ISSN (Print): 2959-4391 ISSN (Online): 2959-4405

JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES DEVELOPMENT

www.jssd.org.pk editor@jssd.org.pk

POLITICAL PARTIES, ETHNO-NATIONALISM AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

Nouman Khan[1], Dr. Shahbaz Khan[2] & Dr. Muhammad Umar[3]

[1]Lecturer, Department of History and Politics, The University of Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
Email: Nouman.khan@uoh.edu.pk

[2]Professor, Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
Email: drshahbazkhanpsc@gmail.com

[3]Assistant Professor, Department of History and Politics, The University of Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
Email: m.umar@uoh.edu.pk

KEYWORDS

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, political parties, ethno-nationalism, national integration, relative deprivation, Awami National Party, Hazara province, PTM

ARTICLE HISTORY

Date of Submission: 29-09-2026
Date of Acceptance: 30-10-2026
Date of Publication: 02-11-2026

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how political parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa dealt with the ethnic and regional grievances of the province during the period 2010 and 2024, and what this meant for national integration. The study uses Relative Deprivation Theory as its main framework and Recognition Theory as a supplementary lens. This qualitative study relies mainly on election results, party manifestos, official records and press reports supported by a small number of semi-structured interviews with politicians and journalists, which were analysed through thematic analysis. The paper founded that parties carried only part of grievance of the province. The renaming of the province in 2010 met the long-standing demand of the Awami National Party for recognition of the Pashtun identity. However, it left the complaint of the province over its share of resources unsettled and created a new grievance among the Hindko-speaking population of Hazara Division. In the 2013 general election, most Pashtun voters moved to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf because of its clear position on the war on terror rather than any appeal to ethnic identity. Similarly, in the newly merged tribal districts, voters in the 2019 elections preferred independent candidates and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf over the older nationalist parties, while grievances raised by the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement later found a party platform in the shape of National Democratic Movement (NDM). In Hazara Division, the demand for a separate province never became a strong party force, because the division itself is divided over it. The paper concludes that wider access to elections increased political inclusion but did not by itself produce national integration. When political parties failed to address grievances of the people, those frustrations turned into mass mobilization outside the party system.

2026 Journal of Social Sciences Development

Corresponding Author Nouman Khan

Email: Nouman.khan@uoh.edu.pk

DOI https://doi.org/10.59075/jssd.v5i9.431

Volume/Issue 5(9), 2026, 243-257

Introduction

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa entered a new constitutional phase in 2010. The 18th Amendment renamed the North-West Frontier Province as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after its Pashtun majority and transferred considerable powers from the centre to the provinces (Government of Pakistan, 2010). In 2018, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) were merged into the province in the 25th Constitutional Amendment and extended to the tribal population the same rights enjoyed by other citizens (Dawn, 2018). Both reforms answered to the long-standing demands of the area. Yet the years that followed did not settle the ethnic politics of the province. The Awami National Party, which had led the campaign for the new name, lost most of its support in the 2013 election (Yaqubi, 2024). The Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement emerged in 2018 outside the party system, and the Hindko-speaking population of Hazara, which saw no place for themselves in the new name, revived its demand for a separate province.

This paper asks why constitutional recognition and wider access to elections did not settle ethnic grievance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and what role did political parties play in this outcome. Parties are the main channels through which ethnic demands are expected to reach the state. Ethnic identity becomes politically important when leaders mobilise it in the competition for power and resources (Brass, 1991). In a parliamentary system party is the main vehicle for that competition. When a party takes up demands of a group, the grievance can be negotiated over inside the legislature. When no party does, the grievance looks for another outlet.

Existing work on the province has mostly studied these two arenas separately. Research on the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement focuses on the movement itself, its nonviolent method and its conflict with the state (Yousaf, 2019). Work on the demand for a separate Hazara province examines the question of identity and the case for a new province (Anwar, Abbasi, & Noreen, 2021). Electoral studies traces party performance and voting patterns but do not ask what happened to the grievances that parties failed to carry (Zaman & Mushtaq, 2023). This paper brings these two arenas together. It follows the ethnic and regional grievances of the province through the party system between 2010 and 2024, and identifies where and why they moved outside it.

The analysis uses Relative Deprivation Theory as its main framework. Gurr (1970) defines relative deprivation as the gap between what people believe they are entitled to and what they believe they are able to get (Gurr, 1970). Recognition Theory serves as a secondary lens. Honneth (1995) identifies three forms of recognition, namely cultural, legal and social recognitions, while Taylor (1992) argues that misrecognition can itself cause real harm to a community or group (Honneth, 1995) (Taylor, 1992). This paper draws mainly on the second and third forms, because the renaming of the province was a legal act of recognition for one group, while the other group perceived it as a misrecognition.

