

National integration remains a crucial issue in pakistan politics essay



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The present study aims to identify the important problems, which have been responsible for national disharmony and the negative impacts. The study is a stepping-stone, suggesting some concrete proposals, in order to achieve the objective of national integration.

INTRODUCTION

National Integration remains a crucial issue in Pakistan. There are various forces, which accentuate divisive factors like geography and culture of our country. Religious fundamentalism is one such force while linguistic diversities constitute another. Despite a shared culture for a long period, regionalism has remained a major force, which generates tension because of inequitable development amongst different provinces/regions of the Country. The FATA/FANA and Baluchistan are the best examples in this case, where people have been deprived of economic, political and social justice. All the above forces and factors pose a serious challenge for Pakistan's integrity and unity. It is, therefore, necessary to make concerted efforts to strengthen the national integration.

Quaid-e-Azam had envisioned that Pakistan would be a state, where all citizens would enjoy equal rights irrespective of caste, creed, sect, or place of birth[1], but it could never become a reality. In a polarized and fragmented society like Pakistan, it is necessary to have the consent of all groups with regards to resolution of their genuine problems. This important aspect was never given a serious thought by political and military rulers. Despite all domestic odds, Pakistan has demonstrated genuine ability to survive as a viable ' Nation State'. Considering the prevailing circumstances, the process of national integration has gained more significance and

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importance than ever. There is a need of following a correct and pragmatic approach with dispassionate analysis of all the issues jeopardizing the process of national integration.

The task of national integration in a plural society like Pakistan is although arduous, yet it can be achieved by bringing in diverging forces together through a political system based on justice, equality and fair play. In order to find out a viable solution for achieving this objective, the following important questions need to be addressed:-

Question 1. What are the disintegrating forces in Pakistan and how they can be brought together?

Question 2. What are the pillars of national integration and how they can be strengthened?

Question 3. What mechanism is needed to be devised to bring all the segments at par economically and politically?

Question 4. Where lays our survival as a nation?

Aim

The identify the important problems being faced by Pakistan, which have been responsible for national disharmony, suggesting concrete proposals, in order to achieve the objective of national integration.

PART – 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Nation and National Integration

Nation. A nation is generally defined as a community knit together by common experience over reasonably long past, shaping a common religion, culture and tradition[2]. However, different societies have defined it differently according to their own environment. The word “ Nation” comes from a Latin expression “ Natio”, meaning birth or race[3].

Integration. The word in its literal sense means fitting together parts to make one whole or incorporation of disparate ethnic or religious elements of the population into a unified society, providing equality of opportunity for all members of that society[4]. Keeping in view the definition, “ Integration” can be categorized in Functional and Psychological domains[5].

Determinants of National Integration

National Objective. National goals are determined from time to time depending upon the national needs. National objectives are the specific Ends that a nation seeks in order to advance, support or defend its national interests.[6]

Ideology. Ideology means the science or study of ideas. In general sense it refers to the specific manner in which a group of persons thinks[7].

Nationalism can develop into a uniting and sufficiently aggressive force, only if the requisite emotional and ideological base exists; but ordinarily, this sentiment takes centuries to mature.[8]

Religion. Religion is one of the strongest bonds in an ideological state and an essential element of national integration being a sanction of unity. It provides an additional source of pride to the nation and affects national character and habits. In Islam, the loyalty of the Muslims to one another has been institutionalized by the concept of Ummah.[9]

Language. Language is one of the most enduring artefacts of a people's culture, and unless people are forced by any system of dominance or conquest, their language can always determine the people's social physics and history.[10]

Culture. National integration in multi-cultural states is untenable without an entrenched public culture because this comprises the values shared by all groups and constitutes the common grounds on which the diverse groups conceptualize and appreciate the state.[11]

Leadership. An effective leader is naturally integrative, who brings together people of different culture, races, genders, personalities and stages of development and integrates them into a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.[12]

PART – 2

NATIONAL INTEGRATION MOSAIC OF PAKISTAN

Religious Facade of Pakistan

It was clear as early as pre-independence times that, given the immense ethnic diversity of Pakistan and the strong centrifugal forces, the new state would urgently need a 'common denominator' and that was Islam.

