

POLITICS OF IDENTITY AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN PAKISTAN (1999-2007): AN ANALYSIS

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DEDICATIONS

Abstract

Pakistan's ongoing struggle to forge a cohesive national identity amid deep-rooted ethnic, linguistic, and regional diversity has posed persistent challenges since its inception. Although Islam was initially deployed as a unifying framework, this approach failed to address the complexities of pluralism, especially under General Pervez Musharraf's regime (1999–2007). During this period, state-led efforts toward national integration, including centralized governance, economic reforms, and counterterrorism policies, often exacerbated identity-based grievances rather than resolving them. The marginalization of regional languages, unequal resource distribution, and militarized responses to dissent particularly intensified discontent in provinces such as Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This study analyzes the intricate interplay between identity politics and national integration by evaluating government strategies, socio-political movements, and economic disparities during this critical decade. The findings demonstrate that the imposition of a singular national identity, without accommodating regional aspirations and cultural diversity, contributed to political alienation and socio-economic exclusion. It further reveals that education policies, media narratives, and national security frameworks under Musharraf often suppressed peripheral identities instead of fostering national unity. The research highlights the need for a pluralistic and inclusive model of national integration, one that empowers civil society, decentralizes authority, recognizes linguistic and ethnic diversity, and ensures equitable economic development. By addressing the underlying causes of disintegration, such as structural inequalities and centralized power, Pakistan can work toward a more sustainable and representative national identity.

Keywords

National Identity, Identity Politics, Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, Civil-Military Relations

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Pakistan's struggle to forge a unified national identity amidst its diversity remained one of the country's most significant challenges since its independence in 1947. Created as a homeland for Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, the country was founded on a religious identity that initially differentiated its population from that of India. However, as Jalal (2017) argued, this religious unity masked deeper layers of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. Unlike homogenous nation-states, Pakistan comprised multiple ethnic groups—Punjabis, Sindhi's, Pashtuns, Baloch, Muhajirs, among others, each with its own traditions, languages, and socio-political aspirations (Siddiqi, 2012).

One of the earliest and most significant manifestations of the challenges posed by this diversity was the language movement in East Pakistan. The imposition of Urdu as the national language was met with strong resistance by Bengali speakers, who felt that their cultural and linguistic identity was being suppressed. This conflict foreshadowed the failure of a singular identity narrative in Pakistan and culminated in the secession of East Pakistan in 1971. This event highlighted how the exclusion of linguistic and cultural rights could severely undermine national cohesion (Jabeen et al., 2020).

The politics of identity extended beyond language. Provinces like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) had distinct civilizations, customs, and values, which often diverged from those of Punjab and Sindh. Grievances such as underrepresentation, economic marginalization, and the perceived exploitation of natural resources by the federal government intensified regional nationalism, particularly in Balochistan (Khan, 2014). Movements like the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) also emerged in response to state practices under the pretext of counterterrorism, reflecting deeper identity-based frustrations.

The period from 1999 to 2007—under General Pervez Musharraf—marked a particularly significant phase in the relationship between identity politics and national integration. Following a military coup in 1999, Musharraf introduced a modernization agenda that sought to liberalize the economy and present a moderate Islamic identity. While these efforts aimed at fostering stability and global alignment, they also brought the state into direct conflict with Pakistan's ethnic, linguistic, and religious pluralism.

Although the regime promoted a singular, modern vision of Pakistani nationalism, it often failed to accommodate the country's internal diversity. Policies aimed at religious moderation, language standardization, and centralization of power frequently alienated regional groups. These efforts further deepened the existing identity crisis, as they clashed with deeply rooted sub-national identities and regional autonomy movements.

Historically, Pakistan's identity had always been tied to its origin narrative as a refuge for Muslims. However, this national vision often overlooked the fragmented nature of its society. Ethnic groups, particularly Sindhi's and Baloch, possessed well-developed political identities and demands for resource control. The national language policy, which prioritized Urdu, created linguistic hierarchies that marginalized regional languages and identities, thereby reinforcing perceptions of cultural exclusion. Language in this context was more than a communication tool—it symbolized heritage and self-pride. For many, the prioritization of Urdu in public offices and education was perceived as a form of cultural domination or even erasure. This dynamic further complicated the task of national integration.

