



SOCIO-POLITICAL CHALLENGES OF 21ST CENTURY AND CULTURAL BARRIERS OF PAKISTANI SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan is among the poor and over populated countries having abundance of natural resources and geographical prominence. It also has a multi-cultural society that comprises of different sub-cultures. After more than seven decades of independence, it has not been able to establish a coherent and composed social system yet, tangled with fragmented, mobile and materialistic society. Pakistan's economy is primarily based on agriculture, gradually progressing towards industrialization and urbanization. The urban modes of living have also been widespread across the country. Traditional culture has been over saturated but the new one is struggling to takeover, therefore ideological divisions and moral uncertainty penetrates through the roots of its foundation. Pakistani society is divided and diverse, poor but in a process of transition. Therefore, the study aims to identify and examine the motives of uncertain and assorted elements of Pakistani culture which cause hurdles in the process of development and prosperity of the nation.

KEYWORDS: Culture, Disparity, Ethnicity, Radicalization, Fragility, Hegemonic control



INTRODUCTION

Culture has a very wide meaning, the Encyclopedia of Sociology defined the idea of culture as a set of values for enlightening and accepting social conduct (Borgatta, & Montgomery, 2000:562). Scholars believe that it comprises of “conventional patterns of thought and behavior, including values, beliefs, rules of conduct, political organization, economic activity which are passed on from one generation to the next by learning – and not by biological inheritance”(Ibid, 263). It also means the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of particular country or group (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 7th Ed, 2005). Some other analysts define it as the capability of a society to enjoy. So it is the innovative traditions in which people have fun themselves (Azam, 2009: 03). Culture is ‘an arrangement of signs’ (Borgatta, & Montgomery, 2000: 562) whereas, society is a specific cluster of people who share the same traditions, rules, etc (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 7th ed., 2005) and any organized activity which connects with the society is called ‘social’ behavior. However culture is a learned customs, core elements of actions and an essential view in the cultural anthropology (Silis, 1968: 314). An individual’s behavior “is influenced more by the values, norms, and rituals prevalent in the society than by laws” (Hafeez, 1991: 264). It means that society and culture do effect styles and etiquettes.

PAKISTANI SOCIETY

Pakistan encompasses several different cultures and indigenous clusters from the Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. Its society is fundamentally polyglot and multi-ethnonational. All of them are diverse but contain some similarities because most of them belong to ‘Aryan’ legacy or lived in harmony along the Indus River for thousands of years. After over 70 years of union, a distinct "Pakistani" culture has developed particularly in the urban regions. The old-style domestic values are greatly esteemed and consecrated; besides city folks have gradually converted and embraced modern life styles with socio-economic limits of the society. The end of past century has witnessed the rise of a self-made class in cities where education is regarded as a base of this socio-economic leap whereas, the rustic areas are still traditional and controlled by thousand year’s old regional tribal customs.

RESEARCH PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The core reason behind the study is to examine the role of cultural barriers in the socio-political development of Pakistan. Precisely, the research circles around the notion that how the challenges of 21st century and modern initiatives can help in bridging the gap



between modernization modes and indigenous cultural behaviour of nation. Apart from the above research problem, the main objectives of this study are stated as following:

- To provide inclusive causes of the diverse nature of Pakistani society.
- To examine the shifts in Socio-cultural structure of the society.
- To highlighting the dynamics of social transformation in Pakistan and its effects.
- To find out future prospects of modernization and challenges of new millennium for nation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is planned on a qualitative and analytical methodology and based on available literature review on the research problem. In accordance to the nature of research objectives, extensive efforts have been made to gather factual data from different sources. Hence it is an amalgamation of primary and secondary sources. All the Information has been collected from authentic sources and original documents such as the U.N.'s Human Development Index, International Crisis Group Asia Reports, the Pew Global Attitudes projects, books, journals, statements and official declarations and communications. Apart of literary research communication with other scholars through international seminars, conferences and workshops, has been very beneficial in mounting precision in discerning about various features of the topic.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The respective essay is organized in three sections. The initial part of the research, deals with the objectives and methodology of research. Whereas the next portion focuses on the brief discussion of the real causes of socio-cultural disparity of Pakistan and the scope of development and modernization of Pakistan as part of third world nations. A summary of findings, recommendations and some predictions for the research problems would be discusses in the last section of the study. It is expected that the outcomes of the work would not only empower the scholars and experts of socio-cultural politics and development challenges but it would be also provide an in depth knowledge to the students, social activist and policymakers of societal development.

