

NATIONALISM: A CASE STUDY OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The ideology of nationalism endows the nation with collective concepts regarding their socio-political and economic lives. It deals with the nation as a collective entity as a separate being from the other nations in the world. The increasing trend of fragmentation in Pakistani society on various bases is an alarming sign, and playing a pessimistic role in nation and state building as a whole. This article is an effort to investigate the causes of weak nationalism in Pakistan. The article highlights the important factors which contributed towards the weak formation of nationalism in Pakistan. The first major factor is 'ineffective role of leadership' in Pakistan that has always attempted to politicize the matter of implementation of Islamic ideology as a system; secondly the 'least priority to the economic interests of the common people' who exerted for a separate country in quest of a separate Islamic identity and an elevated economic status.

Keywords: Pakistan, Nationalism, Identity, Cultural diversity, Islamic ideology.

Defining the Concept of Nationalism

Taras and Ganguly opine that "Nationalism is the world's most powerful political idea." (1998:xi)

Lieven defines nationalism as the "devotion to an ideal, abstract, unrealized notion of one's country, often coupled with a belief in

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some wider national mission to humanity."(Lieven, Anatol, 2004). Another explanation is, "Nationalism is an ideology, a complex of related ideas that establish values about what is good and bad, directs adherents on how to act (patriotism), link together those adhere to the ideology, and distinguish them from those who do not. Specifically, nationalism connects individuals, their sense of community, and their political identity in contradistinction to other nations."(2005:101)

Mortimer & Fine estimate the importance of nationalism as, The political segmentation of the world rests in great part on three concepts: nation, nation-state, and nationalism. (Mortimer & Fine, 1999) Nationalism in simple words is a love of homeland. It can be considered a face of a nation that how a nation perceives itself. The most common factors which take part in the formation of this face are ethnicity, language, religion, socio-political values and objectives, and ideologies. This face is clearly depicted in a nations' poetry, literature, art, music, fiction, dress, way of life, cultural values and ideologies etc...

Nationalism is a concept related with the perceptions of identity, uniqueness, self hood and love for country. It has political, psychological and cultural aspects. It defines the cultural and ideological boundaries of a nation as a distinct group of people. Nationalism can be considered a construction of self hood for a nation. It plays a very important role in the process of nation and state building which are essential for the overall development of a state. Nation and state building in a broad sense means development of the nation and state in all realms. The process is consisted of ways, strategies and means which can lead to the development of nation and state. Nation building is commonly misunderstood and is considered only the political development; rather it includes the political, economic, religious and cultural uplift of a nation. In the 1990s the UN Development Program brought out the Human Development Report and the Human Development

Index to focus on those aspects of development other than economic.

The concept of nation-building is evolutionary and takes place with a slow pace in a long time, and it essentially emerges from within and cannot be brought from outside. For example, the multiple languages and cultural groups in France slowly emerged as a nation, the transformation of China from the warring kingdoms to a developed industrial state, took a very long time. It is kind of a wide social consensus found amongst a nation. Multiple elements take part in this process; but the basic ones revolve around two indispensable elements i.e. leadership and priority to the economic development and equality of people (economic development in this global world also means technological development).

Nationalism with Reference to Pakistan:

Most commonly, when the issue of nationalism in any dimension is investigated the research starts from the history of a nation spawned over centuries, but in case of Pakistan it starts from its establishment in 1947 and consisted of about sixty five years. Before the establishment of Pakistan, people had lived in united India under the rule of various monarchs, and in end the British crown ruled the region. In united India, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society existed for a long period of time. People living there belonged to various ethnicities, language groups and religions. Muslims a largest minority of united India got themselves separated in 1947 through a long and tough political movement involving very harsh times for their lives, property, culture, creed and religion.

The movement for making a separate state was based on the reason that, distinct identity and cultural practices, different religion and a completely different set of ideology about life entitle Muslims as a separate nation. Moreover, along with the reason of being different from other groups living in united India, exploitation of economic rights of Muslims was another plea for the demand of a separate state. The Muslims living there were not enjoying equal and enough

economic rights which was ultimately affecting negatively their overall socio-political rights and status in India.