The paper argues that political parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have absorbed partially the ethnic and regional grievance of the province. The Awami National Party secured recognition of Pashtun identity, but the resource grievance behind the old demand for autonomy remained unresolved. Pashtun voters then moved to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf because of its stand on the war on terror,

and not because of ethnic identity. In the merged districts, grievance moved from a protest movement into a new party, the National Democratic Movement, whose first electoral contest ended in a disputed result and loss of lives in 2024. In Hazara, the province demand never became a party force, because the population of the division itself is divided over it. Where parties could not carry a grievance, movement politics fills the gap.

Literature Review

Writing on ethnicity in Pakistan has long linked ethnic conflict to the way the state manages ethnic diversity. Siddiqi (2012) studies the Baloch, Sindhi and Mohajir movements that faced military operations after 1971. He shows that ethnic movements cannot be understood without the political divisions that nationalist ideology creates within each group.

Rahman (1996) identifies language as the main key of ethnic identity in Pakistan. He also shows that the ruling elite developed a deep mistrust of the words Pashtunistan and Pakhtunkhwa because Afghanistan used them to support its territorial claims, and he noted that the demands of the Pashtun nationalist gradually shifted from independence to the symbolic assertion of cultural autonomy. This mistrust helps in explaining why the province waited for decades for its new name and why the name remained contested after 2010. Both works treat ethnicity as a relationship between ethnic groups and the state, but neither covers Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the 18th Amendment.

Marwat, Kousar, & Latif (2022) deals with Pashtun nationalist parties and elections in the province. Studies credit the government of Awami National Party between 2008 and 2013 with making significant progress in education and provincial autonomy, but point to unfulfilled election promises.

Yaqubi (2024) links the collapse of the party after 2013 to its confused policy on militancy, which turned the conflict into a contest between the Taliban and Pashtun nationalists. He also points to the closed leadership of the party for failing to attract young voters, many of whom turned to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

Measuring vote shifts since 1988, Zaman and Mushtaq (2023) find that Peshawar Valley, the heartland of the party, is the most volatile region of the province, and that volatility fell sharply in 2018, pointing to more stable party loyalties. These studies explain why parties won or lost. They say little about what happened to the ethnic grievances carried by the losing parties.

Mahsud (2024) studies the movements that arose outside the party system. Research on the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement has examined how tribal Pashtuns came to be portrayed as violent and how the movement challenged that image through nonviolent protest (Yousaf, 2019).

Similarly, Ahmar (2013) warns of creating new provinces without the consensus of the relevant stakeholders could create conflict between linguistic groups.

Anwar et al. (2021) frame the movement in terms of identity crisis and the politics of ethnicity. Abbasi and Kalhoro (2022), comparing Hazara with the Saraiki movement, and observed that ethnic politics in Pakistan has moved from demands for security and development towards the demands for new provinces on ethnic lines.

Taken together, this literature treats parties and movements as separate subjects. Electoral studies stop at the ballot box, and the studies of movements begin where parties failed. Little of this work asks how a grievance passes from one arena to the other, or why it stays inside party politics in one region and leaves it in another. This paper addresses this question for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the period 2010 and 2024, and reads it through the frameworks of relative deprivation and recognition theories, so that the movement of grievance can be linked to its effect on national integration.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study. Its main evidence is documentary: election results and electoral studies, constitutional amendments, and national press reports, used to trace party support and party responses to ethnic demands during the period 2010 and 2024. This is supported by semi-structured interviews with five key informants, namely three politicians and two journalists, who were selected through purposive sampling method for their knowledge of provincial politics. Interviews were conducted in Pashto and Urdu and were then translated into English. All respondents gave informed consent, and their identities are protected by pseudonyms. The interview data were analysed through thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The resulting themes were checked against the documentary record and interpreted through Relative Deprivation Theory and Recognition Theory. Following Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility was supported by comparing accounts across respondent categories and against the official and press sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Analysis and Discussion

Pashtun Nationalist Parties and the 2010 Renaming

Pashtun nationalist politics in the province began with a claim for larger provincial rights. On 21 June 1947, a joint meeting of the Frontier Congress, the Khudai Khidmatgars and their allies at Bannu demanded a separate Pashtun state and decided to boycott the referendum, which offered only a choice between India and Pakistan (Shah S. W., 2015). However, the demand was not met and over the following decades, the National Awami Party (NAP) later renamed as the Awami National Party, started demanding for provincial autonomy within Pakistan (Harrison, 2008). An author describes this as a shift from seeking independence to the symbolic assertion of cultural autonomy, with the name Pakhtunkhwa as its main symbol. The state, however, remained conscious of the ethnic name for the province because Afghanistan had used the name of Pakhtunistan for its territorial claim (Rahman, 1996). Therefore, the demand for a new name carried a unique political weight that would not apply to any other province.

