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Infusing National Integration in the Fractured Society of Pakistan

Headings

Abstract   There is a common proverb that national integration in Pakistan appears in crises only. The nation has responded during calamities in a unified manner. However, when the crisis is dealt with, the internal incongruities resurface. The Pakistani society is divided into fault lines, like, political, ethnic, linguistic, societal, feudal, religious, and provincial etc., which has fractured national integration. This publication is in continuation of my previous articles on the challenges of national integration in Pakistan 2018 and the national security paradigm of Pakistan published in 2019. This article investigates the existing status of the Pakistani State and society and how far we have progressed towards achieving national integration both as the State and society. The article also examines various factors impacting the national integration in Pakistan and suggests a course of action for achieving tolerance and harmony in the society to fulfill the dream of creating a progressive and tolerant society.

Key Words: Fractured Society, National Harmony, National Cohesion, National Integration

Introduction

The creation of Pakistan was the result of enormous sacrifices, unified struggle, and the charismatic leadership of Quaid -I -Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. They were created on the notion of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the sub-continent, where they could live freely and practice their religion without any fear. The minorities and all segments of society would have equal rights, and the constitution of Pakistan would guarantee equal opportunity for all its inhabitants (Niazi, 2012, p. 1). While on the other hand, Pakistan inherited a host of challenges like non-existing infrastructure, a weak economy, lack of defense capability in the face of

hegemonic neighbour, and unparalleled human security challenges due to mass migrations and re-settlement of refugees. Pakistan, since 1947, has come a long way towards progress and prosperity. It has a strong defense, reasonably well-developed infrastructure, and a moving economy amid challenges. Despite that, the nation is desperate and fragmented due to a lack of equal opportunities, societal division along parochial fault lines, which have been exacerbating over a period. For the last 75 years, the country has witnessed different forms of governments, various slogans to win the political support while doing little on the ground to create

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harmony and social justice. The biggest challenge today is that Pakistani society stands fractured and divided along linguistic, religious, ethnic, and provincial lines, to name a few, which is seriously impacting national integration in Pakistan (Hippler, 2012, p. 1). While there is a great realization both at federal and provincial levels to address the issues of underprivileged segments of society, however, not much has been done on the ground in a tangible manner, nor do the statics support the arguments of successive governments. Every subsequent government has been trying to get popular votes by chanting slogans only to get political ascendency; however, once in power, they seldom talk of the national issues which they promised during their election campaigns. In such a scenario, the underprivileged areas like Balochistan, former federally administered tribal (FATA) areas, remote areas of Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Punjab and Sindh have been relegated, and they feel marginalized from the mainstream development of the country that has caused social stratification of rich and poor classes so obvious now, than ever before.

Irrespective of language, religion, creed, race, or ethnic background, the national integration provides a sense of purpose and belonging, binds every section of society in a well-knit fashion for a unified cause of serving and developing the nation-state. Integration is also unswerving advancement that provides equal rights and opportunities without any discrimination to its inhabitants (Mukhtar et al., 2019, p. 189). In fact, it is a social contract between the State and society. Whenever the bonds of this social contract are progressive and strong, both the State and society are obliged to work for each other. While in the case of Pakistan, the society feels marginalized due to a host of factors related to governance and lack of equal opportunities, underdevelopment, rampant corruption, to name a few. The distinction between the elite ruling class and the society is widening, generating notional disillusionment, which has a negative impact on national assimilation. The recipe of national integration rests on the prerequisite that governance both at national and provincial levels should create a strong sense of national pride by identical development and ensuring equal rights for

all the communities, regions, and the federating units (Shah & Ishaque, 2017, p. 42). In fact, the diversity of different federating units should create unity instead of disunity based on parochial assumptions of social stratification in Pakistan. Building upon the previous work on the subject, the evolving global, regional, and national dynamics have been factored to investigate the causal factors affecting national unity and harmony in Pakistan.