The urge to achieve a separate piece of land where Muslims can obtain due economic rights followed by a respected and alleviated socio-political status was actual base of Pakistan movement. The people living in distant parts of whole India identified themselves as a separate group possessing all factors necessary for being a nation. The prominent factors were they all shared history and have lived together under one rule for centuries, they all had same religion, their cultures though different from each other but were essentially rooted in Islam, and the problems they were experiencing in united India in religious, financial, and socio-political terms were identical. For Pakistan, "this sense of community was initially manifested through the idea of using Islam as a religious base to unify Indian Muslims to create a national identity" (2005:03).

The pioneer leaders of Pakistan dreamt a society which was to be multi-ethnic but have common bond and consensus around Islam. Islam during Pakistan movement played a very substantial role; it provided Muslims a strong political platform, a strong force for uniting the people of different cultures, provided Muslims the identity, and a common goal woven around the same ideology and acceptable for all Muslims despite of their cultural differences. The situation after the establishment of Pakistan became entirely different, the people who identified them as one nation got partitioned again in 1971 between separate states of West Pakistan and newly separated state East Pakistan named Bangladesh. This time even the partition was on the issues of language, political representation, and economic rights. The situation in the rest of the country kept on worsening by the passage of time. The question arises that why the people who identified themselves as a one nation got fragmented after achieving their object of a separate state.

The key reason responsible for the rifts in Pakistani society has always been displayed in the history as cultural differences. At present even the news papers, research studies, academia, and even leadership focus on the issue of cultural diversity of Pakistani society as a reason of fragmentation. The same cultural diversity was not a complicated issue when Pakistan movement was on a scratch start and even Urdu was not that common and understandable to make proper communication with Muslims living in distant parts of India.

Here the role of leadership proved inefficient and rather contributed negatively for its own selfish interests. Nationalistic feelings are always propagated, publicized and directed by the leaders. Leaders provide the people the visions regarding their state. The role of Hitler who stressed in the ethnic superiority of Germans is still present even after the death of Hitler. In Pakistan every leader interpreted nationalism according to his own interests, the religious leader propagated about a rigid religious state relating to his own specific belief or sect, the leader from an ethnic background provided people with a vision of superiority of his own ethnic prosperity. The leaders after the demise of pioneers dealt the sensitive issues of ideology, language and ethnicity according to their own benefits. The most important issue of implementation of Islam as a system had become prey of political concerns. After the establishment of Pakistan, the situation became vice versa and Islam was exploited and emerged as a most controversial issue in the society in terms of sects, modes of Islamic practices, and its implementation in life. The leadership did not use Islam to promote a common culture for which people are still looking for but unable to find the national culture of Pakistani society. Political parties and political movements have always paid less attention on agenda rather they emphasize on the frequent use of slogans, symbols, cultural songs, cultural dresses and other sentimental belongings. These cultural manifestations occupy central place in politics and promote ethnic nationalism. The leadership always interpreted

nationalism according to their own interests. The dominant negative influences on the part of leadership did not let the nationalism be grown and sustained in a positive direction. Nationalism in Pakistan has been badly politicized and dealt merely as a hot political issue rather than an important contributing element towards nation and state building.

The special characteristic of nationalism is to bring a nation under a single ideology. It is a fact that nationalism in the world is generally identified with ethnicity and language issues, but it is also an equal fact that nationalism needs strong bases for its growth, for example, economic security, safety of life and property, protection and alleviation of the self interests, and pride to be a member of community better than others. Minicucci explains it in more pragmatic terms, "National feeling, like the attachment to any political community, had a materialistic basis. Attachment to the union did not reflect a denial of self-interest but, rather, a reconstruction of it: self-interest properly understood." (2002:253) In the conditions where interests of citizens are well protected specially in economic realm, they are guaranteed equal rights, and provided with the favourable socio-political and economic conditions then the attachment or bond between land and people becomes stronger, and in case of opposite situation it becomes vice versa.

There are many model societies in the world which are entirely diverse on ethnic and religious grounds but are united nations and developed states. In fact, cultural diversity is not a serious matter in developed societies. USA, a land of immigrants is the super power state of the world. It is comprised of migrants and there is no one who can claim to originally belong there. The people from USA identify them proudly as an American and less emphasize their original belonging. In America the people from diverse cultures and religions are equally enjoying the fruits of economy, rule of law and equality. There is a strong bond felt to be present amongst people which was achieved through state policies aiming at economic

uplift, internal improvement programs, and over all betterment of systems like logistics, post office, banking, health, education and etc... American (1999), Dana Frank's a historical analysis of economic nationalism in the United States, deals with an important aspect of nationalism. Frank's research centers on recurrent public campaigns that insist on consumers to purchase American products. Buying American products was depicted as a sensible decision, a sign of national loyalty, and also a means for common citizens to cause damage the foreign economies that supposedly threatened America in economic realm. The concept of national identity was emphasized by relating it with the issues of economic progress, national security and personal consumption. It also encouraged the people's trust on their country.

