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Provincial Reconfiguration in Pakistan: A Case Study of the Hazara Region and its Multi-Dimensional Implications

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Abstract

This research paper examines the demand for a separate Hazara Province and its multidimensional implications for Pakistan's federal structure. The study explores the political, cultural, administrative, and developmental factors that have contributed to the emergence and persistence of the Hazara Province movement. The research study is qualitative and exploratory in nature, using document analysis of the relevant scholarly literature, government documents, policy documents, parliamentary documents and other secondary sources related to the research. The theoretical structure is based on Federalism Theory to analyze the aspects of regional autonomy, regional governance and state restructuring. Analysis of the document revealed that political marginalization, cultural and linguistic identity, unequal resource distribution and governance-related issues are the most important factors driving the movement. The research also shows that a reconfiguration of the provinces could improve regional development, political representation and administrative effectiveness. The establishment of a new province, however, brings constitutional, fiscal and institutional issues that need to be thoughtfully considered. The study finds that the Hazara Province movement is not a localized one but is a part of the bigger issue of decentralization, regional equity and inclusive governance in the federal system of Pakistan. The paper suggests that to resolve regional grievances without compromising national unity and federal stability, local governance must be strengthened, resources must be distributed fairly, and evidence-based strategies and models of provincial restructuring must be used.

Keywords: Hazara Province, Provincial Reconfiguration, Federalism, Decentralization, Regional Autonomy, Governance, Pakistan.

Introduction

The federal system in Pakistan has been a debated topic over time regarding the number, size, and administrative effectiveness of the provinces in the country (Ayaz & Fahad, 2025; Ahmed & Jamil, 2023). Since independence, the country has operated under a limited number of large provinces, each characterized by significant ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. Although the federal system was intended to allow for these variations, many regions still feel politically underrepresented and under-served. Ashraf and Shahzad (2020) stated that the unaddressed conflict between the federal government and the regional aspirations has been an enduring issue in Pakistan's political system. As a result, there is growing demand for administrative reorganization in the national political arena (Wasim, 2025).

The issue of provincial reconfiguration has received significant attention as policymakers and scholars are looking for solutions to governance problems and regional disparities (Ahmed & Jamil, 2023; Ali, 2024; Sharafat Ali, 2024). Restructuring supporters contend that smaller administrative entities will be more responsive to the needs of government and will make equitable development easier. Ali & Musarrat (2020) pointed out that decentralisation has become a major problem as many regions feel that the current provincial structures do not meet the needs of the local areas. Institutional reforms are further bolstered by administrative inefficiencies and unequal distribution of resources. These concerns have spurred wider debate on the function of provinces as a means of achieving good governance and citizen engagement (Khan, 2024).

The demand for a separate Hazara Province is one of the most visible and persistent cases of the various regional movements calling for administrative reorganization within Pakistan (Ahmad et al., 2024; Abbasi & Abbasi, 2024; Wasim, 2025). The region has a clear cultural and administrative identity, but the movement has gained strength since the NWFP was renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010. The new name was viewed by many residents as focusing on Pashtun identity and ignoring the culture and language of the Hindko speakers and the specific culture of the region. This development led to a large-scale protest, political mobilization and calls for more regional recognition, which is explained by Asif et al., (2022). As protesters lost their lives during the demonstrations, public support grew stronger and more people began demanding a separate province (Mian, 2024; Ahmed et al., 2024). In fact, the movement was no longer about the renaming but had now become the call for provincial autonomy and representation.

The Hazara region has distinct linguistic and cultural features which also differ from most other areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Ali & Zahra, 2024; Khan & Nawaz, 2021; Raza & Shah, 2023). Most of the population speaks Hindko and practices the cultural traditions which are different from those normally observed in Pashtun majority areas. Ali and Zahra (2024) examined how this linguistic difference has been influential in forming regional identity and political awareness. Local communities have become concerned about the preservation of cultural uniqueness. Concurrently, the calls for political recognition have become connected more and more to representation and identity politics of culture (Abbasi & Kalhor, 2022).

