



Achieving National Integration through Education

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A nation is considered to be a community of human beings formed on the basis of a combination of shared features, for example, culture, ethnicity, history, language as well as society. Generally, nations are formed through social construction and are historically contingent. Throughout historical evolution, people feel attached to their kin group and traditions, territorial authorities as well as their homeland. Most importantly, it is the shared values, which define a nation. As a modern entity in the modern socio-political set-up, a nation-state comprises of individuals as well as groups having varied backgrounds and great diversity. However, one must realize that national diversity becomes a liability for a given state unless it is embedded into a social system, which is homogeneous. Inclusive prosperity is, critically, dependent on integrating diverse groups into a uniform societal network. National integration is a social force, attracted towards center, which inculcates a sense of unity among the different societal factions as well as groups, blending different national strands into a singular social fabric and building an integrated national front against challenges, both internal and external. This can be accomplished by generating a unified sense of belongingness, consciousness and purpose. National integration promotes societal harmony and stability, boosts national unity, assures inclusive development and generates common direction as well as identity. For national integration, one has to rise above ethnicism, regionalism, religionism, provincialism, sectarianism and racism. Pakistan being a diverse society with multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious societal landscape, the need for national cohesion has always been tremendously high. However, the forces, which are pulling the persons away from center, have been working against the integration of the country since it came into existence. By definition, national integration implies holding the citizens of a nation-state, no matter, belonging to different castes, religions or ethnicities, with a single rope, bestowing on them a common identity. For the citizens of Pakistan, the common identity is a Pakistani, and the unifying theme is the national anthem (Fig. 1) and the flag of Pakistan (Fig. 2). Safeguarding and promotion of national integration is very important for the strength and unity of Pakistan. The crisis of national integration in Pakistan may be looked from different perspectives. Pakistan was created suddenly in an unexpected manner. Hence, very little preparation was possible for national integration, the problem escalated with the early death of its founder. The demand for partition was put forward in 1940 for bargaining purpose to get a political leverage for Muslims of British India. However, within a short span of 7 years, we were blessed with an entire country. The second reason is the untimely death of its founder, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, which introduced a leadership crisis. There were challenges on the foreign front from India and Afghanistan as well as delay in formulating the constitution. A stronger nationally-integrated Pakistan should have a balanced foreign policy, free from hard and soft corruption, universal health care, free education till HSC, subsidized education in universities, which gives Pakistan the leadership role among its neighboring countries through utilization of smart-intelligent power. The uphill task of transforming Pakistan into a regional power involves creating a strong defense based on advanced weapon systems (developed through cutting-edge indigenous basic research in mathematics and physics, applied to defense technologies) as well as well-trained personnel of the Armed Forces of Pakistan. The future generation of Pakistan should concentrate on getting the best education along with skills needed to deal with challenges of the third millennium and make their country excel in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) as well as make her stronger and powerful by taking up opportunities offered by complex economic interdependence of today to become financially sustainable and improve her Gross-National-Happiness Index (a concept propagated in Bhutan) and Human-Development Index (a concept introduced by the Pakistani economist, Mahboob-ul-Haq in 1990) — a dream nurtured by founders of Pakistan in 1940s.

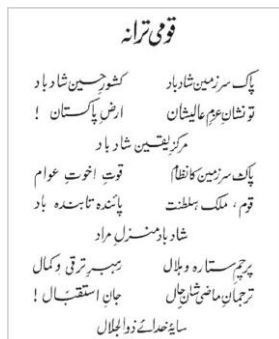


Fig. 1. National anthem of Pakistan

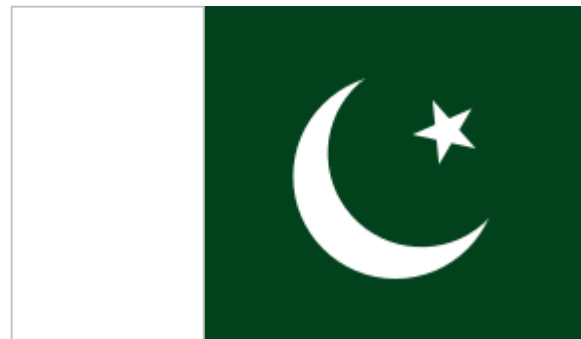


Fig. 2. Flag of Pakistan

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