

CHAPTER 6 NATIONALISM AND THE BOMB

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Nation-building is the process of creating, or reinforcing a national identity using the power of the state. The goal is to unify the disparate peoples within an emerging state, reduce internal conflict, and create the conditions for effective governance. Nation-building can involve the use of propaganda, myth building, and the creation of national paraphernalia such as sports teams, national holidays, anthems, flag carrying airlines, and, of course, the display of military might. In much the same way, a few states see nuclear weapons as an instrument for building or consolidating a national spirit.

One can readily understand why this is so because the bomb can level mountains, cause seas to boil when exploded underwater, or snuff out a living city in a flash. Post-Hiroshima, the bomb became the symbol of ultimate power. Even countries allied to the U.S. felt at a disadvantage and rushed to make their own. Ernie Bevin, the foreign secretary in UK's Prime Minister Clement Attlee's post-war government, found the condescending attitude of the nuclear-armed Americans insufferable. In 1946 he remarked:

I don't want any other foreign secretary of this country to be talked to or at by a secretary of state in the United States as I have just had in my discussions with Mr Byrnes. We've got to have this thing [a nuclear bomb] over here whatever it costs. We've got to have the bloody Union Jack on top of it.¹

Six years later cash-strapped Britain, though devastated by six years of total war, became the world's third nuclear power. The notion that it would otherwise be considered a second-rank nation was simply intolerable.

France, under Charles de Gaulle, thought similarly. It developed its own deterrent while thumbing its nose at NATO and the U.S. All entreaties made to de Gaulle failed; the *force de frappe* had to be uniquely French. After the first French nuclear test on 13 February 1960, he exclaimed—‘Hurray for France! From this morning she is stronger and prouder.’²

While democratic governments have used the strong feelings generated by the possession of nuclear weapons, unpopular and illegitimate regimes know this fact still better.

This was evident in India when Indira Gandhi, extremely unpopular in 1974, tested India’s bomb for the first time, releasing a burst of nationalist excitement that led to her popularity briefly shooting upward. India glowed again after its 1998 tests, with the BJP and Congress parties setting aside their difference to exult in ‘Indian greatness’. Massive celebrations followed, sweets were distributed, and citizens danced on the streets of Delhi and Mumbai.

In Iran today, nuclear nationalism unites a polity that is sharply divided on everything else. Mohammed El Baradei, reflecting upon his term as the IAEA’s director general says, ‘From what we repeatedly observed, a policy of isolation and sanctions only served to stimulate a country’s sense of pride; in the worst case, it could make the targeted country’s nuclear project a matter of national priority.’³

The North Korean regime has also used nuclear weapons to promote nationalism. Its dynastic dictatorship has twice tested nuclear weapons and demonstrated that even dramatically underdeveloped countries can go nuclear if they want. Unknown for scientific achievement, the country has little electricity or fuel, food and medicine are scarce, corruption is ubiquitous, and its people live in humiliating conditions. In a famine some years ago, North Korea lost nearly 800,000 people. Its enormous prison population of 200,000 has been subjected to systematic torture and abuse. Nevertheless, nuclear weapons are touted as the country’s major accomplishment.

In Pakistan, the 1998 nuclear tests were celebrated with even greater fervour than in India. Missiles were paraded in Islamabad, and bomb and missile replicas were installed on major road crossings and public squares. Some still survive, although, several were removed over the last decade. It was generally expected by Pakistanis that nuclear weapons would make their country an object of awe and respect internationally, and that it would acquire the mantle of leadership of the Islamic world. Indeed, in the aftermath of the 1998 tests, Pakistan's stock shot up in several Muslim countries. Iran's foreign minister paid a congratulatory visit to Pakistan days later, and Saudi Arabia sent congratulations. By gifting \$5 billion worth of oil, it helped Pakistan avoid an economic breakdown caused by the sanctions imposed by Western powers. A year later tumultuous celebrations were held across the country on *Youm-e-Takbir* to infuse a new sense of national spirit.