Theoretical Construct

For academic discourse on the national integration in Pakistan, theoretical approaches of nation-building, state-building, and national development have been applied as these have complementary functions towards national integration. Goldsmith describes nation-building as 'the establishment of a common national identity within a given geographical area, based on shared language and culture' (Brinkerhoff, 2007, p. 37). In contrast, Hopp and Kloke-Lesche emphasize that the establishment of effective institutions, infrastructure, and equitable distribution of resources for development (Hopp & Kloke-Lesch, 2005, p. 13). Another significant aspect of nation-building is state-building, which forms the nucleus of all developmental spheres. In fact, it is a process to develop institutions, capacity, and legitimacy of the State determined by state and society relations (Grotenhuis, 2016, p. 11). Therefore, 'in the overall all context, state-building is principally about strengthening the relationship between the state and society, along-with developing effective ways to manage such a relationship.' The process of state-building is 'instituted on the political procedures to negotiate state-society relations and power relationships among elites and social groups. The hallmark of state-building is the process of engagement between the State and its inhabitants and the extent to which the State can effectively manage its obligations without resorting to using force. The lynchpin of this debate rests on the core argument that, where there is a mismatch between expectations of society and the performance of state institutions, it can lead to political tension and eventually cause instability. Therefore, ensuring security, implementation of the rule of law, ensuring

equitable development, and providing economic opportunities along with health and education are prime areas of the State's social contract towards the society. In the case of Pakistan, the national security mosaic discussed in the latter part of this article provides a comprehensive view of existential internal and external challenges impacting the fabrics of Pakistani society. From the lens of state-building and nation-building, this article has been developed, which provides insightful analyses as to why the issues of national integration are still relevant in Pakistan despite more than seven decades of independence and how a harmonious society can be developed.

Research Methodology

The article has been built through qualitative research using both primary and secondary data. The content analysis has been conducted by examining various speeches, policy statements, and press conferences of various stakeholders of Pakistani governance structure and society. The field visits were also conducted to Balochistan, former FATA, and interior Sindh for getting first-hand knowledge of the prevailing ground situation in terms of poverty, infrastructure development, and people's grievances, which have been factored in analyses and recommendations part to make it all-encompassing research work.

Literature Review

The debate surrounding challenges of national integration in Pakistan dates to the days of partition after the promulgation of Urdu as an official language. Ensuing language riots and later traumatic dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 is the stark reminder of persistent challenges, which are still haunting the Federation of Pakistan. The literature review section recaptures important arguments of the past research conducted on the subject, identifying the gap and later building own arguments as an addition to the existing knowledge supported by the empirical data. Dr. Moonis Ahmer describes that national integration is as a sense of belonging and evolves as a process by providing social and economic justice by the State to the society, and it is not something that can be created artificially (Ahmer, 2019a). The diversity based on language,

culture, religion, and ethnicity exists in many countries, but visionary leadership capitalize on the diversity and infuse a sense of participation, undertake equitable development and provide equal opportunities for the inhabitants (Ahmer, 2019b). The social contract between the State and society, which makes everyone a stakeholder in the national development process, invigorates the feelings of ownership and empowers the masses, which unfortunately has been missed out on several occasions in Pakistan in the last seventy years. Dr. Waseem Ishaque opines that regional identities, sub-nationalist tendencies, and religious extremism are considered as core challenges, which have eroded our national identity and national integration since last forty years, where systemic environments like; Islamic revolution in Iran, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 979 and Pakistan's ensuing role as front line state in defeating communist aggression, subsequent Talibanisation in Afghanistan and later the global war on terrorism proved extremely costly for the State and society of Pakistan, and fractured it on religious, ideological and ethnic lines and also compounded the already existing fissures. Sub nationalist tendencies in Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces resulted in security forces operations, which again proved counterproductive on account of national integration (Shah & Ishaque, 2017, p. 37). Lack of equitable economic development, rising Inflation, increase in poverty index, and declining human development index (HDI) are additional factors, which have been eroding our national identity and pride (Shah & Ishaque, 2017, p. 43). Ahmed Rashid feels that three significant aspects; ethnicity, national identity, and blurred concept of national security, are creating disharmony among the power structures in Pakistan, therefore, creating a gulf between State and society (Rashid, 2010, p. 371). Zaid Haider highlights that Pakistan, since its inception is facing significant challenges out of which three fault lines; ethnic strife, maintaining balanced civil- military relations, and Islamic ideology, have affected stability and national integration in Pakistan (Z. Haider, April2010, p. 8). The Pakistani State devoted its initial time for national development instead of creating a genuine community with national identity and pride; therefore, the East-West