The autonomy demand also rested on a material complaint. Pashtun leaders of the province had charged the centre of withholding electricity from their province, which went mainly to Punjab. Similarly, tobacco and cotton grown in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and supplied to the factories established elsewhere, and that irrigation funds also favoured Punjab (Harrison, 2008). Regardless of how accurate these charges are, they show that nationalist parties framed Pashtun grievances around both resources and identity. In Gurr's (1970) terms, this is decremental deprivation, in which expectations of a group stay the same while it believes its share is decreasing.

The coalition government of Awami National Party with the Pakistan People Party from 2008 to 2013, answered the identity part of the demand. The 18th Amendment in 2010 renamed the North-West Frontier Province as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and transferred a considerable power from the centre to the provinces (Government of Pakistan, 2010). The old name described only the geographical location of the province, while the new name represents the dominant Pashtun ethnic group of the province. In Honneth's (1995) terms, this is cultural and somehow legal recognition, written in the constitution. The non-material aspect of grievance got resolved and the material grievance, however, remained unresolved. On resource dimension the deprivation stayed as decremental, as the province continued to receive a disproportionately small share, despite deserving more. On power dimension the deprivations stayed as aspirational, because the new constitutional powers raised expectations faster than the real capacity of the province to exercise them. While the renaming decided who owned the province, but not what it would receive.

The same act of recognition produced a sense of loss for the Hindko-speaking population of Hazara Division. An academic respondent explained the reaction as: "Many Hazarewal perceived the new name as emphasising Pashtun identity while overlooking the linguistic and cultural diversity of the province. This created a sense of cultural exclusion among the sections of the Hazarewal, particularly those who identified strongly with Hindko-speaking and regional identities" (Personal interview with Khan, 2025).

The respondent views the grievance as a matter of respect rather than legal rights. Hindko-speakers lost no legal entitlement in 2010, but the ethnic name of the province now reflects identity of a particular group. This corresponds to the third form of Honneth's recognition, social recognition, it explains how a single constitutional act could accomadate one community while alienating another (Marwat, Kousar, & Shafaeen, 2022). The renaming of the province was severely opposed in Abbottabad and demonstrations were carried out across the districts of Haripur, Abbottabad and in some parts of Mansehra. The Abbottabad police opened fire on demonstrators in Abbottabad in April 2010 that left seven people dead (Four years on, the voice of Hazara "martyrs" still resonates, 2014).

The Awami National Party was not the only party who demanded the renaming of the province. While leading the provincial chapter of Pakistan People Party, Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao had moved a resolution to rename the province to Pakhtunkhwa as early in 1997. After the 2008 general election, he formed the Qaumi Watan Party by merging his own faction with some dissident leftists and Pashtun nationalists. However, its support remained limited to districts like

Charsadda, Buner and Dir, and its main electoral effect was to divide vote of the Awami National Party (Khan Z. , 2013). On the Hazara question, however, the two rivals stood together. Both opposed the 2014 resolution of the provincial assembly for a separate Hazara province, by describing it as an attempt to divide the province on linguistic grounds (KP Assembly adopts resolution to create Hazara province, 2014).

As for as merger of the tribal areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is concerned, the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, whose base lies in Balochistan, shows Pashtun nationalist parties did not always agree to each other. It joined the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) in opposing the merger of the tribal areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018 (Dawn, 2018), a merger that was also supported by many other parties.

For national integration, the record of this period is mixed. The renaming brought the main Pashtun nationalist party into the constitution-making process and gave its central demand a constitutional answer, which drew Pashtun nationalism further into the federal framework. While it sought recognition for one group; however, it created a new grievance inside the province in the shape of separate Hazara province. It also left the resource question open, it kept the older grievance alive for other parties, and later for movements, to take up.

Decline of the Pashtun Nationalist Parties and the Rise of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

The Awami National Party came into power in 2010 and lost it in 2013. It won only five seats in the 2013 general elections in the province. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) emerged as the largest party by winning most of the provincial seats and formed a coalition government with Jamaat-i-Islami, the Awami Jamhori Ittehad and, notably the Qaumi Watan Party (Yaqubi, 2024). In this election, the party that had secured the new name for the province was reduced to the minority, while its smaller nationalist rival entered the provincial government as a junior partner of a party that did not organise around ethnicity at all.