Identity politics has become an important aspect of the Hazara Province movement (Abbasi & Kalhor, 2022; Asif, 2023; Abbasi, 2022). The movement shares with other acts of contestation for recognition by communities that feel they are marginalized in the existing political system. Ethnic and language identities can be strong bases for political mobilization in federal states, argue Khan and Nawaz (2021). In Hazara, identity-based grievances also increased when the province was renamed, and helped to build a sense of regional consciousness. This movement thus illustrates the impact of cultural issues on the claims for administrative redrafting (Raza & Shah, 2023).

Apart from the issue of identity, the movement is also linked to the notions of political and economic deprivation (Abbasi, 2022; Shaheen et al., 2021; Asif et al., 2020). Many residents have stated that Hazara has been neglected in terms of development projects, infrastructure development and allocation of resources. The horizontal inequalities between regions can encourage expressions of discontent and lead to collective political action, as described by Shaheen et al. (2021). Proponents of devolution of the province, therefore, think that administrative autonomy would help to improve governance and development results. These arguments have reinforced the practical rationale for provincial status, not just in terms of culture, but also for other reasons (Ali & Musarrat, 2020).

The formation of new provinces has also been a topic of discussion based on the constitutional context of Pakistan (Aslam & Mohyuddin, 2024; Ali et al., 2023). The Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment drastically increased provincial autonomy and changed the relationship between the federation and the provinces. Aslam and Mohyuddin (2024) noted that the amendment was a significant effort towards decentralisation and further consolidated a federal system of government. It also brought up questions around the continued validity of the current provincial boundaries for good governance, however. As a result, calls for new provinces have been made more and more in the context of federal reform (Abbasi & Abbasi, 2024).

To understand the Hazara movement, it is crucial to look at the bigger picture of similar demands that have been raised in other parts of the country in Pakistan (Iqbal, 2021; Javaid, 2009; Qasmi et al., 2023). Separate administrative zones based on representation and development concerns have also been called for in other parts of the country, including South Punjab, Bahawalpur and Karachi. Such demands are part of an attempt to redefine federalism and enhance the involvement of the regions in governance, as put forward by Iqbal (2021). While every movement has its own historical and political profile, overall, they suggest that there is discontent with current administrative structures. The developments indicate that there is a need to seriously look into the provincial structure in Pakistan (Siddiqi, 2024).

The establishment of a separate Province of the Hazaras has administrative and political connotations (Syed et al., 2021; Asif, 2023). The creation of a new Province will take a constitutional amendment, institutional changes and a political consensus. Syed et al. (2021) point out that a major challenge in the process is regarding legal and administrative aspects of governance, jurisdiction and allocation of resources. The debate is complicated by questions of the redirection of financial resources and bureaucratic responsibilities. Hence, debate on Hazara Province is not only about identity politics but also about other issues of the administration of the state (Ali et al., 2023).

Although there are positive implications of provincial reconfiguration, there are still conflicting views about the long-term impact thereof (Khan, 2024; Ahmed, 2022; Siddiqi, 2024). Decentralisation, as well as its potential to increase regional grievances and enhance governance outcomes, is cited as a means to enhance federalism. In smaller provinces, Khan (2024) argues, representation could be better and the government more responsive to the citizens. On the other hand, critics say the establishment of provinces on ethnic or linguistic lines could foster further fragmentation and further disintegration of the nation. The Hazara Province movement is, therefore, a case study to understand federalism, decentralisation and regional identity in the context of Pakistan (Abbasi & Kalhor, 2022; Hamza, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Pakistan's federal system continues to face challenges related to political marginalization, unequal resource distribution, and limited regional representation. The demand for a separate Hazara Province reflects these concerns and raises important questions about regional

autonomy, governance efficiency, and the potential implications of provincial reconfiguration for Pakistan's federal structure.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the key factors behind the demand for Hazara Province.
2. To examine the implications of Hazara Province for Pakistan's federal system.

Research Questions

1. What factors drive the demand for Hazara Province?
2. What implications would Hazara Province have for Pakistan's federal structure?

Literature Review

The issue of federal structure is still a prominent topic of research, with frequent worries about governance, representation, and provincial autonomy (Ashraf & Shahzad, 2020; Ahmed & Jamil, 2023). The current state-based boundaries were suggested in the existing literature to be more colonial than socio-political ones. Shaheen et al., (2021) states that the demand for new provinces has arisen due to the feeling of marginalization felt by some of the regions in the existing federal framework. These questions have led to debates about the possibility of administrative restructuring to enhance governance results and increase democratic participation. Hence, the issue of provincial reconfiguration has become a pressing one in the political discourse of Pakistan (Ali, 2024).