paradigm created two distinct identities compounded by language riots, which eventuality led to the tragic demise of East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh (Ziring, 1974, p. 311). These fault lines, in one way or the other, are persisting even today with varying degrees of intensity and overall impact on national integration in Pakistan.

Appraisal of Evolving National Scene of Pakistan

To build a comprehensive picture of the status of national integration in Pakistan, multiple factors have been considered, analyzed and accordingly, the arguments have been developed. The critical examination of factors impacting national integration in Pakistan is presented here.

Pakistan's National Security Paradigm

The evolving regional and global settings are fast moving towards power transition, especially when viewed in the context of the United States' hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan and nascent government in Kabul still trying to hammer out an accepted model of governance, which should enjoy legitimacy and popular support.
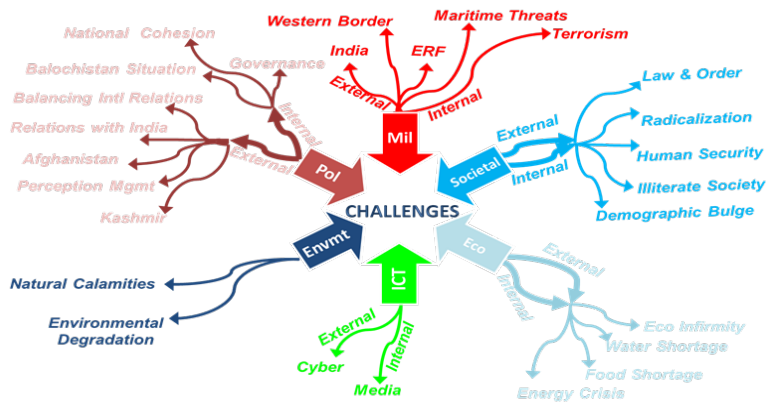

Figure 1: Pakistan's National Security Paradigm (Mukhtar et al., 2019, p. 193)

The suicide blasts at Kabul airport in late August 2021 and later to different parts of Afghanistan and claiming of responsibility by ISIS-K is a worrisome development as this terrorist organization with its sleeper cells has the capability and will to unleash terror at will, therefore, is likely to be exploited for creating security challenges both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The evolving regional and global order, therefore, present far-reaching implications on Pakistan's National Security paradigm pictorially highlighted in figure 1 and internal security matrix is given in figure 2 below, warrant extraordinary leadership, internal cohesion, and harmony and whole of government approach for a synergetic response to meet the evolving challenges in a befitting manner. It may be noted that there are many pending socio-economic and socio-political issues causing concerns among the masses (Anis, 2021, p. 3), especially from underdeveloped areas, which demand immediate attention and priority considerations. Such overtures will help in augmenting national integration and denying space to anti-state elements for exploiting the fissures as justification for advancing their anti-state agenda supported by their foreign masters. It is highly appreciated that the security forces and other state institutions are fully cognizant of their obligations and doing their best to respond to internal and external challenges; however, a need has been felt whereby the entire nation stands up to the strategic challenges and responds in a cohesive manner. What I want to emphasize is that one voice as one integrated nation is the need of the hour, and we must rise to the occasion for providing an appropriate response to the emerging challenges. Many unaddressed socio-political and socio-

economic issues have generated a degree of concern among the masses (Ali, 2021, p. 3), which need to be addressed as a priority for enhancing national integration and denying space to anti-state elements using these fissures as an excuse for creating social unrest and disharmony.