Although May 28 has been celebrated with progressively decreasing fervour every year, the bomb remains popular today as well. A poll conducted in 2011 by YouGov, in association with Cambridge University, revealed that a majority supported the expansion of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal with 81 per cent voting in favour of it and just 9 per cent against it.⁴

This essay explores the relationship between the bomb and Pakistani national identity. After examining the circumstances surrounding Pakistan's birth and the difficulties created by the Two-Nation Theory, it argues that the bomb does create a national consensus, but only in a narrow sense. In spite of the fact that most Pakistanis agree on having the bomb, this unity is unlikely to create anything more than an illusory notion of nationhood, or lead toward a more stable and secure state. But, for all its difficulties, Pakistan does have a fighting chance of becoming a nation provided it concentrates upon bolstering human security, improves the economy, and moves towards better governance.

PAKISTAN'S SEARCH FOR NATIONHOOD

The French historian Ernest Renan (1823–1892) had a useful definition of a nation. He says it is a soul, a spiritual principle:

Two things, which are really one, constitute this soul and spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other, the present. One is the possession in common of a rich trove of memories; the other is actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to continue to value the undivided, shared heritage. . . . To have had glorious moments in common in the past, a common will in the present, to have done great things together and to wish to do more, those are the essential conditions for a people. We love the nation in proportion to the sacrifices to which we consented, the harms that we suffered.⁵

A more prosaic definition is that a nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.

The concept of nation must not be confused with that of nation-state: a modern nation-state refers to a single or multiple nationalities joined together in a formal political union. The nation-state determines an official language(s), a system of law, manages a currency system, uses a bureaucracy to order elements of society, and fosters loyalties to abstract entities like 'Canada', 'the United States' and so on.⁶ It is possible to have a nation-state but no nation! For example, Eric Hobsbawm, the influential Marxist British historian, persuasively argues that the state of France under Napoleon made the French nation, not vice-versa.

But Pakistani leaders and governments have failed what Napoleon succeeded at. Although it has been a nation-state since 1947, Pakistan is still not a nation. To be precise: it is the name of a land and people inside a certain geographical boundary. Crucial components needed for nationhood are missing. These include a strong common identity and mental makeup, shared sense of history, and common goals.

The lack of nationhood can be traced to the genesis of Pakistan and the single factor that drove the Pakistan Movement (1930–1947), namely religious identity. Carved out of Hindu-majority India, Pakistan was the culmination of the competition and conflict between natives who had converted to Islam and those who had not. Converts often identified with Arab invaders of the last millennium. Shah Waliullah (1703–1762), a ‘purifier’ of Islam on the subcontinent who despised local traditions, famously declared, ‘We [Hindustanis] are an Arab people whose fathers have fallen in exile in the country of Hindustan, and Arabic genealogy and the Arabic language are our pride.’⁷

The founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, also echoed the separateness of South Asia’s Muslims from its Hindus, basing the struggle for Pakistan on the premise that the two peoples could never live together peacefully within one nation-state. This was known as the Two-Nation Theory, first propounded in 1940 by Jinnah while addressing the Muslim League in Lahore.⁸

Waliullah and Jinnah were as different as could be: Waliullah was a bearded religious scholar who knew classical texts and Arabic whereas Jinnah was an impeccably dressed Westernized man with Victorian manners, secular outlook, and a connoisseur of fine foods and wines. Nevertheless, Jinnah effectively articulated the fears and aspirations of an influential section of his co-religionists, insecure at the thought of living in a free Hindu-majority India.⁹ Interestingly, he was opposed by a large section of the conservative ulema (Islamic scholars), such as Maulana Maudoodi of the Jamaat-i-Islami, who said that Islam must not be confined to national borders. But Jinnah and his Muslim League won the day by insisting that Muslims constituted a distinct nation which would be overwhelmed in post-British India by a larger and better educated Hindu majority.