Religion also shaped identity politics in Pakistan. Though founded as a homeland for Muslims, the country housed various Islamic sects as well as religious minorities. Sectarian conflict, particularly between Sunni and Shia communities, and tensions with non-Muslim minorities, contributed to national fragmentation. State efforts to regulate religion and promote a controlled version of Islam during Musharraf's tenure added to this complexity, as they alienated certain religious factions. Furthermore, globalization introduced new lifestyles, technologies, and ideologies, which affected identity construction, particularly among the youth. While economic modernization improved Pakistan's global image and infrastructure, conservative segments of society often viewed these reforms as threats to traditional values, widening generational and ideological divides.

This study focused on the role of identity politics in shaping national integration efforts in Pakistan between 1999 and 2007. It examined how attempts to construct a singular national identity interacted with competing ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian affiliations. The study aimed to uncover how these tensions influenced state policies, civil resistance, and the broader challenges of unity in a multi-ethnic state. Ultimately, this research contributed to understanding the complex relationship between identity and integration in the context of Pakistan's unique political and social landscape.

1.1 The Concept of Identity

The definition of identity is complex as it incorporates different elements related to people and groups. In Pakistan, identity is not just a matter of nationality but rather a mixture of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and regional identities each with its social and historical context (Khan, 1999). Its true comprehension entails identifying how several components of identity construct self and community, and subsequently, how these perceptions affect national integration.

More so, identity refers to that issue as to how a person perceives himself or herself based on the social, cultural, and personal experiences. Moreover, identity is also associated with groups which offer a sense of identity, belonging, and a community. This is particularly true in the case of Pakistan, where identity is shaped by ethnic and linguistic groupings, religious sectarianism and, in several contexts, associated to location. To illustrate, a Sindhi-speaking Pakistani born from the province of Sindh may first regard himself in light of his ethnic identity rather than national identity. While this process gives rise to modification in social identity, social structure remains rich but fractured.

1.1.1 Identity Crisis

Confusion, uncertainty, and lack of self-regarded ideas arise due to the complex layering of social structures, giving rise the phenomenon known as identity crisis. As Hashmi (2013) observed, identity crises have pervaded Pakistani society from its very birth. The creation of Pakistan was based fundamentally on religion, which provided a unifying spirit to the Muslims of Pakistan. Nevertheless, this religious identity did not consider Pakistan's ethnic, linguistic, and cultural composition, which has led to identity crises for different groups within the country at different times.

The identity crisis of Pakistan owes itself to the tension between a single nationality identity and many ethnic identities (Jahangir, 2019). National identity has always conflicted with the identity of people with distinct ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. This contributes to feeling of exclusion, particular when the state encourages certain identities in its rhetoric. A case in point is the adoption of Urdu as the national language, which has over the years alienated many Sindhi, Pashto and especially Balochi speakers and has compounded the identity crisis faced by them.

The period between 1999 and 2007 is marked by a rise in identity crises owing to insurmountable internal and external turmoil faced by Pakistan. Musharraf, whilst urging for a synchronized national vision and modernization, and his government faced opposition from groups who felt their identities were

either nonexistent or threatened. Certain religious groups that were feeling these policies to control some religious narratives and curb extremism were alienated also led to certain discontent among specific religious factions. This already illustrates how the cohesive national identity efforts can cause an explosion deepening the division with an identity crisis at its core.

1.1.2 Identity Politics

The politics of identity has played a critical role in shaping Pakistan's national trajectory, particularly in its post-independence political development. From ethnic mobilization to linguistic assertion, identity politics has persistently challenged the state's project of centralized national integration. In Pakistan, groups such as the Baloch, Sindhi, Pashtun, and even segments within the Muhajir and Seraiki communities have articulated political demands rooted in distinct ethno-linguistic and cultural identities. These contestations often run counter to the central state's top-down narrative of a homogenous national identity based largely on religion and Urdu language, producing periodic tensions between the center and peripheries (Ahmed, 1998; Waseem, 2010).

These identity-based assertions are not arbitrary but are grounded in long-standing grievances stemming from historical marginalization, unequal access to state resources, and structural exclusion from political power. For example, Baloch and Sindhi nationalists have historically pointed to discriminatory resource allocation, military repression, and underrepresentation in federal institutions as sources of frustration and discontent. Meanwhile, policies that seek to impose a singular national identity—often through education, media, and language imposition—have tended to delegitimize local cultures and further fuel alienation. Thus, understanding the complex interplay between identity and the state is essential for grasping why the notion of national integration has remained both fragile and contested in Pakistan's political evolution.