Pakistan's Internal Security Mosaic

The internal security mosaic for Pakistan presents a fractured image of Pakistani society.

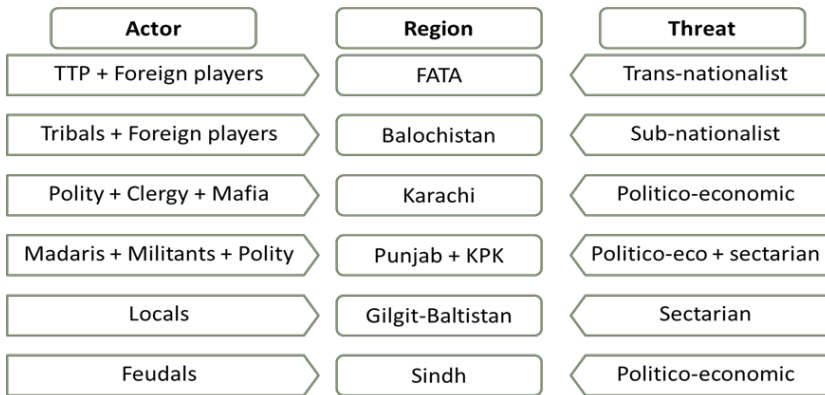| Actor	Region	Threat
TTP + Foreign players	FATA	Trans-nationalist
Tribals + Foreign players	Balochistan	Sub-nationalist
Polity + Clergy + Mafia	Karachi	Politico-economic
Madaris + Militants + Polity	Punjab + KPK	Politico-eco + sectarian
Locals	Gilgit-Baltistan	Sectarian
Feudals	Sindh	Politico-economic

Figure 2: Pakistan's Internal Security Mosaic (Mukhtar et al., 2019, p. 191)

Identity-based on language, tribe, province, and ethnicity have resurfaced in underdeveloped regions of Pakistan (Khan, 2021). The notion of deprivation and marginalization are fracturing our society, as they feel left out from the radar screen of Islamabad. Sectarianism and economic instability are yet other important variables negatively impacting the internal fissures posing serious threats to the internal security of Pakistan (Mezzera & Aftab, 2009, p. 33). Religious extremism, on the other hand, has produced an unpleasant image within and outside Pakistan (S. F. e Haider, 2021, p. 1). Inter-provincial disharmony, feelings of deprivation, and marginalization has led to armed struggle in Balochistan and former FATA with simmering effects in interior Sindh as well. There have been instances of armed insurgency by a handful of tribal leaders and counter-insurgency operations by security forces in Balochistan and former FATA (Rumi, 2012, p. 183). The armed groups with their hide outs in "NO GO" areas in Balochistan and adjacent Afghanistan are a constant source of threat (Gattani, 2021). While successive governments have won electoral benefits by voicing solidarity with such deprived communities like Aghaz e Haqqo QE Balochistan (Shaheen, 2020), but little was done on the ground to alleviate their sufferings and mainstream them through equitable economic development. The deficiency of equitable socio-economic development has provided ethno-sectarian elements and regional forces cases -belie to exploit these inadequacies and internally weaken the federation of Pakistan through protracted low-intensity conflict. It is emphasized that the ethno-sectarian glitches are serious threats to the internal security mosaic of Pakistan. Political polarization, intolerance, and depleting respect for other's views and manifestos have added fragility to the national harmony. Receding economic opportunities, rising Inflation, unemployment, and a growing number of population sliding below the poverty line are seriously impacting the internal cohesion and nationhood of Pakistani society.

