

National Integration: Challenges and Options for Pakistan

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Abstract

National integration solidifies the foundation of nationhood, which is crucial for national security against internal and external challenges. The study argues that there is a thin line between centripetal and centrifugal forces, which stimulates unfavorable environment having specific characteristic and features. Therefore, the multiplicity of languages, races, ethnicities, and sects are being influenced from that particular environment, which may serve both as ingredients of national integration and disintegration. Based on secondary review of academic sources, this study discusses that the issues such as leadership dilemma, bad governance, socio-economic disparity, ethno-cultural polarization, sub-nationalist politics, fragile national unity under federalism, extremism, national identity crisis and modernity confusion are the main challenges to Pakistan's efforts of national integration. It also suggests ways and means to address the issues of national integration.

Keywords: Two-nation Theory, Socialism, Enlightened Moderation, Muslim Identity, National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, National

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Introduction

“National integration indicates national consciousness, a common national consensus and common national identity, where regional sub-cultures get interacted into a national political system”² in order to keep intact their cultural, political, religious, and ethnic sub-identities, equally enjoying their socio-economic rights and opportunities, which is essential to enhance the national integration process. “It is a process through which people having common goals, sense of belonging and patristic sentiments arrive at a consensus on social, political, cultural, religious and economic cohesion with diversity.”³ Common goals, interests and preferences may create a sense of unity among fragmented elements of society, which helps in laying the foundations of constructive nationalism against internal and external challenges. “National integration includes a confidence in nation’s future, a continuous rise in the standard of living, development of feeling of values and duties, at good and impartial administrative system and mutual understanding.”⁴

Socio-cultural, and ethno-lingual diversities are the centrepiece of national integration, wherein the intermingling diversities enrich each other and in no way weaken them. The provinces of Pakistan are rich in socio-cultural, and ethno-lingual heterogeneity, and the phenomenon of national integration has to run in the backdrop in engaging the

² Jehanzeb, Saima Perveen & Fayaz Ur Rehman, “Challenges and Policy Options to National Integration in Pakistan A Comparative Analysis,” *Journal of Law and Society*, Vol. 44, no. 64 (July, 2013), 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ Shamila Tabassum, Ghulam Mustafa & Muhammad Nawaz Bhatti, “Issues of National Integration in Pakistan with Reference to Balochistan,” *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (March 2020), 205.

provincial citizenry, acting as a bonding material of harmony and co-existence, thus enabling the centripetal forces to take on a central role to intraregional integration. Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, and Pashtun nationalisms are always at the heart to form Pakistani nationalism, which is crucial to solidify the foundations of nationhood.

In this scheme of things, it is also observed that the intersecting features make unification of the fragmented strands of society an uphill task in the pluralistic society of Pakistan, where multiplicity of cultural and ethnic traits crosscut each other for their competing interests in attaining specific goals of ensuring maximum shares within the meagre national resources. This competition has made national unity difficult for national integration.

Ever since the creation of Pakistan, the country has remained entangled with the multiple challenges: bad governance; socio-economic and power disparities; politico-ethnic polarization; racial and lingual differences; civil-military and of late judicial confrontations; weak political system and leadership; ideological identities; religious extremism and sectarianism; modernity confusion; national identity crisis; and threats to territorial integrity from neighboring countries. The mistrust between the Centre and the small federating units infused by a sense of deprivation has piled up the problems being exploited by the hostile exogenous elements. These challenges have complicated the process of national integration in Pakistan.

The consciousness of separatism usually emerges in suffocated societies having internal crevices created by their ethno-lingual, racial, caste, and creed corrosions. With the deepening of these fault lines, the sub-nationalists try to exploit loyalties of the dissatisfied factions to their advantage. Therefore, in Pakistan, the centrifugal elements within the country's "national politics have promoted separatist tendencies

and identity crisis striking at the very soul of Pakistan's ideology."⁵ The emerging situation gets ripened to be exploited by both the Islamists and secular political entities for their own vested interests. The sectarian extremist tendencies under the guise of Shia, Deobandi and Barelvi sects have further threatened national integration and challenged the very birth of Pakistani nation.

Concept of National Integration

National integration signifies a continuous process bonding together the individuals from various socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds into a common national identity to create the joint sense of oneness, harmony and national consciousness. Further, it is a process that offers different segments of society an "identical prospects and equal rights"⁶ guaranteed by the constitution for enjoying several socio-economic and political avenues without any discrimination.

More precisely, national integration is a quest for unanimity within the state regardless of religion, race, creed or ethnic traits and language. It ties up every section of the society for a combined purpose of serving and developing a nation state therefore, it has great bearing and relevance to national security and nationhood.⁷ A nation is an evolved community having particular territory, common history, values, language, ethnicity, and psychological characteristics of oneness.

Nation-building and state-building are twin processes of the concept of national integration, which is vital to national cohesion and security. Nation-building refers to creating psychological sense of unity without any particular linguistic and regional affiliations. State-building

⁵ Jehanzeb, Perveen & Fayaz, 1.

⁶ Syed Jawad Shah & Waseem Ishaque, "Challenges of National Integration in Pakistan and Strategic Response," *ISSRA PAPERS*, Vol. IX, no. II (2017), 35.

⁷ Ibid.

is a process of territorial integrity in which separatist feelings are absent within the geographical boundaries of the state “where the administration of central and state government runs.”⁸

There are multiple interpretations of the concept of National Integration. According to the Dictionary of Political Thought, integration is a process in which various segments of society enjoy equal privileges including social, educational and recreational opportunities without any discrimination.⁹ It further describes that “integration is the process, whereby all institutions are made available to all members of the state irrespective of creed, race and origin with the intention of forming a unified civil society within the jurisdiction of a unified state.”¹⁰

H. A Ghani describes national integration as a “socio-psychological and educational process through which feelings of unity, solidarity and cohesion develops in the hearts of the people, fostering a sense of common citizenship, and loyalty to the nation.”¹¹

Fred M. Hayward explains “integration as system cohesion, adaptation to structures, a bridging of elite-mass gap, the establishment of common norms and commitment to pattern of political behavior.”¹²

⁸ Faiza Mir & Dr. Abdul Manan Bazai, “Challenges to National Integration: A Case Study of Baluchistan,” *Journal of Contemporary Studies*, Vol. IV, no.1 (Summer 2015), 81-84, 82-83.

⁹ Gulshan Majeed, “Problems of National Integration in Pakistan,” *Journal of Political Studies*, Vol. 21, no. 2 (2014), 69.

¹⁰ Shamila Tabassum, Ghulam Mustafa & Muhammad Nawaz Bhatti, “Issues of National Integration in Pakistan with Reference to Balochistan,” 206.

¹¹ Faiza Mir & Abdul Manan Bazai, 81.

¹² Gulshan Majeed, “Problems of National Integration in Pakistan,” 70.