Main reason behind the downfall of the ANP was the war on terror. During its time in office, the Party lost hundreds of workers to militant attacks, yet it could not end the violence. The confused policy of the ANP turned the conflict into a contest between the Taliban and Pashtun nationalists and it had failed to understand the feelings of many of the people who were themselves victims of terrorism. Voters also perceived the party as mishandling developmental funds, and a gap had opened between its workers and its leadership, which remained in the hands of a closed circle of elders. PTI offered a different response to the conflict related to war on terror. It demanded an end to American counterterrorism operations in the tribal areas, a demand that resonated strongly in the province, and it drew in young voters who felt shut out of the older parties (Zaman & Mushtaq, 2023).

In Gurr's (1970) terms, the war produced decremental deprivation among the Pashtuns of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Pashtuns lost security, lives and livelihoods while their expectations of ordinary life remained the same. This grievance was felt mainly in Pashtuns, since they were the most suffered people of the war on terror. Yet it was not carried by the party built on Pashtun identity. It moved

to a party that addressed the grievance without speaking the language of ethnicity. The 2010 renaming, a major act of recognition, did little to protect the Awami National Party, because what voters most wanted in 2013 was security rather than recognition.

The 2018 election proved that this shift was not a temporary protest. PTI won 30 of the 39 National Assembly seats in the province and secured seats in all four regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In Peshawar, the historic base of the Awami National Party, PTI won the highest share of the provincial vote. Electoral volatility across the province also fell sharply in 2018, which suggests voters settling into stable loyalties rather than looking for an alternative (Zaman & Mushtaq, 2023). By 2024 the pattern had hardened further. PTI-backed independent candidates defeated the leaders of every major party in their own constituencies. The provincial president of the Awami National Party lost in Charsadda, and the former chief minister, Amir Haider Khan Hoti, also lost both his national and provincial assemblies' seats in Mardan and resigned his party office. The Qaumi Watan Party also failed to win a single seat in the 2024 general election (Bacha, 2024).

The response of the Awami National Party to new grievances in this period also helps explain its decline. When the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement emerged in early 2018, the party removed Mohsin Dawar, the then head of its youth organisation and an active participant in the movement, and warned its other members too, not to participate in the activities of the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement without the permission of their own party. A senior party leader described the stance of the movement as extremist and said the party could not afford more deaths, having already lost hundreds of its workers to militancy (Shah S. Q., 2018). The caution was understandable, but its effect was clear. The party that claimed to speak for Pashtuns, distanced itself from the most visible Pashtun protest of the period, and the young activists it pushed away, who later formed their own party in the shape of National Democratic Movement.

For national integration, this shift cut in two directions. Pashtun grievance moved from a regional ethnic party into a party that contests elections in every province, which drew Pashtun voters more fully into national politics. But the grievance itself was not resolved. It simply changed its carrier. When the Awami National Party in turn could not answer the specific grievances of the tribal areas, those grievances found their way into a movement outside the party system, as the next section shows.

From Movement to Party in the Merged Districts

The previous section ended with Pashtun grievance passing from an ethnic party to a national one. In the tribal belt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, that transfer did not went smoothly, because their political inclusion came late. The 25th Constitutional Amendment, on 31 May 2018, merged formally the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The president of Pakistan after signing the bill said, the merger gave the tribal population the same rights as other citizens of the country (Dawn, 2018). In Honneth's (1995) terms, this was a legal recognition, extended to a population that had lived for decades under the Frontier Crimes Regulation.

The first provincial election in the merged districts was held on 20 July 2019 for sixteen general seats, with four further seats reserved for women and one for minorities. Independent candidates won six of the general seats, PTI won five, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) won three, and the Awami National Party and Jamaat-i-Islami won one each. Pakistan People Party and the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) won none, and neither nationalist party made a real impact in the election (Ullah A. , 2024). The tribal population gained adult franchise only in 1996, and political parties were not allowed to operate there until the Political Parties Act was extended to the area in 2011. Party loyalties therefore had little time to form. When the tribal areas formally entered the electoral system of the province, the older Pashtun nationalist parties had no established base in the tribal belt.

By then, the main voice of tribal grievance was already outside the party system. The Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement rose in early 2018 after the extra-judicial killing of the Naqeebullah Mehsud in a police encounter in Karachi. It raised sensitive issues such as missing persons and the treatment of tribal people by the security forces on security check-posts (Shah S. Q., 2018). In Gurr's (1970) terms, this fits progressive deprivation. As the war receded and the merger approached, expectations in the tribal areas raised, but a single event soon exposed the harsh reality of how people were actually being treated. That gap led to the emergence of the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement.