Stocktaking of National Integration Matrix

Even though Pakistan was created in the name of Islam after enormous sacrifices and human sufferings, yet even after 74 years of independence, we have not been able to gel ourselves as a homogenous society. The gap between State and society is widening, and the social contract is weakening, thus eroding the pride of Pakistani society. The successive governments also made

little effort in seriously addressing the frustration of underprivileged segments of society, and today, this ever-growing monster of disunity is hurting the very foundations of our existence as a nation-state. The undermentioned diagram recapitulates the existing national integration predicaments for us, which are also examined in detail in the ensuing paragraphs.

Figure 3: National Integration Matrix of Pakistan

Political Polarization

Pakistan's political history and governance is rich in forms and manifestations. More than half of the time since the country's inception in 1947 has been ruled by the military, and out of remaining time, we have witnessed controlled democracy, party, and non-party basis elections and full democracy. The critical examination of different types of governance along -with their time durations lead us to conclude that no system was perfect, and since then, the country has been facing the perpetual State of experiments. Theoretically, the mainstream political parties are a symbol of national unity and integration, but unfortunately, due to the feeling of ostracism, they have opted to limit their electoral desires within their native constituencies. The vacuum at the national level was initially exploited by the religious extremist parties and later by those championing provincialism and regionalism while resorting to low-intensity conflicts to achieve their political ends. There is yet another phenomenon of political intolerance and lack of respect for others' views, which has fractured the civilized norms and outlook of Pakistani society. Today the national political scene is presenting a dreadful picture, where impatience, intolerance, abusive language, allegations, and the blame game is shaping the behavior of political parties and inculcating the culture of hatred, parochial provincialism, ethnicity, tribalism, feudalism, thus creating a serious dent in the national identity and self-esteem of Pakistani nation. While several slogans have been articulated by political elites addressing the socio-economic issues of the masses, however, people have always been ignored when any party has been elevated to govern through the electoral process. The mindset of the ruling elite, which has nurtured since independence, remained one of "colonial" character, designed to control people instead of becoming an instrument for self-government (Z. S. Ahmed, 2019, p. 402). The evolving paradigm presents a very grim picture of the national integration matrix as the political point-scoring at the cost of national development and subduing each other are the new norms of our political discourse, which is negatively impacting our identity, assimilation, and dignity.

Securitization of State Policies

It is very important to understand the

unprecedented security threats to our territorial integrity at the time of independence from hostile India in the east and unfriendly Afghanistan in the west amid the height of the cold war. Therefore, Pakistan, since its inception, inherited a peculiar set threat environment, which in fact shaped the state policies and is going on for last 74 years. The vulnerability from both India and Afghanistan kept Pakistan in the perpetual State of security-centric policies, with the state survival as the ultimate end. Over expenditures on the security apparatus at the cost of development of other elements of national power (EONP) has resulted in a greater imbalance between defence and all other elements of national power; therefore, the comprehensive national power of Pakistan is relatively inconsistent. The rising Inflation and price hike with limited employment opportunities have created despondency as around 39% of the population is now living below the poverty line (D. V. Ahmed, 2021), which was around 24% in 2015 (Redaelli, 2015, p. 1) . The declining budget for health, education, and lack of capacity for infrastructure development has created a huge gap between rural and urban populations. The social contract between the State and society is under stress due to the lack of government's capacity to provide adequate jobs. The youth bulge has been affected by a shrinking economic base and, therefore, seriously affecting the human development index and human security in Pakistan. We have come a long way on account of safeguarding the territorial integrity of Pakistan with strong conventional and nuclear capabilities and have also successfully defeated the menace of terrorism; therefore, an all-encompassing review of existing decencies of other EONP is the need of time. Pakistan can only grow stronger when all EONP will grow proportionately. It requires serious introspection and reappropriation of resources for health, education, infrastructure development, and industrialization.