Adding further complexity are factor-specific dimensions that intensify identity-based fragmentation and weaken integrative frameworks. These include constitutional arrangements that inadequately address provincial autonomy, centralization of fiscal authority, socioeconomic inequalities between provinces, and repeated military interventions in democratic processes (Saeed, 2007; Akhtar, 2007). The concentration of power in federal institutions—often under the influence of the military establishment—has historically undermined inclusive governance and pluralistic federalism. This has reinforced perceptions in provinces like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that the federation prioritizes coercion over dialogue and dominance over negotiation.

These concerns became particularly pronounced during the 1999–2007 period, when General Pervez Musharraf’s regime undertook political restructuring without adequate provincial consultation. Historical documents and parliamentary debates from this era serve as critical sources to trace policy decisions and public responses that shaped identity-centered contestations. For instance, the National Finance Commission Award negotiations, the debate over the Kalabagh Dam, and efforts to implement a uniform curriculum all became flashpoints for provincial dissent. Language-based protests in Sindh and Balochistan, opposition to military cantonments, and the rise of regional parties further illustrate the deep-seated resistance to centralized governance.

By analyzing these moments through the lens of secondary data and historical documents, this study captures how identity politics, compounded by structural inequities and political exclusion, directly impacts the process and viability of national integration in Pakistan.

1.2 Locale of the Study

Every region within Pakistan already has distinct cultural and socio-political features. These regions allow us to focus and understand the multi-layered identity dynamics of the country. It is crucial to comprehend the locale as identity issues in Pakistan are multi-rooted and geographical and each region has a different way of formation and conflict of identity. For the purpose of this study, the following regions have been chosen: Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). All of these regions have something distinct to offer in terms of identity politics and national integration.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Pakistan’s efforts to achieve national political integration and stability have historically been challenged by its complex ethnic, linguistic, and regional diversity. As the only state founded on the ideological basis of uniting the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, Pakistan was burdened from its inception with the task of forging a coherent national identity. This challenge became particularly pronounced between 1999 and 2007 under General Pervez Musharraf’s regime, when the state pursued a dual agenda of modernization and national unification. These efforts, however, frequently clashed with the entrenched identities of Pakistan’s various ethnic groups, contributing to what can be described as a prolonged identity crisis.

This research focused on disentangling the role of identity politics in shaping national integration efforts during this period. It examined how policies that are driven by nationalism and political

centralization, are intended to unify the country were often incompatible with the realities of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural fragmentation. The tension between state-sponsored nationalism and regional conceptions of identity further undermined national cohesion.

One of the central issues was the concentration of state power and resources, which was often perceived by non-Punjabi ethnic groups as biased in favor of Punjab, which is the most populous and economically advanced province. This perception fueled resentment among communities such as the Sindhi's, Pashtuns, and Baloch, who viewed the central government's control over local resources as exploitative. The Baloch, in particular, expressed grievances over the federal government's extraction of natural resources without proportional investment in the province. These dynamics contributed to competing narratives of identity, as sub-national communities sought recognition and autonomy within a framework that prioritized a singular national identity.

Language policies further complicated this dynamic. While Urdu was intended to serve as a unifying national language, it is not the mother tongue of the majority of Pakistanis. The elevation of Urdu in education and public administration contributed to the marginalization of regional languages such as Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi. This created linguistic hierarchies that many communities perceived as cultural suppression, deepening the sense of exclusion. For some, the promotion of Urdu was viewed as an instrument of cultural erasure, contributing to a broader identity crisis.

Religion also played a complex role. Although Pakistan was created as a homeland for Muslims, it comprises various Islamic sects as well as religious minorities such as Christians and Hindus. During the Musharraf era, state efforts to regulate religious expression and promote a "moderate Islam" often led to sectarian tensions, particularly between Sunni and Shia groups. These efforts, though aimed at combating extremism, sometimes alienated religious constituencies and contributed to further identity fragmentation.

Globalization added another layer of complexity. While economic modernization under Musharraf improved Pakistan's international standing, it also triggered backlash from conservative segments of society. The introduction of global values and lifestyles was seen by some as a threat to traditional norms, intensifying generational and ideological divides.

The core dilemma addressed by this study was the tension between a centralized, state-led vision of national identity and the lived realities of a diverse population. Efforts to construct a singular Pakistani

identity frequently undermined the pluralism necessary for genuine integration. This research therefore examined how identity politics, when left unresolved, can transform into politics of exclusion and fragmentation, ultimately weakening the foundations of national unity.