The basis of nationalism for every nation is different. Nations are tied around common culture, ideology, ethnicity or etc... The German people have a cultural bond amongst them and culture is a basis of their nationalism. French nation has its roots in a political compact through a common citizenship. Pakistan was dreamt to be a home to the people pursuing same ideological goals woven around Islam and have common dreams of achieving a better life.

The nationalistic thoughts, wishes and pride are always prominent in nations' collective lives. In case of Pakistan, the common bond amongst the nation is felt to be at a lowest level. Regional identities occupy an important role in the society as compared to the national identity. Cultural diversity becomes more visible and mostly negative in all kinds of situations good or bad. The events in the national life good and especially bad severely lack unanimity of opinion and action. The celebrations or crisis clearly show the fragmentation of Pakistani society. For example at the event of death of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto the regional feelings were negatively highlighted and the common national loss was ignored. The event was full of aggression against each other and anti state slogans. The matter of celebration of Eid (a religious celebration) is

always badly conflicted and not celebrated unanimously in the whole country. The higher level of exported foreign goods and their usage in society shows people's distrust on the country. The priority to foreign goods depicts the elevated status of foreign products in the society; and rejection of local products shows the feelings of inferiority.

The nationalism of a nation grows by sharing and experiencing thick and thin together and even in tough times the nationalistic feelings become stronger. The common bond holds a community together guides them, motivates them, teaches them to live together and share, and leads them towards common goals. The strength of this bond consequently creates a sense of superiority in the nation, gives birth to a community which is powerful from inside, knows its existence and is a sovereign nation. A sovereign nation prioritizes the supremacy of national interest, national development over group or regional interests. This aids heavily the process of nation and state building. The construction of nation and state building highly depends on a nation's sense of common belonging which motivates them to work for their land and community.

Nationalism does not merely deals with the issue of identity, rather there is always a relationship between country's nationalism and its policy making as a goal to be achieved then sustained in all walks of life. Various examples are present in this context, the citizens of America believe in supremacy of law, equality, justice and development. These all concepts have been the part of their policies and prioritized by their leadership and are clearly depicted in their domestic and even foreign policies.

Conclusion

The concept of Nationalism always requires to be watered with what it needs and to be grown by the passage of time. Hitler sown the seeds of ethnic superiority in Germans and it has had been sustained, American nationalism is always made strong by the

continuous efforts of reaffirming the vows on which independence was achieved.

The continuous efforts of politicians for politicizing the issue of Islam, lack of attempts leading to betterment of common people, and different interpretations of nationalism based on selfish interests has led the society of Pakistan to zero tolerance level. In this situation no one is ready to own the territory where the interests of citizens are being exploited. The vast majority of problems in the society of Pakistan are arising from politicizing the matter of Islamic ideology. This complex situation is pulling the society in two opposite directions, on one side this is dragging the country into war of terrorism, and on other side the extreme Westernization of society is happening. In presence of economic inequality the people experience destitute of political and social equalities as well which leads them to think in different or more aptly negative ways. This pulling situation is dividing the people in ideological terms since it involves all the issues related to leading life.

The real reinterpretation of nationalism is required in this situation. This reinterpretation should stand on original sources for which a separate country was achieved instead of mere sentimental slogans. The real basis of the integration of people of Pakistan were without any doubts the true practice of Islam (away from the rigid face of Islam as being propagated negatively on media) and the elevation of economic and respectively the social and political status of common people. These two points should be kept at the priority at the time of making and implementing the policies and agenda by both government and political parties.

Pakistan is suffering from the situation where the interpretation of nationalism is interest based and is different for all groups constituting a nation; it has already given birth to multiple serious issues like identity clashes, making of policies, and successful implementation of policies. Policy making and respective goals are never clear in this situation and a blurred scenario in all walks of life

has emerged.

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