Rising Inflation and Cost of Living

The unchecked price hike, shrinking purchasing capacity, over-taxation with different brands (Aftab, 2021) bulldozed with the mantra of putting people behind bars who don't pay taxes, has created a great despondency among the masses. Despite introducing several forms of indirect taxes, the ruling elite, unfortunately, propagates against their own people that they don't pay taxes contrary to facts on the ground. In my analyses, it is in-fact elite class, who seldom pay taxes, and that the burden is shared by commoners through an indirect taxation system. The masses have now reached to the optimum frustration level as they are paying the high cost for incompetent leaders, who are making policies to please their masters and not the commoners of Pakistan. This situation of hopelessness and dejection is generating anti-state sentiments and creating a breeding ground, which can be exploited by our adversaries. The Arab Spring and resultant infighting in the Middle Eastern countries were triggered by economic crises, where masses were squeezed and marginalized to the extent that they decided to take up arms against incumbent rulers. The case study of the separation of East Pakistan and the Arab Spring are relevant in today's environments as well, therefore, concrete steps would be needed to address the weakening economy and rising Inflation so that the masses are incentivized for love with the country, lest it is too late.

Preference Towards Regionalism and Sub Nationalist Tendencies

Pakistan, since its inception, inherited the preference of regional identities and affiliations due to different federating units willingly opting to join Pakistan. However, at the national scene, despite concerted efforts, the ideal interprovincial harmony could not be created. While such a diversity could have been capitalized as one nation with different colors, but unfortunately, a holistic outlook is far from reality. The grievances of smaller federating units and the failure of central government in addressing their legitimate concerns and instead of using hard power in crushing those sentiments have led to polarization and dissatisfaction in the current structure of federation. The marginalized segments of society have resorted to armed struggle, especially in Baluchistan and former FATA areas. Continued neglect, parochial political interests, tribal ethos, and weak governance has been exploited by the anti-state elements and supported by their foreign masters, which has given rise to

sub-nationalism and a radical culture that thrives on brutality, vandalism thus eroding the social fabrics and national integration in the country.

Ideological Character of State

As per Stephen P Cohen, "The most significant struggle in Pakistan is not a civilizational clash between Muslims and non-Muslims, but a clatter between diverse conceptions and interpretations of Islam, predominantly how Pakistan should implement Islamic identity in State's outlook" (Cohen, 2011, p. 13). Even after 74 years of independence, the ideological construct of the State is still being debated by almost all the political parties, especially the religio-political parties. Unfortunately, the State's Islamic ideology is a point of debate since our independence and has become a very sensitive issue over a period (Karmani, 2017), that has made the society intolerant, and has deflected the policymakers from core concerns of socio-economic development and wellbeing of the society.

Religious Extremism

The sectarianism and religious extremism have grown as the most complicated challenge to the national integration, security, and stability of Pakistan. The urge to impose their version and interpretation of Islam has acted as a fundamental cause of disharmony in the society. It is worth noting that various political parties and other forms of governance in Pakistan for their perceived interests used the religious card to advance their political motivations and agendas. Instead of unifying the nation under one religious identity enshrined by Islam, such myopic religious discourse has divided us on intolerant societal characteristics, fueling hatred and discord as the State and society has delegated the religious interpretation to clergy, which offered them the monopoly over religious issues. The revolution in Iran, Afghan jihad, Talibanization and recent victory of Taliban and reinstatement of their government in Kabul has recharged aspiring religio-political entities to resort to militancy for accruing political leverage. The federal capital has virtually become a battle ground for all religious and political protests, where life comes to a grinding halt at frequent intervals. The

writ of the government is challenged by every such gatherings and each time the State has surrendered to the demands of protesters to an unprecedented level (Hussain, 2021). The charged mob of protesters do not care about fellow citizens and brutalize the law enforcing agencies as well. The people are gradually loosing trust in the governance elites due to eroding public order and safety at the hands of a handful of religious fanatics. The evolving situation if not proactively handled may polarize the society even further and promote extremism, terrorism, and hatred within Pakistan, further confounding the integration matrix.

