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Pakistan Day Reflections for Policy Making

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Pakistan Day- Reflections for Policy Making

The 23rd of March is celebrated with verve and vigor, every year, to commemorate the passing of the historic Pakistan Resolution, known as "Karar datey Pakistan", at Minto Park, Lahore in 1940. The Resolution signified the first ever articulation of collective will of Muslims of the sub-continent to establish an independent geographic entity demarcated on the basis of geographically contiguous areas where Muslims were numerically in a majority as were in the North Western and Eastern zones of India. The Resolution specifically provided for the constitutional protection of minorities and their rights - religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative etc., in the independent state.

The **Lahore Resolution** was drafted by Muhammad Zafarullah Khan and others and presented by A. K. Fazlul Huq, the then Prime Minister of Bengal and adopted by the All-India Muslim League during the course of its three-day general session in Lahore on 22–24 March 1940. The name "Pakistan" though had been proposed earlier by Choudhary Rahmat Ali in his Pakistan Declaration, did not find expression in the resolution but began to be widely used later as a symbol of unity of purpose and struggle for an independent home land.

The founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, was the driving and inspirational force behind galvanizing and uniting the Muslims of the sub-continent which culminated in the creation of Pakistan. "Unity, Faith and Discipline" were the values espoused and advocated by the Quaid and, inter alia, constituted the basis and guiding principles to build and develop the newly independent nation.

However, these national values, over the years, have been eroded and reduced to merely a slogan to episodically remind us of their origin and purpose. They are rarely exhibited and practiced in Pakistan; fragmentation, hypocrisy, political myopia for personal gains, indiscipline, and selective application of law, on the contrary seems to have pervasively permeated in the conduct of our national affairs to the neglect of politics for public service and people's wellbeing.

Almost seven decades after independence, Pakistan is still struggling to articulate an enduring shared consensus on the nature and direction of its state and society. Different strands and threads are being advanced to project partisan societal narrative based on selective use and interpretation of Pakistan movement. A convoluted version of religion Islam is being propagated to replace "Faith" and to foment schism, sectarianism and religious intolerance. Slowly but steadily, the religious narrative seems to have emerged and solidly entrenched at all levels- from the grassroots to the highest national institutions in one form or the other: through mild sermons and particular Quranic interpretations; through the rigorous training in madrassas and mosques to inject sectarianism and intolerance to listen to the other perspective; and more worryingly, the narrative of hard liners who believe that the entire system is non-Islamic and those following it need to be punished and even exterminated. They construct and draw strength of their narrative from strong traditions, historical heritage and Dars-e-Nizami curriculum rich in philosophy; logic; Greek, Roman and Islamic ideologies; laws of rhetoric and speech; as well as religion. Their narrative, despite a perverse ideology and distorted vision, does embody internal energy and persuasive power to attract people, especially the misguided youth to their fold. They perceive the existing social, political and economic order characterized by injustice, alienation, disempowerment, tyranny and oppression opposed to basic injunctions of Islam. One of the major reasons for this sordid state of affairs is the lack of priority focus by the successive regimes- political, authoritarian or techno-professional- to develop the human capital and enlightened society through investment in education and learning and health. The scale and size of Pakistan's population and the projected increase with its demographic repercussions add to the enormity of the daunting challenges. Our education system including the infrastructure, HR, curricula and evaluation system is totally out of discord with the 21st century globalized and IT savvy society and hence fails to educate youth and new generations to deal with the contemporary socio-economic development challenges. A drastic change in the syllabus and curriculum at all levels is sine qua non; modern schools including private and government as well as the religious institutions and madrassas. National unity, tolerance and true Islamic spirit are some of the most important principles that need to be promoted in the syllabus. Technology, sustainable development,

globalization, human rights etc., should figure prominently as cross cutting themes in the course of studies right from the primary to tertiary levels.

Our health care system lags increasingly behind from that of many developing countries. The stark reality is that Pakistan ranks 147 out of 188 countries on human development index; 141 on educational attainment; and 132 out of 141 on health and survival. Up to 10 million children suffer from malnutrition; and we rank 146 out of 147 countries survey for gender scoring.

Another crucially important fundamental is the peace and security and availability of justice. Our performance on this account has been dismal in all the fields- social injustice, criminal injustice and administrative injustice. Article 38 of the constitution explicitly states that the provision of timely justice should be one of the foremost priorities of the state but this priority seems to have faded away in the quest for retaining political power and flouting justice rather than creating conducive environment for the citizenry to partake the benefit of speedy justice. Law and justice, judiciary, police, prosecution, prisons etc., all need to be integrated to develop and enforce legal framework to provide cheap, effective and timely remedy to the citizens, decide between right and wrong and ensure and secure citizens' rights.

Governance dysfunction is another major problem which affects all programs and policies no matter how good these may be in black and white.

The world and its economic and political order is rapidly evolving and changing in ways faster than expected. The increasing impact of globalization and geo-politics on the national as well as world's business and governance environment; technological advancement especially phenomenal growth in the use of information technology tools; population and demographic dynamics including youth bulge, urbanization and rising middle class; and human safety and security related issues are, inter alia, the prevalent and emerging realities which we as Pakistan have to negotiate with in the highly competitive world order. The major issues for us are:

- Are our leaders committed to articulating and giving us a shared vision and perspective which goes beyond the "election lens" to bring about a transformative change for a better and brighter future in the lives of millions and millions of people entrapped in the vicious circle of poverty?
- Do we have the right type of people and human resource well equipped with the skill-competence mix in government, private sector, industry, financial institutions etc., to respond to both the enormity of challenges and plentitude of opportunities unfolded by the rapidly changing world?
- Do we have the right mix of policies and upstream frameworks to move us from low HDI country to medium HDI in the next 5 years and in the long run pave the way for sustainable human development?
- Do our institutions have the strength, resilience and capacity to effectively address the multiple challenges that we face and become instruments of good, inclusive and responsive governance?