S.N. Panda explains national integration as a “psychological phenomenon, a feeling of oneness that rises above all narrow and divisive tendencies and makes for genuine patriotism and progress.”¹³

National integration is mainly a sentiment, in which “the community of any state assumes peaceful living with one another, having the feelings of togetherness, unity, compassion, without any discrimination of race, ethnicity, regional boundaries, etc.... No matter, a nation bears any caste, belief, region, or lingual issues, they consider themselves that ‘They Are All One.’ This kind of spirit is indispensable to national integration.”¹⁴

Factors influencing national integration involve social values, culture, language, interfaith harmony, religion, and ethnicity. Therefore, collaboration, cooperation, fusion, and development among these elements on the principles of inclusive approach, shared future, and win-win situation are the core to the process of national integration. As a result, the exchange of ideas, history, social customs, knowledge, art, languages, goods, and cultural beliefs increase people-to-people interaction and trust. Thus, “national integration is about national spirit, which brings peoples from different areas, dialects and beliefs together in a common endeavour to build systems for enhancing the prosperity of a nation”¹⁵ with the aim of creating allegiance towards a state.

Culture is generally defined as a way of life of every specific group of people based on their beliefs and customs. In the multi-cultural societies, national integration is considered as a tool to create unity in diversity by minimizing cultural differences even in a complex societies and forging uniformity in the nation. National language also unites the

¹³ Shamila Tabassum, Ghulam Mustafa & Muhammad Nawaz Bhatti, 204.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ M. Kumar & N. Rekha, *Historical And Political Economy Of Education In India* (Chhattisgarh: Sankalp Publication, 2020), 340.

nation by promoting national consciousness in the multilingual country. Likewise, interfaith harmony, dialogue, respect to religious freedom, and mutual acceptance have the potential to assimilate in promoting the national solidarity and integration.

Impediments to National Integration for Pakistan

The foundation of Pakistan was laid down on the Quaid-i-Azam's vision of separate democratic homeland for Muslims in which the state would be governed on principles of "Islamic ideas of social justice and equality."¹⁶ The theory of the founding father perceived the Muslims of sub-continent as a separate nation opposite to the Hindu nation in the form of "Two-nation theory."¹⁷ In fact, the empirical evidences of Muslims of sub-continent show that they were divided on the lines of Aligarh and Deobandi traditions; pro-Indian National Congress political ideology of territorial nationalism; pro-Muslim League's political ideology of distant Muslim identity; and religious parties' opposition for separate Muslim state in order to preserve the Muslim Ummah.¹⁸

Pakistan started its early life journey with internal and external complexities that demanded hard struggle for country's survival and political consolidation. Ultimately, the process of nation-building has been complicated and even become a more difficult task by the evolving events and unfavourable political landscape of Pakistan. For instance, the period from 1947 till 1971 was stressful and unstable for the federal integration. With the early death of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the infant state witnessed administrative and

¹⁶ Jehan Zeb Khan & Abdul Rashid Khan, "Quaid's Vision of a Progressive Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. XXXII, no.1 (2011), 166.

¹⁷ Abdul Majid, Abdul Hamid & Zahida Habib, "Genesis of the Two Nations Theory and the Quaid-e-Azam," *Journal of Pakistan Vision*, Vol. 15, no.1 (2014), 192.

¹⁸ Jehanzeb, Saima Perveen & Fayaz Ur Rehman, "Challenges and Policy Options To National Integration in Pakistan: A Comparative Analysis," 7.

governance challenges; economic and political instabilities pushing the military to power; the emerging sub-nationalist tendencies sponsored by hostile agencies; and the Indian animosity of “1948, 65 and dismemberment of 1971”¹⁹ made integration a difficult process, creating many hurdles, which later on dragged the country into identity crisis.²⁰

In that era, the futile debate on ideological identity of the nation “as an Islamic state, moderate state, socialist state has also been the contributory factors affecting the state efforts for the national integration.”²¹ The ideological divide pushed Pakistan into an endless discourse of constructing the state identity on the bases of “Quaid-i-Azam’s vision; socialism during 1970s; Islamization during 1980; and enlightened moderation even after 73 years of the country’s existence.”²² Hence, Pakistan inherited ideological cleavages for developing state identity, along with “multi-ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups and sub-groups, which had little in common besides Muslim.”²³

Ultimately, the political leadership and policymakers of Pakistan have been involved in the matter of integration that has “become very

¹⁹ Syed Sikander Mehdi, “Pakistan: Conflict, Migration and Peace,” *Asteriskos: Journal of International and Peace Studies*, no. 1/2 (2007),4.

²⁰ Alongside, the regional geopolitical implications illustrated by the repercussions of the “USSR invasion in Afghanistan (1979),” and the “Iranian revolution (1979)” caused the deepening of Saudi-Iran rivalries while using Pakistani land for their sectarian proxy war, which led to the rise of religious intolerance. Amidst this environment, the biased US policies have further complicated the national integration process in Pakistan. For this see: Alan Taylor, “The Soviet War in Afghanistan, 1979 – 1989,” *The Atlantic*, August 4, 2014.

²¹ Syed Jawad Shah & Waseem Ishaque, “Challenges of National Integration in Pakistan and Strategic Response,” 36.

²² *Ibid.*, 41.

²³ Jehanzeb, Saima Perveen & Fayaz Ur Rehman, 4.

sensitive and heatedly discussed”²⁴ in the political landscape of the country, and in case of failure, this issue has a potential to make society intolerant. The oscillatory circumstances have forced political leadership and policymakers to divert their attention from the core areas that could ensure socio-economic prosperity and development for nation-building. Therefore, they have been unable to implement people-friendly policies, which might have fully satisfied the oppressed class, in general, and marginalized sub-nationalities, ethnicities and small provinces. The inability of political leadership and policymakers for delivering basic services to the people has provided a space to the disintegrated multitudes to exploit the situation to their favour, further creating instability in the country.

In reality, the successive regimes had been unsuccessful to offer due share to the citizenries in policy-making process at grass-root level. They were unable to initiate effective people-centric policies that could address the real grievances of various ethnicities at the social, political, and economic levels, specifically of the communities of East Pakistan, Balochistan, tribal areas, and Sindh to some extent. Eventually, the dismemberment of East Pakistan in 1971, the number of “insurgencies in Balochistan,”²⁵ and the demands for “Pushtunistan, as well as Sindhu Desh,”²⁶ are the cases in points.

As of today, the political leadership of Pakistan still faces the challenges of creating “a national identity out of the diverse regional,

²⁴ Syed Jawad Shah & Waseem Ishaque, 41.

²⁵ Muhammad Muzaffar, Sidra Karamat & Khalid Saeed, “Balochistan Insurgency: Causes and Prospects,” *Orient Research Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.3, no. 1 (June 2018), 117.

²⁶ Aamir Nazir, “Ethnic Militancy in Pakistan: Causes, Consequences and Remedies,” (paper presented at the two-day international conference on “Terrorism, Extremism and Militancy in Pakistan: Domestic & International Factors, Multan, Pakistan, January 17-18, 2017).

linguistic and cultural identities.”²⁷ The hurdles to national integrity are not specifically internal to Pakistan, as they also originate by the unfavorable circumstances and environment engineered by the external elements to aggravate the situation, thereby perpetuating economic disparities, ethno-religious extremism, political instability and sub-national tendencies at the domestic front. The victimization of Pakistan by the external hostile states has added complications to the phenomena of national integration.

