

(1)

9. Political Consensus in Pakistan : a Key to ~~Resolve~~ Resolve Collective Challenges

Outline

A. Introduction

- (a) what is political consensus ?
- (b) Political consensus is a key to resolve collective challenges
- (c) ~~The~~ Thesis statement

B. An Overview on Political Consensus in Pakistan ;

- (a) Political alliances
- (b) Charter of democracy
- (c) 18th Amendment

C. What are the collective challenges which Pakistan faces?

- (1) The challenges of security both at external and internal level
- (2) The issue of bad governance
- (3) Leadership crisis and political instability
- (4) Looming economic crisis.

D. How Political Consensus is a Key to Resolve Collective Challenges?

- (1) Good governance is possible through

(2)

- Political stability
- (2) Effective decision making and political consensus
 - (3) Political stability leads to economic stability and development
 - (4) Achieving peace and prosperity in the society
 - (5) Eradication of social evils like terrorism, extremism, and sectarianism ;
 - (a) National action plan
 - (6) Improving national cohesion and provincial unity
 - (7) Ease in policy making and implementation
 - (8) Maintaining effective foreign policy and diplomacy

E. Way Forward to Ensure Political Consensus in Pakistan to Resolve Collective Challenges ;

- (1) Promoting dialogue and diplomacy across the political parties and institutions
- (2) Ensuring agreement on charter of democracy and economy
- (3) Prevailing national interest over personal and political interest
- (4) Creating awareness and education in public through media and civil society

F. Conclusion

(3)

Different countries in the world have made development through different strategies and ways, one of the key property in all these developed countries is having a strong political consensus. The term refers to the agreement of politicians and their political parties over a myriad of national and international issues. Sadly, Pakistan lacks this element since independence. Though small efforts were made in this regard, but it does not produce a long-term impact over political consensus. There is a greater disagreement and instability in Pakistan politics; political polarization has further widened the gap between politicians. Sadly, Pakistan is faced with multiple challenges like bad governance, economic crisis, and security challenges. These challenges have derailed the country from the track of development. However, political consensus, indeed, can help to resolve these collective challenges. Political consensus can bring and improve good-governance; efficiency in decision making; peace and prosperity in society; eradication of terrorism; improving national cohesion and provincial unity; easiness in policy making and implementation; and bringing economic stability. In fact, political

(4)

Consensus is the panacea for all evils of the country. Moreover, to ensure political consensus in Pakistan, certain measures need to be taken which include, promoting dialogue and diplomacy in political parties; agreement on charter of democracy and economy; prevailing national interest over political and personal interest; and creating awareness and education in public through various measures.

In short, Pakistan is faced with myriad of socio-economic and political challenges; however, fostering political consensus among diverse stakeholders, all the challenges can be addressed efficiently.

Since inception, Pakistan has faced the issue of lack of political inception. Although several efforts were made, like making of some political alliances such as Pakistan national alliance, Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), and Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), but mostly in vain. Till 2008, no government have successfully completed their tenure, and the country experienced martial law for more than thirty years. In 2006, charter of democracy happened, which provides some hope. However, there is still a high degree of polarization and instability in

(5)

Pakistan politics. No Prime Minister in the history have yet completes its ~~tenure~~ ~~tenure~~ tenure.

There is death of leadership and thus it has led to poor political consensus, which has further paved way for numerous challenges.

The following paragraphs describe collective challenges which Pakistan faces.

First of all, the challenges of security both at external and internal level faced by Pakistan is due to lack of political consensus. In fact, regional stability depends upon political consensus. Currently, India-Pakistan bitter relations is also because of political differences. There is a lack of negotiation between India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. As a result, cross-border terrorism is on rise. In the same fashion, internal security situation of the country cannot improve without having proper diplomacy with non-state actors. Politicians, in this manner, can play important role, however, their respective role is missing which puts the country into myriad of security challenges.

Similarly, the issue of bad-governance faced by Pakistan is also due to poor political consensus. Bad-governance include corruption, lack of

(6)

accountability, red-tapism, nepotism and so on. Politicians as well as bureaucrats are involved in malpractices. According to the report of Transparency International, "Pakistan rank at 140th least corrupt nation out of 180 countries." (Transparency International report, 2022). This has led to the issue of bad-governance, which is a major challenge for developing countries like Pakistan.

