announcements of Saraiki province and Saraiki bank by the Prime Minister and the President, former senator Muhammad Ali Durrani one of the torch-bearers of Bahawalpur province restoration cause expressed his strong opposition towards any move that is intended to exclusively support the creation of Saraiki province. He threatened mass agitation and resistance against any such move. He said that President Asif Ali Zardari's stance on the creation of Saraiki province was a flagrant violation of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan as it did not empower the President to announce or form a new province at his will. Durrani said that President is considered as a symbol of the federation of Pakistan and should not stir ethnic and linguistic sentiments, adding that Zardari's refusal to announce the creation of Bahawalpur province had dispirited the people.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) submitted to the National Assembly Secretariat a constitution amendment bill seeking creation of new provinces in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Similarly, the bill demanded a referendum to be held in the regions of Tank and Dera Ismail Khan, parts of KP province, to decide whether they want to remain with the KP or want to merge with the proposed southern Punjab province.<sup>44</sup> MQM had also suggested referendums in Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalnagar, and Multan. The proposal also included regions of Khanewal, Lodhran, Vehari, Toba Tek Singh, Jhang, Chiniot, Khushab, Mianwali,

43 Umbreen Javaid, *Politics of Bahawalpur, from State to Region (1947-2000)* (Lahore: Classic Publishers, 2004).

44 Ibbetson Denzil and MacLagan Edward, *Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and NWFP* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1990).

Sargodha, Bhakkar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Layyah, Muzaffargarh, Sahiwal, Pak Pattan and Okara. The PPP and Pakistan Muslim League-Q took a clear stance and unequivocally extended their support for the idea of new provinces whereas the PML-N could not manage to come up with a clear policy response. On various occasion the PML-N leaders have clearly expressed their stance of supporting the creation of new provinces but such measures should purely be on administrative basis.<sup>45</sup>

After the announcement of Seraiki province the leader of Hazara province movement strongly reacted to the move and threatened to launch strong protests and civil disobedience if the Hazara people and their demands are ignored. "President should treat equally and impartially the demands of the people. We are not against the Saraiki province, but the president's statement about forming Saraiki province hurt those people who shed their blood for the Hazara province. The government never paid heed to their demands," Baba Haider Zaman stated.<sup>46</sup>

The Bahawalpur National Awami Party (BNAP) formed in recent years to electrify the movement of restoration of the Bahawalpur province under the supervision of Amir of Bahawalpur Nawab Salahuddin Abbasi. An election alliance between BNAP and Pakistan Muslim League Functional was announced recently, so both parties would field joint candidates in next general elections and would launch a campaign for the restoration of former provincial status of Bahawalpur.

A number of influential leaders from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, like Sardar Assef Ahmed Ali, have supported the restoration/creation of Bahawalpur province. The Pakistan People's Party may encourage leadership of Bahawalpur by granting a capital city of a new province to Bahawalpur and there is a possibility of naming the Saraiki province as

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45 Denzil and Edward, *Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and NWFP*.

46 Nazir Ali Shah, *Sadiqnamah* (Lahore: Maktaba Jadeed, 1959).

Bahawalpur province to convince the leaders of former princely state. However, the PPP will face tough time in making a Saraiki province if they do not get success in persuading the apex leadership of Bahawalpur and the PML-N, the formation of new provinces in Punjab cannot be viable. Owing to the constitutional procedure that provincial assembly passes a resolution with a two-third majority.<sup>47</sup>

The formation of new provinces can be materialized on the basis of languages, ethnicity and administrative inadequacy but implementation ought to be above political ploy and party interests. The state restructuring commission is highly needed in order to fix on the outlines and make legislations to settle on the question of new provinces. On account of that the issue of new provinces, or smaller administrative units are receiving popularity in some regions of Pakistan.

The claim of Hazara province is ethnic. Seraiki is linguistic, and some others due to larger provinces to be segmented into smaller units so that they can have a better administration. But the demand of Bahawalpur province is unique, as they do not ask for the formation of a new province but instead they aspire for their former provincial status to be reinstated.

In this regard, two movements are already on the surface along with a Saraiki Province Movement due to the reason that Saraiki speaking people are less developed comparatively to Punjabi speaking areas. Along with other grievances there is less access to power, goods, services and settlement of people from other areas lead to the lack of developmental planning. All this started in 1886, when 86 canals were dug by the British and new canal colonies of Southern Punjab Bahawalpur region were opened to outside settlers and then the Sutlej Valley Project added to displeasure of Saraikis.<sup>48</sup> Other area of distress was that

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47 Shah, *Sadiqnamah*.

48 Shah, *Sadiqnamah*.

Saraiki regions produce more money than what's spent on them. According to them, Saraiki regions are economically exploited. Bahawalpur is a major producer of cotton and its income is not spent on Bahawalpur, also, the Saraiki quota of placements to be increased.

The supporters of Saraiki province movement in Bahawalpur are only a few. The Urdu and Punjabi language speaking regions vehemently opposed the formation of separate Saraiki province on ethno-lingual basis.

### **Conclusion**

New provinces for the purpose of ensuring equitable distribution of resources and devolution of power is highly recommended for political development and strengthening of the federation of Pakistan. But unfortunately, the movement for new provinces has been hijacked mainly by demagogues and radical ethno-nationalist leaders. The issue is thus highlighted for the sake of political score making. Since the issue entails an inevitable reference to the lingual and ethnic identities, political demagogues find it easier to attract and mobilize masses creating a rally-round-the-flag effect. Violent clashes, protests, and venomous slogans have been wide spread under the garb of ethno-lingual and parochial rights and identities. A lot of venomous pamphlets, hate speeches, and websites glorifying one ethnic community while condemning the other is very common and easily accessible. Ignoring these harsh realities will prove to be fatal for the federation of Pakistan.

The secession of Eastern Wing of country should be taken as a lesson in this regard where refusal and indifference by the federation towards the complains regarding allocation of economic shares to East Pakistan led to violent separatist movements eventually leading to falling apart of Pakistan. The case of Bahawalpur region should be taken seriously keeping in view the generosity and loyalty the region's rulers and people have shown towards federation of Pakistan. In both economic and political areas, Bahawalpur area should be offered its due share. The

government should attempt to address the feelings of deprivation among the Saraiki speaking people of the region before it turns into a violent insurgency movement which may cause law and order situation in the respective regions. The issue of formation of new provinces should not be addressed in hurry. A national commission should be made to develop studies, to resolve the issue of allocation of resources and most important is the needs and aspirations of the masses who constitute the proposed new federating units. The best way to resolve the issue appears to be holding of a referendum. Previously, the blunder of renaming Khyber Pakhtunkhwa devoid of consulting the people of Hazara should be avoided now. The ultimate objective should be the strengthening of the federation of Pakistan.