SAT Brief
Nov, 2026 | Issue: 06

REDRAWING WITHOUT DIVIDING

The Administrative Case for New Provinces



Authored by: Fakeha Laique
Edited by: SAT Research Desk

Published by South Asia Times | southasiatimes.org

Authored by: Fakeha Laique
Edited by: SAT Research Desk



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fakeha Laique holds a bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUITEMS), Quetta. She is an emerging researcher focused on international relations, regional dynamics and security issues in South Asia.

ABOUT SAT BRIEFS

SAT Briefs are the weekly original research of South Asia Times. Each brief examines a pressing question in regional and international affairs, advances an evidence-based argument and sets out policy options for decision-makers. The views expressed are those of the author.

Suggested citation: Fakeha Laique, *Redrawing Without Dividing: The Administrative Case for New Provinces*, SAT Brief No. 06 (Islamabad: South Asia Times, November 2026).

KEY ARGUMENT

Pakistan′s 241 million people are governed through four provinces and an administrative system that has changed little since colonial times. Authority, resources, planning and execution are concentrated in provincial capitals; areas beyond them feel neglected and remote from government; and the commissioners and deputy commissioners who shape citizens′ daily dealings with the state are appointed officials who answer upward to the province rather than outward to the people. The result is a weak connection between citizen and state. Smaller, duly empowered administrative units can bring government closer to citizens, improve access to timely services and give local priorities a voice, while major policy and strategic matters remain with the federal and provincial governments. Applying four tests (reach, span, accountability and cost) to Pakistan′s own data, this brief finds that each province is stretched in a different way. Balochistan strains reach, with Gwadar some 910 km from Quetta; Punjab strains span, with 127.7 million people under one government; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa strains span and integration, supervising 35 districts that include the former tribal areas and remote valleys such as Chitral; Sindh strains scale at the metropolitan level, with Karachi Division alone larger than all of Balochistan; and every province strains accountability, because no elected body sits between the province and the district. It proposes building any new unit from whole divisions, never on a language claim, with shared water under common rules, a published minority audit, a reachable capital, real fiscal and administrative authority, a cap on the number of units and a dated transition law. Pursued through the Constitution and with provincial consent, administrative restructuring can strengthen the federation rather than divide it.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5
1. INTRODUCTION 6
2. WHERE THE DEBATE STANDS 8
3. THE CASE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURING 11
4. FOUR TESTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE SCALE 14
5. THE TIER PAKISTAN ALREADY RUNS 17
6. REDRAWING WITHOUT DIVIDING: FIVE RULES 20
7. LESSONS FROM ABROAD 22
8. THE COST QUESTION 24
9. THE TRANSITION 26
10. OBJECTIONS AND RESPONSES 27
11. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAKISTAN 28
12. CONCLUSION 30
ENDNOTES 31

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Governance in Pakistan is concentrated in provincial capitals. Punjab's 127.7 million people are served from one secretariat in Lahore; Balochistan covers 44 percent of the country's land; and the district administration that citizens deal with remains a bureaucracy-led, colonial-era structure of appointed officials not answerable to voters.[1,2] Each province is stretched differently: Balochistan in reach, Punjab in span, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in span and integration, and Sindh in metropolitan scale.
- The debate has reached the top of national politics. After Balochistan reorganised into 11 divisions and 41 districts in July, the Interior Minister called for an administrative "reset" and the military's spokesperson backed a debate through constitutional avenues. By 14 November the Defence Minister had backed up to 12 provinces on administrative lines, and the government was reported to be preparing for a referendum.[3,4,5,6]
- Opinion is divided but moving. A November survey reports 77 percent support for more provinces, while the Sindh Assembly rejected any division of Sindh on 3 September, and the Prime Minister's adviser says Parliament will have the final say.[7,8,9]
- The Constitution sets the path: two-thirds of both houses of Parliament and, where a province's limits change, two-thirds of the provincial assembly concerned. A referendum cannot replace that process.[10,8]
- The division is a ready-made middle tier. Its 31 census-era units range from 0.9 million to 22.8 million people, but none has an elected body. Empowering such units, or building provinces from them, needs no new line on the map.[11]
- Design decides results. A province costs Rs22–26 billion a year to run, and 14 of 30 division-sized provinces would fail a fiscal sustainability test; the South Punjab Secretariat showed that a title without real powers changes little.[12,13,14] The brief proposes five rules, empowered administrative units, a fiscal screen, a cap on the number of units and a dated transition law.

1. INTRODUCTION

A widow in Gwadar finds that a revenue entry has given her late husband's plot to his brother. She wants it corrected. The case is illustrative, but the route it takes is set by law. Her dispute begins with an assistant collector. Under section 161 of the Land Revenue Act 1967, the first appeal lies with the collector, the Deputy Commissioner of Gwadar; the second with the Commissioner of Makran Division in Turbat; and, on a point of law only, a final appeal may go to the Board of Revenue in Quetta. The Act allows 30, 60 and 90 days for these appeals, so the filing windows alone can total 180 days. [15]

Quetta is about 910 km from Gwadar by road, a journey of 13 to 14 hours; Turbat is about 232 km away. [16,17] A final answer can require four offices in three cities. The collector and the commissioner are appointed officials, listed in Balochistan's budget under the Board of Revenue and Administration, and no elected body oversees the commissioner at the divisional level. [18] The widow's problem is one of scale, not identity.

One Land-Record Dispute, Four Offices, Three Cities

Illustrative appeal route for a revenue-record dispute in Gwadar under the Land Revenue Act 1967



Filing windows alone: up to 180 days · Gwadar–Quetta by road: about 13–14 hours each way

Note: The case is illustrative; the route is set by law. Source: West Pakistan Land Revenue Act 1967, s.161; Government of Balochistan budget estimates (Board of Revenue and Administration); road-routing data. Distances approximate. Graphic: SAT, after Laique (2026).

Her experience is not an exception. Across Pakistan, authority, resources, planning and execution are concentrated at provincial headquarters, and often in the chief minister's office itself. Policies are formulated remotely, with limited local input; reach and responsiveness thin out beyond the provincial capitals and a few major cities; and citizens in outlying districts feel neglected, disenfranchised and increasingly indifferent. The existing model has struggled to deliver efficient, timely and equitable services, particularly across geographically large and administratively diverse provinces. That is the governance case for administrative restructuring, and it needs no embellishment.

That distinction matters now. In 2026 the question of new provinces moved from the margins to the centre of national politics, with ministers, the military's spokesperson, provincial assemblies and political parties all taking positions. This brief does not argue for or against any particular province. It asks how smaller, duly empowered units can close the gap between citizen and state, at what scale

administration works, and how the map should evolve, through the Constitution and with consent, without dividing communities. It sets out where the debate stands, applies four tests of administrative scale to Pakistan′s data, prices the costs, learns from other countries, and closes with a five-question test for any proposal.

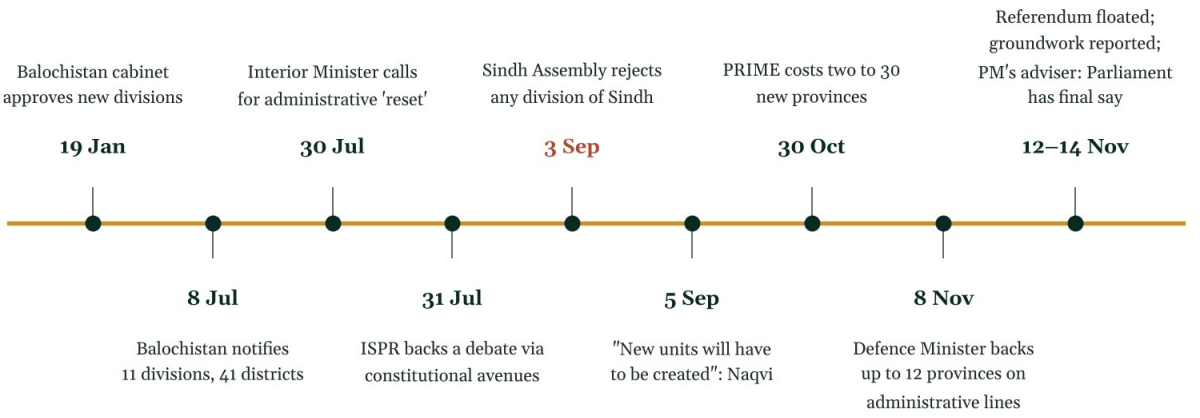
2. WHERE THE DEBATE STANDS

Two developments reopened the question. The first was administrative. In January 2026 the Balochistan cabinet approved new divisions and districts, and a Revenue Department notification of 8 July raised the province from 8 to 11 divisions and from 36 to 41 districts. [19,20] Quetta district was split into Quetta East and Quetta West; Kalat Division was replaced by Khuzdar and Lasbela divisions; and new Pishin and Koh-e-Suleman divisions were created. [3,21] The reorganisation showed that the state can redraw its internal map below the provincial level by notification, without constitutional change.

