

# **Dynamics of Nationbuilding: Are We in the Right Direction?**

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## **Introduction**

The process of nationbuilding holds several dimensions and taxonomies. A considerate individual may enquire about an effective model of nationbuilding and its implementation. Three factors tend to determine the success of nationbuilding, according to Andreas Wimmer, a political scientist at Columbia University: “The early development of civil-society organizations, the rise of a state capable of providing public goods evenly across a territory, and the emergence of a shared medium of communication.” It likewise encompasses creation of a complete range of national apparatus comprising national flag, anthem, air carriers, languages, days, stadiums, traditions, folklores, and so on and so forth. Moreover, nationbuilding brings various ethnicities into a cohesive ring of national identity – a process that becomes unavoidable in the case of countries in which colonial rules had left a deep impact on social structures, leaving behind ethnically heterogenous cultures. One of the greatest leaders this world has witnessed, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, had aptly noted that: “If we begin to think of ourselves as Punjabis, Sindhis, etc. first and Muslims and Pakistanis incidentally, then Pakistan is bound to disintegrate.... Do not think that this is some abstruse proposition: our enemies are fully alive to its possibilities which I must warn you that they are already busy exploiting.” He said at another occasion: “If you [want to] build up yourself into a nation... [then] give up this provincialism [that] has been one of the curses; and so is sectionalism – Shia, Sunni, etc.” His astute evaluation by far provides the finest direction for Pakistan's leadership for steering the helms of nationbuilding.

## **Ground Realities**

A truly built nation keeps individual suffering subservient to a larger cause. In Aristotle's valuation, “poverty is the parent of revolution and crime” – a possible path towards fragmentation and destruction. The absence of common cause and unity, in my opinion, is even a bigger recipe for fragmentation that entices citizens into false information, damaging

propaganda, and related ills. Ever since I have grown up into a mindful individual, I have counted plentiful dividing elements present in our society. Earlier, they were based mainly on division of caste, sect, and language. However, the collective methods for achieving peace applied by the so-called 'illiterate' people of that time was highly appreciable – they were able to wisely leverage divides and co-exist in a peaceful manner. It was not my family or the surroundings that had taught me that I was a *Sunni*, but a few official forms that strictly required this information while I was treading the academic and professional ladder. There was only one Islam being practiced by all. For instance, the spirit of the month of *Moharram* was equally understood and remembered. It used to bring along a surge of unity and respect rather than driving insecurity and exploitation, not to mention the need for present-day security arrangements.

Thus, the first ingredient for strong nationbuilding, a unity of thought and action, is virtually missing. Reasons for this divide are ample and have kept on snowballing with the passage of time. It would have been a different scenario had there been a conscious and concrete attempt to address sectarianism instead of a limited approach and a few cosmetic treatments.

Some of the main grounds of divides are: sect, language, culture, ethnicity, provincialism, political and religious leanings that may turn into a desire to be assertive and make oneself prominent, financial and social status, politicized unions in various organizations, and interest and pressure groups / mafias whose self-interest supersedes the national interest, such as transporters, landlords, shopkeepers, industrialists, chambers of commerce, retailers and wholesalers, construction, private school owners, media stalwarts, lawyers, etc. Furthermore, opportunists may belong to any class or creed and have the capacity to influence policy makers single handedly or by joining hands with either of the above listed groups. It is also pertinent to note that in the midst of pressure exerted by these elements, there lingers a propensity of fueling fragmentation through exploitation of the common people, who in fact have nothing worthwhile to gain by this alignment. There is also a list of institutions who have seldom been made to work as a team. The presence of immeasurable pressure and interest groups has been barring almost every incumbent government from disturbing the status quo on one pretext or the other – thus creating a collective national loss.

The aforementioned scenario presents a suitable case for addressing frequent demonstrations of assertion, such as through acts of violence and raised voices to achieve vested interests, in order to dent national stability. Group cause thus dominates national cause. The unchecked practice infuses disunity among citizens and needs to be dealt with. Above all, pressure groups have their own reasoning to stay disjointed. Possibly, the fear of being overshadowed and losing influence keeps the divides and demands surmounting.

The situation does not remain off the lens of those international actors who, owing to nefarious designs, tend to invest in the state of affairs and further compound problems for Pakistan. In this case, personal ambitions once again overshadow the idea of keeping state security and existence sacrosanct. A close examination reveals umptieth names of individuals who have often chosen to tread this path, either for the fulfillment of their personal ambitions or as a result of a Faustian bargain.

### **Plan of Action**

Nationbuilding is nothing but a set of rules specified by the rulers, a subsequent voluntary compliance of citizens, and existence of a will on both sides to develop as a nation. This relation results into a stronger belief in commonness that shuns any tendency of change in behavior patterns and undesirable influence. Unfortunately, this commonness has not been achieved so far – instead of learning how to join hands we have learned how not to stay united. The issue, therefore, calls for a serious debate at all levels, initiating from the top tiers of governance. A suggested recipe for a holistic nationbuilding exercise may include the following ingredients:

1. The dream of nationbuilding will be best realized by indoctrinating a nationwide culture of norms and practices as reflected in Quaid-e-Azam's vision for Pakistan, expressed in his speeches, letters, decisions, and discussions. His vision expected Pakistan to be free of bias and self-interest. A number of upright mavens who have worked and written on Quaid's life and have witnessed the struggle for independence must be involved in this regard. The vision must be the national code of conduct and the guiding principle for constitutional, political, government, and all other structures. It should also not be mixed up with the national development vision – a confusion that has often resulted in inconsistent policies.