The response of the parties to the movement was divided. As the previous section showed, the Awami National Party removed Mohsin Dawar from its youth organisation for joining the movement. A politician from the Awami National Party interviewed for this study expressed the same position: he said "The PTM emerged because of deprivation and injustice in the Pashtun tribal areas. However, the ANP does not support the way the PTM portrays the grievances of the Pashtuns. Pakistan is a democratic country, with a parliament and provincial assemblies to represent its people. The ANP believes in parliamentary politics and in resolving issues in a peaceful and democratic way" (Personal interview with Hussain, 2025).

The respondent accepts the grievance but rejects the method of the PTM. This distinction is visible in the record. In March 2020, the Awami National Party called a Pashtun jirga at its headquarter in Peshawar, attended by representatives of all the major parties and by the leader of the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement. Its declaration took up several core demands of the movement: a truth and reconciliation commission for the war period, a judicial inquiry into the Khar-Qamar incident, the production of missing persons before the courts and the removal of landmines from the war affected tribal areas. Alongside these, it repeated the parties' own demands for implementing the 18th Amendment and paying the province its net-hydel profit (Pakhtun jirga asks govt to take action against all terrorist networks, 2020). All the parties in the Jirga, agreed upon with much of the demands of the movement while keeping themselves at a distance from it.

The step from movement to party came from inside the movement. Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir had been elected to the National Assembly in 2018 as independent candidates. On 1st September 2021, Mohsin Dawar and a group of other nationalist leaders launched their own political party

with the name National Democratic Movement (NDM) in Peshawar, apparently breaking ranks with the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement and its leader Manzoor Pashteen. The new party drew some of the dissident members of the Awami National Party, rights activists and workers of the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement and the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party. Dawar justified it by saying that political workers in the province felt a political vacuum (Ali Z. , 2021). Its manifesto called for a secular, federal parliamentary system, civilian supremacy under the constitution, and recognition of the historical marginalisation of smaller provinces in the distribution of resources (Khosa, 2021). The grievance that the movement had carried in the streets was now written into a party manifesto.

The first electoral test of the party came in 2024. In NA-40 constituency of the North-Waziristan, the provisional results gave Misbahuddin of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) 42,994 votes, the PTI-backed independent Aurangzeb Khan 33,852, and Dawar 32,768 (Dawn, 2024). On 10th February, Mohsin Dawar and his supporters protested the delayed result outside the Miran Shah garrison. Three protesters were killed and fifteen were wounded with Dawar among them. Protesters said the security forces opened fire on them (Siddique & Wazir, 2024), while the district police officer stated that armed persons within the demonstrators had opened fire first (Khan M. H., 2024). The sources examined for this study do not report how the dispute was finally settled.

For national integration, the merged districts show both progress and its limits. The merger gave the tribal population equal legal status, and the move from the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement to the National Democratic Movement brought part of the tribal grievance back into party politics, which is an integrative step. But the first contest of that party ended in deaths, not in a settlement through courts or institutions. Formal inclusion had arrived, while trust in the electoral process had not been built up.

The Hazara Province Demand and Its Failure to become a Party Force

In Hazara Division, grievance followed neither of the paths described above: it was neither absorbed by a national party, as Pashtun grievances were in the 2013 election, nor transformed into a new political party, as in the merged districts. The exception was the party made by Baba Haider Zaman, Tehreek-e-Suba Hazara, which collapsed after its electoral defeat. Although the demand for a separate Hazara province gained momentum after the renaming of the province in 2010, however, it failed to produce a party capable of winning power. Three features of the case explain this outcome.

First, the Hazara Division itself is divided on the issue of a separate province. The demand came mainly from the Hindko-speaking districts of Haripur, Abbottabad and Mansehra, while the division also includes Pashtun-majority areas like Battagram, Torghar, some areas of Mansehra and Kohistani-speaking Kohistan districts. In June 2011, the Awami National Party government announced a separate Abaseen Division made up of Kohistan, Battagram and Torghar. The plan drew opposition from both directions. A leader of the Tehreek-e-Suba Hazara called it an attempt to divide the people of Hazara, while the own provincial assembly members from Kohistan objected that his district had not been consulted in this regard. He added that a Kohistan jirga had preferred a Hazara province to the proposed division (Dawn, 2011). The non-Hindko-speaking areas are

therefore divided on this issue. A demand that claimed to speak for the whole division could not rely on the support of the whole division.

The second feature is the weakness of the parties that produced the demand. The Hazara Qaumi Mahaz had campaigned for the rights of the Hazrewal since 1987. After the 2010 protests, Baba Haider Zaman registered the Tehreek-e-Suba Hazara as a separate party a year before the 2013 election. All its candidates lost to PTI, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and independents. Baba Haider Zaman himself secured 36,571 votes in NA-18 Abbottabad constituency and stood third (Sadaqat, 2024). A politician interviewed for this study observed this result as a verdict on the demand itself: he said "The politicians who were fighting for the creation of a separate Hazara province were badly defeated in the 2013 general election by the people of Hazara. This shows that the Hazara province is not the main concern of the majority people of the Hazara Division, rather the wishes of some politicians, from the Abbottabad and Mansehra districts" (Personal interview with Hussain 2025).

