

# Intense Polarization and Pakistan's Democratic Future

## Outline

### A. Introduction

The intense polarization on every front owing to diverse social, political and economic reasons has caused a huge damage to the essence of democracy in Pakistan

### B. Intense Polarization as the Stalemate for Diverse Societies

### C. Polarization has Become Aggravated owing to:

- 1- The recent surge in the 'intransigent politics of division rather than integration.
- 2- The lack of communication between the federating units winding the flames of provincialism
- 3- The unheard demands of the under-privileged community of Balochistan
  - a- The issue of Rekodia
  - b- The rising instability in Gwadar
- 4- The continuous rise in inflation



widening the gap of class difference  
and gender inequality

## D- Democratic Future of Pakistan owing to Intense Polarization is in danger as:

1- There is a visible and continuous  
downfall of economy because of lack  
of political consensus

2- The sacred image of supreme  
court of Pakistan is under threat  
by dragging it in political disputes.

3- The Election Commission of Pakistan  
is losing confidence of the people  
amidst political rivalries

4- The civil-military relations are  
at its lowest ebb

5- The emergence of new wave of  
terrorism on the western border  
of Pakistan

## E- Way-Outs to Minimize Polarization for a Promising Democratic Future

1- Dite need of 'All Parties Conference'  
to reach an agreeable political  
consensus



2- Overwhelming political support to the military of Pakistan to root out the involvement of Non-state Actors

3- Fresh political mandate in the House to attract foreign investment and earn the confidence of people

4- Addressing the needs of Balochistan people to secure Gwadar as an operational unit of CPEC.

5- Independent and constitutional working of all state institutions to avoid political victimization

## F. Conclusion



# Essay

The life on Earth reflects many diverse and beautiful shades. This diversity and pluralism is intrinsic in the scheme of creation. The acceptance of this diversity and difference makes societies peaceful and prosperous. Whenever this diversity is challenged or disturbed through any uncalled for division, polarization takes birth that directly dents the democratic norms of the society. Currently, the democratic future of Pakistan is at stake owing to various social, political and economic reasons. They range from the stubborn and hard politics of division to the rising graph of inflation causing intense class difference and gender inequality. The aggravating tide of provincialism regarding various economic contracts with the foreign companies and the internal dissatisfaction of the people of Balochistan are some of the causes of intense polarization. The cause-impact relationship of polarization



is cyclical and so ultimately the causes producing drastic social, political and economic impacts in turn generate synergistic negative effects to further push the polarization. But the hope lies in the diversity itself and if some promising consensus-based steps are taken in the political, social and economic realms, Pakistan can have a thriving democratic future.

The societies with more diversity are in need of more cooperation, tolerance and acceptability. The presence of grey areas acts the wheels upon which the vehicle of democracy covers the distance of light years. But if the culture of polarization finds any little space, it can cause political exclusion, economic exploitation and the social stigmatization. All of these three factors stand as the pillars of polarization that acts as a stalemate for the diverse and democratic societies arresting their growth and prosperity.



The social fabric of Pakistan is a diverse one in which there are many religions, languages, ethnicities and cultures present parallel to each other. Only nationalism binds them. The presence of any little provocation can weaken this one bond of nationalism against such diverse factors. In this regard, the recent surge in the politics of deadlock has caused a huge damage to the cohesion of nationalist force. The intransigent and inflexible political ideologies are causing division. The sanctity of the highest democratic institution of a state, parliament, is being damaged. This atmosphere of rivalry and victimisation will further affect the turn-over and the relationship of government and opposition in the upcoming elections.

Moreover, there are different parties governing the federal capital and provinces respectively. This division of turn-over and mandate has reduced communication between the federating



units which in-turn is causing a wide cleavage on the political front. This will further lead towards provincialism weakening the centrifugal force of federation. By turning the leaves of the political history of Pakistan, the worst polarization was witnessed in East-West divide in the elections of 1970-71 that eventually led to the fall of Dhaka and creation of Bangladesh.

Furthermore, the unheard complaints and demands of the people of Balochistan, largest province in terms of geography and enriched place in terms of natural resources, have sprouted out depicting their dissatisfaction with the federation. The long-lasting legal battle of Rekodia, claimed to be one of the biggest underground reservoir of gold and copper, is just one of the several cases where the province portrayed its grievances. The recent instability in the Gwadar Port, considered to be the most vital



part of CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor), and the failure of negotiations between government and protestors of "Haqar Do Tehreek" HDT <sup>are</sup> causing more problems. In short, the dissatisfaction and unheard demands of people of Balochistan can provide more space to the external elements, in this era of hybrid warfare, to cause more polarization.