EAST PAKISTAN CHALLENGES THE TWO-NATION THEORY

The basis in religious identity soon led to painful paradoxes. Jinnah’s Two-Nation Theory, which successfully led to the nascent state, was to receive its first strong challenge in East Pakistan. On 21 March,

at a civic reception at Dacca's Racecourse Ground, Jinnah—who could not speak Urdu with any fluency—declared that, 'Urdu, and only Urdu' embodied the spirit of the new Muslim nation and would be its state language. Urdu was the language spoken by the North Indian Muslim elite, many of whom migrated to West Pakistan. Bengalis wanted their language instead, but Jinnah claimed that their protests were designed by a 'fifth column' to divide Pakistani Muslims. He labelled those who disagreed with his views as 'enemies of Pakistan. Before Jinnah left Dacca [Dhaka] on 28 March 1948, he had delivered a speech on Radio Pakistan reasserting his 'Urdu-only' policy.¹⁰

The Bengali people suffered terribly under West Pakistani rule. They believed their historical destiny was to be a Bengali speaking nation, not the Urdu-speaking East Pakistan which Mr Jinnah wanted. The language riots were just the beginning. Over time, grievances compounded. The East Wing comprised of 54 per cent of Pakistan's population and was the biggest earner of foreign exchange. But West Pakistani generals, bureaucrats, and politicians such as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, feared that a democratic system would transfer power and national resources to East Pakistan.

An overbearing West Pakistan ran roughshod over East Pakistan and became despised as an external imperial power. Pakistanis who grew up when East and West Pakistan were one country knew that we were never one nation. Young people today cannot imagine the rampant anti-Bengali racism among West Pakistanis then. With shame, I must admit that, as a thoughtless young boy, I too felt embarrassed about small and dark people being among our compatriots. Victims of a delusion, we West Pakistanis imagined that good Muslims and Pakistanis were tall, fair, and spoke chaste Urdu. Some of my schoolmates would laugh at the strange sounding Bengali news broadcasts from Radio Pakistan.

Denied of democracy and justice, the Bengalis helplessly watched the cash flow from East to fund government, industry, schools and dams situated in West Pakistan. When the Bhola cyclone killed half-a-million people in 1970, President Yahya Khan and his fellow generals in Rawalpindi's GHQ appeared callously indifferent.

The decisive break came with the 1970 elections. The East Pakistan-based Awami League won a clear majority in Pakistan's parliament. But Bhutto and the generals would not accept the peoples' verdict. The Bengalis finally rose up for independence. When the West Pakistan army was sent in, massacre followed massacre. Political activists, intellectuals, trade unionists, and students were slaughtered. Blood ran in street gutters, and millions fled across the border. After India intervened to support the East, the army surrendered. Bangladesh was born. The enthusiasm of Muslim Bengalis for Bangladesh, and refusal to accept Islam as the basis for their new state, was a deadly blow to the very idea of Pakistan.

Although Pakistani history books attribute the loss of East Pakistan to an Indian conspiracy aimed at misleading Bengalis, the lost territory still shows no desire to reintegrate into Pakistan after over four decades of independence. Bengalis insist upon an apology, one that Pakistan still refuses to give. Reflecting the fact that relations have never normalized between what were once two wings of the same country, Bangladesh's High Commissioner to India, Ahmed Tariq Karim, recently cited 'seven deadly sins' of Pakistan. These were: doctrines of Islamic invincibility over Hindus; West Pakistani superiority over inferior Bengalis (Bangladeshis); its indispensability as a strategic ally of the U.S.; too much emphasis on relations with China and Iran; a belief that majority of Kashmiris want to join Pakistan; and that defense of East Pakistan lay in the plains of Punjab (Pakistan).¹¹

COULD THE BOMB HAVE PREVENTED A BREAKUP?