The documentary record supports the results of the election and suggests a more mixed explanation. Accounts collected by Sadaqat (2024) describe the politics of Hazara as personality-based rather than driven by ideology, and note that the founders of the movement came from ordinary backgrounds and could not match the resources of established electable. A local journalist quoted in the same report described the decision of Baba Haider Zaman to form a separate party rather than join the Hazara Qaumi Mahaz as a political miscalculation. Many politicians who joined the movement after 2010 had previously lost elections and used it as an opportunity to re-enter parliamentary politics. The 2013 electoral defeat therefore reflected internal division of the movement and personality-driven leadership, rather than public indifference alone. The pattern continued in 2024, when another pro-province party, the Hazara Awami Ittehad, fielded two provincial candidates who together polled fewer than 1,000 votes (Sadaqat, 2024).

The third feature is, the mainstream parties absorbed the demand in words while holding seats of the region. In 2018, PTI won three of seven seats of National Assembly in Hazara Division and gained a fourth one also when an independent joined it. The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) held two, and the seventh went to the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) (Khan N. A., 2024). In 2014, the PTI-led provincial assembly adopted a resolution and asked the federal government to create new administrative units, including Hazara province. The Awami National Party, the Qaumi Watan Party and the Pakistan People Party opposed it as a division of the province on linguistic lines (KP Assembly adopts resolution to create Hazara province, 2014). Before the 2024 election, both Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and PTI candidates again expressed support for a separate Hazara province (Sadaqat, 2024). The parties that won seats in Hazara region therefore carried the demand in their rhetoric, which left little room for a separate party built on it.

A resolution, however, is not sufficient to create a province. Under Article 239(4) of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, a constitutional amendment required to alter the limits of a province. The amendment needs two-third majority votes of each house of the parliament to be passed from the parliament. After getting two-third majority from the parliament the same procedure also to be

followed in the concern provincial assembly. A journalist interviewed for this study described the procedure in these terms: he said "The creation of a province is not a simple job. It needs a two-thirds majority to amend the Constitution, and the bill must also be passed by the two-thirds majority in the provincial assembly concerned. If this procedure is followed in Parliament and in the provincial assembly, no one can question the new province. Political consensus should be built to resolve the issue democratically and to strengthen national harmony" (Personal interview with Momand, 2025).

The point of the respondent is the outcome depends on consensus, not on the will of any single party or a group. In the case of Hazara, consensus is missing at every level, within the division, and among the provincial and mainstream parties too. A respondent described the same as "political consensus should be built on this issue to solve it peacefully" (Personal interview with Zaheer, 2025).

A Pashtun respondent from the division also warned against a decision taken without the consent of the Pashtun population of Hazara. He said, if the whole region were made a separate Hazara province "without the consent of its Pashtun population, it would lead to conflict between the Hindko-speaking and Pashto-speaking populations" (Personal interview with Sardar, 2025).

Therefore, political consensus is essential to resolve this issue and to strengthen national integration.

In Gurr's (1970) terms, the Hazara province grievance is a case of aspirational deprivation. The renaming raised expectations of the Hindko speakers of equal recognition within the province, while their political position did not change. Yet the grievance stayed within constitutional channels. It was pursued through elections and assembly resolutions rather than through a sustained protest movement, and in this sense, it posed no challenge to national integration. Its limits are political rather than institutional. The demand was never remained strong enough electorally, or united enough geographically, to build the consensus that the Constitution requires. Of the four cases examined in this paper, Hazara shows clearly that party politics can keep a grievance within the system while leaving it unresolved.

Conclusion

This paper asked why constitutional recognition and wider access to elections did not settle ethnic grievance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the period 2010 and 2024. It finds that parties carried only part of grievance of the province. The 2010 renaming, secured by the Awami National Party, met the Pashtun demand for recognition, but it left the resource grievance unresolved and created a sense of exclusion in Hazara. The party also lost its base in 2013, because voters wanted security more than recognition. Pashtun grievance passed to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, a national party that did not appeal to ethnic identity. In the merged districts, where political parties act was extended in 2011, grievance moved outside the party system into the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement and later returned to party politics through the National Democratic Movement, whose first contest in 2024 ended in casualties. In Hazara, the demand of a separate province stayed within constitutional channels but never built a party able to win, because the division is divided, the movement is fragmented, and mainstream parties had carried the demand only in rhetoric.