The idea of provincial reconfiguration is sometimes associated with the general goal of decentralisation and administrative efficiency (Ali, 2024; Sharafat Ali, 2024; Ahmed & Jamil, 2023). It is believed that smaller administrative units will be able to offer better governance by having state institutions closer to the people. According to Ali (2024), administrative restructuring could help deliver public services better and eliminate inefficient bureaucracy. In addition, decentralized governance is seen as a way to deal with the regional disparities and improve accountability. The arguments have prompted scholars to look at the benefits of establishing new provinces in Pakistan (Khan, 2024; Naazer, 2024).

There are several studies that have been conducted on the demand for new provinces in various areas of Pakistan, and the common themes of political exclusion and developmental imbalance are found in these studies (Iqbal, 2021; Javaid, 2009; Siddiqi, 2024). Regional movements tend to spring up as a result of the sense of unfulfilled needs of local communities in the absence of adequate representation within the existing administrative system. Iqbal (2021) showed that the demand for the establishment of a South Punjab Province is linked to the demand for more political representation and resource allocation. In the Bahawalpur movement, similar patterns were witnessed with regional identity and regional governance issues being very significant. The results in this paper indicate that the calls for new provinces are not unique, but rather a reflection of the structural debates in general (Qasmi et al., 2023).

The Hazara Province Movement or demand for a separate Province of Hazara is one of the most organized and oldest provincial reconfiguration movements in Pakistan (Abbasi & Abbasi, 2024; Ahmad et al., 2024; Hazara Province Movement, 2025). The region was known as the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) until 2010, but then it was renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which sparked a strong momentum for the movement. Many residents viewed this renaming as an effort to promote Pashtun identity and ignore the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of Hazaras. The resulting protests ended up giving rise to a political movement for separate provincial status, according to Asif et al. (2022). Protest killings during protests further reinforced the demand for administrative autonomy among the masses and intensified the demand for it (Mian, 2024; Khan & Nawaz, 2021). This process eventually became a major national debate about federalism, representation and restructuring of the province.

The issue of identity politics has been explored in significant detail in literature on the Hazara movement (Abbasi & Kalhoro, 2022; Asif, 2023; Khan & Nawaz, 2021). It is claimed that ethnic and linguistic identities often are the catalyst for political mobilization in multiethnic societies. The Hazara movement is a form of identity crisis due to perceived feelings of exclusion and cultural marginalization, according to Asif et al. (2022). Likewise, regional activism has been associated with activities that are directed towards the maintenance of cultural specificities and political recognition. The connections between identity formation and claims for administrative autonomy (Raza & Shah, 2023) are clearly reflected in such findings.

The linguistic distinctiveness of Hazara has also received considerable attention in the literature (Ali & Zahra, 2024; Khan & Nawaz, 2021; Asif et al., 2022). The region is more linguistically distinct from Pashtun-dominated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with the predominance of the Hindko language. In the region's particular linguistic setting and its importance in the construction of identity, Ali and Zahra (2024) emphasize. Language heritage has emerged as a significant issue of concern for local communities that want to be more politically recognized. Consequently, language is also becoming a key variable that affects the desire for a separate province (Abbasi & Kalhoro, 2022; Raza & Shah, 2023).

In addition to cultural and linguistic issues, researchers have highlighted issues related to grievances involving governance issues that have encouraged the Hazara movement (Abbasi, 2022; Shaheen et al., 2021; Asif et al., 2020). The region has been claimed to have been underrepresented in the political arena and to not be receiving enough developmental support. These concerns are explained by Shaheen et al. (2021) with the concept of horizontal inequalities, that is, inequalities between various regions or groups in a state. The sense of inequity can result in discontent and spur collective political action. As a result, calls for federalization are often endorsed as ways to address challenges of good governance and development in the region (Naazer, 2024).