Human Security and Human Development Index (HDI)

Pakistan's declining HDI as it ranks 154 out of 189 countries as per UNHD report on 2020 (M. Haider, 2020), is seriously affecting the human security. Inadequate health and education budget compounded by COVID crises and enhanced security sector requirements have created a serious imbalance in managing human security issues in Pakistan. Rambling corruption, selective accountability, tardy justice, and ineffective institutions, are some of the contributory factors which are creating serious demoralization and hopelessness in the masses. Additionally, the imbalanced budgetary grants and resources, lack of employment opportunities, against much trumpeted election slogans, ever increasing prices of even daily commodity items, jagged infrastructural development have generated anxiety in society and disparity in overall wellbeing of people. The skilled and unskilled youth bulge being a source of delight for the country has rather become a liability and source of capitulation, as the State cannot absorb such people in the job market and private sector has not been harnessed adequately in the national mainstream, therefore, presents a very gloomy picture of our youth contributing towards national development. The most worrisome scenario is that if such a large number of unemployed youths is exploited by the local and foreign hostile elements, the national unity will be seriously endangered. The apathetic approach by successive governments has already generated estrangement among the population and

if triggered by the militancy will create serious repercussions which will negatively impact the national integration.

Policy Recommendations for Boosting National Integration

Having analyzed the existing national security paradigm, internal security mosaic and the factors impacting the national integration in Pakistan, the policy recommendations for infusing nationalism and enhancing national integration are presented here;

Resuscitating Pride in Pakistani

Concreted efforts are required for rejuvenation of Pakistani nation and making them realize the genesis of creation of Pakistan. This is our identity, pride, and national purpose. The onus lies on the leadership governing the country, who must reach out to the masses with the message of love, trust, and sense of belonging. The hollow slogans will not work anymore. A participatory approach is recommended in national development projects, and people should be made stakeholders in all future undertakings. Every resident of this country should feel thrilled in his love with Pakistan, which must be spawned through high quality national songs, historical documentaries of struggle for Pakistan and infusing pride in being a Pakistani citizen. This necessitates frenzied pursuits, inclusive policies and equitable development and employment opportunities for all. The education institutions from schools to universities should also chalk out comprehensive strategies to rejuvenate the youth and infuse pride and nationalism by organizing various curricular and co-curricular activities. The government is suggested to chalk out long term absorption strategy whereby the educated skilled youth is employed in the relevant industry soon after graduation and enhanced focus on vocational training of unskilled and uneducated youth is also the need of time. All-out efforts are suggested for attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for job creation and signing of MOUs with friendly countries for adjustment of educated talented youth, so that, apart from performing as ambassadors, they are source of remittances for Pakistan. Strategic messaging through effective use of media that State of Pakistan cares for everyone irrespective of political leanings, therefore, it is imperative for all citizens to do their best and participate in the national development. The power of media and particularly the social media should be exploited to galvanize the nationhood which is undergoing persistent phase of despair, despondency, and anxiety.

Capitalizing the Concept of Unity in Diversity

Pakistani society is multilingual and multi-cultural, and multi ethnic, with rich traditional history, customs, and culture. Each region adds different colours to our national outlook. The national assimilation in such multi-cultural societies is an attempt to establish *"unity in diversity"*, exercising to reduce socio-cultural incongruities and employing uniformity, despite the diversity of even a complicated nature. The language-based divisions should be discouraged and avoided at all costs. No region, culture, customs, or language should be considered detrimental to national integration. Such diversity should be respected and capitalized. All federating units with rich culture and traditions add value to our standing and pride. This assortment should be used as our strength to unify the federation of Pakistan leading to the path of progress and prosperity.