Leadership Dilemma

Behavior and psychology of the leadership play an important role to promote awareness of oneness among disjointed sections of society. The leadership’s charisma, sagacity, and deeper insight about peoples’ feelings or emotions, play a constructive role in minimizing the socio-cultural, and politico-economic identity rifts to implement the national order. However, after the death of Quaid-i-Azam, the leadership of Pakistan has been making efforts to transform the centrifugal tendencies of marginalized ethnic groups into centripetal feelings. Even, influential leaders like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto lost his charisma after the debacle of East Pakistan and had been unable to transform the parochial feelings of the people of East Pakistan, Balochistan, and former North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) recently named as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) by diluting the separatist sentiments with national loyalty.

Although 18th Amendment was passed in 2010²⁸ for giving maximum autonomy to the provinces, yet the leadership of Pakistan

²⁷ Faiza Mir & Abdul Manan Bazai, “Challenges To National Integration: A Case Study of Baluchistan,” 82.

²⁸ Mahboob Hussain and Rizwan Kokab, “Eighteenth Amendment in the Constitution of Pakistan: Success and Controversies,” *Asian Social Science*, Vol. 8, no. 1 (January 2012), 83.

seems reluctant to devolve further power at grass-root level. This fact hindered individuals' direct participation in the decision-making process, depriving them of the sense of ownership. Ultimately, the socio-economic and development policies formulated for the wellbeing of masses could not get general recognition. Instead of promoting the sense of oneness among the diverse ethno-cultural identities, the ill-perceived policies caused dissatisfaction among the public.

The fact of the matter is, different ethno-cultural identities are considered the beauty of pluralist state, which ideally contribute constructively to the progress of the country, ensuring socio-economic and political rights. If these basic rights of diverse identities are at risk, denying them access to social safety net, the marginalized communities can easily be derailed from their constructive role to destructive one. It may lead to instability or disintegration in an extreme case as evident in the "Bengali ethnic identity crises of Pakistan."²⁹ In the present-day Pakistan, the instability is factored out by the insecurity of Baloch dissatisfied groups —the ongoing low intensity ethnic insurgency in the province³⁰—and the demands for social justice and human rights in the garb of Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).³¹ The onus is on the political leadership to pacify the alienated ethnic groups by seeking national identity out of the various provincial

²⁹ Muhammad Qasim Sodhar & Samreen, "Ethnic Conflicts: The Problems of Bengali Identity in Pakistan and Tribal Identity Problem in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh (1947-1975)," *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, Vol. 7, no. 4 (April 2017), 51.

³⁰ Abubakar Siddique, "Balochistan's Separatist Insurgency on The Wane Despite Recent Attack," *Gandhara*, April 18, 2019, Available at: <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/pakistan-balochistan-separatist-insurgency-on-the-wane-despite-recent-attack/29889887.html> (accessed on 22 March 2021).

³¹ Francesca Marino, "Manzoor Pashteen Arrested: 'They Can Kill Me But Not the Movement'," *The Quint*, January 28, 2020, Available at: <https://www.thequint.com/voices/opinion/pashtun-tahafuz-movement-manzoor-pashteen-arrest-pakistani-state-army-human-rights> (accessed on 22 March 2021).

identities, thus giving the sense of ownership unified by national loyalty in the backdrop of internal and external challenges.

Bad Governance and Social-economic Integration

Good governance is a prerequisite to “strengthening the process of national integration by providing equal development, ensuring equal rights and services’ delivery for all communities, regions and the federating units.”³² It helps to incite a strong sense of national identity and national pride in the society. It also supports formulating effective policies centered around the concepts of “sharing, entrustment and allocation of national resources to the provinces”³³ to create a sense of satisfaction among all regional sub-systems. In return, the communities get encouraged to participate progressively as a medium to enhance the process of national integration.

Contrarily, bad governance is the root cause to all inefficiencies: social injustice; economic inequality; regional disparity; unemployment; unaccountability; delayed justice; misuse of power; corruption; nepotism; uneven infrastructure and industrial development; unequal distribution of natural resources along with the demands for royalty; inefficiency of institutions; and dissatisfaction among the general public. Rather, the “uneven division of resources either natural or other and favouritism in political and administrative manners of central and provincial governments always destroy the state.”³⁴

³² Syed Jawad Shah & Waseem Ishaque, “Challenges of National Integration in Pakistan and Strategic Response,” 35.

³³ Jehanzeb, Saima Perveen & Fayaz Ur Rehman, “Challenges and Policy Options To National Integration in Pakistan A Comparative Analysis,” 2.

³⁴ Shamila Tabassum, Ghulam Mustafa & Muhammad Nawaz Bhatti, “Issues of National Integration in Pakistan with Reference to Balochistan,” 211.

The lax governance has generated economic backwardness in Pakistan, giving rise to social ills fueled by massive poverty, and crime, spreading frustration, and demoralization in the underprivileged regions especially the South Punjab, interior Sindh, Balochistan and tribal areas of Pakistan, where sentiments of marginalization have triggered militancy casting serious consequences on national integration.

The ill-disciplined governance in the country has made space for both the religious fanatics, and the sub-nationalists fulfilling their nefarious designs with the foreign backing and funding. Eventually, the religio-ethnic schism based on provincialism has become a breeding ground for discontentment, and deprivation, eroding the national harmony, integration, and prosperity.

A weak system of governance has been incapable of maintaining consistent “policies in the best interests of various cultural pluralities of the country.”³⁵ Despite passing the bill of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) merger with KP³⁶ to integrate the underprivileged tribal areas into the mainstream socio-economic landscape, the people of the region are still facing “unsteady development”³⁷— an illustration of bad governance. “The administrative, security, and economic reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts are being implemented at a snail’s pace.”³⁸ For instance, “the process of inclusion of an estimated

³⁵ Gulshan Majeed, “Problems of National Integration in Pakistan,” 68.

³⁶ Amir Wasim, “National Assembly green-lights Fata-KP merger by passing 'historic' bill,” *Dawn*, May 25, 2018.

³⁷ Wajeeha Malik & Shakeeb Asrar, “Post-merger Inaction in FATA: Expectations vs. Reality (Blog),” *South Asian Voices*, July 10, 2019, Available at: <https://southasianvoices.org/post-merger-inaction-in-fata-expectations-vs-reality/>. (accessed on 24 March 2021).

³⁸ Abubakar Siddique, “Pakistan’s Tribal Areas Caught In Limbo Awaiting Integration,” *Gandhara*, January 16, 2020, Available at: <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/pakistan-tribal-areas-caught-in-limbo-awaiting-integration/30381219.html> (accessed on 24 March 2021).

30,000 local Levies and Khasadars into the regular police force is moving slowly ... The new tribal police lack training and infrastructure to undertake policing, which is still performed by the army and paramilitary troops in large parts of tribal districts.”³⁹

Although, the federal government pledged in “2018 to spend around US \$10 billion on development schemes over a decade, approximately 10 per cent of the US \$540 million were reserved for the tribal districts’ development during the fiscal year 2019-20.”⁴⁰ That kind of performance is causing frustration among the tribal people, providing grounds to justify the demands of anti-nationalist elements such as PTM in the name of social justice, which already have unfriendly sentiments towards the civil and military establishment.