CULTURAL BARRIERS OF PAKISTANI SOCIETY

The socio-cultural structure of Pakistan is shifting, multifaceted methods of societal conversion are proceeding but the core issue is the course of transformation hardly taken positive and generally adverse. While in the process of change, things are not working properly because of inadequate approach and application of practices, as well as hurdles



created by diversified cultures. Dynamics of social transformation in Pakistan bring a mixture of different types of barriers such as; National Identity issues, weak economy, ethnicity, radicalization, sectarianism, modernization and unbalanced development etc.

NATIONAL IDENTITY ISSUES

Pakistan entered in the new millennium with unresolved issues of national identity. The quest for identity has remained a regular subject of conflict during the 70-year history of this unusual county. There is a constant argument between those who believe in religion based Muslim identity and those, who differentiate Muslim identity from Islamic identity. They also presented secular personality of founder of the country, Quaid-e-Azam as a model (Khan, 2006: 50). Though, both are on the crossroad situation and partners against the third view, which believed that national identity should be based on ethnic disparities. Since 1980s regional and provincial ethnic identities sustained, which include:

- Pashtun, Chitralis, Gilgitis and Hazarawals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
- Baloch, , Makranis and Barohis in Balochistan
- Sindhi in Sindh
- Punjabi, Saraiki in Punjab
- Muhajir (migrants from India after independence) in the urban cities in Sindh.

These regional and provincial identities challenged national Pakistani identity. Although an ongoing connection has established among national and religion based identities which are promoted by moderate religious groups. The real conflict continues between extreme ethnic and extreme religious groups who are not ready for any resolution that makes this issue severer. Thus it creates more cultural differences and divides national unity. The real possibility for an essential modification in Pakistan's decision making and autonomous progress is dependent on national unity at any cost. Regime's power is tangled with deference of the multinational racial foundation of Pakistani identity, which is not an ideal choice but the only choice for the betterment of the country.

ETHNICITY

Ethnicity is generally taken as societal division on the basis of cast, language or geography. It was an ancient phenomenon but not outdated because it exists in every era till date. Pakistan was suffering from ethnical problems since its birth. Bengali linguistic and ethnic division hurt Pakistan in its early days which later infiltrated in other parts of the country. The increase of class cognizance and differences among people are increasing day by day, which causes fatal conflicts all over the country. On the other hand constrains between Islamists and Secularists also developed particularly during 2nd



marshal's law which were later exploited by both groups for their own benefits. The Islamist movements sometime looked like a class revolutionary movement. The exemplary secular group Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) in urban Sindh and Karachi, who were self-proclaimed representatives of middle classes are now divided into further groups and challenging their own status.

Pakistan's racial groups are not similar except Punjabis, who have faced the rage of the federal regime because they have driven nationalist movements (Pew Global Attitudes project, Aug, 13, 2009:01). The Baloch and Pashtuns are based on a tribal culture, Sindhis are majorly pastoral and the Urdu speaking community is largely urban but in last decade a large portion of rural population of Sindh has settled in Karachi, which changed the Sindhi population's proportion in urban areas. After the army operation in FATA and FANA the population shift in Karachi and other urban areas increased which up surged the ethnic conflicts in the country.

The rise of ethnic consciousness during war against terrorism made democratic governments more cognizant and brought them in a better peacemaking position, which hopefully, will endure stability in Pakistan. The 18th amendment of constitution increased provincial powers which strengthened the trust of provinces on federal system, which is supported by a rising civil society and new mass media had changed politics in the country. In 2010, the National Finance Commission Award was ratified after 19 years of debate, which was by itself a big achievement and a further step towards a goal of bringing ethnic harmony in the country. This gave more support to utilize the revenue and resources to the provinces.

RADICALIZATION AND SECTARIANISM

Radicalization is understood as extreme attitude against ritual believes and faith therefore, anyone who has less tolerance besides contrary faith and becomes violent is known as radical or extremist, hence, this notion is not directly related with Islam. Islam is the religion of peace but "Islamic" grievances, such as the Israel-Palestinian, Kashmir conflict, Bosnia Massacre or dispute of Chechnya, hurts the emotions in every part of the Muslim World. At the same time World bias behavior has also triggered many Muslims in every corner of the World. Pakistan, as a prominent part of Muslim World also faced similar sentiments of their own population. Yet, three events have hastened the radicalization in the country.

- Shia revolution in Iran, which brought the Sunnis, Shia disparity and conflict.
- The increase of military support for radical Islamists during and after Afghan war.