The literature also highlights the relationship between provincial reconfiguration and democratic governance (Ahmed & Jamil, 2023; Ali, 2024; Khan, 2024). There are suggestions that smaller provinces can enable more inclusive decision-making processes and improve citizen participation. Khan (2024) states that decentralisation can enhance democratic institutions and decrease the gap between citizens and government institutions. Restructuring the administration is said to lead to greater responsiveness and accountability. These assertions, however, are largely speculative and need to be studied in a particular regional context, like Hazara (Sharafat Ali, 2024; Naazer, 2024).

The constitutional and legal aspects of establishing new provinces are a key theme of the literature (Syed et al., 2021; Asif, 2023; Abbasi & Abbasi, 2024). The Constitution of Pakistan does not specify any concrete rule for changing the boundaries of the provinces except with a lot of consensus and constitutional changes. For example, the complex institutional arrangements regarding governance, jurisdiction and allocation of resources are highlighted by Syed et al. (2021) when defining the creation of a new province. Achieving the needed consensus may be complicated by political differences among stakeholders. These constitutional challenges are big hurdles in achieving the demand for a Hazara Province (Asif, 2023).

Another critical point of scholarly discussion on provincial reconfiguration is administrative implications (Naazer, 2024; Asif, 2023; Ali et al., 2023). Creating a new province involves creating administrative institutions, redistributing government responsibilities, and distributing financial resources. Bureaucratic reforms and public services delivery are also important factors that can impact the viability of provincial formation, as discussed by Asif (2023). Issues of provincial capitals, governance and fiscal management need to be tackled as well. Thus, the administrative

implications of establishing a Hazara Province are considered one of the critical points in the discussion (Syed et al., 2021; Ahmed & Jamil, 2023).

The question of national unity and the effects of provincial reconfiguration is a highly debated topic in the literature (Khan 2024; Ahmed 2022; Siddiqi 2024). Decentralisation is believed to have the potential to make the federation stronger by catering to regional concerns and making it more inclusive. Supporters say decentralisation can help the federation by appealing to regional concerns and improving inclusivity. The representation can promote a greater sense of belonging for the marginalized communities, as per Khan (2024). On the other hand, opponents argue that the formation of provinces on an ethnic or linguistic basis could lead to more division and exacerbate ethnic politics. The issues raised have sparked extensive discussion on the future consequences of the reorganization on the federal system in Pakistan (Abbasi & Kalhor, 2022; Ahmed, 2022).

The existing body of literature collectively indicates that the Hazara Province movement is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which is driven by identity politics, governance concerns, developmental inequalities, and constitutional considerations (Abbasi & Kalhor 2022; Shaheen et al., 2021; Naazer 2024). The movement has been well documented in the past, and there are several studies that offer insights into the historical development and political importance of the movement. Much of the literature, however, has been descriptive of grievances of identity and constitutional discussion. Siddiqi (2024) calls for more studies to assess the wider administrative, political and governance consequences of reconfiguring the provinces. Thus, the Hazara case remains a significant one for challenges and opportunities of FEDs in Pakistan (Qasmi et al., 2023; Ahmed & Jamil, 2023).

Critical Analysis of Existing Literature

Although the existing literature provides valuable insights into the Hazara Province movement, several limitations remain evident. The studies are mainly concerned with ethnic identity, cultural recognition and political implications of renaming Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The existing studies manage to address the historical background and socio-political underpinnings of the movement but pay less focus to its global relevance on the effectiveness of governance, efficiency of administration, growing of the region, management of finances and federal related stability.

Moreover, most of the previous research focuses on these aspects individually without a comprehensive analysis. This has not been explored enough, however, to understand the intertwinement of identity politics, governance problems and federal restructuring. Further, many studies take a descriptive approach and do not consider the impact of the provincial reconfiguration on the federal system of Pakistan in the long-term. Thus, there is a need for a holistic and multi-layered study that would be able to address the root causes and impact of the Hazara Province movement in the context of the federal framework.