Apparently, the religious ideology as the basis of the state was viewed as a tool for nation-building and thwarting possible Indian designs to reject the creation of Pakistan.[13]

After independence, the religious differences were aggravated by the “Ulemas” on the basis of sectarianism. The saboteurs launched by anti-state elements fully exploited these differences and religious strength started turning into national weakness[14].

In retrospect, what we have now is a divided society on the lines of sectarianism, propagating extreme forms of de-faced shape of the Islam. Religion, instead of serving a unifying force, is now acting as a component of disunity and disharmony.

Misconceived Perceptions. The rationale for Pakistan’s independence notwithstanding, we failed to identify and consolidate other factors that could have contributed towards national integration and societal cohesion in the newly independent state. We remained confused, and still are, as to be a ‘ Nation State’ or ‘ Religion State’? The results are there in front of us i. e. FATA, FANA, Swat and Baluchistan. Large sections of the population, especially those in the minority provinces, have become increasingly disillusioned[15].

Weak Democratic Roots. Democracy could not establish its roots at the time of our independence due to short sightedness of our politicians. The leadership vacuum created in the early years of our history denied us the opportunity of developing a stable political system of governance during various periods ranging from parliamentary and presidential forms,
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authoritarian system and so on[16]. It was the incompetence of Pakistan's post-Jinnah political leadership that drew the armed forces heavily into politics and policy-making[17]. Political instability, the rampant corruption of the political and bureaucratic élite, and poor governance have given birth to public scepticism of the prevalent system[18].

Political/Constitutional Issues. Our political institutions have yet not grown strong enough on power sharing and to fight against the divisive force, which have been working to disintegrate Pakistan. The politicians of Pakistan have been engrossed with internal feuds group, religious sects, economic classes, and leading personalities[19].

Regional Diversity. For Pakistan, regionalism had emerged with different complexion. Even the common religion, flag and national ideology could not fully blend Pakistanis together as one entity until today.

Ethnic Diversity. Pakistani nation is fairly diverse. Ethnically, Punjabis are dominating followed by Pathans and Sindhis. Punjab-based establishment is looked upon by the rest of the population as well as the dominance of the so-called ' migratory élite', originating from regions in today's India. There are numerous macro level ethnic identities

Lingual Diversity. The lingual diversity became apparent after independence. In case of East Pakistan, we failed to understand that nations are composed of human being, whose deep feelings about such questions as their mother tongue, should not be ignored easily[20]. The linguistic differences intensified the problem of national integration and result was riots in most

parts of the Country,[21]that ultimately cost us separation of our Eastern wing.

Economic Irritants. Defining the economic aims and selecting realistic objectives based on economic potential and framework is a pre-requisite for giving out attainable policies. Frequent policy changes due to vested interests of groups, have created instability and impaired credibility of macro economic measures.

Social Justice. Inefficient state agencies, selective application of law, and ever-increasing corruption are breeding a culture of negativism in Pakistan. Disparity between the rich and the poor is leading to frustration, misuse of power, and lawlessness.

Military Involvement in Civilian Affairs. Army influence in political decision making started with induction of uniformed Ayub Khan in the cabinet as Defence Minister, and since then it has had very negative effect on the society. This has been one of the major cause for the many ills in the society.

Role of Bureaucracy. Bureaucratic traditions that came to influence after independence, were essentially a legacy from the British. It has now become a two Way Street where bureaucracy openly seeks political patronage for personal gains and in turn provides personalized service to the politicians.

PART – 3

PRESENT IRRITANTS TO NATIONAL INTEGRATION OF PAKISTAN

FATA and Swat Situation. The Taliban movement in Fata and the NWFP wants to replace the FCR with a medieval legal framework, that is reminiscent of the Arab tribal era. Inability of successive governments to integrate the region into national mainstream brings to fore certain key issues, which have directly or indirectly contributed to its prolonged isolation. Negligence on the part of state institutions, parochial political interests and the naiveté of the rural folk have given birth to a militant culture that thrives on vandalism, brutality and anarchy[22].