Moreover, political instability and leadership crisis are also the challenges faced by Pakistan due to absence of political consensus. Pakistan, indeed, is multi-ethnic country and there are many political parties in different regions of the country. Punjab is mostly under control of Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), while Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) controls Sindh. Therefore, the difference in political vision creates instability in politics. Furthermore, there is dearth of sincere leadership, which can think for stability of the country. Politics in Pakistan is largely polarized. Hence, instability and crisis enlarges which can only be avoided through political consensus.

Lastly, the looming economic crisis in Pakistan is also because

(7)

poor political consensus. The country is faced with unprecedented economic crisis. The inflation rate in June 2023 is 29.4 percent (observerdiplomat.com, June 2023). Similarly, Pakistan is 45th largest economy of the world; on other hand, India is 3rd largest economy. This is a huge difference between the two neighbours. The reason for it is that India enjoys a stable democratic and political system, while Pakistan is faced with severe ^{political} instability and leadership crisis.

The following paragraphs will describe how political consensus in Pakistan is a key to resolve its collective challenges.

First of all, good-governance is possible because of political cooperation and stability. The attributes of good-governance include transparency, accountability, responsibility, public participation, and responsiveness. So, if a country is politically unstable then it not possible for a country to run its official affairs smoothly. Take the example of China, Russia, USA, and some European countries which enjoy good-governance, it is because of their stable political system. The politicians of these countries

(8)

debate over national issues from the perspective of their national interest. There is a greater political consensus; hence, there is a good-governance which is a blessing for the development of a country.

Likewise, effective decision making and political cooperation are a key to resolve collective challenges of the country. If there is a political consensus, then the leadership will reach to fair result and decision timely. This will enhance efficiency of decision making. On other hand, if there is polarization and differences among politician and other stakeholders, then the situation can become worst, if proper consensus did not build-up among them. That is why, to achieve an effective decision making mechanism, political consensus is sine qua non.

Furthermore, through political consensus and cooperation, political stability can be achieved which can lead to economic stability. It is a well known fact that those countries make progress which are politically as well as economically sound. Both, economy and politics, move together. This can be

(9)

seen in developed countries of the world. On the other hand, least developing countries face political and economic crisis. Hence, to overcome economic crisis, political stability is the pre-requisite.

Moreover, through political consensus, peace and prosperity in the society can be achieved which is a major challenge in the current world. If political parties are united and work in cooperation with each other, then society can easily live in peace and prosperity. For example, western societies are more prosperous and developed, it is because of their political stability and cooperation. On other hand, there is scarcity of pluralism in Pakistani politics. Resultantly, societies are divided and polarized. Henceforth, political consensus is a key to achieve the challenge of peace and prosperity in the society.

In the same manner, the challenge of eradication of social evils is possible through political unity. Social evils include terrorism, extremism, and sectarianism. After Army Public School attack in December 2014, all political parties conference held in which it was agreed unanimously to curb terrorism from its root. As a result, national action plan

(10)

policy was framed, which reduced terrorism in Pakistan to a larger extent. Besides, on the same pattern, extremism can be avoided through political pluralism. Moreover, religion should be used for political purpose. Hence, culmination of social evils and its challenges can be minimized through political consensus.

In the same fashion, political consensus can improve national cohesion and provincial unity, which is also a major challenge faced by the country. In fact, Pakistan is multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-national country. Therefore, to keep it united is not an easy task. For instance, the issue of Kalabagh Dam is an example of provincial disunity and political polarization. That is why, if consensus are not build up in resolution of these kind of issues. Then it is a threat to the integration of a country. In a nutshell, provincial unity and national cohesion can be strengthened through effective political consensus.

Additionally, political consensus helps in policy making and implementation, which is another challenge in the way of Pakistan progress. Policy making and its fair

Implementation is necessary for a country development. In case of Pakistan, different governments and political parties came up with their own policies, which is not good for a long-term vision. There is a lack of cooperation in comprehensive policy making and its strict implementation. Moreover, several policies are made but not implemented, such as national security policy, vision 2025 and many more. Therefore, it is need of hour to ease the process of policy making and implementation through political consensus.