Read together, the four cases suggest that the political outcome of grievance depended on three factors: whether a party was willing to represent it, whether the group was united, and whether institutions could resolve internal disputes. When these conditions were met, grievance remained within party politics; when they were absent, it remained unresolved or shifted towards protest. Relative Deprivation Theory explains why the grievance persisted, while Recognition Theory explains how a single act of recognition could resolve one claim and create another. Parties in the province proved better at meeting claims for recognition than at reducing deprivation.

In terms of national integration, the period saw more progress in form than in substance. The renaming, the merger and the shift of Pashtun voters towards a national party drew the province further into the federal system. However, resource grievance, distrust in the tribal areas and the Hazara demand for a separate province remained unresolved in 2024, indicates that national integration remained incomplete.

References

Akbar, A. (2018, 06 04). At least two PTM workers killed in South Waziristan 'militant attack'. Karachi, Pakistan: Pakistan Herald Publications (Pvt.) Ltd. Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1411810

Ali, A. (2019, 06 1). KP chief minister announces compensation for affectees of Khar Qamar clash. Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan: Dawn Media Group. Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1485926

Ali, A. (2026). Borderland, Resistance, and Neo-Pashtun Consciousness: The Case of Pashtun Tahafuz (Protection) Movement in Pakistan. *Critical Pakistan Studies*, 1–20. doi:10.1017/cps.2026.10013

Ali, M. (2025, September 2). KP asks Centre to release over Rs71 billion net hydel profit. Dawn News. Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1939002/kp-asks-centre-to-release-over-rs71-billion-net-hydel-profit

Ali, Z. (2020, 12 20). Ex-Fata compensation, economic recovery initiatives in slow lane. Karachi, Pakistan: Dawn Media Group (Pakistan Herald Publications). Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1596736

Ali, Z. (2021, 09 2). Waziristan MNA, nationalists form political party. Peshawar: Pakistan Herald Publications (Pvt.). Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1644028

Anwar, M., Abbasi, A. M., & Noreen, K. (2021). Identity crises and politics of ethnicity: A case study of Hazara Nationalist Movement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *Global Political Review (GPR), 6*(4), 54–62. doi:10.31703/gpr.2021(VI-IV).06

Bacha, A. H. (2024, 02 10). Tehreek-i-Insaf's nominees deliver upsets in KP. Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1812857

Brass, P. R. (1991). *Ethnicity and nationalism: Theory and comparison.* New Delhi, India: Sage Publications. Retrieved 13 01, 2026, from https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=Ethnicity+and+Nationalism+Theory+and+Comparison+Brass

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Dawn. (2011, 06 19). Creation of Abaseen division opposed. Mansehra: Pakistan Herald Publications (Pvt.). Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/637931/creation-of-abaseen-division-opposed

Dawn. (2018, 05 31). President signs KP-Fata merger bill into law. Karachi, Pakistan: Dawn, Pakistan. Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1411156

Dawn. (2024, 02 10). JUI-F's Misbahuddin wins North Waziristan's NA-40. Peshawar: Pakistan Herald Publications. Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1813024

Four years on, the voice of Hazara "martyrs" still resonates. (2014, 04 12). (T. E. Tribune, Compiler) Karachi, Pakistan: The Express Tribune. Retrieved from https://tribune.com.pk/story/694407/four-years-on-the-voice-of-hazara-martyrs-still-resonates

Government of Pakistan. (2010). *The Constitution (Eighteenth Amendment) Act, 2010.* Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) of Pakistan. Islamabad: National Assembly of Pakistan. It hosts the official text; the Act itself was published in the Gazette of Pakistan. Retrieved from https://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1302138356_934.pdf

Gurr, T. R. (1970). *Why men rebel.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Retrieved 03 01, 2026, from https://archive.org/details/whymenrebel0000tedr

Harrison, H. S. (2008). *"Pashtunistan": The challenge to Pakistan and Afghanistan.* Real Instituto Elcano, Security & Defence area. Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano. Retrieved from https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ari37-2008-harrison-pashtunistan-afghanistan-pakistan.pdf

Honneth, A. (1995). *The struggle for recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts.* Cambridge, England: Polity Press. Retrieved from https://www.politybooks.com/bookdetail?book_slug=the-struggle-for-recognition-the-moral-grammar-of-social-conflicts--9780745611600

Khan, B., Ali, S., & Khan, A. (2023). A historical overview of reforms in the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Pakistan. *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS), 4*(1), 15–27. doi:10.47264/idea.jhsms/4.1.2

Khan, I. (2014, 06 16). All-out military operation launched in North Waziristan. Karachi, Pakistan: Dawn Media Group (Pakistan Herald Publications). Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1112949