Baluchistan Issue. The situation in Baluchistan is a cause of major concern for national integrity. Baloch nationalists are mooted the insurgency as a struggle for greater political autonomy, more control over and royalties from the region's abundant mineral resources, chiefly the gas-fields and against the new cantonments in the Province. The weaponry and communication means being employed by the insurgents thumbprint the foreign power.

Economic Turmoil. The current chaotic state of global finance has invalidated the existing orthodoxy in macroeconomic management.[23] We are once again on the mercy of IMF after conceding to a \$7.6 billion 'Standby Arrangement' signed in November 2008. Global recession has also added to the miseries of people who are vulnerable to be exploited by interest groups, for their vested interests.

Worsening Law and Order Situation. Insecure citizens are vulnerable to anti-state and anti-social elements, thereby becoming a liability to national integration. Improving law and order is a major challenge for the nation's socio-political integration. If the constitution and the rule of law are not adhered to, such a federation essentially turns into an empire that is controlled by powerful ethnic and social groups[24].

Judicial System. Post March 2007 Judicial Crisis, has added tremendously to the miseries of aggrieved people. In this vacuum, Islamic clerics, present their version of judicial system, which by no way, present the true picture of Islam. Recent Government's conceding to Tehrik-e-Shariat-Muhammd's brokered deal with local militant leaders on the plea of shariat enforcement, should be an eye opener for rest of the society.

Religious Militancy. The phenomenal increase in number of deeni madaris has not only increased sectarianism but also introduced militancy in the Country[25]. There are more than 50, 000 madrasas operating in Pakistan[26]. Lal Masjid incident has been a turning point to the phenomena.

Decayed Education System. The literacy rate of the Country is alarming at 49. 9%[27], especially in female population, which forms more than 50% of total population. Deep ingress of political parties into the educational institutions is causing divisions. Parallel education systems are segregating the society into classes.

Federal – Provincial Matters. Concurrent list, quota system, NFC awards, share of divisible pool etcetera and many other legislative provisions, work

against the aspirations of the people of smaller provinces for socio-economic and political development.

PART – 4

THE WAY FORWARD

Ideological Issues

Ideological Orientation. Fresh ideas aimed at finding new common grounds should be explored and additional cohesive factors identified in order to hold the nation together. National integration in the case of Pakistan should mean establishing a common citizenry, common political and social structures, a common State, and an additional sense of identity, of belonging together. It means building commonality on top of the existing linguistic, ethnic, religious and geographical diversity, and not substituting an artificial new identity for the old ones.

Concept of 'Unity in Diversity'. We should subscribe to Weiner's 'public policy strategy' for achieving national integration through 'Unity-in-diversity[28]. With inter-provincial economic relations fast developing, unity in diversity appears a realistic national aspirations.[29]Rather than suppressing or subjugating the diverse elements, we must chisel these diversities into a fine mosaic.

Inculcating Concept of Nationalism. There is a need to develop Pakistani nationalism which should give people the feeling that despite differences, they are people destined for common statehood. This can be done through:-

Parity is an inalienable right of all the regions and provinces of Pakistan.

The rights of the provinces and autonomy consonant with national interests and agreed in 1973 constitution have to be assured.

Pay heed to Quaid's motto: 'Unity, Discipline' and Faith (in the same order).

Political Issues

Political Structure. After practicing all forms of governance, the draw is in favour of a parliamentary form of government, as envisioned in the 1973 constitution (in original shape). Following need consideration:-

Pakistan's leadership may need to update and even revise its 'strong centre' ideology in favour of more pronounced regional autonomy.

Re-demarcation and increase in number of constituencies.

Establish autonomous and independent Election Commission.

Establish powerful, reliable and neutral accountability body.

Bar on minimum education qualification for candidates to contest the elections be lifted.

Political Parties

Political parties must be made to organize themselves on democratic lines with transparency in their party elections, discipline as well as accounts.

If political party obtains less than five percent votes in general election its registration with Election Commission be terminated by law.

Political parties must not be allowed by law to influence the working of political activities of student unions in college/universities.

Politician elected to hold a government office to relinquish party portfolio.

Governance Issues

Changing the Administrative Model. We need to change British colonialism administrative model ruthlessly and invent our own. A step towards this direction has already been taken with adoption of Local Government Plan. However, some of the serious reservations of the provinces should be addressed in the new system, to make it more acceptable.