- The American reaction after 9/11 against Muslims.

These developments take the relationship of the state with Islam on that path which cannot be easily fixed by authorities or scholars. Some intellectuals believed that Pakistan is a shelter for Indian Muslims, where the role of Islam within the state still needs to be defined without eliminating its importance in the society (International Crisis Group Asia Report, No. 49, March 2003: 02). Pakistan expresses that its soul power is driven from Central and Southwest Asia in terms of Islam, therefore claims, on that ground, a close relation and concern for Indian Muslims. Many analysts have asserted, that Pakistan used Islam to pursue its interests in the region, first in Kashmir and later in Afghanistan (Nasar, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2000: 139-180). These observations damaged Pakistan's image, not only as a peace loving nation but also scared the face of Islam as a religion of peace. The counter attack was as similar and one sided as the allegations, which resulted in further destruction of both nation and religion. These two extreme ideologies played a vital role in increasing extremism and radicalization in Pakistan. On one hand liberal group tries to promote secularism while on the other hand, Islamist groups promote fundamental aspects of Islam, therefor, both the factions failed to yield any significant effort or chose a right direction to depict the real face of Islam and Pakistani nation.

The problem is not Islam or religion but how religion has been used or exploited in a radical way or in a liberal way. Pakistan has suffered from sectarianism internally and from radicalization as well as extremism both externally and internally. The affected section of people feel hopeless and many of them left the country. Pakistan is very far from secularism, the radicals are increasing swiftly and the country is going towards a multifaceted civil war, where people had to decide which side they are on (Hoodbhoy, June 16, 2009).

Sectarian differences divide people with hatred and vicious feelings. Today, Pakistanis are swamped with every kind of Islamist slogan. The ideology of country is based on religious distinction, which has developed more after its independence. The situation of radicalization and extremism is mounting not only in Muslim World, but also in multicultural states like United States, Canada, Europe, Latin America or Southeast Asia, which illustrates that extreme behavior is a psychological disorder that can increase anywhere and has no particular relation with any region or religion.

FRAGILE ECONOMY

The economy of Pakistan was suffering since its independence However; there were flaws in financial strategy because it ignored land and agriculture knowingly. Pakistan is



90% an agricultural occupation country. None of the governments ever worked in the direction of significant land reforms, as other East Asian nations did (Zaidi, Sep, 2010). Secondly, feudals and industrialists with the cooperation of bureaucracy consistently kept remunerations low, harassed unions and didn't invest in basic education. The social concerns of such feeble and fragile fiscal growth are very severe. According to Weiss, the deprived and rustic residents of Pakistan have been left with inadequate means, appealing for jobs, underrated schools for their kids, afflicted by inflation, and breathing in the dark. Pakistan's ranking in the UNDP's Human Development Index slipped from 120 in 1991, to 138 in 2002, and to 141 in 2009 – worse than the Congo (136) and Myanmar (138), and only just above Swaziland (142) and Angola (143), all countries with far weaker economies (U.N.'s Human Development Index, August, 02, 2014).

Today, Pakistan hardly lives on its own finances; almost half public amenities are funded from the west. Although the governments try to increase financial resources by adopting better economic plans with collaboration of neighboring nations like China and Iran and central Asian states such as RCD (Regional Countries Development) and CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) but fragile economy need more productive plans. Pakistan was faced with financial failure in 2001, and was rescued from liquidation by American intervention after 9/11. Pakistan's existing revenue structure is very weak and insufficient export capability could not lead the country to the path of economic independence, and it will remain reliant on external support for an indefinite period.

9/11 harmed Pakistan more than any other country. Terrorism and internal insurgent situation severely damage the economic environment of the foreign investors, as well as, for the locals, most of the local investors left the country after frequent attacks on factories and businessmen. Apart of its geo-strategic importance and nuclear capability, it gradually turning into former East Pakistan (Bangladesh) yet, its important position in world politics puts it in a different strategic class.

Pakistani governments have failed to offer rudimentary facilities to its citizens. The country survived the past century because of its agricultural based economy where well-educated population was not required but today without an educated population the country cannot reach the mark of financial independence. Skilled learned population can be a better asset than oil or mineral resources. Pakistan does not export many processed high value products instead of it the major export, consists of raw material and very low level services (export of man power), it also overlooked the prospects to develop its agricultural sector. The situation is getting worse, no one has been helpful in modernizing the economic structure or assisting the development of industries in the country or permitting its exports to flourish particularly textiles.