The situation for Balochistan is no different than that of tribal districts. The decision of increasing the Balochistan’s job quota from 3.5 to 6 per cent in federal departments was initially taken in 2016.⁴¹ However, till June 2020, no progress was seen until the Prime Minister Imran Khan took notice of the matter during his meeting with Akhtar Mengal on June 28, 2020 and ordered all federal departments for the implementation of 6 per cent job quota reserved for the province.⁴² Besides, “the short term projects of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Balochistan (2014-2020) such as “Khuzdar-Basima N-30, up-gradation of D. I. Khan-Zhob Highway N50, up-gradation of Quetta-Surab Highway N25, and completion of existing roads projects that were supposed to be completed by 2020, have seen little to no

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ “Balochistan’s Quota in Federal Jobs Increased,” *Dawn*, January 23, 2016.

⁴² “PM orders implementation of 6pc job quota for Balochistan to woo BNP-M,” *Pakistan Today*, June 28, 2020.

progress.”⁴³ The indifferent behavior of civil administration for delaying to implement the federal government’s decisions and projects may instigate the marginalized ethnic groups in future to start resistance against unsteady developmental policies of federal government. Rather, it encourages “rebellious activities against the state and would be a major risk in the way of national integration.”⁴⁴

Some efforts have been made to address the socio-economic and political grievances of the alienated regions of Pakistan in the form of National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, 18th Amendment, Pervez Musharraf development plan for Balochistan, Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan, National Action Plan, CPEC project and FATA merger with KP. These measures are considered positive steps to meet the demands of the provincial governments of Pakistan for attaining more political power, ensuring larger share in national funds, developing basic infrastructure, and warranting basic services for raising the living standards of the people.

However, these measures are unable to produce the desired results and bring clear trickle-down effects on the livelihood of the locals, owing to the weak administrative ability, capacity issues and poor planning of the provinces, in particular, and federal government, in general. That is why; the remote areas of each province of Pakistan along with the tribal belt do not have the provision of proper facilities of health, education, and economic opportunities at par with the bigger provinces and their metropolitan hubs.

⁴³ Rafiullah Kakar, “Review of CPEC: Impact on Balochistan,” (paper presented at Islamabad Policy Research Institute Webinar on Security and Development of Balochistan: Existing Dynamics and Way Ahead, Islamabad, Pakistan, June 25, 2016).

⁴⁴ Shamila Tabassum, Ghulam Mustafa & Muhammad Nawaz Bhatti, “Issues of National Integration in Pakistan with Reference to Balochistan,” 205.

The statistics of government of Pakistan show that “24 per cent of Pakistan’s population (31 per cent in rural and 13 per cent in urban areas) lives below the poverty line. The multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) of the country is 38.8 per cent, which includes 54.6 per cent in rural and 9.4 per cent in urban areas.”⁴⁵ Amongst them, the tribal districts have the highest levels of MPI followed by the Balochistan.

Consequently, people have started blaming the federal government for lacking objectivity in policy measures at the national level, as is evident in the case of Gwadar port that is seen as the lynchpin of CPEC for socio-economic uplift. However, “the state of connectivity of Gwadar with the rest of Pakistan is so poor that it raises questions about the planning as a whole.”⁴⁶ The objectivity concerns are sufficient to generate rifts between the dissatisfied section of public and federal government.

With the growing mistrust, the dilemma has been that any development project of the federal government in small provinces, starts attracting jaundiced eyes. For instance, the security situation in Balochistan started deteriorating when the federal government took the initiatives of Gwadar Port, coastal highway, road and rail links, which was opposed by the Baloch nationalists’ propagation that it would change Balochi ethnic culture and demography.

Instead of welcoming these projects, the Baloch dissidents responded with fear that they would be “dispossessed of their own

⁴⁵ “Balochistan Drought Needs Assessment (BDNA) Report, February 2019,” *Relief Web*, accessed August 24, 2020, Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/balochistan_drought_needs_assessment.pdf (accessed on 28 March 2021).

⁴⁶ Rafiullah Kakar, *Ibid.*

lands and resources,"⁴⁷ while turning into minority by the overwhelming inflow of Sindhis, Punjabis and other ethnic identities. Likewise, in the case of CPEC, the actual allocation of only US \$4 billion to Balochistan out of the potential aggregate of US \$50 billion⁴⁸ CPEC investment is being exploited by the Baloch dissidents that the province has a "meagre share and participation in the construction of mega projects."⁴⁹ Baloch dissidents are also misleading the local communities making them to believe that federal government allocates only scanty share of the NFC Award to Balochistan. Contrarily, the province has seen an increase in its budget in 7th NFC Award from 5 per cent share to 9 per cent.⁵⁰ Rather, the 7th NFC Award recognized the factor of inverse population density, poverty, poor revenue collection, and the area as the variables for distribution of funds.⁵¹

Alongside, misperceptions are being aired that the federal government is mainly focusing on physical security, and not the human security (health, education, and employment generation) in Balochistan, resulting in either alleged killings or forced disappearances of the innocent Baloch by the security forces on the pretexts of peace and stability."⁵² Whereas, the government of Pakistan claims that these

⁴⁷ Muhammad Zubair, "Balochistan Deserves Justice In Chinese Projects," *Gandhara*, January 14, 2019, Available at: <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/pakistan-balochistan-deserves-justice-in-chinese-projects-cpec/29708813.html> (accessed on 24 March 2021).

⁴⁸ Rafiullah Kakar, *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Muhammad Zubair, *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Muhammad Sabir, "Financial Implications of the 7th NFC Award and the Impact on Social Services," *The Pakistan Development Review*, Vol. 49, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 387-403. Also see; Imran Ali Kundi, "Rs3254.6b for provinces under NFC Award," *Nation*, June 12, 2019.

⁵¹ Usman Mustafa, "Fiscal Federalism in Pakistan: The 7th National Finance Commission Award and Its Implications," *PIDE Working Papers*, no. 73 (2011), 7. Also see; Junaid Shaikh, "NFC Award: limitations of provinces," *Dawn*, April 29, 2011.

⁵² Kamal Baloch, "Its Time the World Knows about Missing People of Balochistan," *News Intervention*, Available at: <https://www.newsintervention.com/its-time-the-world-knows-about-missing-people-of-balochistan/> (accessed on 29 March 2021).

missing people have fled to “Afghanistan or other places of the world.”⁵³

Indeed, the misperceptions and fears incite the Baloch ethnicity to resort to force in pressing their rights and representation in the central government. Majority of the Balochi folks fall easy prey to aggressive lobbying of the dissidents, making the provincial masses to believe that they are being discriminated in terms of their deprivation. Ultimately, the general sentiments of scepticism and unsteady development prevalent in the marginalized community of the country tend to hamper the goal of national integration.