1.4 Significance of the Research

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the complex interplay of identity and national integration within Pakistan's unique socio-political landscape, particularly during a transformative period between 1999 and 2007. Examination of this period allows the study to assess the interplay between attempts by the state to promote a homogenized national identity and the ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities that are unique to the people of Pakistan. The scope of this research can be construed through some available lenses such as the academic contribution, policy ramifications, socio-political importance and the general impact in multi-ethnic countries.

1.5 Hypothesis

The research hypothesizes that unresolved identity issues and regional disparities have significantly hindered the process of national integration in Pakistan during the period under study.

1.6 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. To analyze how identity politics shaped national-integration efforts during Musharraf's regime.
2. To examine the causes and manifestations of identity crises during 1997-2008.
3. To evaluate government policies and initiatives aimed at promoting national integration.
4. To propose strategies for addressing identity-related challenges.

1.7 Research Questions

Central Research Questions

- How did identity politics influence Pakistan's national integration during General Pervez Musharraf's tenure (1999–2007)?

Sub Research Questions

1. What were the primary causes of identity crises during General Pervez Musharraf's tenure (1999–2007)?
2. How effective were government policies in addressing these challenges?
3. What strategies can effectively address identity-based challenges and promote national cohesion?

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into six comprehensive chapters, each addressing key aspects of identity politics and national integration in Pakistan from 1999 to 2007. The organization follows a logical progression, beginning with foundational concepts, moving through historical and analytical discussions, and concluding with policy recommendations and future research directions.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter introduces the study by defining key concepts, particularly identity and national integration. It discusses the research problem, significance, hypothesis, objectives, and questions. A literature review follows, analyzing previous scholarship on identity politics, national integration challenges, and the role of the military and state institutions, with a particular focus on the Musharraf era.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the qualitative research approach used in the study, emphasizing its exploratory and interpretive nature. It details data collection methods, including primary and secondary sources, along with sampling techniques, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and ethical considerations. The chapter also addresses research limitations and provides a timeline for the study.

Chapter 3: Historical Context of Identity Politics in Pakistan

Chapter three traces the historical development of identity politics in Pakistan, beginning with the country's formation and early challenges. It examines the evolution of ethnic and regional identities, major political and social movements from 1947 to 1996, and the historical grievances that shaped identity conflicts leading up to 1997.

Chapter 4: Identity Politics and National Integration (1997–2008)

This chapter analyzes the political landscape of Pakistan during the study period, focusing on the role of state institutions such as the ISI and military. It assesses Pervez Musharraf's policies and their impact on national integration, particularly in the context of ethnic and regional tensions. The chapter also examines the War on Terror and its consequences, including militarization, sectarianism, and insurgent movements. It further explores the role of political parties, government policies on integration, and their successes and failures.

Chapter 5: Socio-Economic Dimensions of Identity Crisis

Chapter five delves into economic disparities, regional inequalities, and their influence on identity-based conflicts. It discusses the role of education and cultural narratives in shaping national identity, assessing the impact of curricula and media. The socio-economic consequences of the War on Terror, such as economic disruption, displacement, and radicalization, are also explored. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of civil society's role in peacebuilding and national cohesion.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

The final chapter summarizes key findings, highlighting the interplay between identity politics and national integration. It provides policy recommendations aimed at addressing governance challenges, economic disparities, and educational reforms. The chapter concludes with reflections on the broader implications of the study and potential future research directions.

1.9 Literature Review

National integration in Pakistan has been a subject of extensive academic inquiry, particularly in relation to identity politics, ethnic nationalism, and state policies. The complex interplay between state-led nationalism and diverse ethno-linguistic identities has shaped the country's political landscape, often leading to tensions and conflicts. This literature review synthesizes key scholarly and policy contributions, linking them to the central theme of identity politics and national integration during the period of 1999–2007. The review highlights the gaps in existing research and establishes the foundation for the hypothesis that unresolved identity issues and regional disparities have significantly hindered national integration in Pakistan.

The existing works surrounding the themes of identity, nationalism as well as communities' political integration in multi-ethnic states are critical to understanding identity politics in Pakistan. Scholars from different fields of study have examined identity in terms of ethnicity, language, religion,

and places of origins. This review entails theories and concepts from sociology, political science, and anthropology that tell us how identity is constructed, how nationalism is used as a tool for bringing together mixed populations, and the problems faced by multi-ethnic states in achieving social unity.