Moving towards the economic front, the rise of inflation is also causing polarization in terms of class difference and gender inequality. According to the economic statistics of August 2022, the inflation rose to 27.1%, highest in 40 years in Pakistan and with reference to Economic survey of Pakistan about 24% of population already living below the poverty line, this crisis is reducing the per capita income and purchasing power of the people of middle class driving them to the lower middle class and eventually below the poverty



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line. The Marxist analysis of this rise in inflation suggests that it will have even drastic effects for women who have the general pay difference of 16% as compared to men in Pakistan. To cut short, the elimination of middle class owing to the rising inflation and aggravating gender inequality are also causing polarization.

The impacts of the increased polarization in Pakistan are visible on various fronts. The lack of political consensus is causing the continuous downfall of economy. The debts are increasing, the Foreign Direct Investment is nose-diving, and the alarming trade-deficit are the conspicuous impacts of lack of commitment, cooperation and consensus on the political front.

Secondly, the involvement of Supreme Court in petty political disputes is another impact of failure of negotiation channel of politics and extreme polarization. The significance



of the floor of the house and the constitutional institutions such as the Council of Common Interests ~~is~~ bypassed and Supreme Court is dragged to the parliamentary matters that ~~breaches~~ <sup>breaches</sup> the constitutional boundary and the sacred social image of the apex court. <sup>So</sup> the unnecessary pulling of the court to political disputes is the other impact of polarization.

Moving forward, amidst the political rivalries and the serious allegations against the constitutional institution of Election Commission of Pakistan with the rhetoric of political biasness, the institution is at the danger of losing the confidence of the masses. This is the direct impact of intense polarization. The bridge between the people and the parliament is Election Commission of Pakistan and the recent situation holds enough negative energy to break this bridge causing a further



political and structural breakdown and sowing the seeds of civil war in Pakistan.

Furthermore, the civil-military relations are on the lowest ebb in the ongoing state of affairs. Having learnt no lessons from the history of unequal civil-military equation, the working relationship between both institutions and an unprecedented need of a well-crafted foreign policy, in the wake of drastically changing plus challenging global world order, can be seen nowhere in the predictable future.

This can seriously damage the sovereignty and identity of Pakistan on the global canvas. In concise form, the deteriorating civil-military relationship is the direct impact of political polarization.

Among the impacts of polarization being intensified and challenging the democratic future of Pakistan, the emergence of,



new wave of terrorism on the western border of Pakistan is the worst one. It will destroy all the efforts already made and all the sacrifices already served in the arduous and heart-wrenching struggle to boot-out the menace of terrorism from Pakistan. The presence of hard-lines government in the neighbouring country, Taliban government in Afghanistan, and the lack of collective effort on the part of Pakistan will allow the militant organizations to form safe havens in Pakistan.

Having discussed some of direct causes and the drastic impacts of intense polarization in Pakistan, some ~~of~~ ~~the~~ timely taken steps can still save the country from falling into quagmire of political uncertainty and economic bankruptcy on what stands the democratic edifice of any prospering state.



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Firstly, all the parties should engage in a political solution of the ideological differences. Through an "All Parties Conference" the economic direction of the country should be set and in the same vein, the consensus-based foreign policy with all stakeholders taken on-board should be crafted and implemented that remains undisturbed with the change of governments.

Moreover, with an iron political will, the military is in need of full political and moral support from all the political units of the country to attest the recent rising tide of terrorism. The vicious campaign against the army should be rationally tackled by the government by a well-managed team of cyber-experts.

Moving forward, the on-going year is of elections and the revival of confidence of the



masses in the Election Commission of Pakistan is very necessary. This can become possible by all the parties agreeing on a single list of people running the institution during the time of general elections. This will reduce the power of rhetoric of rigging of elections and the mandate will be freely and fairly transferred to the most powerful democratic force. This will also improve the dwindling economy and will serve as a cohesive ~~and~~ centrifugal force kicking-out the elements of polarization.

The demands of the people of Balochistan and especially the residents of Gwadar should be given an institutional mechanism and included in the streamline projects. This will attract the sentiments of the people to



a reliable and compassionate federation.

In the end, the institutions should not be used as the tools or instruments of political victimization. They should be ~~based~~<sup>run</sup> by the book of law and not the whims or wishes of any particular personality or incumbent governments. This will secure the track towards democratic future.

To cap up the whole discussion, it can be stated that the faultlines of the intense polarization are present in every domain and the diverse demography of Pakistan makes them even problematic if the direct and indirect provocations are not checked. But the same diversity becomes the beauty of the democracy when some of the institutional and normative steps having consensus and agreement as their foundation are implemented.



The proper and coherent working of institutions and the cohesive social fabric accepting and celebrating the themes of diversity and pluralism have the potential to boot-out polarization and promise democratic future for Pakistan.