Ethno-Cultural Diversity

Cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversities are natural phenomena, recognized as important determinants of integration to enrich and promote the national heritage. Ethnic diversity forms the national identity with the common interest of nation-building, which is perceived as the key characteristic of ethnic outlook of Pakistani society.⁵⁴ “Cultural integration indicates common national culture by which people identify themselves. It does not overlook cultural diversity, nor does it overstate a monolithic society. There are sub-cultures within the sphere of a common culture in a pluralistic society.

⁵³ “The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances has 2178 cases unresolved till 2019. For this see; “Pakistan: Enduring Enforced Disappearances,” *Amnesty International*, March 27, 2019, Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2019/03/pakistan-enduring-enforced-disappearances/> (accessed on 29 March 2021).

⁵⁴ “Demographically, the Punjabis embody the largest population of 109.99 million (52.96 percent), Sindh 47.85 million (23.04pc), KP 30.51 million (14.69pc), Balochistan 12.34 million (5.94pc), Fata 4.99 million (2.4pc) and ICT 2 million (0.96pc). Punjabi is number one language spoken by the majority (38.78pc) of Pakistanis, followed by Pashto 18.24pc, Sindhi 14.57pc, Urdu 7.08pc and Balochi 3.02pc.”

When the numerous sub-cultures get intermixed with their distinct identities, they form one common integral culture.”⁵⁵

Ethnic and cultural diversities have the potential to play a central role in making common community. They are equally pivotal to assessing the ethnicity that to what extent it has an inbuilt paradox of conflictual and consensual characters. It is described as a cognitive act constructed on identity or loyalty, aimed at furthering the interests of specific group and region. Therefore, ethno-cultural and linguistic divide in Pakistan is prone to suffer owing to the tendency of unwillingness of interest groups to accept the cultural and linguistic diversity.⁵⁶

The result is seen in the tug of power among various political parties at the provincial and federal levels dominated by the conflicting ethnicity, causing unease of relations between the center and provinces - the key concerns for national integration. The cleavage may disintegrate the nation by spiraling the feelings of marginalization and alienation, as evident in the case of East Pakistan dismemberment in 1971, wherein the few initial riots got massively triggered on charges of ethno-lingual marginalization, leading to the violent conflicts costing the national integrity. It is observed that the social fabric of Pakistan is also fragmented around biradari and caste structures that are much cherished as a main source of identity, and recognition, specifically in remote areas of the country, thereby eclipsing the importance of nationhood.

Though, the provincial or regional identity is essential to solid nationhood. Yet, using regional identity as a political card for vested

⁵⁵ Jehanzeb, Saima Perveen & Fayaz Ur Rehman, 15.

⁵⁶ Zaheer Ud Din Qureshi, “Role of Interest Groups in Public Policy Formulation,” *Hamari Web*, Available at: <https://hamariweb.com/articles/31713> (accessed on 29 March 2021).

interests poses challenge to national integration as evident in the activism of PTM⁵⁷ and in the slogans of separatism raised by the Baloch insurgents like the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA).⁵⁸ All these elements are sponsored by the hostile states with the aim to destabilize the country.⁵⁹ Pakistan has repeatedly raised its voice against the support extended by many foreign countries and their hostile intelligence agencies to their sleeper cells to conduct subversive acts, equally lending patronage to the terrorist elements to sabotage the national integration process.

The insurgents of Balochistan no way represent the general aspirations of the Balochistan society, but they are trying hard to harm soft targets of innocent non-Balochis and government installations by their low-intensity periodic attacks for which they get regular support from external players like India immersed in its hegemonic aim of destabilizing Pakistan.

In order to integrate Balochistan with the federation, there is a dire need of preserving the ethno-cultural-linguistic identities and removing the socio-economic inequalities. As discussed above, the successive governments have undoubtedly launched various development programmes, including the “Political Reconciliation process”⁶⁰ to give complete ownership to the people of Balochistan. However, these

⁵⁷ Francesca Marino, “Manzoor Pashteen,” Ibid.

⁵⁸ Srijan Shukla, “Who are Baloch Liberation Army? Insurgents who killed 30 in Pakistan in last one week,” *The Print*, February 20, 2020, Available at: <https://theprint.in/theprint-essential/who-are-baloch-liberation-army-insurgents-who-killed-30-in-pakistan-in-last-one-week/368398/> (accessed on 3 April 2021).

⁵⁹ “PTM Funding: The Role of RAW-NDS, Wealthy FATA Diaspora in the Gulf & Hostile Agencies,” *Global Village Space*, April 30, 2019, Available at: <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/ptm-funding-the-role-of-raw-nds-wealthy-fata-diaspora-in-the-gulf-hostile-agencies/> (accessed on 3 April 2021).

⁶⁰ “Balochistan reconciliation: 625 insurgents surrendered in six months,” *Express Tribune*, February 8, 2016.

initiatives remain unable to curb the assumed fears of sub-nationalist groups that such programmes are only going to offer development opportunities to non-Baloch ethnicities like Punjabis and Sindhis; the issues of the Baloch ethnic groups of the province would remain unaddressed.

Unacceptance of central government's socio-economic and political initiatives by ethnic insurgents is bound to damage the cause of national integration. Whereas the concept of national integration for Pakistan is meant to create 3Cs: i) "common citizenry, ii) common political and social structures, and iii) a common state"⁶¹ for building a common community with the aim to establish a sense of identity and mutual belonging without disturbing the existing diversities of linguistic, ethnic, religious, and geographical strata. "It does not mean to substitute an artificial new identity for the old ones."⁶²

Sub-nationalist Politics and National Integration

Muslim nationalism of sub-continent played a crucial role in the Pakistan movement. Later, its role to preserve the integrity of newly independent state had been gradually undermined due to its inability of agreeably resolving the issues of language, provincial status and division of natural resources among the stakeholders of diverse cultural backgrounds. The never-ending delays in solving these issues provided conducive environment for solidifying the sentiments of sub-nationalism in Pakistan.

With the passage of time, perceived marginalization of provinces and deprivation of nationalities set a stage for launching sub-nationalist movements, which "provided an opportunity to the leaders

⁶¹ Jehanzeb, Saima Perveen & Fayaz Ur Rehman, "Challenges and Policy Options to National Integration in Pakistan A Comparative Analysis," 4.

⁶² Ibid.

of sub-national groups such as Jeay Sindh Mahaz, All Pakistan Muttahidda Students Organization now called Muhajir / Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and “National Awami Party (NAP)”⁶³ to start gripping the political landscape of the regional politics, while creating and exploiting controversy on the issues like Kalabagh dam.

Even today, the nationalist leaders of the small provinces such as Shafi Muhammad Burfat, Chairman, Jeay Sindh Muttahida Mahaz⁶⁴ Ayaz Latif Palijo, President, Qomi Awami Tahreek,⁶⁵ and Manzoor Ahmad Pashteen, Chairman, PTM⁶⁶ are inciting the sentiments of regionalism on the self-professed exploitation, alienation, and deprivation of their ethno-lingual identity. These sentiments may dent the process of national integrity by the acts of vandalism and brutality, thus threatening the national social fabric.