Khan, M. (2024, 02 10). "Police firing" in N Waziristan injures Mohsin Dawar. Pakistan: Jang Media Group. Retrieved from https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/1156292-police-firing-in-n-waziristan-injures-mohsin-dawar

Khan, M. H. (2024, 02 10). Police firing' in N Waziristan injures Mohsin Dawar. Peshawar: Jang Media Group. Retrieved from https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/1156292-police-firing-in-n-waziristan-injures-mohsin-dawar

Khan, N. A. (2024, 01 19). The Hazara front. Abbotabad: Pakistan Herald Publications (Pvt.). Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1807023

Khan, Z. (2013, 04 1st). Tracing the trajectory of Aftab Sherpao and the Qaumi Watan Party. Karachi, Pakistan: Express Media Group. Retrieved from https://tribune.com.pk/story/529279/tracing-the-trajectory-of-aftab-sherpao-and-the-qaumi-watan-party

Khosa, A. (2021, 09 1). MNA Mohsin Dawar launches National Democratic Movement in Peshawar. Lahore, Pakistan: The Friday Times, Lahore. Retrieved from https://www.thefridaytimes.com/01-Sep-2021/mna-mohsin-dawar-launches-national-democratic-movement-in-peshawar

KP Assembly adopts resolution to create Hazara province. (2014, 03 21). Karcahi, Pakistan: awn Media Group (Pakistan Herald Publications). Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1094671

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (1st ed.). Beverly Hills: Sage. Retrieved from https://collegepublishing.sagepub.com/products/842

Marwat, S. K., Kousar, S., & Shafaeen, L. (2022). Analysis of Awami National Party's theory and practice during its rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2008–2013). *Global Political Review (GPR), 7*(1), 83–91. doi:10.31703/gpr.2022(VII-I).09

Pakhtun jirga asks govt to take action against all terrorist networks. (2020, March 11). Pakhtun jirga asks govt to take action against all terrorist networks. Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Dawan Media Group. Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1539937

Rahman, T. (1996). *Language and politics in Pakistan.* Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press.

Sadaqat, M. (2024, 01 23). Efforts on to revive Hazara province politics. Karachi, Pakistan: Dawn Media Group (Pakistan Herald Publications). Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1807945/efforts-on-to-revive-hazara-province-politics

Shah, S. Q. (2018, 03 22). Has PTM taken the road less travelled by? Peshawar: Pakistan Herald Publications (Pvt.). Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1396751

Shah, S. W. (2015). *Ethnicity, Islam and nationalism: Muslim politics in the North-West Frontier Province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) 1937–1947.* Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research (NIHCR). Retrieved from https://wiqaralishah.com/media/pdf/Books/Ethnicity-Islam-and-Nationalism.pdf

Siddique, A., & Wazir, U. (2024, 02 14). Wounded ex-lawmaker among scores of candidates challenging results of disputed Pakistani elections. Prague, Czech Republic: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). Retrieved from https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-candidates-challenging-elections-results/32819715.html

Taylor, C. (1992). *"The politics of recognition," in Multiculturalism and "the politics of recognition": An essay (A. Gutmann, Ed.).* New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Retrieved 04 02, 2026, from https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691037790/multiculturalism

Ullah, A. (2024). The 2019 provincial elections in newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: An epoch-making commencement. *Central Asia Journal. The article header prints it this way. Crossref lists the title simply as Central Asia.*(94). doi:10.54418/ca-94.220

Ullah, A. (2024, 12 26). The 2019 provincial elections in newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: An epoch-making commencement. *Central Asia Journal*(94), 51–70. doi:10.54418/ca-94.220

Ullah, K. (2021, 10 06). Blocked identity card: "Despite being a Pakistani, I live the life of an absconder.". Baluchistan. Retrieved 03 05, 2026, from https://loksujag.com/story/blocked-pashtun-ID-cards-eng

Yaqubi, H. (2024). New trends in the politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Issues and outcomes. *Pakistan Vision, 25*(1), 29–44.

Yousaf, F. (2019). Pakistan's "tribal" Pashtuns, their "violent" representation, and the Pashtun Tahafuz movement. *SAGE Open, 9*(1), 1-10. doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019829546

Zaman, A., & Mushtaq, M. (2023). Mapping electoral volatility in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan (1970–2018). *Pakistan Journal of Social Issues, 14*, 156–171. Retrieved from http://uog.edu.pk/downloads/journal/XIV/14.pdf

Appendix 1

List of the Interviewers

S.No	Pseudonym	Category	Mode of Interview	Year
1	Shah Hussain	Politician	Face to Face	2025
2	Aslam Khan	Politician	Online	2025
3	Khan Sardar	Politician	Online	2025
4	Tariq Zaheer	Journalist	Online	2025
5	Zaheer Momand	Journalist	Online	2025