The second was political. On 30 July, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi told the Pakistan Economic Summit that the governance "system" had collapsed and urged parties to consider new provinces or units. A day later, the Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) endorsed a debate on an "administrative reset", linked good governance to national security, and stressed that any change should proceed only through political and constitutional avenues. [4] Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal floated 12 to 15 provinces, or 160 empowered district governments, and the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs said both houses would debate the proposals. [22,8]

2026: The Provinces Debate Returns

Key moments in the administrative-reorganisation debate, January to 14 November 2026



Sources: ProPakistani; Dawn; South Asian Voices; The Friday Times; ARY News; The Nation; Daily Pakistan (see endnotes).
ISPR: Inter-Services Public Relations; PRIME: Policy Research Institute of Market Economy.

Positions have since hardened. On 3 September the Sindh Assembly unanimously rejected any proposal to divide Sindh or place any part of it under separate administration, describing the province as a "historic, civilisational and constitutional entity" and citing Article 239(4). [23,8] Two days later Naqvi said in Lahore that "new administrative units will have to be created". [8] The demand is not new: the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly unanimously called for a Hazara province in December 2025, the Senate accepted a bill for a South Punjab province in January 2022, and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)

lawmakers renewed calls for a South Punjab province in the Punjab Assembly and the Senate in May and June 2026.[24,25]

November brought the debate to a head. On 8 November Defence Minister Khawaja Asif backed up to 12 provinces, drawn on administrative rather than ethnic or linguistic lines.[5,26] On 12 November Naqvi proposed a referendum, and by 14 November the government was reported to have accelerated preparations for one, with a proposal for 10 to 12 provinces under consideration and a supporting resolution expected in the Balochistan Assembly.[6] The Punjab Assembly Speaker endorsed a referendum, while the Prime Minister's adviser, Rana Sanaullah, said Parliament would have the final say whatever its outcome.[27,9] President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reportedly agreed that any change must follow the Constitution and cannot bypass Parliament or the provincial assemblies.[28] A prime ministerial aide has said a 28th Amendment is expected before the new year, though no bill had been tabled.[29,30]

Public opinion appears to favour change. The Meridian National Barometer 2026, reported on 14 November, found 77 percent of 5,000 respondents in favour of more provinces, up from 54 percent in 2022; its methodology has not been independently verified.[7] Federal Health Minister Mustafa Kamal of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) argued the same day that the Rs8,844 billion the provinces receive has not reached the grassroots, because provinces have not devolved powers and funds to local governments.[31]

Actor	Stated position	Basis
Federal Interior Minister	New administrative units "will have to be created"; referendum proposed on 12 November	Governance and service delivery
Defence Minister (PML-N)	Up to 12 provinces, on administrative rather than ethnic or linguistic lines	Administrative efficiency
ISPR (military spokesperson)	Supports a debate on an "administrative reset" through political and constitutional avenues	Governance as national security
PPP and Sindh Assembly	Rejects any division of Sindh; the issue belongs in Parliament	Article 239(4); provincial integrity
Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)	No party-wide position; the PM's adviser says Parliament has the final say whatever a referendum shows	Needs PPP votes for a two-thirds majority
MQM-P	Calls new provinces "a vital necessity"; campaigns for empowered local government	Devolution below the provinces
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	Long-standing support for a South Punjab province; tabled the KP Assembly's Hazara resolution (December 2025)	Electoral commitment
IPP; Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	IPP backs Hazara, South Punjab and Bahawalpur provinces; JI calls the idea constitutional and open to debate	Administrative efficiency

Sources: South Asian Voices (1 September 2026); Aaj News (17 August 2026); The Friday Times (16 October 2026); Dawn (9 and 14 November 2026); The Nation and ARY News (14 November 2026); The News (2 December 2025).

THE CONSTITUTIONAL PATHWAY

- **Article 239:** a constitutional amendment requires a two-thirds majority of the total membership of both the National Assembly and the Senate. [10]
- **Article 239(4):** an amendment that alters a province's limits must also be passed by two-thirds of the total membership of that provincial assembly before it goes to the President.
- **Article 48(6):** a referendum on a matter of national importance needs a joint sitting of Parliament. Experts note it cannot itself create provinces; boundary changes still require the amendment process. [8]

The consent of the province concerned is therefore built into the Constitution. Any reform that respects it strengthens the federation's legitimacy; any attempt to bypass it would invite exactly the division the reform is meant to avoid.

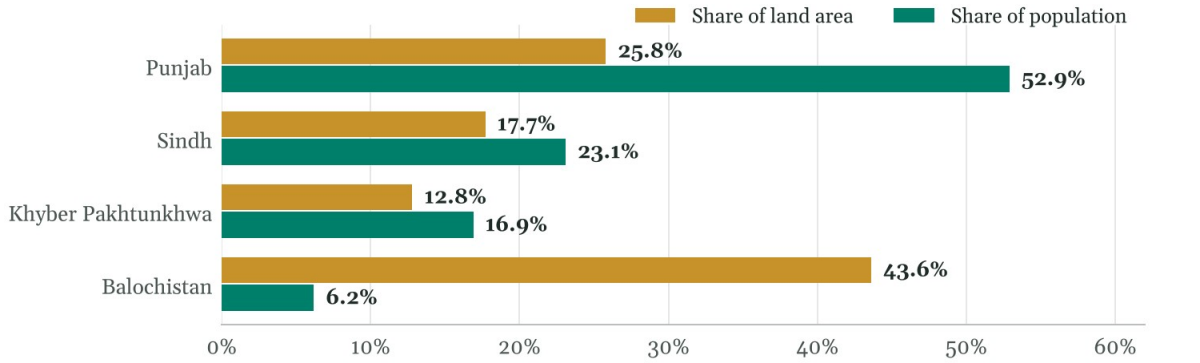
3. THE CASE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURING

3.1 Power concentrated in provincial capitals

Pakistan's 2023 census counted 241.49 million people, governed through four provinces. [2] Punjab alone has 127.7 million, more than any country in Europe, served from one chief minister's secretariat in Lahore. Balochistan covers about 44 percent of Pakistan's land but holds 6 percent of its people. Inside provinces the disparities are just as large: Lahore district has 13 million people and Harnai district in Balochistan about 128,000, a hundredfold difference, yet both are run by the same tier of district administration. [2,32]

Four Provinces, Very Different Burdens

Each province's share of Pakistan's land area and population, Census 2023, percent



Note: Shares of the national total excluding Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan; Islamabad Capital Territory accounts for the remainder.
Source: PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census 2023 (provincial area and population); author's calculations.

The system that serves these citizens remains heavily bureaucracy-led and reflects its colonial origins. Commissioners and deputy commissioners exercise considerable authority over citizens' land, security, permits and development, yet they are appointed officials, answerable upward to the province rather than outward to the people whose files cross their desks. Resources and decisions remain concentrated at provincial headquarters; policies are often made remotely with insufficient local input; and the result is a disconnect between state institutions, local needs and citizens' priorities. Concentration was defensible when Pakistan had a fraction of today's population. It is harder to defend for a Punjab of this size, or a Balochistan this far from the state's reach.

3.2 What smaller, empowered units can do

Smaller administrative units, properly empowered, can bring government closer to citizens. They can improve access to timely services and administrative responsiveness; reduce the concentration of resources and decision-making at provincial headquarters, freeing attention for underserved regions; give local priorities a greater voice in policymaking; and strengthen accountability by making officials

more accessible and responsibilities more clearly defined. Additional units allow greater administrative devolution while leaving major policy and strategic matters with the federal and provincial governments. Many countries have moved in this direction, bringing decision-making closer to citizens while keeping policy and strategy at higher levels, though, as Section 7 shows, design determines whether it works.