The civil and military leadership in Pakistan are continuously making efforts to merge the narrow feelings of provincialism into the coherent national identity. Power corridors in Islamabad are well aware that the coercive means could not produce fruitful results for attaining the goal of national unity, as it is a commonly observed practice that “different ethnic factions begin to attach more importance to their core ethnicity than the national identity.”⁶⁷

⁶³ Nadeem F. Paracha, “The first left,” *Dawn*, November 9, 2014.

⁶⁴ “Pakistan is afraid of political voice of Sindhi and Baloch: Shafi Burfat,” *ANI*, November 8, 2017, Available at: <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/pakistan-is-afraid-of-political-voice-of-sindhi-and-baloch-shafi-burfat201711081913310003/> (accessed on 7 April 2021).

⁶⁵ “Ayaz Palijo says he is being punished for talking against ‘anti-Sindh projects’,” *News International*, October 4, 2016.

⁶⁶ Francesca Marino, “Manzoor Pashteen Arrested: ‘They Can Kill Me But Not the Movement’,” *Ibid*.

⁶⁷ Gulshan Majeed, “Problems of National Integration in Pakistan,” 68.

Searching National Unity under Federalism

Federal form of government is considered an effective tool to crystalize the national integration process by separation of power between the federal government and the federating units. In this form of government, constitution guarantees protection of the rights of federating units and their ethnic strata. The federal form of government enables the diverse ethnicities to freely flourish their cultural uniqueness and integrate their belonging into the mainstream political system, which is indispensable for the process of national security and integration.

Observing the off-and-on engagement of the previous federal governments with the federating units, it seems that the present central government also feels the need to highlight the importance of belongingness and oneness of the federation to its federating units. There might be a realization in the federal government that any exclusive policy or indifferent attitude on its part may undermine the autonomies of the small provinces. Contrarily, only the inclusive polices guarantee constructive role of the federating units under the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan.

In this context, essence of the 18th Constitutional Amendment is to ensure smooth functioning of the country's affairs in an organized way. The rationale behind the amendment was the separation of power feature to strengthen the federal system by boosting its national security and integration. Obviously, the 18th Constitutional Amendment empowers the provinces to formulate polices in areas of socio-economic, educational, and health sectors, besides making local body laws. Now, the provinces are responsible for allocating the resources to development projects and implementing those for socio-economic uplift of their marginalized communities.

However, the poor performance and administrative incapability of the provincial governments have been the reason for their incompetence in delivering the basic services to their people, which is now pushing the federal government to think about revisiting the 18th Amendment for overcoming the irritants. But this idea has raised the eyebrows of national, religious, and sub-nationalist political parties of Pakistan, including the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Awami National Party (ANP), Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party and Balochistan National Party. These political parties consider themselves the architect of 18th Amendment that ensures provincial autonomy in true sense. In their view, any attempt to reverse the 18th Amendment by the PTI government would be an attack on provincial autonomy, to the extent that they have grown sceptic about the commitment of the central government to national integration.

The lags in development are not necessarily the fault of 18th Amendment, but more so, the fault of the entire political system, which requires innovative reforms.⁶⁸ Basically, the political setting in Pakistan is still relying on the legacy of dynastic politics, with its two major national political parties: PML-N and PPP (apart from PTI). Despite their slogans of indiscriminately representing and serving the entire Pakistan, these two political entities have largely been relying on Punjab and Sindh provinces as their vote-bank. Interestingly, the results of 2008, 2013 and 2018 general elections show that the role, behavioral pattern, political priorities, and interests of these national political parties have become limited rather transformed, focusing more on regional than national politics.

⁶⁸ Nadeemul Haque, "Post 18th Amendment Fiscal Space Issues Face by Federal Government and Possible Solutions," (paper presented at the Islamabad Policy Research Institute Webinar on 18th Amendment: Impact on Governance in Pakistan, Islamabad, Pakistan, July 21, 2020).

Therefore, the mainstream political parties try to contest elections based on ethnicity (PPP, PML-N and ANP motivate the voters in their favor on the basis of Sindhi, Punjabi and Pashtun ethnicities respectively), while the religio-ethnic political space has been shrunk to rural areas of Sindh, KP, and Balochistan. Hence, they maneuver to keep religio-ethnic differences alive to secure their political supremacy and relevance among the public, which is damaging the very cause of national integration.

In fact, the entire political structure of Pakistan evolved in a manner that a small ruling elite has remained dominated on the main landscape of the federal politics. They comprise the Punjabi rural, Sindhi feudal, Baloch Sardars, tribal Maliks and Khans, small group of Mohajirs, sub-nationalist leadership, industrialists and top civilian and military bureaucracy. In contrast to the Punjabi elite, the Sindhi, Balochi, and tribal elite tend to consider themselves excluded from the nation-building process on ethnic lines, and not on political grounds. Politically, they hold even more exclusive position in the peripheral landscape of regional politics. Such characteristics of regional polity, along with, dynastic politics have deepened polarization in the political milieu of federal politics on the bases of caste and creed system affiliated to narrow ends of ethno-cultural politics.

The scholars argue that political hegemony of the few “is confined to exercise the instruments of state power and serve its vested interests.”⁶⁹ Dominance of the aristocrats over national political system does not represent will of the masses, who feel excluded from the decision-making process. Concentration of power in few hands rather weakens the institutions, compelling the military to intervene, and introduce its own style of democratic system, while the judicial

⁶⁹Jehanzeb, Saima Perveen & Fayaz Ur Rehman, “Challenges and Policy Options to National Integration in Pakistan A Comparative Analysis,” 16.

intervention takes the form of *Suo moto* apparently to correct the executive and legislative measures.

Tug of power among the political aristocracy for preserving their legacy has further weakened the federation, rendering the social structure ineffective. Pakistan is, therefore, still struggling to seek societal integration at federal level of its diverse society fragmented on ethno-cultural, and sectarian lines. In this context, “the role of federal body as facilitator is essential to enhance the development of national integration in the country.”⁷⁰

The responsibility of the central government is to provide guideline to provincial governments for conducting their affairs in an organized but mutually coherent manner.⁷¹ The federal entity also listens to the political voices of the small provinces, with the aim of creating harmony on constitutional issues. It is necessary for the federal government to learn lesson from the bitter realities of the past of not listening to the demands of small provinces and not taking into confidence the small federating units on matters of constitutional amendments.

A smooth, cordial, and balanced relations between central and provincial governments are the pre-requisites to meaningful national integration. Otherwise, marginalization, alienation, disagreement with federal government, dissatisfaction, and insecurity among the small provinces will flourish centrifugal forces, causing national security issues like “separatist tendencies, anarchy, internal turmoil, subversion, ethnic issues, and violent struggles for power.”⁷²

⁷⁰ Shamila Tabassum, Ghulam Mustafa & Muhammad Nawaz Bhatti, “Issues of National Integration in Pakistan with Reference to Balochistan,” 204.

⁷¹ Gulshan Majeed, “Problems of National Integration in Pakistan,” 75.

⁷² Faiza Mir & Abdul Manan Bazai, “Challenges to National Integration: A Case Study of Baluchistan,” 84.