Defence spending covers the largest share of annual budget of the country and has become the major feature of the economy. Pakistan increased its defense budget by almost 17% in 2010-2011 due to war against terrorism particularly in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa where demands for troops and combat were necessary. Retired General Talat Masood has said that the increase in spending was directly related to counterinsurgency requirements along with Eastern (Indian) front which remains constant since independence. A part of it was provided by USA, some \$15 billion in direct payments since 2001 (Haider, June, 2010). Now this aid has become minimal because US does not need Pakistan's armed assistance anymore. Thus, Pakistan has to find other ways which depend on its own resources to strengthen its economy in future.

HEGEMONIC CONTROL

Authoritative mechanism is a system where racial defies to national power were unimaginable or impractical for minor communities (McGarry, & O'Leary, 1993: 60). It operates in dictatorial form of governments but does not essentially rely on the backing of major ethnic groups however any of such groups are used as a forcible tool. In liberal democracies it is rarely used because of promotion of citizenship rights, and it generally grows around ethnicity for facilitating organization and mobilization. Mostly in third world countries, democratization is perceived as a tool for ethnic mobilization, whereas democracy by itself is a hegemonic control through rule of majority. There are numerous examples where minorities command over armed and law enforcement forces, which allow them to rule over state such as the Alawites Shiites in Syria or the role of Sunnis in Saddam Hussein's Iraq (Samad, March, 2013). Whereas the Ayub era was the beginning of hegemonic control in Pakistan, then it got worse in Yahyya regime before 1971. Dominance of Punjab in civil and military bureaucracy led armed commanders to use power against Bengali majority in East Pakistan. They failed to deal the problem politically and military operation finally led the separation and the emergence of Bangladesh (Khan, 2006: 59). Despite the disaster of 1971, dominion control was still in the hands of Punjabis who were now in the majority in remaining Pakistan. They are not racially impartial because they became the leading linguistic group with a majority of more than 56% of the whole population. Therefore, their majority in key institutions are visibly ostensible, such as in civil and military bureaucracy particularly at the highest level. Even though Punjabis have rarely been prime ministers, but after Zia regime among the six tenures of political regimes, three tenures were held by Nawaz Sharif who belongs to Punjab whereas other three are share by Sindh and Punjab.

MILITARY RULE



The sixth barrier in Pakistan is the military culture which is more important to understand in Pakistan's self-perception. It was an enduring legacy of the British rule where military pride was itself developed as the patron for the state. The army played an important role in strengthening the colonial rule in Subcontinent and always took an equal share in administration. Thus, civil government greatly relied on them in fulfilling native liabilities and forming control on troublesome domains, princely states and inimical northwest frontier tribes. The military head was second in order of command to the Governor General/Viceroy, and played an important role in strategy and policymaking (Khan, Vol IV (10) 2005). Defense spending was the major element in British rule and letting more means than any other department of government. The same model was adopted by Pakistan and it continues till date. Gradually with the help of senior civil bureaucracy, military obtained an influential position in decision making in political, civil and even in cultural matters of the country (Rizvi, 2003: 06).

Immediately after partition, native British army was divided between both newly born states and were involved in the boundary issues, controlled an incursion of refugees, and dealt other sufferings of division. The security threats were real and impending for the country which could only be pawned with resilient defense thus, it became the first priority of the new regime (Khan, 2006: 57). Although the other institutions have agreed that the armed forces should be well remunerated and well respected for its courage, sacrifices and challenges but they also believed that there must be some cautions and legal restriction for them to not over power their role and to be well-kept in their boundaries because of their regular interference and take-over on political governments. Thus, Pakistan is tangled between this malicious sequence of constitutional democracy, quasi-democracy, and military dictatorship.

MODERNIZATION AND UNBALANCED DEVELOPMENT

Development and modernization are the intangible standards for analyzing the social and cultural change of Third World societies in 21st century. These are also the criteria by which these societies themselves measure their progress, aiming to raise incomes, decrease poverty, increase productivity, facilitate technological advancements, improve health, educational and nutritional standards, and promote responsive governance, representative government, equality, human rights, and freedom. Theoretically, modernization is a process that transforms these objectives into social institutions and cultural norms. In practice, their forms can vary but the meanings and functions remain the same. Third World societies also want to preserve their culture. Apparently, they do not want to become the handicap of America or Europe. Thus, modernization ideals probably will be covered in native outfits.