Social Justice. Problem of rising unemployment needs to be tackled in a pragmatic manner. Social action programme for education, health, empowerment of women, and population control, is the need of the hour. To avert the social conflicts turning into communal conflicts, establishment of social equilibrium is an essential condition for national integration.

Improvement of Judiciary System

Judiciary be given constitutional guarantee of its independence to work free of pressure.

Judges of superior courts be paid handsomely keeping in view the sensitive and critical nature of their duties.

Appointment of superior court judges be on non party basis and free of political strings.

Rationalization of NFC Awards. The centre should divide the divisible resources as per agreed formulas strictly in accordance with the awards as per the constitution. We have to revise NFC formula, wherein overt weightage on population should be rationalized by giving more weightage to backwardness, area and revenue generation.

More Active ' Council of Common Interests' (CCI). Constitutionally, CCI is just the right forum to discuss the various inter-provincial and federal-provincial irritants, like Net Proceeds & Royalties, Concurrent Legislative List vis-à-vis Provincial Autonomy, Representation of Federating Units in the Top Bureaucracy and Quota System etc.

Cohesive Education Policy

Cleavages between traditional Islamic educational institutions and modern educational institutions (including elitist pattern), be removed.

Maximum incentive to private sector to open schools in rural areas. Their fees and standard may, however, be monitored.

Curriculum be made realistic and uniform for all provinces with better quality textbook at subsidised rates.

Mismatch between educational preparation and job specification be reduced through vocational training.

Urdu language should also be employed as a vehicle to develop cultural unity, common identity and a shared future.

Provinces may be allowed to retain the regional languages as a subject after primary level.

Bolstering Religious Harmony

Islam's message of universal tolerance, of peace and respect should be propagated to foster harmony among various religious schools of thought.

All the religious militant groups be disarmed with a highhanded policy.

Steps be taken for tracking down verified terrorist groups and the concerned countries be diplomatically perused to take necessary steps against these groups.

Already chalked out Madrasa Strategy be followed in true letter and spirit.

FATA/FANA and Swat Situation

We have to bring FATA/FANA into mainstream by initiating process of Land Settlement and promote urbanization, increased focus on Human Resource Development, exploit drivers of growth i. e. minerals and horticulture, development of industries on fringes of FATA and facilitate early creation of Reconstruction Opportunity Zones.

We should also initiate dialogue with all the factions fighting against the state machinery in Swat and FATA to address their grievances through political means.

Baluchistan Issue

Instead of marginalizing the nationalist elements, we need to bring them on board.

Two-pronged strategy of “ Dialogue” and “ Development” is the only way to address deprivation. Where applicable, selective use of limited force may also be undertaken as last resort.

To address the grievance of the Province, there is a requirement for the Federal Government to invest heavily in raising more job opportunities in the Province.

Economic Policies

An increasing development budget is essential to overcoming the negative effects of social fragmentation and illiteracy-fed Islamic fundamentalism.

Every effort must be made to do away with disparity and economic disequilibrium between the various classes, regions, areas and provinces.

The economically backward areas should be brought into the mainstream through education, modernization, mass media of communication, general economic developments, well-being and progress and through an effective system of roads, transportation and communication.

Eliminating Unemployment

Economic Revival Package for the revival of industries to stimulate production and investment.

Government should announce a package for the development of agriculture sector.

More Technical and Vocational training facilities should be provided.

With a view to reduce educated unemployment; self-employment schemes should be encouraged in true manners.

CONCLUSION

National integration permits a heterogeneous nation like Pakistan to live in peace, harmony and unity. It is an important element of the nation's power potential and binds its military, economical and political strengths. Pakistan has sub-nationalist undercurrents, which run along ethnic lines, seeking their share of national pie and, at times, threatening secession from the federation. Whenever, Pakistan's national integration suffered, the underlying causes were political expediencies and lust for power.

This research will be a stepping-stone, suggesting some concrete proposals, in order to achieve the objective of national integration. In the wake of the current situation prevailing in the country, where the nation is in despair and gradually losing hope and optimism, the research is very significant to find out the way forward for coming out of the current crisis.