Sectarianism, Extremism, Ideological Identity and Modernity Confusion

The Quran forbids exaggerating religious matters (religious extremism) and ordains just and balance (middle path) between the extremes. Islam celebrates “*Ikhtilaf*”⁷³ (diversity). It defines the boundaries of religion to avoid overstepping and to prevent schism. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) said that “*Ikhtilaf*” is a blessing. According to a saying of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), “diversity among the Muslims is a blessing (*Ikhtilafu um matirahma*).”⁷⁴

However, in the intellectual history of Islam, diversity, space, and freedom of opinion have led to difference of opinions among the religious scholars, which has tended to dent the unity of the Muslim *Ummah*. However, various Muslim thinkers and jurists had been trying to prevent this schism by suggesting “*Ijma*” and “*Ijtihad*” (consensus and collective wisdom).⁷⁵

Islamic Jurisprudence did not develop as state law. It is called *Fiqh*⁷⁶ and its concept and ideology are *Shari’a*. Muslim jurists started developing *Fiqh* and jurist opinion. These jurists worked independently from the state, but there was cooperation between the state and the jurists. The Islamic Jurisprudence developed as a jurist’s law. These laws were not legislated by the caliph or the king. However, these laws were implemented in certain matters by the Muslim state.

⁷³ Muhammad K Masud, “Ikhtilaf al-Fuqaha: Diversity in Fiqh as a Social Construction,” *WANTED* (2009), 65, Available at: <http://arabic.musawah.org/sites/default/files/Wanted-MKM-EN.pdf> (accessed on 20 April 2021).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Sajila Kausar, “Collective Ijtihad: History and Current Perspective,” *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies* vol. III, no. V (March 2017): 151-163.

⁷⁶ Prawitra Thalib, “Distinction of Characteristics Sharia and Fiqh on Islamic Law,” *Yuridika*, Vol. 33, no. 3, (September 2018), 438.

The major religious divisions in Pakistani society are based on Islamic laws such as “Hanfi,” “Shafi’i,” and “Jafari.”⁷⁷ The founders of Islamic laws always explained that they had differences on the interpretation of Islamic laws for which all of them are right.⁷⁸ The division in Islamic laws is not “Firqa”. *Fiqh* has become “Firqa (Sect)” in Pakistan where “Hanfi”, “Shafi’i”, “Jafari”, and “Ahl al-hadith” schools of thought tend to opt sectarian lines. In this regard, sectarianism has been promoted and supported in religious ways without realizing its severe implications for the Pakistani society.

Religious extremism in Pakistan has made it difficult for general scholars to analyse it, oppose it, or talk about it for the fear lash back from the extremist sympathisers in the country. This sympathy is based on nationalistic spirit and religious affiliation on strong sectarian lines. Resultantly, an ambiguous attitude towards religious extremism is observed. It is difficult to separate religious extremism from the normal faith and belief. It is equally difficult to differentiate between violent extremism and sectarianism.

The term extremism has been in use, but it got more significance in the post Afghan war in 1979. The reason is that extremism means an ideology for achieving the extremist objectives (power, dominance, etc.). When extremism is coupled with politics and political goals, power and authority, it becomes an ideology, which abhors dissent, differentiation and difference of opinion. But more importantly, when the ideology establishes link with power and dominance, its aim is no longer for individual and social improvements rather its goal is to get power to dominate others.

⁷⁷ Jawad Syed & Edwina Pio, “Unsophisticated and naive? Fragmenting monolithic understandings of Islam,” *Journal of Management & Organization*, Vol. 24, Special issue 5 (September 2018), 599.

⁷⁸ Muhammad K Masud, “Ikhtilaf al-Fuqaha: Diversity in Fiqh as a Social Construction,” *WANTED* (2009), 65.

The sectarian Islam is “*Firqa Najiya*”⁷⁹ that also means to believe in “*Taqlid*”⁸⁰ which, in turn, means following one of the schools or groups in Islam. The term political Islam is used for those interpretations that called for an Islamic state. Foremost among them is Sayyid Abu’l A’la Mawdudi, who influenced other Muslim countries.⁸¹ According to Mawdudi, *Iqtidar* (power) belongs to God and He is powerful and Hakim. This sovereignty of God becomes a basic concept of political Islam. Mawdudi believes that the concept of God makes obligatory for the Muslims to reject all those political systems which he termed “*Taghut*.”⁸² He describes that *Din* requires state and a political power as without these, religion would not be established.⁸³

The sectarian views of Mawdudi about *Din* were criticized by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi and others.⁸⁴ According to them, political Islam is not a mainstream perception and Mawdudi’s interpretation of the *Din* is more political one that is why Jam’iyat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Da’esh and other Muslim terrorist groups have opted for his concept of political Islam to get political powers.⁸⁵ The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan tried to solve the question of sovereignty in the way that the sovereignty of God is there but He has delegated His power to the people and the people through their

⁷⁹ Muhammad Al-Atawneh, “Wahhabi Self-Examination Post-9/11: Rethinking the ‘Other’, ‘Otherness’ and Tolerance,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 47, no. 2 (March 2011), 258.

⁸⁰ Abdul Rahman Mustafa, *On Taqlid: Ibn al Qayyim’s Critique of Authority in Islamic Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 54.

⁸¹ Muhammad Khalid Masud, “Islam and Influence of Religious Extremism in Muslim Societies,” (paper presented at Lecture Series for Islamabad Policy Research Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan, December 20, 2016).

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

representatives. In fact, the parliament is exercising the dedicated powers.⁸⁶

The assumption of the exclusive role of madrassa-trained clergy for giving religious interpretation has created a space for them to establish their monopoly over religious issues in Pakistan. The indulgence of external actors and their funding to religious institutions have further worsened the situation, thriving the religiously disruptive forces. With the passage of time, sectarianism emerged as a security challenge to national security and integration. The situation got worsened when various clergy from different sects gave divergent interpretations of Islam, which led to the tendency of extremism in the country.⁸⁷ The reasons for not raising voice against religious extremism in Pakistan include fear and anxiety, weakness, ambiguity, misunderstanding and lack of critical and analytical outlook.

In reality, there is an ambiguity in Pakistan about the spirit of religion, Islamic state, religious systems and objectives that affect certain questions such as: What is the type of the state identity? What should be the trends for Islamisation? What is Pakistan's national vision? Consequently, it has to get into a blind type of discussion such as whether Islam or secularism was the idea of the founding father of Pakistan. To achieve this goal, there are a number of Ulama Mashaikh conferences held in Pakistan, which have merely resulted in strengthening the existing strong sectarian sentiments of the religious groups.

⁸⁶ National Assembly of Pakistan, "The Constitution of The Islamic Republic of Pakistan," *National Assembly of Pakistan, 2018*, Available at: http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1549886415_632.pdf (accessed on 28 April 2021).

⁸⁷ Syed Jawad Shah & Waseem Ishaque, "Challenges of National Integration in Pakistan And Strategic Response," 42.

Thus, Pakistan has a lot of ambiguities in dealing with these questions, which gets accelerated by a belief that Islam is the only religion that unites the different religious sects. Instead of solving the questions of corruption, languages, provincialism, the Pakistani society and its political and religious leadership have been stuck with an idea that being a Muslim, they should stand closer and united by Islam. In fact, they have a vague idea of unity and identity.