2. The presence of fragmentation and the absence of a clear understanding of the national cause and vision have resulted in the counterproductive practices of politically driven unions in government organizations. Most people as of today think and look through the lens of their political leaders who themselves may or may not always have a clear vision. It is therefore necessary to desist from associations based on the political parties' biases and choices so long as the nation is in the building process.
3. An actionable strategy of national vision must focus on restructuring of education sector, remodeling of institutional frameworks, and introducing such syllabi at all levels that ensure religious integration of the vision of our founding fathers and social and civic responsibilities of the citizens. Rules, regulations and functional performances of state institutions must be geared towards achieving those goals obtained as a result of the vision. Quaid's motto for the nation spelled in his clear three words of Unity, Faith and Discipline must form the essence of the national vision and followed with resilience, steadfastness and, where necessary, with zero tolerance. Only if these are achieved, can we ever reap the benefit of other aspects of nationbuilding.
4. Since nationbuilding is a common and supreme cause, all actions of party or group interests must fall subservient to that. Constitution must limit the powers of provinces and smaller entities to define their own charter, if it negates or undermines the common goal. In the name of cherishing democracy, freedom may not be allowed to the extent of undermining the overall state interest. Any such resolutions and agreements already existing, should be quashed through an act of parliament.
5. Religious freedom is important so long it does not interfere in other's matter. Religious occasions of any nature must not be allowed at the cost of freedom of others. No road and street processions and marches may be allowed on any pretext. Funding mechanism must be thoroughly scrutinized and no outside funding may be allowed to go directly to any sect or group. All Madrassas should be registered and if established illegally on state land, should be removed. This action should be nondiscriminatory and undertaken with a total resolve and no party or group interference in this campaign be allowed.

6. State should ascertain sensitive issues which must not be allowed for debate in any of the print or electronic media and other discussion sessions unless specifically permitted. State interests should not be made subservient to the notion of freedom of speech. The most advanced nations around the world have clear red lines which are not crossed at any cost.
7. All the land holding contracts existing prior to 1947 must cease to exist through well chalked out land reforms. Such land holdings have grossly undermined the state assertions, are prone to be used as blackmailing and coercive tools, and pose serious challenge to the nationbuilding exercise.
8. Pakistan has had no national security policy since inception. In the absence of this important document of common and synergetic interest, state institutions and other functional bodies tend to work in silos – a recipe for failure in the attempt to build nation.
9. All national actions should follow a uniform course of application. Tax collection, for example, cannot have exemptions for any segment of society. Only the proportion of the amount of tax can vary between rich and poor. It will surely bring in the value of citizenship and inculcate transparency and accountability as everyone will question on the sitting government's performance. This pressure from all segments of society will also force the governments to deliver at all cost besides infusing togetherness at the national level.
10. Provinces must be suitably sized for efficient governance. Their names must not be language- or sect-based. Secondly, size of cities must not be allowed to grow beyond the limit where necessary public facilities cannot be provided. New cities must be established and basic facilities given to existing towns and cities under a uniform mechanism throughout the length and breadth of Pakistan, guarded well against mismanagements.

In addition to the above, some important aspects of governance may be enforced through a well thought out mechanism as suggested below:

1. The significance of speedy justice has never been ruled out throughout the history of civilizations. In pursuit of realization of a common cause and consolidation of central authority's stature, an ordinary man's worries have to be swiftly felt and addressed. In so far as the speedy justice is concerned, routine complaints have to be answered speedily and on sight. Social welfare courts at all important and easily accessible places have to be established. These spot decisions may not

require any lawyers to pursue the case. Rather, the retired judges of impeccable repute may hold these courts with a support staff for necessary verification for dealing with complaints of routine issues like inflated price hike, overstated fares, trivial quarrels, indecencies, interferences, etc. once approached for other decisions, these courts may refer cases to superior and relevant judiciary. As far as possible, the judgement of these courts, unless grossly wrong, may not be subject to challenge in the superior judiciary, and can be ascertained by regional councils of judges of the social courts.

- 2.** Building a coherent and credible pool of national data is as crucial an endeavor as building a nation. An accurate and balanced national census is need of the time. Once prepared, this record must be fully computerized and automated for provision of secure linkages from top to the lowest levels, with addition and deletion made at the grass root level. Going further on this, an efficient law and order system must cater for the maintenance of central record at various levels. Each police station must have a computerized record of all who live in its jurisdiction. Any move in and out should be reported and crossed checked with the other police station from where the individual is moving in or going to. Accounted for people have greater regard for following due obligations particularly under the prevalent security situation.
- 3.** Urban public transport as well as rail and road services should not be privatized and strictly controlled through government's clearly indicated and enforced framework. The transport system is a victim to a mafia that neither let it develop nor let the concerned authorities make it a better option for people. The available services, such as the seating arrangements in the old and low-quality pickup carriages, are not only disrespectful but also do not fulfill the criteria of religion and social etiquette. It should not be left to continue on a mere plea of employment generation. The citizens have to be brought into the development sphere, so that their self-respect is not hurt. This practice is only adding a strong transport mafia with their selfish interest who every now and then can blackmail governments on one pretext or the other.
- 4.** The improvement of monitoring systems throughout the country will enable strong checks and balances. Timely action on misconduct will further build confidence of common citizens in the governance mechanism.

A nation cannot be built in a day but can realize this dream through sustained and collective conviction, determination, and hard work towards national goals. Aristotle rightly said, "Through discipline comes freedom." The Pakistani leadership and citizenry must now make a serious and concerted effort to inculcate a national culture based on the visionary ideals of Quaid-e-Azam and meticulously structured goalposts. The farsightedness and resolve of the leadership and awareness and compliance of citizens are the two basic and foremost requirements for setting Pakistan on to the path of development in the new year and onwards.

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