Last but not the least, ~~political~~ political consensus can help in maintaining effective foreign policy and diplomacy. Pakistan is faced with a hard challenge of making and executing an independent foreign policy. Super powers like United States of America (USA), China, and Russia try to use Pakistan for their vested interest. Pakistan is left with option of choosing either side. Indeed, it is a challenging position for a developing countries like Pakistan. In this manner, political stability can play an important role. All political parties must adhere to the national interest of country by maintaining an effective foreign policy and diplomacy.

(12)

with world. Conclusively, political consensus can resolve the challenge of maintaining effective international relations with the world.

After explaining how political consensus is a key to resolve collective challenges in many paragraphs, the following paragraphs describe the way forward to ensure political consensus in Pakistan to resolve collective challenges.

First of all, promoting dialogue and diplomacy across the political parties and institutions can ensure political consensus in Pakistan to resolve collective challenges. Political parties must adopt the culture of dialogue and diplomacy. Through talks and negotiations, any political issue can be solved. For this purpose, all parties meeting and conference platform can be used. Most importantly, it is the cry of the day that political parties ^{must} set together and resolve their political ~~issues~~ issues through political consensus.

Secondly, political consensus over ensuring agreement on charter of democracy and economy can resolve collective challenges faced by Pakistan. All political parties must support democracy over martial law or any other form of intervention. Additionally, the

civil military should be on one page. There should be good relationship and understanding between civilian government and military bureaucracy. Similarly, political parties must implement economic reforms so that poverty and economic crisis resolved. Then, as a result, the country can overcome economic and political challenges.

Thirdly, political consensus must be ensured in such a manner that leads to prevailing national interest over political interest. Politicians and their respective political parties, without any doubt, must prioritize national interest over vested personal interests. Because, if politicians only think for his party, then the country will not prosper and developed. Rather, the country ~~will~~ would be in chaos and instability. Therefore, sincere leadership in politics is need of hour, who can unite the different political forces for national cause and interest. Hence, there should be political cooperation to prioritize national interest over personal interest.

Last but not the least, creating awareness and education in public through media and civil society can ensure political consensus not only in politicians but also in masses. Political parties are composed ~~are~~ ^{of} different groups of public, and if these public are educated

through awareness campaign, then obviously they will avoid political polarization and instability. Moreover, public cannot be misguided further as they will stick to their ideology and national interest. As a result, politicians will also not be able to deceive public for vote gaining bank. Electronic media, civil society, and awareness campaign can enhance the understanding and education of masses, which can play a pivotal role in bringing political consensus to resolve collective challenges.

To conclude, it can be said and accepted that Pakistan is faced with myriad of socio-economic and political challenges; however, fostering political consensus among diverse stakeholders, all the challenges can be resolved efficiently. Throughout its history, Pakistan experience dealing of democracy and political instability. Since inception, not a single Prime Minister has completed his five year tenure. The country is faced with leadership crisis and political polarization. Pakistan, also, facing some challenges to its security, governance, politics, and economy. The root cause is political lack of political consensus. If ~~if~~, there established a political cooperation then all these mentioned challenges can be overcome. Good -

governance, effective decision making, economic stability, eradication of terrorism, improving national cohesion, and maintaining effective foreign policy are the things that can be achieved through political consensus. Undoubtedly, collective challenges can be resolved in the same fashion. Moreover, to ensure political consensus^{and} to resolve collective challenges, certain steps need to be taken like, promoting dialogue and diplomacy in political parties; prevailing national interest over personal interest; creating awareness and education in public through media and civil society and so on. If these steps are taken in due care, then there is always light at end of a dark tunnel. Furthermore, to have a political consensus, Pakistan must follow the^a successful model of developed countries of the world. If, Pakistan adopted the measures to ensure political consensus in true spirit, then it is a key to resolve all collective challenges, which the country is faced with, and Pakistan will be developed by leaps and bounds.

ASADULLAH Batch-93-C