The conceptual confusion of ideological identity and modernity predates independence. There were three perceptions about: the Islamic nation, the role of state and how best to be a true Muslim during the pre-partition of the subcontinent, which had contributed to weakening the basic concepts. For instance, first, the Islamic nation was defined in the pre-partition period as Ummah that did not recognize any territory. On the contrary, Pakistan has been territorialised. Even its constitution and religious groups have accepted Pakistan's territorial integrity.

Second, the state should be represented through religious identity. When Pakistan came into being, most of its people were calling for the implementation of Islam and Sharia in the country. They did not believe any state role in the religious affairs. In fact, it was the colonial period when for the first time the state had implemented Sharia in the subcontinent.⁸⁸

Third, there was a fear that commenting anything on the religion could be penalized on the Day of Judgment or could be considered as blasphemy. However, after independence, the country's Constitution evolved as a mix of modern democracy and Islamic statehood; actually, in neither of the two.

⁸⁸ Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Ibid.*

Pakistan could not solve the conundrum of role of religion in the ideological construct of the state. According to 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.”⁸⁹ Such debates have always cast negativity and have been a source of persistent friction in the society and have kept the nation divided along religious-ethnic lines.⁹⁰

The crisis of ambiguity in the religious discourse came from modernity, the meaning of which is still unclear in the country as the Pakistani society inherited this modernity from colonialism. The concept of modernity was considered by the Muslims of the subcontinent as an attack on their identity, culture and religion. At that time Syed Ahmad Khan stood up to differentiate between modernity and political aspect of Islam by asking the Muslims to acquire education and knowledge. He clarified that Muslims of the subcontinent needed a new theology and Ijtihad. His idea was criticized by most of the religious scholars of the subcontinent, who considered that Syed Ahmad Khan’s suggestions would defeat the Muslim political history of the subcontinent,⁹¹ thus they did not need any Ijtihad. Rather, they demanded the revival of Muslim political status or the revival of Islam in a political sense.

In Pakistan, the trend of political Islam has created further confusion in the concept of modernity, which was based on power and conflict theory that the political power should be divided on the basis of sectarian Islam along with the restoration of Sharia and Islamic laws

⁸⁹ Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2004), 197.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Muhammad Khalid Masud, Ibid.

on the same lines. The weakness in the religious context is that the Pakistani society has not been able to define nationalism, role of state and sectarianism (whether it is good or bad). The fear in the religious context is to do Ijtihad is to disintegrate Islam and to commit blasphemy against religion. Any innovation or a new thing is not forbidden in Islam until it is added in the religion as an obligation like the obligations already pronounced in the Quran and Sunnah.

Recommendations

Against this cloudy horizon, steering the process of national integration urges the federal government to focus on following steps:

- A well-thought-out National Social Action Plan (NSAP) is required considering the socio-economic, and political imperatives of all the provinces, thereby satisfying the essential needs of the ethno-cultural, and socio-political divergent identities. It will minimize the regional-provincial disequilibrium, granting more sense of ownership to the federating units supportive of the process of national integration.
- The on going political-economic initiatives for Balochistan taken by the federal government are appreciable, yet more efforts at the grass-roots level are needed to integrate the Baloch communities with the other provinces. In this regard, the provision of 4G internet service, and the development of the transmission lines and rail-road networks in all the provinces will help bring the on going initiatives to a logical end. In addition, there is a need to allocate seats to the people of Balochistan in all federal departments on the criteria of poverty, backwardness, and area so that they could consider themselves integral part of the country. It will equally help ensuring participation of the dissatisfied people, thus neutralizing their strong sub-nationalist feelings in the favour of national cohesion.

- There is a need to improve the administrative structure of KP government for implementing the former FATA merger plan in true letter and spirit, addressing the unsteady development in the region, which is crucial to the concept of national integration.
- Equitable distribution of development projects is required while accommodating the local private sector for creating new entrepreneurial units, cementing the unified economy. The central government needs to give priority to those projects, which generate economic mergers, inter-provincial interdependency, and national integration.
- To improve efficiency and capacity-building of all provincial and federal departments, the central government should launch a national policy giving guidelines for optimal departmental performance based on administrative accountability, decentralization of power, and removal of the traditional bureaucratic attitudes.
- Inter-provincial internship programmes with attractive packages for the qualified skilled professionals like doctors, engineers, and economic managers should be encouraged. Trade, labour, lawyer, and doctor unions should be reinvigorated at the national level.
- Empowered Local Body system is indispensable for Pakistan to keep people satisfied, narrowing down the spread of mistrust, and reducing the separatist tendencies. Decentralization of power from provinces to local bodies is a concrete measure to uninterrupted growth of the political process, ensuring integration of the deprived folks into the mainstream political process.
- Perseverance, patience, and continuous political dialogue are the key to building long-term consensus on the 18th Amendment. In this context, proposing well-considered

amendments and working for building consensus ought to be the top priority of the federal government.

- National political parties need to shed off their major reliance on provincial politics. They should transform their role, behavioural pattern, political priorities, and party interests from regional politics to more national politics.
- For ethnic and social harmony, the federal government should start the series of seminars on regular basis to be held in each provincial capital to inculcate the significance of unity in diversity.
- The scope of Council of Islamic Ideology should not be only confined to its role as an advisory body for the legislature that whether or not laws are against the spirit of Qur'an and Sunnah. It should also oversee any religious interpretation(s) given by madrassa-trained clergy to avoid divergent Islamic interpretation, and verdict, causing extremist leanings in Pakistan. It is observed with concern that the Friday sermons of various mosques tend to generate deviations, and sectarian divides, thus flourishing extremism. To curb this detrimental inclination, there is a dire need to develop a state-level single national Friday sermon mandatory to be recited at the Friday congregational prayers, thus solidifying the roots to national integration.
- Media plays an important role for cultural consolidation and national integration. A strong national narrative should be broadcasted to counter the extremist and sectarian along with provincialism narratives in the society.

Conclusion

National integration is a process of bringing together culturally and socially distinct groups within the unified geographical boundaries of

the country in order to create a sense of oneness among them integral to the national unity. The cluster of languages, cultures, and ethnicities are perceived as the key elements that set a stage to the concept of nationhood, where people-friendly policies encourage all segments of society to play a constructive role in the nation-building. Opposite to this, any sense of marginalization, ethno-linguistic and sectarian schisms, extremism, caste-creed cleavages, and socio-economic deprivation, are the impediments to the growth of nationhood.

In fact, the nexus between sentiments of oneness and human development has become a central focus of national integration. These two elements are interlinked. There will be no feelings of togetherness without human resource development and no human resource development without feelings of togetherness. The study finds that in Pakistan, the successive governments could not get the desired progress in human capital formation to remove socio-economic injustices in Balochistan, interior Sindh, South Punjab, and tribal belt. The challenges that the country is facing in the political and social realms get compounded by provincialism, ethno-cultural divergences, bad governance, and inequalities in the provision of education and health services. As a result, socio-cultural, and political fault lines remain the dominant features of Pakistani society.