Research Gap

Existing literature on the Hazara Province movement has primarily focused on ethnic identity, cultural recognition, political mobilization, and the implications of the renaming of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Research on the socio-political and historical aspects of the movement has been useful but has not been much concerned with the several aspects of its wider implications for governance, administrative efficiency, regional development, resource allocation and federal restructuring. Moreover, these are studied separately without an attempt to offer an integrated understanding of how they collectively shape the demand for Hazara Province. Hence, there is a lack of literature in the field of a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the political, cultural,

administrative and developmental aspects of the movement and how it affects the federal system in Pakistan.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the Hazara Province movement through the lens of Federalism. This study incorporates political, cultural, administrative, and developmental elements in a single analytical framework in contrast to previous studies which have emphasized principally political, cultural, and/or political mobilization topics. The study also has relevance in the broader context of the Hazara Province demand for decentralization, representation, governance and federal restructuring in Pakistan. The research brings together evidence from a variety of documentary sources to provide a comprehensive picture of the forces that are shaping the movement and their implications for the federal system of Pakistan. The study also contributes to the growing debate on provincial reconfiguration in Pakistan by linking regional demands to broader questions of federal governance and institutional reform.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and exploratory case study design to examine the demand for a separate Hazara Province and its implications for Pakistan's federal structure. The study has relied on secondary sources of information through document analysis of scholarly articles, government reports, policy documents, Parliamentary records and journal's archives from 2010 to 2025. The documents were selected purposefully because they were relevant to Hazara Province movement/reconfiguration, federalism, governance, development of Hazara Province in Pakistan.

The documents collected were critically reviewed and analyzed to determine the salient arguments, views and information on the factors that are pushing for the demand of Hazara Province and the implications this may have for the federal system in Pakistan. Data from various documentary sources were crosschecked and compared to increase the credibility of the findings. The analysis was approached by using the lens of the Federalism Theory that addressed the problem of regional autonomy, representation, governance, and decentralization.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Federalism Theory, which serves as the primary theoretical lens for analyzing the demand for a separate Hazara Province and its implications for Pakistan's federal structure. Federalism theory was first conceptualized by K.C. Wheare (1963) and later extended by Daniel J. Elazar (1987), who defined federalism as a constitutional arrangement of government that divides power between the central and regional governments, maintains unity and regional autonomy. The basic tenet of the theory is that federalism is a means to accommodate ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity in a single political system.

For the purpose of this study, Federalism Theory offers a useful analytical lens to understand the genesis of demands for regional autonomy when communities experience political exclusion, administrative neglect, cultural marginalization and unequal access to public resources. The theory is that such federalism can handle diversity through ways of representation, decentralization, power sharing and regional involvement in governance.

This approach enables the study to analyze the role of underrepresentation and governance shortcomings in shaping demands for provincial reconfiguration in the context of the Hazara Province movement. The Federalism Theory also sheds light on how constitutional mechanisms can be used to address the grievances of the region, while maintaining national unity and deepening democratic governance. Hence, theory is suitable to consider the causes and implications of the demand for Hazara Province.

Results and Discussion

Results

Political Marginalization and Demand for Representation

The document analysis indicates that political marginalization is one of the most significant factors associated with the demand for a separate Hazara Province. The reviewed documents consistently highlight perceptions of inadequate political representation and limited influence in provincial decision-making processes. Evidence from policy discussions, parliamentary records, media reports, and academic sources suggests that many residents of the Hazara region perceive the existing provincial structure as insufficient for addressing their political interests and regional concerns. The renaming of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa appears to have further intensified these perceptions and contributed to political mobilization in support of provincial autonomy. Overall, the findings suggest that the demand for Hazara Province is closely linked to aspirations for greater political participation, representation, and regional empowerment (Ahmad et al., 2024; Khan & Nawaz, 2021).

Identity Politics and Cultural Recognition

The analysis reveals that cultural and linguistic identity constitutes a significant dimension of the Hazara Province movement. The reviewed documents repeatedly emphasize the distinct cultural heritage, historical background, and linguistic characteristics of the Hazara region, particularly the predominance of Hindko-speaking communities. The examined sources indicate that concerns regarding cultural recognition became more pronounced following the renaming of the province, which was perceived by many residents as insufficiently reflective of the region's identity. The findings suggest that demands for a separate province are not solely administrative in nature but are also associated with efforts to preserve and promote regional cultural distinctiveness within Pakistan's federal framework (Asif et al., 2022; Abbasi & Kalhor, 2022).