There is also a national security dimension. Pakistan's military spokesperson has linked good governance to national security. [4] Under-governed peripheries are where local grievance is easiest to exploit and where hostile narratives find an audience already convinced that the provincial capital does not answer its calls. Some foreign outlets, particularly in India, have already presented Pakistan's administrative debate as a prelude to fragmentation. [33] A state that reaches its citizens through accountable, accessible institutions denies that narrative its premise.

3.3 A record of promises

Pakistan's political class has long agreed, on paper, that the current map underserves citizens. The record shows how often that agreement has stalled.

Year	Development	Outcome
2014–2025	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly resolutions for a Hazara province (2014, 2022 and, unanimously, December 2025)	No constitutional bill
2019	PML-N constitutional amendment bill for Bahawalpur and South Punjab provinces	Not enacted
2020–2024	PTI government's South Punjab Secretariat in Multan and Bahawalpur, with 17 departments	Powers later curtailed; departments cut to 10
January 2022	Senate accepts a bill for a South Punjab province	Not passed by both houses
May–June 2026	PPP lawmakers renew South Punjab demands in the Punjab Assembly and Senate	Debate continues
September 2026	Sindh Assembly rejects any division of Sindh	Consent withheld under Article 239(4)

Sources: The News (2 December 2025); Dawn (18–19 January 2022 and 2024); Wikipedia, South Punjab Province Movement; The Express Tribune (4 September 2026).

The South Punjab Secretariat is the clearest lesson. Created in 2020 with 17 departments to bring decision-making closer to the region's three divisions, it later had its autonomy curtailed and its departments cut to 10. [14] A title without real fiscal and administrative authority changes little. Whatever form restructuring takes, empowerment must be real and protected in law.

3.4 Scale, not identity

The 2023 census shows why scale matters. [1] Punjab's 127.7 million people live on 205,345 square kilometres, 622 people per square kilometre. Balochistan's 14.9 million are spread over 347,190 square

kilometres, 43 per square kilometre. Both are single provinces, yet their administrative problems are opposite. Using a projected 2026 population of 259.3 million, the average Pakistani province holds about 65 million people, unusually large among the world's most populous countries; sixteen provinces would bring the average to about 16.2 million.[34]

Province	Population (2023)	Area (sq km)	Density (per sq km)	Districts (2023 list)	Divisions
Punjab	127.7 million	205,345	622	36	10
Sindh	55.7 million	140,914	395	30	6
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	40.9 million	101,741	402	35	7
Balochistan	14.9 million	347,190	43	34 (41 from July 2026)	8 (11 from July 2026)

Sources: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), Census 2023 and List of Administrative Districts 2023; Balochistan Revenue Department notification, July 2026.

Four tests distinguish these problems. **Reach** asks how far a citizen must travel to the office that decides a case. **Span** asks how many districts and people a provincial secretariat supervises. **Accountability** asks who is responsible for a decision, and to whom. **Cost** asks what each tier consumes against what it delivers. Each province strains them differently. Punjab strains span; Balochistan strains reach; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa strains span and integration; Sindh strains scale at the metropolitan level. All four weaken accountability, because no elected body sits between the province and the district.

Economists describe the underlying trade-off: larger units spread fixed costs and internalise spillovers, while smaller units match public services more closely to local needs.[35] Theory cannot fix the right size. Applying the tests to Pakistan's own data can at least show where the present map works and where it does not.

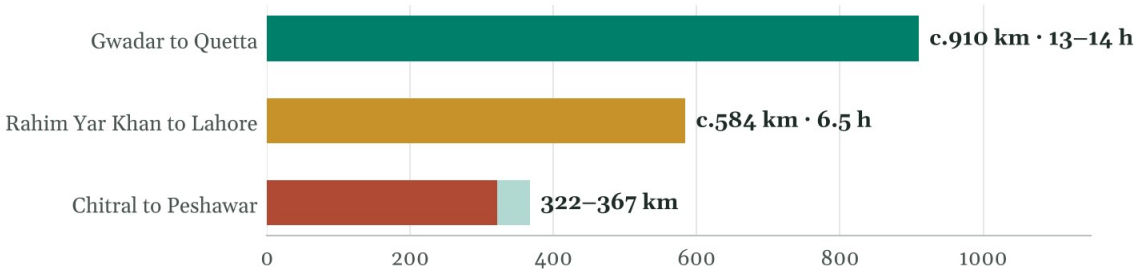
4. FOUR TESTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE SCALE

4.1 Reach

How far must a citizen travel to the office that decides a case? The road from Gwadar to Quetta is about 910 km and takes 13 to 14 hours, so a round trip needs at least 26 hours of driving.[16] Rahim Yar Khan is about 584 km, or six and a half hours, from Lahore; Chitral is 322 to 367 km from Peshawar, depending on the source.[36] Of the three, Balochistan's route is by far the longest.

Reach: How Far Is the Decision?

Approximate road distance from selected district headquarters to the provincial capital, km



Note: The pale segment for Chitral shows the range across sources.

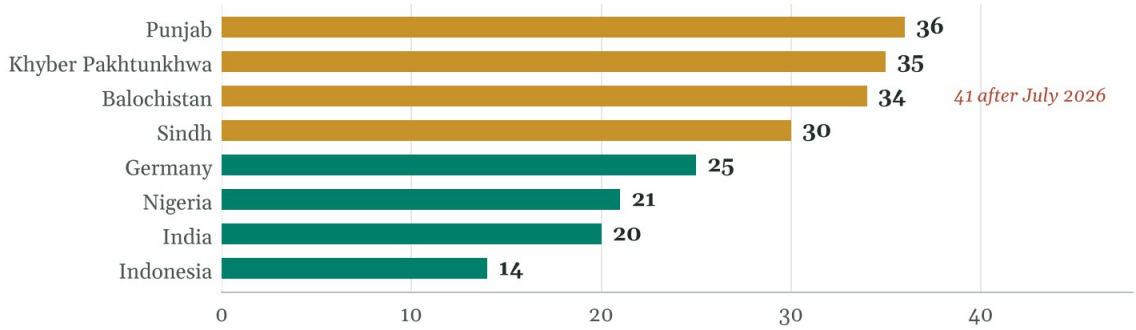
Sources: Google Maps; Distancesfrom.com; Travelprofy (accessed October 2026), compiled by the author.

4.2 Span

How many districts must a provincial government oversee? The 2023 census list records 36 districts in Punjab, 35 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), 34 in Balochistan and 30 in Sindh.[37] By comparison, German states supervise 25 districts on average, Nigerian states 21, Indian states and territories about 20, and Indonesian provinces about 14.[38,39] Districts are defined differently from country to country, so the gap is a guide rather than a ranking. Punjab adds a second strain: 127.7 million people under one government. Balochistan's July 2026 reorganisation raised its count to 41 districts, widening its span even as it shortened some lines of reach.[3]

Span: How Many Districts Does One Secretariat Supervise?

Districts per province (Pakistan, 2023 census list) and average per state or province elsewhere



Note: District definitions differ between countries; the comparison is a guide, not a ranking. Balochistan rose to 41 districts in July 2026.

Sources: PBS, List of Administrative Districts 2023; OECD–UCLG SNG-WOFI profiles (Germany, Nigeria, Indonesia); UCLG GOLD India 2020.

4.3 Accountability

Who is responsible for a decision, and to whom? The division sits between the province and the district, and its head, the commissioner, is an appointed officer. The Commissioner of Bahawalpur Division is responsible for 13.4 million people; the Commissioner of Lahore Division for 22.8 million. [11] Neither division has an elected representative body. A citizen cannot vote out the officer who decides an appeal, and no assembly at that level scrutinises divisional spending or performance.

4.4 Cost

What does each tier consume against what it delivers? A new province brings fixed items required by the Constitution: a provincial assembly (Article 106), a High Court (Article 175) and a public service commission (Article 242). [10] These costs come once per province. Against them stand the divisional offices a province would absorb, such as the commissioners' offices and directorates of land records already funded in provincial budgets. Section 8 prices both sides.