If we had had nuclear capability before 1971, we would not have lost half of our country—present-day Bangladesh—after disgraceful defeat.'

Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan (2011)¹²

Dr Khan and many others who think like him—cling to this dangerous and illogical argument. Given that 30,000 nuclear weapons failed to save the Soviet Union from decay and defeat and collapse, how could the bomb have saved Pakistan in 1971?

Like the Indian Army in Kashmir, or the Americans in Afghanistan, the Pakistan Army was surrounded by a hostile population. When subjected to guerilla attacks, it responded with the iron fist, lashing out with full fury against even unarmed Bengalis. The weakness of West Pakistan's position was fundamental and irreversible: all occupying forces typically exact disproportionate retribution, leading to atrocities which in turn builds up resentment and adds to the insurgency. Moreover, the logistics of supplying 90,000 troops from a thousand miles away, with a hostile India in between, were simply horrendous. India had, of course, refused permission for over-flights, leaving only the sea-route. A long war would have left Pakistan bankrupt.

Could the bomb have been used on the raging pro-independence mobs in Dacca? Or used to incinerate Calcutta and Delhi, and have the favour duly returned to Lahore and Karachi? Threatening India with nuclear attack may have kept it out of the war, but then East Pakistanis would have been killed in still greater numbers. Even without the bomb, estimated civilian deaths numbered in the hundreds of thousands if not a million.

Some West Pakistanis still argue that regardless of the death and destruction, using the bomb to keep Pakistan together would have been a good thing and the people of East Pakistan would have been better off in the long term. But a look at current developmental statistics shows otherwise.

Bangladesh is ranked 96th out of 110 countries in a 2010 prosperity index compiled by an independent London-based think-tank, the Legatum Institute, using governance, education, health, security, personal freedom, and social capital as criteria.¹³ Although this is not good, but Pakistan's position is 109 according to the index, rendering it just one notch above Zimbabwe. By this measure the people of the East Wing have actually benefited from independence. Independently, the U.N. Human Development Index ranks Bangladesh at 146 out of 182 countries and Pakistan at 141, which makes Pakistan only marginally better.¹⁴ This suggested that Bengalis would have gained little, if anything at all, by remaining with West Pakistan.

Numerical data does not tell the whole story. Bangladesh is poorer but more hopeful and happier. Culture is thriving, education is improving, and efforts to control population growth are more fruitful than in Pakistan. It is not ravaged by suicide bombings or by daily attacks upon its state institutions and military forces. Some kind of ramshackle democracy has taken hold, and Bangladesh's civil society groups are the envy of some other countries.

PAKISTANI IDENTITY AFTER 1971

Contrary to dire predictions at the time, the Pakistani state survived the split. Its powerful military easily crushed emerging separatist movements in the provinces of Balochistan and Sind. For a while the question of national ideology fell into limbo. Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto attempted to create a Pakistani identity around the notion of revenge for the loss of the East Wing, promising a 'war of a thousand years' against India and summoning scientists in 1972 to start Pakistan's quest for the atomic bomb. While anti-Indianism served temporarily as a rallying cry, the military coup of 1977 that sent him off to the gallows revived identity issues.

Soon after he seized power from Bhutto, General Zia-ul-Haq announced his intention to remake Pakistan and, once and for all, end the confusion of Pakistan's purpose and identity. Like Napoleon, he wanted to use the nation-state to create a nation. The word went out that Pakistan was henceforth not to be conceived as a Muslim state. Instead, it had to be re-visualized as an Islamic state, i.e., one where Islamic law would reign supreme. To achieve this new conceptualization, Zia determined that future generations of Pakistanis would have to be purged of liberal and secular values.