Modernization is useful for those societies that are growing, urbanizing, and developing. The institutional requirements that are bearing down on the urbanizing and modernizing Pakistan are:

- Make systematic endowment of collective amenities and services for all
- Create space in urban life style
- Appropriate development of civic mechanism for metropolitan society
- Encourage formal planning and cultural development

These imperatives could be guidelines for Pakistan's social and cultural transformation (Abdul Qadeer, 2006: 259). Pakistan's modernization has taken a distinct form. It is clearly reviewing Western institutions and norms, without realizing that how modernization ideals are functioned within the bounds of recipient cultures. The Western forms are adopted externally but they often serve as traditional functions because they are incorporated with historic structures of society. In addition, Pakistani society is hung between modern and Islamic norms, resulting in an imbalanced progress. Islamic revivalism has appeared as an equivalent power of social transformation in the country. Ideological and religious movements are driving social change almost as much as the technological and material advances. Therefore the social processes of Pakistan can be categorized into three directions:

- Indigenization
- Modernization
- Islamization

After seven decades, Pakistan as a society has developed out of its conventional roots. Separation of Bangladesh reduced it geographically, but its population increased twice as much as it before fall of Dhaka. Its four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, FATA and Azad Kashmir are united together by national communication networks, transport services, trade and most of all by people's mobility. A national social formation has emerged over and above regional and provincial communities. However, ethnic and linguistic communities continue to be vibrant and assertive but the Pakistani society is a living reality.

In Third World countries, the state is the prime foundation that can support systematized social and cultural change. The state of Pakistan has gradually become less effective in the process of social development because of frequent interference of other institutions



like military. Those political crises have given rise to imbalanced development. Social legislation and public action for reforming institutions have been lagging. Other institutional constraints also remain neglected to varying degrees. Is this an enduring condition or this is another turn of fortune of state and society in the works? This remains an open question because the country keeps falling into weak stature in all walks of life.

CONCLUSION

Pakistan is a diverse state by every notion of diversity, it has indigenous, multilingual population with regional and socio-economic variances. Its track record in accepting these characteristics on the national ground has been quite poor. Sociocultural factors revolve around Pakistan's culture of economy, religion, and education. Economic culture is very unfair; religious values are diverged and become a soul reason of sectarianism; whereas educational system is extensively inadequate. These are the reasons behind internal political instability and economic decline, but these stigmas are still not a direct contributing factor rather than, indirect causes of insufficient government policies and political pragmatism along with furtive international involvement. Dictatorial and inequitable approach of establishment and other relative departments is also the factor of inconsistency. Mass-media, religious organizations, and so called educational NGOs have been used to promote these inequalities by the authorized and unauthorized means.

Islam is an essential element of Pakistani culture, however it cannot be implied that it is the only defining source for all the local cultures of the country. Similarly, the ideology of Pakistan is also founded on western concept of nationalism, which smartly amalgamated with modern rational view of Islam and Urdu as a national and connected language. It illustrates that Islam was entered in regional cultures quite late, when Sufism was spread thus its role was promoted after the independence in such a significant way that it is impossible to imagine these cultures without Islamic values. Though, the practice of these values in different regions are not same and people adopted them according to their own understanding and lifestyle. It brought the different culturalism and belief system altogether. The state, on the other hand projected its ideology as a tool to renounce multiplicity and variances.

Pakistan also had a long history of dictatorships and underneath military controlled constitutional democracy. The autocratic behavior of regimes are the main reason of feeble civil society and aggressive undemocratic political culture. The absence of real democratic coexisting culture created the refuting approach towards the acceptance of reality of heterogeneity, or the plurality of the society and every government regardless of political or military pursued a policy of creating a unitary national identity for the



country. Contradicting policies has resulted in a culture of resentment and antagonism. Therefore, the socio-cultural decline has raised every kind of challenge for the society and state. Today Pakistan faces severe issues primarily in politics and economics, although it receives financial aid and assistance but to inherent socio-cultural problems, corrupt incapable leadership and instable political circumstances creates hurdles in producing any encouraging outcomes. Still Pakistani Society exists with all odds of ethnic and linguistic barriers and a national social formation has emerged over and above regional and provincial communities with the modernization and development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase in literacy and creating socio-ethical awareness is the only ray of hope for such a diverse society, because gradual transformation is the approved method for long lasting civilizational change, hence the remedy for third world polarized societies.

To promote real democratic coexisting culture needs continuation of democratization in any form, like a common phrase states that “if you have weak democracy give more democracy” must be adopting as an approach towards the development of nation, or the improvement of acceptance of multiplicity of the society.

Lastly, every government regardless of constitutional or real democracy pursued a policy of creating a unitary national identity for the country.



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