4.5 The four tests, province by province

Applied to each province, the tests show four different profiles. **Punjab** strains span: 127.7 million people, 36 districts and 10 divisions answer to one secretariat in Lahore, and Rahim Yar Khan is about 584 km away. [1,37,36] **Balochistan** strains reach: its districts are spread over 44 percent of Pakistan's land, and a Gwadar appeal can end about 910 km away in Quetta. [16] **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa** strains span and integration: its secretariat supervises 35 districts, including the former tribal areas merged in 2018 whose administrative integration is still under way, and remote valleys such as Chitral lie 322 to 367 km from Peshawar. [37,40] **Sindh** strains scale at the metropolitan level: Karachi Division alone has 20.4 million people, more than all of Balochistan, and its capital sits at the province's southern coastal edge, far from upper Sindh. [11,2] Accountability is weak everywhere, because no province has an elected tier between the province and the district.

Province	Reach	Span	Accountability	Main strain
Punjab	Rahim Yar Khan c.584 km (6.5 h) from Lahore	127.7m people; 36 districts; 10 divisions	Lahore Division (22.8m) under an appointed commissioner	Span
Sindh	Capital on the southern coast, far from upper Sindh	55.7m people; 30 districts; Karachi Division 20.4m	No elected divisional tier	Metropolitan scale
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Chitral 322–367 km from Peshawar	40.9m people; 35 districts, incl. former tribal districts	No elected divisional tier; merged districts still integrating	Span and integration
Balochistan	Gwadar c.910 km (13–14 h) from Quetta	14.9m people over 44% of land; 34 districts (41 since July 2026)	No elected divisional tier	Reach

Sources: PBS, Census 2023 and List of Administrative Districts 2023; road-routing data; Balochistan Revenue Department notification (July 2026); author's analysis.

The tests show why a single national formula would fail. A reform designed for one problem will not solve the others: Balochistan needs administration closer to remote districts, Punjab needs its span divided, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa needs the integration of its merged districts completed, and Sindh needs accountable governance at the scale of its metropolis. Every province needs an elected tier where the division now stands.

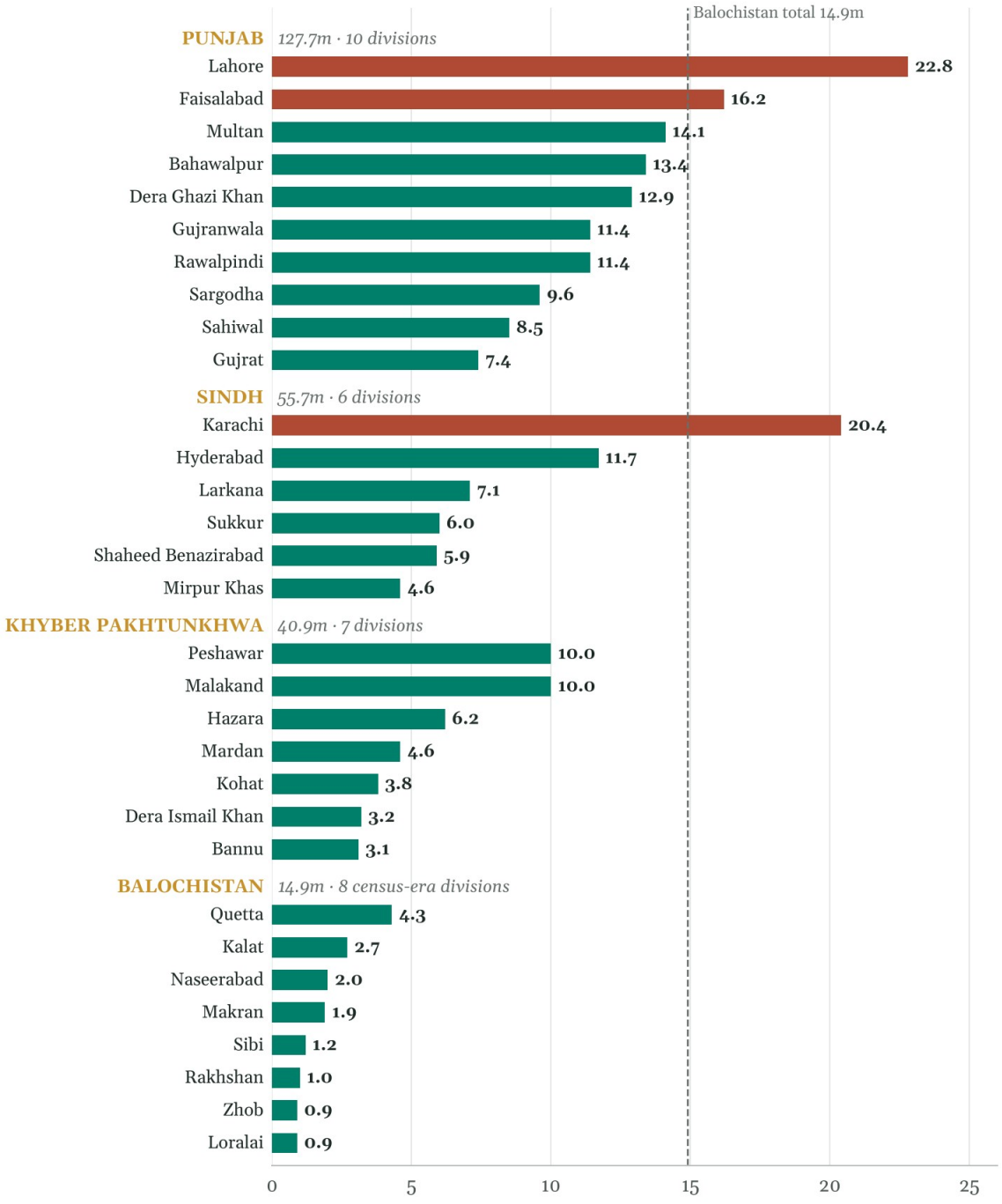
5. THE TIER PAKISTAN ALREADY RUNS

Pakistan already has a middle tier: the division. Each is run by a commissioner appointed by the provincial government, who supervises the revenue officers in the division under the Land Revenue Act.[41] Line departments keep regional offices there; Balochistan's budget, for example, funds directors of land records for individual divisions.[18] The tier's weakness is that no one elects it. Without an assembly or an elected executive, it is easy to switch off and on. The 2001 local government system abolished the commissioner's office and created elected district governments; after 2008 the provinces restored commissioners and reclaimed district functions and budgets.[4]

On the existing map, the sizes already fit. Pakistan's 31 census-era divisions range from 0.9 million people in Loralai to 22.8 million in Lahore; 21 of them have between 3 and 16 million. Lahore, Faisalabad and Karachi divisions each have more people than all of Balochistan.[11] Divisions have boundaries, staff and offices, but no elected leaders or political authority. A province built from whole divisions would need no new line on the map, only an assembly, an executive and a share of revenue for an area the state already administers.

The Tier Pakistan Already Runs: Divisions by Population

Population of each census-era division, Census 2023, millions. Dashed line: all of Balochistan (14.9m)



Note: Red bars are divisions larger than the whole of Balochistan. Balochistan was reorganised into 11 divisions in July 2026; division-level population for the new map is not yet published. Sources: PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census 2023, Table 1; Bureau of Statistics Punjab, Punjab in Figures 2025; author's calculations.

Balochistan's 2026 reorganisation adds a caution. Divisions are administrative instruments that provincial governments can redraw by notification, as Balochistan did when it created four new divisions and five new districts.[3,21] That flexibility is useful for governance, but a constitutional process

needs a stable base. Any reform should therefore fix a reference map of divisions, with published population data, before proposals are drawn.

5.1 Two routes: new provinces or empowered administrative units

Restructuring can take two forms, and they are not mutually exclusive. The first is new provinces, which require a constitutional amendment under Article 239 and the consent of the provincial assembly concerned. The second is empowered administrative units below the province: divisions or regional units with devolved administrative, development and service-delivery functions, elected oversight and their own budgets, while policy and strategic matters stay with the federal and provincial governments. Balochistan's 2026 reorganisation shows that provinces can redraw units by notification; [3] what is missing is empowerment and accountability. The second route can begin now and builds the institutions any future province would need.