Encouraging Interfaith Dialogue and Creating Religious Harmony

Tolerance and respect for other religions is the true essence of Islam. It is recommended that the relevant government ministries and the religious scholars, with the help of media, should project the true spirit of Islam, discourage sectarianism and help creating a tolerant society with absolute degree of religious harmony. The exploitation of religion for political gains has done a lot of damage to our society and strategic culture; therefore, such endeavours in the future should be dissuaded. Electronic and print media platforms should be used to educate the masses on religious harmony, patience and stimulate assimilation rather than divisions based on religious lines.

Inculcating Tolerance in our Political Culture for Enduring Stability

There is no denying the fact that democracy is the best form of government for Pakistan; therefore, political stability must be ensured by all the relevant stake holders. The culture of polarization and negative sentiments, which has increased in the last decade, has eroded the legitimacy of our institutions, which must be reversed as the esteemed national obligation. The state institutions, when working within their rightful boundaries enshrined in the constitution of Pakistan, will continue to enjoy respect and support of the people and other elements of national power, which will surely increase our comprehensive national power and national prestige. Over-centralization has already cost us heavily in the form of separation of East Pakistan; therefore, devolution to strengthen the federating units is the best option. Strong federating units are the guarantor of strong Pakistan; this philosophical underpin must be considered seriously. The culture of political intolerance and abusive language is denting our integration and eroding our national pride; therefore, it must be replaced by patience, accommodation, and sagacity. The decency in our routine discourse will create conducive environments of dialogue and encourage consultations by all the state institutions, which would create a stable political atmosphere leading to the inclusive participation, development, and prosperity.

Improving Governance

The government is recommended to focus on devolving power to the lowest level, inculcate a system of accountability of departments, and implement result-oriented development projects, which are directly affecting the life of commoners. The emphasis should be on provision of justice, providing basic services and increasing the efficiency of departments through use of technology. A lot of research work and policy papers on improving governance in Pakistan have been produced in the last two decades, which must be consulted to get maximum benefit. Infrastructure development is key to mainstreaming the far-flung areas, therefore, it should be completed as an urgent national priority.

Economic Security

Economic security is the engine of growth for any country, which is apt in the case of Pakistan. The last two decades have been very costly in terms of our economic security as our loss on participating US-led war on terrorism stands to US$ 150 billion, apart from human losses and infrastructure damages. The declining HDI, devaluation of the Pak rupee, and stagflation in our economy has created serious human security issues in Pakistan in terms of price hike and Inflation, unemployment, and an increase in the poverty index. The educated youth bulge is in despair due to government's inability to mobilize the relevant industry within and outside Pakistan. This is creating serious fissures among the masses and the federating units. It is therefore essential that we should bridge the gap between different cadres, regions, and the provinces through equitable resource mobilization and allocation. The mega-development project like CPEC should be pursued with full national support and executed in time, which will create immense employment opportunities and absorb talented youth and eventually enhance national integration, provided it is handled pragmatically.

Effective use of Media for National Rejuvenation

The power of media is an undeniable fact in today's environment. It provides the best platform to enhance national integration by way of projecting a positive image, strategic messaging, national development, and achievements and demonstrating soft image of Pakistan. As a government policy, the media's outreach should be capitalized for galvanizing the society and creating a community of shared destiny, future, and tolerant society with an absolute degree of religious harmony and national pride.

Conclusion

National Integration is not a one - time undertaking; rather, it is a constant process spread over a long period of time. Steadfast endeavors towards economic security, prosperity, sense of pride, and national integration is far overdue; therefore, they must be pursued enthusiastically as a supreme

national obligation. It is heartening to express that, despite enormous challenges and capacity issues, the realization of rejuvenation of the Pakistani nation is the utmost priority and is accorded due attention by the government and all elements of national power. We have taken several measures for the devolution of power for provincial autonomy and economic development. The slogans of 'Sindhu Desh' and 'Pashtunistan' etc., are history now. We are moving in the right direction and hopeful for a better Pakistan. However, we need to avoid complacency, and take right stock of the prevailing situation, address all the highlighted issues, and consider some of the suggestions for enhancing national pride, and national integration in Pakistan

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