Governance and Administrative Efficiency

The reviewed documents suggest that concerns regarding governance and administrative effectiveness have played an important role in shaping support for provincial reconfiguration. A recurring argument across the analyzed sources is that existing administrative arrangements may not adequately address local needs and priorities within the Hazara region. The documents indicate a widespread perception that a smaller administrative unit could improve responsiveness, strengthen accountability, and facilitate more effective public service delivery. At the same time, the analysis highlights concern regarding the institutional requirements of establishing a new province, including the development of administrative structures, governance mechanisms, and bureaucratic capacity. These findings indicate that governance considerations remain a central component of the demand for Hazara Province (Ali, 2024; Naazer, 2024).

Economic Grievances and Developmental Concerns

The document analysis identifies economic and developmental concerns as another major factor underlying the demand for Hazara Province. The reviewed sources frequently refer to perceptions of unequal resource distribution, inadequate investment in infrastructure, and limited access to development opportunities. Many documents suggest that regional disparities have contributed to feelings of deprivation and dissatisfaction among local communities. The findings indicate that supporters of provincial reconfiguration view administrative autonomy as a potential mechanism for improving resource allocation, prioritizing local development needs, and enhancing socio-economic progress. However, the reviewed documents also highlight concerns regarding the financial sustainability and administrative costs associated with establishing a new province (Abbasi, 2022; Shaheen et al., 2021).

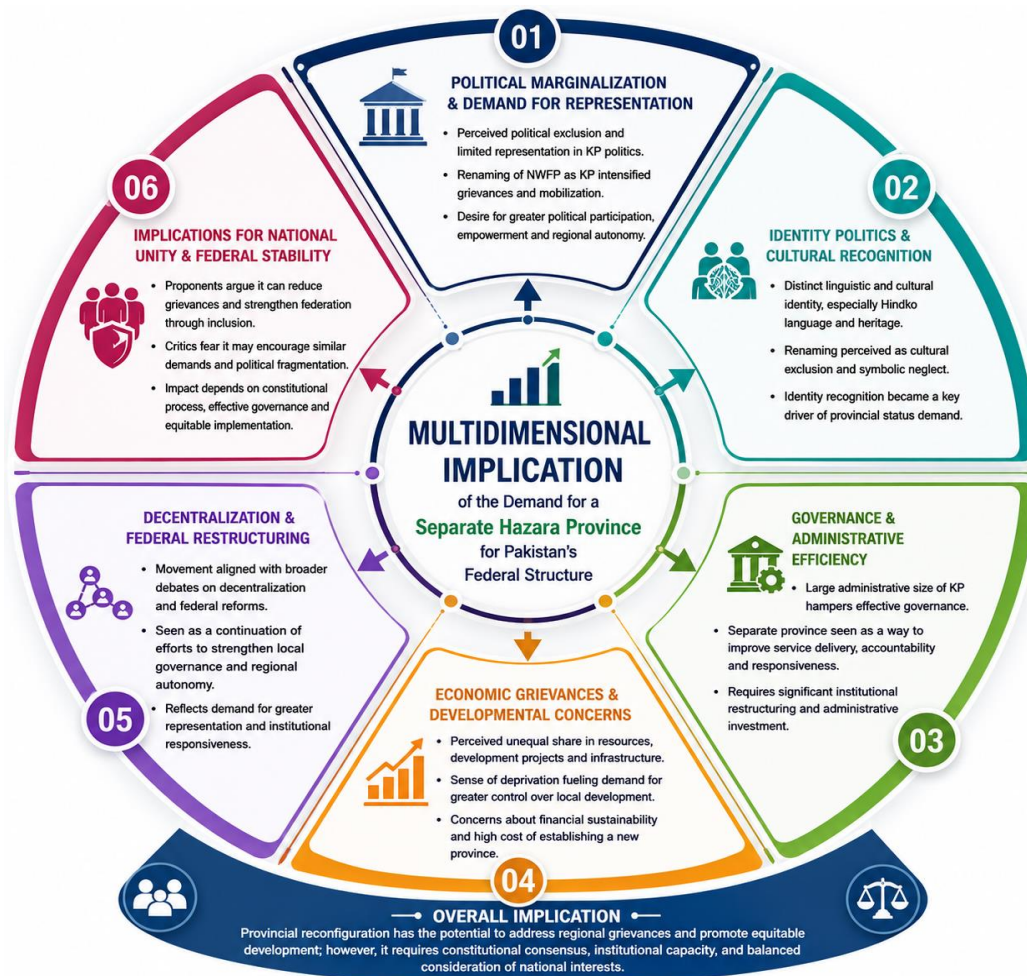
Decentralization and Federal Restructuring