> **HISTORICAL ANCHOR: ONE UNIT, 1955–1970**
>
> Pakistan has redrawn its provincial map before. Under the One Unit scheme of 1955, the provinces and states of the western wing were merged into a single province of West Pakistan, whose administration was organised through divisions. When One Unit was dissolved in 1970, the divisions were regrouped into the four provinces that exist today, and new divisions were added over the following decades. [42]
>
> **Similarity:** then, as now, the division was the building block; provinces were assembled from existing divisions rather than from newly drawn lines. **Difference:** One Unit was a consolidation imposed from the centre, and it generated lasting grievance in the smaller provinces. Today's Constitution requires the consent of the province concerned under Article 239(4). The lesson is that durable maps follow administrative logic and consent; imposed maps do not last.

6. REDRAWING WITHOUT DIVIDING: FIVE RULES

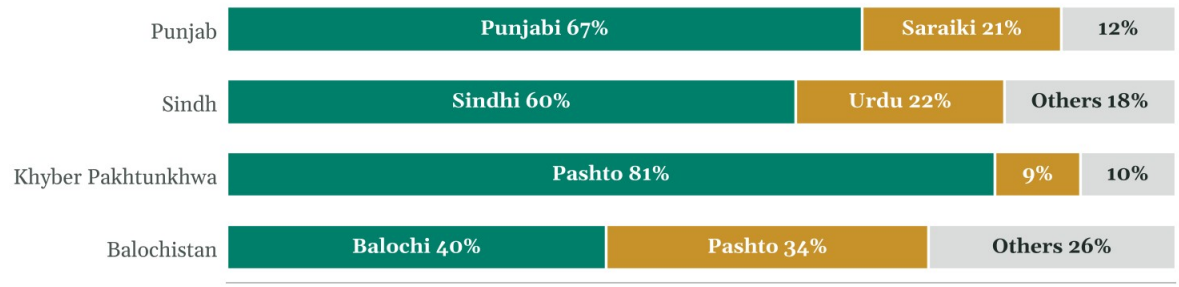
Without rules, a redrawn map divides people. This brief proposes five rules as the basis for any debate on new provinces. A proposal that breaks one of them cannot claim to be a measured improvement in administration.

1. **No new boundary lines.** Build each unit from whole divisions. The state already administers these boundaries, and each division has a commissioner, staff and offices. No one has to survey, contest or defend a new line.

2. **No unit based on a language claim.** Pakistan's languages overlap. In the 2023 census, Punjab was 67 percent Punjabi-speaking and 21 percent Saraiki; Sindh 60 percent Sindhi and 22 percent Urdu; KP 81 percent Pashto and 9 percent Hindko; and Balochistan 40 percent Balochi and 34 percent Pashto.[43] No province is linguistically homogeneous. A province drawn for one language would create a minority inside it and a grievance outside it, and would turn an administrative reform into an identity contest that only Pakistan's adversaries would welcome.

No Province Is Linguistically Homogeneous

Mother-tongue composition of the four provinces, Census 2023, percent



Note: In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the 9% segment is Hindko. Source: PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census 2023, Table 11 (population by mother tongue).

3. **Shared resources stay under common rules.** The 1991 Water Apportionment Accord fixes each province's share of the Indus system, and the Indus River System Authority (IRSA), created by an Act of Parliament in 1992 with members from all four provinces and the federation, monitors distribution.[44] A new province would receive a sub-share from its parent province, and the Accord and IRSA would continue to govern it. A canal that crosses a new boundary would run under the same rules as before.

4. **Every unit passes a minority audit.** Before any boundary is notified, publish the mother-tongue composition of each proposed unit from Census Table 11: the share of the largest group, the share of everyone else, and how each group is distributed across units.[43] A group split across units is not a failure; it is a fact to be published before a vote. A unit fails only if it cuts a division in two or if its composition is not published.

5. **Every unit has a reachable capital.** This brief suggests that every district headquarters should lie within four hours by road of its provincial capital. Today Gwadar is 13 to 14 hours from Quetta and Rahim Yar Khan about 6.5 hours from Lahore; neither meets the standard. [16,36]

A proposal that passes all five rules redraws the map without dividing communities. One that fails a rule should be revised before it goes to a vote.

> The question is not whether to divide, but at what scale the state can reach, supervise and answer to its citizens.

7. LESSONS FROM ABROAD

Other countries have redrawn their internal maps, with mixed results. Their experience points to design, rather than the number of units, as the deciding factor.

7.1 Indonesia

After decentralisation in 1999, new regencies and cities proliferated. Researchers found strong political and fiscal motives behind many of them and recommended a firmer institutional basis for creating or merging local governments. [45] In a study of three new regions, transfers from the centre supplied 70 to 77 percent of revenue. [46] A 2014 commentary judged many new units economically unviable. [47] Indonesia now has 514 regencies and cities, about 13.5 per province. [38]

7.2 India, 2000

Three states (Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh) were carved from three larger ones. A synthetic-control study finds significantly higher growth only in Uttarakhand; Chhattisgarh and Bihar did nominally better than their counterfactuals, but not significantly, and there was no significant change in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh or Uttar Pradesh. [48]

7.3 India, 2014: Telangana

Telangana was created by an Act that received assent on 1 March 2014. The Act fixed an appointed day, made Hyderabad a common capital for up to ten years, kept a common High Court until a new one was set up, and laid down rules for dividing assets, liabilities and the All-India Services. [49] A decade later, some questions over the division of assets and liabilities remained unresolved. [50]

7.4 Nigeria

Nigeria's 12 states of 1967 became 36 by 1996. One study found that elites pushed for new states for economic benefit, and that many states struggle to provide basic amenities; commentators point to heavy dependence on federal grants. [51,52]

Case	What was done	Span today	Evidence on outcomes	Lesson for Pakistan
Indonesia, from 1999	New regions after decentralisation	13.5 districts per province	Transfers supply 70–77% of revenue in three sampled regions	Set a readiness test before a unit is created
India, 2000	Three states carved from three	About 20 per state or territory	Significant growth gains in Uttarakhand only	A new line alone does not guarantee growth
India, 2014 (Telangana)	One state formed by one Act	About 20 per state or territory	Some asset questions open after ten years	Write end dates and owners into the law

Case	What was done	Span today	Evidence on outcomes	Lesson for Pakistan
Nigeria, 1967–1996	Twelve states grew to 36	About 21 per state	Heavy reliance on federal grants	Cap the number of units in the amendment

Sources: Fitrani, Hofman and Kaiser (2005); Fahlevi et al. (2025); Vaibhav and Ramaswamy (2024); Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2014; Oworibo (2001); OECD–UCLG SNG-WOFI; UCLG GOLD India 2020.

Three lessons follow. First, the transition law matters more than the line: Telangana had a statute with dates and duties, while Indonesia created units that critics judged unready. Second, fiscal design determines whether a new unit survives, as dependence on transfers in Indonesia and Nigeria shows. Third, a stopping rule is essential: Indonesia and Nigeria kept adding units. This is why this brief proposes a ceiling on the number of units, written into the amendment itself.

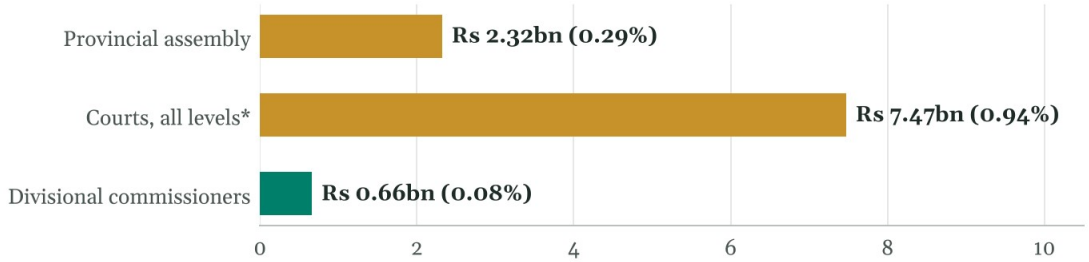
8. THE COST QUESTION

8.1 What one province costs

A new province adds a new political tier. Balochistan, the smallest province by population, offers the best benchmark. In its 2026-27 budget, the provincial assembly cost Rs2.32 billion, or 0.29 percent of current expenditure. Courts at all levels cost Rs7.47 billion (0.94 percent), an upper bound for a High Court. The budget does not separate the High Court or the public service commission, so this brief does not cost them individually. Against these items stand the divisional commissioners' offices a province would absorb: Rs0.66 billion, or 0.08 percent. [18]

What a Province Costs: The Balochistan Benchmark

Budget 2026-27: annual cost of bodies a new province would add or absorb, Rs billion (share of current expenditure)



**Courts at all levels: an upper bound for a High Court. Gold: new items a province must have; teal: existing divisional tier it would absorb.*
Source: Government of Balochistan, Finance Department, Annual Budget Statement 2026-27; author's calculations.