Education was pressed into the drive for creating a new national identity based on the 'Ideology of Pakistan' that centred around Islam. Beginning in 1981, major steps were taken: enforcement of *chaadar* (loose outer garment) for girls in educational institutions; organization of congregational *zuhr* (afternoon) prayers during school hours; compulsory teaching of Arabic as a second language from sixth class onwards; introduction of *nazara* Qur'an (reading of

Qur'an) as a matriculation requirement; alteration of the definition of literacy to include religious knowledge; elevation of *maktab* schools to the status of regular schools and the recognition of *maktab* certificates as being equivalent to master's degree; creation of an Islamic university in Islamabad; introduction of religious knowledge as a criterion for selecting teachers of all categories and all levels; and the revision of conventional subjects to emphasize Islamic values.¹⁵

Notwithstanding the enormous impetus given by Zia-ul-Haq, a new Pakistani identity and a Shar'ia state is nowhere to be seen. Why?

Ethno-nationalism is part of the answer. Historically constituted groups seek to preserve their distinctiveness, expressed in terms of language, dress, food, folklore, and shared history. They reflexively respond against melding into some larger entity. Assimilation of Pakistan's diverse people into a homogenized national culture is opposed by this force which, like the force of gravity, always acts in one direction.

Ethno-nationalism is, of course, vulnerable. It can be overcome by integrative forces, which arise from the natural advantage of being part of a larger economy with correspondingly greater opportunities. For these forces to be effective it is essential that the state machinery provide effective governance, demonstrate fairness, and be indifferent to ethnic origins if not supportive of minorities. But Pakistan's ruling elite is both incompetent as well as ethnically partisan, drawing its roots from the powerful landed and feudal class. The army leadership and the economic elite had joined forces after Partition to claim authority, but they were transparently self-serving and therefore lacked legitimacy.

The prospect of an Islamic state based on justice and equity raised expectations but did little else. A cacophony of voices from different religious groups insisted on their own versions of the Shar'ia; the Shi'a and Hanafi sects were adamant that they would not accept zakat (fixed portion of wealth to charity) to be deducted from their bank accounts. To the chagrin of the establishment, the attempt to

have Islamic law replace secular law ultimately backfired and became the cause of infinite division. The post-Zia generation—brought up to believe that ‘every issue will be solved if we go back to the fundamentals of Islam’—founders in contradiction and confusion because the so-called ‘fundamentals of Islam’ turn out to have multiple interpretations. Some interpretations fuel violent political forces, each convinced that they alone understand God’s will. Murderous wars between Sunni and Shi’a militias started in the late 1980s. Today, many utopians favouring the vision of an ideal Islamic state are frightened by the Pakistani Taliban who seek to impose their version of Shar’ia through the Kalashnikov and suicide bombings.

THE BOMB FAILS TO UNITE

In spite of a consensus that Pakistan must have the bomb, the hope that it would weld disparate peoples together turned out to be incorrect. Most Punjabis indeed think of themselves as Pakistani first and Punjabi second. But not the Baloch or Sindhis. Sindhis accuse Punjabis of stealing their water, the MQM runs Karachi on strictly ethnic grounds, Pakhtoons had the NWFP renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa against the wishes of other residents, caste and sect matter more than competence in getting a job, and ethnic student’s groups wage pitched battles against each other on campuses.

While Punjabis are generally more favourable to the bomb, angry Sindhis see this is as far less relevant. Instead, they want water and jobs—and they blame Punjab for taking these away. Karachi staggers along with multiple ethnically motivated killings; Muhajirs and Pakhtuns are locked in a deadly battle. Karachi explodes into killings periodically as the MQM and ANP battle out their Muhajir and Pakhtun identity politics. Pakhtun refugees from Swat and Buner, hapless victims of a war between the Taliban and the Pakistani Army in 2009, were tragically turned away by both Muhajirs and Sindhis, who are mutual adversaries, from entering Sindh. This rejection struck deeply against the concept of a single nation united in adversity.