The analysis demonstrates that the Hazara Province movement is closely connected to broader debates concerning decentralization and federal restructuring in Pakistan. The reviewed documents indicate that demands for a new province are frequently linked to calls for greater regional autonomy, enhanced local participation in governance, and improved responsiveness of state institutions. The findings suggest that provincial reconfiguration is viewed by many stakeholders as a potential means of strengthening KP democratic governance and addressing regional grievances within the federal system. Consequently, the movement reflects wider discussions regarding the effectiveness of existing provincial arrangements and the future direction of federal reform in Pakistan (Aslam & Mohyuddin, 2024; Asif et al., 2022).

Implications for National Unity and Federal Stability

The reviewed documents reveal differing perspectives regarding the potential implications of Hazara Province for national unity and federal stability. On one hand, many sources suggest that addressing regional grievances through constitutional and democratic mechanisms could strengthen public trust in state institutions and enhance political inclusion. On the other hand, some documents express concerns that the creation of new provinces may encourage similar demands in other regions and generate additional political and administrative challenges. The findings indicate that the impact of provincial reconfiguration largely depends on the manner in which reforms are designed and implemented. Evidence from the reviewed sources suggests that transparent, inclusive, and constitutionally grounded reforms are more likely to contribute positively to federal stability, national cohesion, and the overall effectiveness of Pakistan's federal system (Khan, 2024; Ahmed, 2022).

Figure 1. Multidimensional Implications of the Demand for a Separate Hazara Province



Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the demand for a separate Hazara Province is shaped by a combination of political, cultural, administrative, and developmental factors. Though identity issues are relevant, the evidence indicates that concerns around political representation, governance efficiency, and equitable resource allocation are also key. Perceptions of political marginalization and dissatisfaction with existing administrative arrangements emerged consistently across the reviewed documents. The results align with the previous studies which found that political exclusivity, governance problems and regional inequities are the significant factors behind the provincial movements in Pakistan (Abbasi & Kalhoro 2022; Shaheen et al. 2021).

Hazara Province and Other Provincial Movements in Pakistan

The study also uncovers significant parallels between the Hazara Province movement and other provincial movements in Pakistan, including the South Punjab and Bahawalpur province movements. Like these movements, the demand for the Hazara Province is mainly due to issues of political representation, administrative responsiveness, and equitable sharing of development resources. While cultural identity is a factor that helps the movement to become legitimate and gain public support, the results also indicate that governance-related and socio-economic grievances are also significant. The similarities suggest that the demand for new provinces is not a standalone issue but rather a result of concerns regarding regional injustice, inequity and decentralization in the federal system of Pakistan. This understanding aligns with the perspectives of Iqbal (2021), Qasmi et al. (2023), and Siddiqi (2024) who argue that provincial discontent tends to arise from the feeling of being neglected and the lack of development.

Provincial Reconfiguration and Comparative Federal Experiences

These findings can also be seen in the context of federal restructuring elsewhere. The federal restructuring experiences of countries such as India and Nigeria have shown that the division of states has been a constitutional tool for better governance, increased political scrutiny and the inclusion of regional diversity. The examples showed that territorial organization can be an appropriate solution to complaints in a region when it takes place in a democratic and constitutional manner. International experiences, however, highlight the need for careful planning, institutional capacities and political consensus to realize positive results. Thus, the demand for Hazara Province needs to be considered not just a regional demand, but also a broader discussion for the federal reform, efficiency of administration and democratic inclusion. In fact, decentralization and federal restructuring analyses by Ahmed and Jamil (2023) and Siddiqi (2024) have come to similar conclusions.

Federalism Theory and the Hazara Province Movement

The findings of this study provide substantial support for the core assumptions of Federalism Theory. Federalism scholars suggest that key factors to ensure good governance and successful management of diversity in a Federal state include decentralization and representation and power sharing at the regional level (Wheare, 1963; Elazar, 1987). The document analysis shows that there are feelings of political marginalization and cultural underrepresentation, along with developmental inequalities, that have been significant in influencing demands for increased autonomy among regions. In this view the demand of the Hazara Province is a quest for more autonomy and autonomy in governance within the federal system of Pakistan. The findings, therefore, corroborate the finding that there is no need to forcefully push the demands of the regions through unconstitutional and undemocratic means, which will in turn affect national unity and federal stability (Aslam & Mohyuddin, 2024; Ali & Musarrat, 2020).