Assuming a new province's assembly costs between half and all of Balochistan's, the assembly would cost Rs1.2 to 2.3 billion a year. A province of two or three divisions would absorb two or three commissioners' offices, each costing roughly Rs83 million on average across Balochistan's eight census-era divisions. Both figures are assumptions, not data. The larger costs lie elsewhere: current expenditure is 73 percent of Balochistan's consolidated fund payments, and salaries take 48 percent of current spending and pensions 14 percent. [18] The cost risk lies less in one assembly than in a new bureaucracy and in the multiplication of units.

8.2 Why many small provinces fail the test

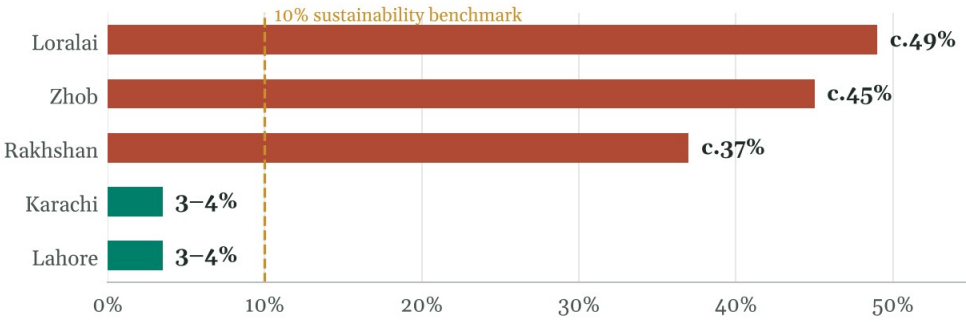
The Policy Research Institute of Market Economy (PRIME) estimates the core recurring cost of a new provincial government at Rs22.4 billion to Rs25.9 billion a year: Rs46.9 billion to Rs56.2 billion for two new provinces in Punjab, and Rs609 billion to Rs730 billion if all 30 divisions became provinces. [12]

A companion analysis by PRIME researchers reinforces the point about small units. Modelling a scenario in which every existing division becomes a province (30 units), it allocates each province's current National Finance Commission (NFC) share among its successors using the NFC criteria, and treats core provincial structure as a fixed cost. Lahore and Karachi would spend 3 to 4 percent of their allocations on that structure; Loralai about 49 percent, Zhob 45 percent and Rakhshan 37 percent.

Fourteen of the 30 units would exceed a 10 percent sustainability benchmark, and every unit under 1.2 million people would need more than a third of its allocation simply to run a provincial government.[13] A limited restructuring with relatively large units, the study finds, carries a far smaller burden.[13] The Institute of Policy Studies has likewise called for a properly mandated research process before any decision.[53]

Why Small Units Fail the Fiscal Test

Core provincial running costs as a share of each unit's illustrative NFC allocation, if every division became a province



Note: Low recurring-cost estimate. In this scenario, 14 of 30 division-based units exceed the 10% benchmark. NFC: National Finance Commission.
Source: Maryam Ayub and Ali Salman (PRIME Institute), The Express Tribune, 2 November 2026.

These findings support the rules proposed here rather than contradict them. Building provinces from several whole divisions, not one, and capping their number keeps fixed costs low. The fiscal frame is already under strain: the 2026-27 federal budget capped the divisible pool at Rs13.35 trillion for three years, effectively revising vertical distribution without a new NFC Award, and the 7th Award guarantees provinces at least 57.5 percent of the pool.[4] New provinces would add expenditure claims and require the distribution formula to be reopened. A credible proposal must therefore come with a fiscal costing and a revenue plan, not only a map.

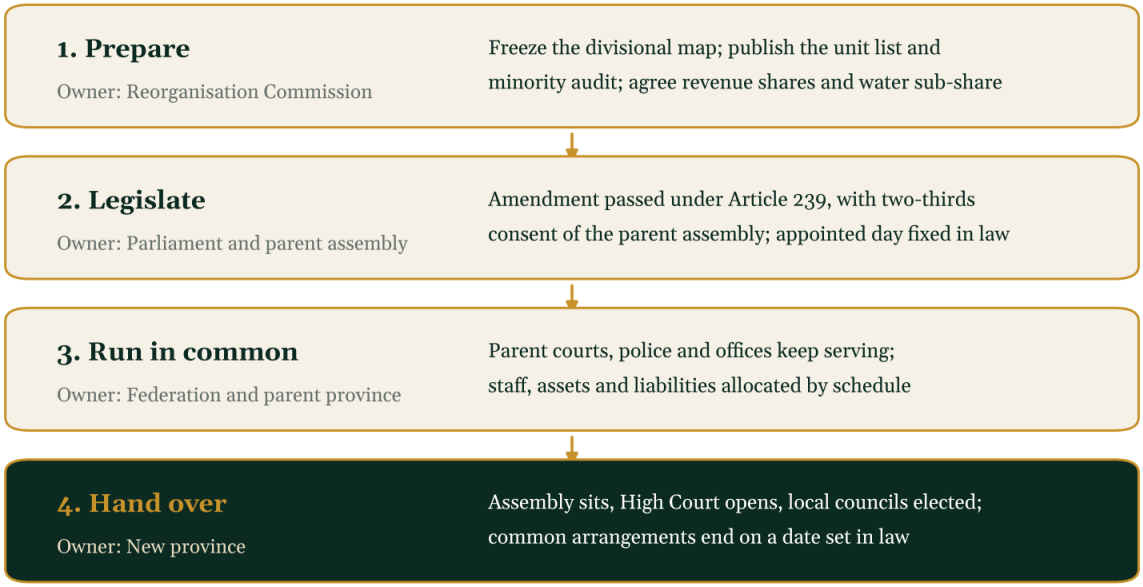
9. THE TRANSITION

A boundary vote begins the work rather than ending it. A reorganisation succeeds or fails in the transition. Two precedents offer guidance: India's Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2014 and Pakistan's own merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018.

1. **India, 2014.** The Act fixed an appointed day, made Hyderabad a common capital for ten years, kept a common High Court until a new one was established, and set rules for dividing assets, liabilities and the All-India Services.[49] Ten years later, some questions over assets and liabilities were still unresolved.[50]
2. **Pakistan, 2018.** The FATA reforms were steered by a National Implementation Committee.[54] Parliament passed the 25th Amendment, and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly approved it on 27 May 2018 under Article 239(4), extending the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the Peshawar High Court to the former tribal areas.[55] An interim governance regulation applied in the meantime, and a ten-year development plan was drawn up.[40] The merger showed that Pakistan can carry out a major constitutional reorganisation with provincial consent.

A Transition With Owners and End Dates

Proposed sequence for creating any new province, drawn from the Andhra Pradesh (2014) and FATA (2018) precedents



Source: Author's design, drawn from the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2014 and the 2018 FATA merger; Constitution of Pakistan, Articles 239 and 140A. FATA: Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

The two precedents yield two rules. First, assign an owner to every step. Second, write the end date of every shared arrangement into the amendment itself, so that common courts, services and assets do not linger for a decade.

10. OBJECTIONS AND RESPONSES

The debate raises four serious objections. Each deserves an answer rather than dismissal.