Balochistan is the strongest evidence of how the bomb has failed to unify. Schools refuse to fly the Pakistani flag, the national anthem is not sung, and black flags celebrate Pakistan's Independence Day. Angry at being governed from Islamabad, some have taken up arms. In stark contrast with Punjab, the Baloch are resolutely anti-bomb. They resent that the two nuclear test sites—now radioactive and out of bounds—are on their soil. Balochistan University teems with the icons of Baloch separatism: posters of Akbar Bugti, Balach Marri, Brahamdagh Bugti, and 'General Sheroff' decorate the campus. The ultra-nationalist Baloch kill the non-Baloch: Punjabis, Muhajirs, and even Sindhis. Poor labourers, school teachers, and professors are also not spared. The Army and the Frontier Constabulary respond with excessive violence against nationalists—even those who believe in using peaceful means only—using a simple principle: abduct, kill, dump. Tortured and disfigured bodies of Baloch nationalists are frequently found dumped in the bushes; Pakistan's top judges fruitlessly instruct law enforcement authorities responsible for enforced disappearances in Balochistan to produce the remaining 'missing persons'.¹⁶

With a country in deep crisis, beating the nuclear drum does little to soothe such basic anger and resentment. Expressions of despair and frustration abound across the country. An irate citizen, fed-up with electricity load-shedding, circulated the following:

In a span of the last one-month, Pakistan has test-fired 5 hi-tech, ultra-sophisticated, stealth-featured, nuclear-capable, long-range ballistic missiles. Even superpowers at the height of the cold war were unable to afford so many tests of their nuclear arsenal in just one month alone. On the other hand Pakistan's 'rocket science' cannot produce a single mega-watt of electricity, construct new dams, provide regular supply of gas to starving industries, CNG stations, consumers etc., through new LNG terminals or pipelines, develop basic infrastructure for the masses, repair stranded locomotive engines of Pakistan Railways, overhaul grounded engines of PIA aircraft, complete the Lowari Tunnel since last 40 years, exploit Thar Coal and other untapped mineral resources etc.¹⁷

The hubris following the 1998 tests, together with the promise that the bomb would transform Pakistan into a technologically and scientifically advanced country, is now nowhere in evidence. On the contrary, apart from relatively minor exports of computer software and light armaments, science and technology remain peripheral to process of production. Pakistan's current exports are principally textiles, cotton, leather, footballs, fish and fruit. The value-added component of Pakistani manufacturing somewhat exceeds that of Bangladesh and Sudan, but is far below that of India, Turkey and Indonesia. Nor is the quality of science taught in Pakistani educational institutions satisfactory. It remains at the level that existed before Pakistan embarked on its quest for the bomb. This is not surprising because making a bomb in present times requires technical skills rather than scientific ones.

CAN PAKISTAN BECOME A NATION?

This bleak picture notwithstanding, there is excellent reason why Pakistan should continue to exist as a nation-state even if it has so far failed to evolve into a nation. Unlike the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the shattering of the Pakistani state would be enormously painful all around. As the failed state of Somalia has recently demonstrated, anarchy and local warlords are extremely destructive to any large body of people.

The collective experience of humankind over four centuries has led to the emergence of independent nation-states. They are now the bedrock of the international system and play critical roles in development, management of shared and scarce global resources, and human and collective security. At a minimum, states have legal and normative responsibilities for assuring the security of their citizens, protecting property rights and providing public goods to enable the functioning of the market. Many states do far more than this, providing social services, particularly education, health and sanitation.¹⁸

Pakistan can, over time, go beyond being just a nation-state and actually become a nation—one that is at peace with itself and the

world. Nations are inevitably formed when people experience a common environment and live together for long enough. But how long is long? In Pakistan's case the time scale could be fairly short. Its people are diverse but almost all understand Urdu. They watch the same television programs, listen to the same radio stations, deal with the same irritating and inefficient bureaucracy, use the same badly written textbooks, buy similar products, and despise the same set of rulers. One can see the outlines of an emergent Pakistani culture. Just as rain and snow eventually grind stark stony mountains into fertile soil, adherence to a few basic principles could cause a viable Pakistani culture to emerge.