The demand for Hazara Province, from a federalist point of view, is a symptom of the larger issues of the distribution of political power and the responsiveness of the provincial institutions to the needs of the region. The outcomes indicate many stakeholders see provincial reconfiguration as a way to increase political participation, increase administrative efficiency, and make better use of resources. In this context, the Hazara movement is a case in point of how the demand for territorial restructuring can be born out of the feeling that the present governance arrangements are not adequate to cater to political and developmental aspirations of communities.

The study also shows that Federalism Theory offers a helpful framework with which the role of constitutional and democratic mechanisms in dealing with regional grievances while maintaining national unity can be understood. Challenges to the federal system need not come from demands for more regional representation; these demands can enhance federalism when handled in an inclusive, constitutional and democratic manner. Hence, the significance of the Hazara Province Movement lies in its enduring relevance in the context of Pakistan's evolving federal framework, which encompasses elements of decentralization, regional autonomy, and power-sharing.

Policy Recommendations

1. **Establish an Independent Commission for New Provinces:** The Government of Pakistan should establish an independent commission to objectively evaluate demands for new provinces. The commission should assess political, administrative, economic, and social factors to ensure evidence-based, transparent decision-making on provincial reconfiguration.
2. **Strengthen Local Governance Mechanisms:** Provincial governments should enhance the effectiveness of local government institutions by devolving greater administrative and financial powers. Strong local governance can improve public service delivery, increase citizen participation, and address regional grievances more effectively.
3. **Ensure Equitable Resource Distribution:** Policymakers should implement transparent mechanisms for the fair distribution of development funds and public resources. Reducing regional disparities in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities can help minimize perceptions of marginalization and inequality.
4. **Promote Inclusive Representation and Cultural Recognition:** The government needs to manage policy to guarantee political representation of ethnic, language, and cultural minorities. Regional identity recognition can help increase social cohesion and a sense of belonging in the federation.
5. **Conduct Comprehensive Feasibility Assessments:** Administrative, fiscal, and governance feasibility studies should be performed in detail before any new province is established. These can be used to establish the feasibility of proposed provinces and to prevent potential institutional and financial problems for policymakers.
6. **Encourage Intergovernmental Dialogue and Consensus Building:** There should be ongoing communication between federal and provincial governments and political parties, civil society organizations, and regional stakeholders. Consensus-based policymaking can help resolve regionally based demands in a peaceful way, while ensuring national unity and federal stability.

Limitations of the Study

This research paper has certain limitations. Firstly, this research study is entirely based on documentary resources and not on primary data collected by interviews, surveys or observation. The findings, therefore, rely on the availability and quality of existing documents. Second, the study concentrates on Hazara Province movement and the results may not be reliable to be

generalized to other provincial movements in Pakistan. Third, although document analysis can be used effectively to understand the political, administrative, and governance-related issues, it may not fully reflect the perceptions and experiences of all movement's stakeholders. For future research, the mixed method or primary data method could be used to gain a deeper insight into public opinion, the perspectives of stakeholders, and the implications of provincial reconfiguration in Pakistan.

Conclusion

This study examined the demand for a separate Hazara Province and its multidimensional implications for Pakistan's federal structure. The findings show that political, cultural, administrative, and developmental factors collectively shape the demand for a separate Hazara Province. Political marginalization, problems of cultural recognition, concerns about accountability, and expectations of fair development have all helped to keep the movement alive. The study also provides an insight into the opportunities and challenges of provincial reconfiguration. It can contribute to better representation, decentralisation and regional development, but it also has constitutional, administrative and political implications. Hence, future consideration on the establishment of new provinces should be done according to the principles of inclusive governance, institutional capacity, equitable development and national cohesion. Hazara ultimately shows how federal reform and decentralisation remain relevant in the wider context of Pakistan's pluralistic political environment, to meet the aspirations of various regions.

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