1. **"Fix local government first."** This sets local government and provinces against each other, although they operate at different levels: local councils serve districts and towns, while the provincial tier sets the framework above them. Smaller provinces are not a substitute for empowered local governments, as critics rightly argue. [22] The answer is sequence and obligation: the amendment that creates any province should also bind every province, new and old, to devolve powers and funds to elected local councils under Article 140A, so that new provinces do not repeat old failures.

2. **"It costs too much."** Section 8 prices the tier. In Balochistan, the assembly costs 0.29 percent of current expenditure and all courts 0.94 percent, while salaries alone take 48 percent. [18] The real cost risk is proliferation, as Indonesia and Nigeria show and as the PRIME costing confirms. [13] The answer is a ceiling on the number of units and a fiscal screen in the amendment.

3. **"It will divide the federation."** The five rules answer this directly: every unit uses whole divisions, no unit rests on a language claim, the minority audit is published, and shared water stays under common rules. The FATA merger and India's 2014 reorganisation both proceeded within constitutional frameworks and dated statutes. The danger lies not in a map but in proliferation, identity-based units and unfinished transitions.

4. **"It overrides provincial autonomy."** The Sindh Assembly's resolution reflects a genuine concern that boundaries could be changed without the consent of the people affected. [8] The Constitution already answers it: Article 239(4) requires the consent of two-thirds of the provincial assembly concerned. [10] Reform that respects that requirement, rather than seeking shortcuts through a referendum or executive action, protects both provincial autonomy and national unity.

11. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

Administrative restructuring is a question of national strength. A state that can reach its citizens quickly, supervise its districts closely and answer to voters at every tier is harder to destabilise, better able to deliver services and better placed to secure strategic assets such as Gwadar and the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor. That is why the military's spokesperson linked governance to national security, and why the same voices insisted that change come only through political and constitutional avenues. [4] The national interest lies in reform that strengthens the federation's capacity and its legitimacy together.

1. **Establish a parliamentary commission on administrative units.** A national commission, as proposed in the cross-party debate, should be mandated by Parliament, include all provinces and report publicly within a fixed period. [56] It should own the preparation stage in Figure 8.
2. **Empower administrative units now.** Devolve defined administrative, development and service-delivery functions, with budgets, to divisional or regional units under elected oversight, and make commissioners and deputy commissioners answerable to elected bodies. This brings the state closer to citizens without waiting for a constitutional amendment.
3. **Freeze and publish the reference map.** Fix the divisional map as of a stated date, and publish division-level population, revenue and expenditure data, including for Balochistan's new divisions, before any proposal is drawn.
4. **Adopt the five-question test as a statutory screen.** Require every proposal to show whole divisions, no language-based unit, common water rules, a published minority audit and a reachable capital (see the table below).
5. **Screen every unit fiscally and cap the number.** Apply a published fiscal sustainability benchmark, settle revenue shares within the NFC framework before the appointed day, and write a ceiling on the number of provinces into the amendment. [13]
6. **Guarantee local government.** Bind every province, new and existing, to devolve defined functions and funds to elected local councils under a strengthened Article 140A.
7. **Legislate the transition with owners and end dates.** Follow the FATA precedent of an implementation committee and the Telangana lesson of dated arrangements for courts, services, assets and liabilities.
8. **Keep to the constitutional route.** Pursue change only through Article 239, with the consent of the provincial assembly concerned. Shortcuts would damage the legitimacy that makes reform durable, and would hand a divisive narrative to those who wish Pakistan ill.

Question	Pass	Fail
1. Is every unit built from whole divisions?	Uses existing divisional boundaries as of a fixed date	Cuts a division or draws a new line
2. Is every unit free of a language claim?	Justified by administrative scale	Defined by one language or ethnicity
3. Do shared resources stay under common rules?	Water sub-share under the 1991 Accord and IRSA	Separate or disputed water arrangements
4. Has a minority audit been published?	Composition of every unit published before the vote	Composition unpublished
5. Is every district within reach of its capital?	All headquarters within about four hours by road	Districts left far beyond a reasonable travel time

A five-question test for any provincial proposal. Source: the author.

11.1 What to watch

Indicator	Why it matters	Horizon
Whether Parliament tables a constitutional bill, or a 28th Amendment draft that touches Article 1	Moves the debate from statements to a formal process	Weeks to months
Whether a parliamentary commission or committee is formed with all provinces represented	Signals a consensus-based rather than executive-led route	Weeks to months
Whether the referendum question goes to a joint sitting of Parliament under Article 48(6)	Tests whether the process respects parliamentary approval and provincial consent	Weeks
A Balochistan Assembly resolution on new provinces, as reported	Would be the first provincial assembly to back the wider restructuring	Weeks
Positions of the Sindh, Punjab and KP assemblies, and of PML-N and PPP	Two-thirds majorities are impossible without them	Months
Publication of division-level data for Balochistan's new map	Makes the reference map and fiscal screening possible	Months
The next NFC Award negotiations	Any new province requires the revenue formula to be reopened	Months to years

12. CONCLUSION

Pakistan′s citizens are governed, administered and taxed, but too often not reached. Authority and resources sit in provincial capitals, and the officials who decide citizens′ daily affairs answer upward rather than outward. Pakistan′s debate asks whether to divide. This brief has asked a more focused question: at what scale does administration work, and how can the map change without dividing communities? The evidence is clear on the problem. A citizen in Gwadar may travel 910 km for a final answer; one government in Lahore supervises 127.7 million people; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa′s secretariat oversees 35 districts while still integrating the former tribal areas; Karachi Division alone holds more people than Balochistan; and in every province the officials who decide appeals at the divisional level answer to no elected body. The state already runs the tier that could fix this, the division, but leaves it without a vote or a budget of its own. Empowering that tier, and building any new province from it, is the most direct way to close the gap between citizen and state.

Any provincial proposal, including the one implied here, should be judged on five questions. Does every unit use whole divisions, with no new line drawn? Is every unit free of a language claim? Do shared resources such as water remain under common rules? Has a minority audit been published for every unit before the vote? And is every district headquarters within a reasonable travel time of its capital? A proposal that answers yes to all five passes; one that fails a question should be redrawn, not abandoned.

Passing the test does not prove that a province will govern better. That depends on design: a fiscal plan that does not breed dependence, a ceiling on the number of units, a duty to devolve to local government and a transition law with owners and end dates. Above all, it depends on consent. Pursued through the Constitution, with the agreement of the provinces concerned, redrawing the administrative map can bring the state closer to its citizens and make the federation stronger.

Redrawn by consent and built from what the state already runs, a new map can unite rather than divide.

ENDNOTES

Sources are listed in order of first citation. Budget shares, division totals and cost estimates are the author's calculations from the official sources cited.

1. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), *7th Population and Housing Census 2023: National Report* (Islamabad, 2023), pbs.gov.pk.
2. "Pakistan 5th Most Populous Country with Population of 241.49m: Report," *Business Recorder* (PBS Digital Census Key Findings Report), brecorder.com.
3. "Balochistan Govt Notifies New Divisions and Districts," *ProPakistani*, 12 July 2026, propakistani.pk.
4. "Whither 'New Provinces?' The Fiscal Politics of Pakistan's Federalism Debate," *South Asian Voices* (Stimson Center), 1 September 2026, southasianvoices.org.
5. "Minister Supports Creation of up to 12 Provinces," *Dawn*, 9 November 2026, dawn.com; "PML-N's Asif Backs Twelve New Provinces," The Express Tribune, 9 November 2026.
6. Azhar Farooq, "Govt Speeds Up Groundwork for Referendum on New Provinces," *ARY News*, 14 November 2026, arynews.tv; "Govt Completes Preparations for Referendum on New Provinces," Samaa TV, 14 November 2026.
7. "Majority of Pakistanis Favour New Provinces, Survey Finds," *Shafaqna Pakistan*, 14 November 2026, reporting the Meridian National Barometer 2026, pakistan.shafaqna.com. Methodology not independently verified.
8. "New Provinces Debate: Constitutional Hurdles, Party Positions and PPP's Political Opening," *The Friday Times*, 16 October 2026, thefridaytimes.com.
9. "Rana Sana Says Parliament Will Have Final Say on New Provinces," *The Nation*, 14 November 2026, nation.com.pk.
10. *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan* (1973, as amended), Articles 1, 48(6), 106, 140A, 160, 175, 239 and 242, na.gov.pk.
11. PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census 2023, Table 1: Area, Population by Sex, Sex Ratio, Population Density and Annual Growth Rate; Bureau of Statistics Punjab, *Punjab in Figures 2025*; pbs.gov.pk. Division totals are the author's calculations.
12. "New Provinces Could Cost Pakistan Rs. 730 Billion Annually: Report," *ProPakistani*, 30 October 2026, propakistani.pk, reporting the Policy Research Institute of Market Economy (PRIME).
13. Maryam Ayub and Ali Salman, "New Provinces Will Cost More Than They Deliver," *The Express Tribune*, 2 November 2026, tribune.com.pk.
14. "Creation of Special Secretaries' Posts Seen as Bid to Reverse South Punjab Decentralisation," *Dawn*, dawn.com; see also Dawn, "Punjab CM Withdraws 'Erroneous' Order on Secretariats," April 2021.
15. West Pakistan Land Revenue Act, 1967 (W.P. Act No. XVII of 1967), section 161, *Pakistan Code*, pakistancode.gov.pk.
16. Road routing, Gwadar to Quetta, *Google Maps*, accessed October 2026; "Distance from Quetta to Gwadar via Panjgur, Turbat," distancesfrom.com. Distances are approximate.
17. "Distance from Gwadar to Turbat," *Distancesfrom.com*, accessed October 2026, distancesfrom.com.