What might be a suitable manifesto of change?

First, Pakistan needs peace. This means that it must turn inwards and devote its fullest attention to ending its raging internal wars. The sixty-year long conflict with India has achieved little beyond creating a militarized Pakistani security state which uses force as its first resort even when dealing its own people. Attempts to solve Kashmir militarily have bled the country dry and left it dependent on foreign aid. The army's role must be limited to defending the people of Pakistan, and to ensuring that their constitutional and civil rights are protected.

Second, Pakistan needs economic justice. This demands a social infrastructure providing decent employment, minimum incomes, and rewards according to ability and hard work. In rural areas, where old structures of land ownership remain intact, sweeping land reforms are urgent. India abolished feudalism upon attaining independence but the enormous pre-Partition land holdings of Pakistan's feudal lords were protected by the authority of the state. The land reforms announced by Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were hardly serious. No agricultural tax is paid to the government because many in parliament own vast tracts of land. On the other hand, even in the urban areas there is gross inequality—mothers commit suicide in the shadow of five-star hotels because they cannot feed their children. The military is landlord and capitalist, owning vast assets that have no relation to national defense. Most countries

have armies but, as many have dryly noted, only in Pakistan does an army have a country.

Third, Pakistan must shed its colonial structure of governance. Different historically constituted peoples must want to live together voluntarily, and see the benefits of doing so. A giant centralized government machine sitting in Islamabad cannot effectively manage such a diverse country. The passage in 2010 of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which enhanced provincial autonomy, was a positive step. As in India, Pakistan has to be reorganized as a federation where provinces and local governments hold the critical economic and social powers, with defense and foreign affairs held in common. In particular, Islamabad's conflict with Balochistan urgently needs resolution using political sagacity rather than military force. Blaming India cannot change reality—the Baloch are angry for good reasons. At a recent lecture that I gave to senior Pakistan civil service officers in Peshawar, I was taken back at the intensity of those from Balochistan who said that wounds were too deep and the time for reconciliation had passed. A decade ago one would have expected this language from student radicals only—now it is the mainstream Baloch who articulates this sentiment.

Fourth, Pakistan needs a social contract. This is a commitment that citizens shall be treated fairly and equally by the state and, in turn, shall willingly fulfil basic civic responsibilities. But today Pakistanis are denied even the most fundamental protections specified in the Constitution. The poor suffer outright denial of their rights while the rich are compelled to buy them. Rich and poor alike feel no obligation to fulfil their civic duties. Most do not pay their fair share of income tax, leading to one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the world.

Fifth, the country's education needs drastic revision in the means of delivery and content. Money goes some way towards the first—better school infrastructure, books, teacher salaries, etc. But this is not enough. Schools teach children to mindlessly obey authority, to look to the past for solutions to today's problems, and to be intolerant of the religion, culture and language of others. Instead,

we need to teach them to be enquiring, open-minded, creative, logical, socially responsible and appreciative of diversity.

To conclude, Pakistan's security problems cannot be solved by better weapons. If Pakistan is to chart a path to viable nationhood, there must be a national dialogue on its most pressing problems. The way forward lies in building a normal nation held together by mutual interests. Wherever this condition lies unfulfilled for too long, there can be major changes: both the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia broke apart after seventy years.

This means Pakistan must aim towards creating a sustainable and active democracy; an economy for peace rather than war; a federation in which provincial grievances can be effectively resolved; elimination of the feudal order and creating a tolerant society that respects the rule of law. Although religion will certainly remain an important part of its social reality for the foreseeable future, Pakistan must seek new roots that lie beyond religion. This is the only way to deal with the surge of insurgencies in the country. They need to urgently to be brought under control through appropriate use of force, as well as major changes in governance, education, and the political structure.

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