18. Government of Balochistan, Finance Department, *Annual Budget Statement 2026-27* (Quetta, June 2026), finance.gob.pk. Cost shares are the author's calculations.

19. "Balochistan Approves New Divisions and Districts," *ProPakistani*, 25 February 2026, propakistani.pk.

20. "Quetta Split into Two Districts as Balochistan Undergoes Administrative Restructuring," *Dawn*, July 2026, dawn.com.

21. Manzoor Ahmed, "Balochistan Divided in 11 Divisions and 41 Districts," *ARY News*, 11 July 2026, arynews.tv.

22. "Pakistan: Can Creating New Provinces Fix Governance?" *Dhaka Tribune* (from Deutsche Welle), 8 September 2026, dhakatribune.com.

23. Muhammad Saleem Jhandeer, "Sindh Bristles at Carve-Up Proposal," *The Express Tribune*, 4 September 2026, tribune.com.pk.

24. "KP Assembly Passes Unanimous Resolution for Hazara Province," *The News*, 2 December 2025, thenews.pk.

25. "South Punjab Province Movement," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 2026, en.wikipedia.org. Used for the sequence of resolutions and bills.

26. "Referendum Talk" (editorial), *Dawn*, 14 November 2026, dawn.com.

27. "Punjab Assembly Speaker Endorses Referendum Proposal on New Provinces," *Dawn*, 14 November 2026, dawn.com.

28. "No Referendum without Parliamentary Approval as Zardari, Shehbaz Discuss New Provinces," *Daily Pakistan*, 15 November 2026, en.dailypakistan.com.pk.

29. "28th Constitutional Amendment Expected Before New Year: PM's Advisor," *ARY News*, 1 November 2026, arynews.tv.

30. "Twenty-Eighth Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 2026, en.wikipedia.org. Compiles reported proposals; no bill had been tabled.

31. Anwar Khan, "New Provinces Are a Vital Necessity for Pakistan: Mustafa Kamal," *ARY News*, 14 November 2026, arynews.tv.

32. "District Wise Population of Pakistan 2023 Census," *PakGeography*, compiled from PBS district tables, pakgeography.com.

33. See, for example, "28th Amendment for Pakistan: Sindh's Boundaries Stand in Way," *ThePrint* (New Delhi), September 2026, theprint.in; and Navbharat Live, 29 July 2026, which presented the debate as Pakistan being split "into pieces".

34. "Should Pakistan Create More Provinces?" *The Friday Times*, 20 October 2026, thefridaytimes.com.

35. Marko Koethenbuerger, "Revisiting the 'Decentralization Theorem': On the Role of Externalities," *CESifo Working Paper* No. 2128 (2007), ifo.de; Alberto Alesina and Enrico Spolaore, "On the Number and Size of Nations," Quarterly Journal of Economics 112, no. 4 (1997): 1027–56.

36. "Rahim Yar Khan to Lahore," *Travelprofy*, accessed October 2026, travelprofy.com.

37. PBS, *List of Administrative Districts 2023*, pbs.gov.pk.

38. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), *World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment (SNG-WOFI)*, country profiles for Germany, Nigeria and Indonesia, sng-wofi.org.

39. UCLG, *Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization: India* (2020), gold.uclg.org.

40. Institute for Policy Reforms, *Challenges of FATA Merger* (Islamabad, June 2018), ipr.org.pk.

41. West Pakistan Land Revenue Act, 1967, text published by the Deputy Commissioner Malir, Government of Sindh, dcmalir.sindh.gov.pk.

42. "Divisions of Pakistan," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 2026, en.wikipedia.org. Used for the historical sequence of One Unit and divisional changes.

43. PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census 2023, Table 11: Population by Mother Tongue, Sex and Rural/Urban, pbs.gov.pk; see also Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis, "Unity in Diversity: Exploring Pakistan's Linguistic Landscape," 2025.

44. Government of Pakistan, *Apportionment of the Waters of the Indus River System between the Provinces of Pakistan* (Water Apportionment Accord, 1991), Ministry of Water Resources, mowr.gov.pk.

45. Fitria Fitrani, Bert Hofman and Kai Kaiser, "Unity in Diversity? The Creation of New Local Governments in a Decentralising Indonesia," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 41, no. 1 (2005): 57–79, doi.org.

46. E. Fahlevi, A. J. Andaning and P. Santosa, "Effectiveness of Regional Expansion in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi Pemerintahan Daerah* 17, no. 2 (2025), doi.org.

47. Risa J. Toha and Malcolm F. McPherson, "Reducing Decentralization's Dysfunction," *The Jakarta Post*, 12 May 2014, thejakartapost.com.

48. V. Vaibhav and K. V. Ramaswamy, "State-Size and Economic Growth: Evidence from State Reorganization in India," *Indian Economic Review* 59, suppl. 1 (2024): 177–203, doi.org.

49. Parliament of India, *The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014* (Act No. 6 of 2014), legislative.gov.in.

50. S. T. Shah, "Telangana Took a Decade, Pakistan Wants New Provinces," *South Asia Journal*, 2026, southasiajournal.net; N. Venugopal, "Hyderabad's Last Day as Common Capital," The South First, 2024.

51. O. J. Oworibo, *Political Economy of State Creation in Nigeria: Rivers and Bayelsa State as a Case Study* (National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, 2001), repository.nipsskuru.gov.ng.

52. Eric Teniola, "Beyond 2027: Prioritise States Creation Demand for Anioma, Ijebu, Ogoja, Ibadan," *International Centre for Investigative Reporting*, 2026, icirnigeria.org.

53. Institute of Policy Studies, *New Administrative Units in Pakistan: An Economic and Financial Context of the Debate* (Islamabad, 21 August 2026), ips.org.pk.

54. Press Information Department, Government of Pakistan, press release on the National Implementation Committee on FATA Reforms, 2017, pid.gov.pk.

55. "The Constitution (Twenty-Fifth Amendment) Bill, 2018 to Endorse FATA Merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," *Associated Press of Pakistan*, May 2018, app.com.pk.

56. "New Provinces Debate Calls for Consensus, Stronger Local Govts," *Aaj English TV*, 17 August 2026, english.aaj.tv.



ABOUT SOUTH ASIA TIMES

South Asia Times (SAT) is an Islamabad-based platform for research, analysis and commentary on South Asia and its wider neighborhood. Its Research section publishes SAT Briefs, original policy research, and Backgrounders, explainers on the issues behind the headlines.

WRITE A SAT BRIEF

SAT commissions scholars, researchers and practitioners to author forthcoming briefs. Contributors are paid. Send a working title, a 300-word outline and a note on your expertise to **submission@southasiatimes.org**.

ONLINE

southasiatimes.org · Research › SAT Briefs

© 2026 South Asia Times. The views expressed in SAT Briefs are those of their authors.