1.9.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Identity and Nationalism

Identity politics for Pakistan needs an interdisciplinary combine within which political science, sociology and anthropology are used to interpret the historical accounts, policies of the states and socio-political systems which craft the national self. The problem of national integration in Pakistan is a multi-faceted one because of the coexistence of many ethnic, linguistic and religious groups within a national framework of a state.

For instance, Hashmi (2020) notes that the identity crisis stems from the state's religion centered integration policy that seeks to homogenize the rich ethnic and linguistic diversity. Islam was posited as the post-ethnic unifying nationalism at the core of Pakistan's raison, since its establishment in 1947. This was done to create an identity rate able at 80 percent pluralistic and 20 percent singular encompassing all ethnic groups. The approach however has had the tendency of over admitting non-Punjabi ethnic groups with their particular specified languages and cultures into the overarching national identity.

Use of dominant monolithic national identity of Islam and Urdu has also faced resistance from other ethnic groups such as Baloch, Sindhi's and Pashtuns Levesque therefore emphasizes. Non Urdu speakers have raised concerns over the adoption of Urdu as the national language owing to the linguistic diversity in Pakistan. The secession of East Pakistan in 1971 due to the separatist actions which was fueled by the Bengali language movement from 1952 to 1971 depicts how ruthlessly language and culture could be suppressed (Ali et al., 2023). The enduring concerns in Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) indicates that the issues with the national identity of the state has not been resolved, and attempts have not been made to change the status quo.

While the theories of nationalism explain Pakistan's struggles with national integration, there remains limited empirical engagement with how these theoretical frameworks have been operationalized by the state, especially under authoritarian regimes like Musharraf's. For instance, Smith's distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism is frequently referenced (Smith, 1991), but few studies systematically examine how Pakistan's state-led nationalism aligns with or diverges from these models in practice.

The friction resulting from governmental nationalism and ethnic pluralism has intensified in Balochistan and Sindh, where nationalist movements are relentless in contesting the state. The concentration of power in Islamabad alongside the political and economic neglect of peripheral areas fuels a feeling of exclusion and resistance among ethnic minorities, and poses a constant challenge to national integration.

1.9.2 Ethnic and Linguistic Tensions in National Integration

The ethnically plural character of Pakistan is, on the one hand, a blessing, while on the other hand, it poses as obstacle towards fostering national integration. It has the potential of serving as an asset owing to the multicultural setting, but the country has found itself fragmented socially and politically. However, current literature predominantly focuses on descriptive accounts of linguistic suppression and ethnic discontent without critically analyzing how state institutions deliberately instrumentalized language and identity during 1999–2007. For example, Hashmi (2015) and Khokhar et al. (2016) outline marginalization but stop short of connecting these policies to long-term shifts in identity-based resistance narratives.

Khokhar et al. (2016) make the case that the enforcement of Urdu as the sole national language led to the neglect of other regional tongues such as Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, and Seraiki. Such forms of linguistic oppression are straddled within the nexus of culture and politics considering that language is one of the most important markers of identity. The hostility towards the imposition of Urdu in both Sindh and Balochistan stems from socio-historical processes where the local populations view the imposition of state policies as acts of cultural genocide. For example, Sindhi nationalist movements have vehemently contested the erosion of Sindhi language and culture, especially due to the demographic shifts resulting from internal migration and state-sponsored development policies.

Likewise, Hashmi (2015) contextualizes the abrogation of Balochi cultural practices within the framework of General Pervez Musharraf's rule (1999-2007) and is of the view that the policies of his government incited separatist tendencies rather than facilitated cohesion. The increased militarization in Balochistan during this phase, coupled with the neglect of Balochi language and culture, led to increased apathy towards the federal government. At the same time, the Sindhi nationalist movement has also started gaining traction due to opposition from political parties to the imposition of policies aimed at constructing a singular national identity at the expense of regional diversity.

The reinforcement of homogenous identity through state controlled education and media has strengthened ethnic diversity. Currently adopted textbooks and the overarching narrative of the state's history often subsume regional symbols and viewpoints which feature Punjabi and Urdu as the hallmark nations of Pakistan. Such exclusionary practices have made ethnic minorities politically and culturally marginalized within the confines of their purported "country." Rather than enhancing inclusion, the state sponsored re-structuring of identity has deepened cleavages at the national level and thus is one of the obstacles towards integration of the state.

1.9.3. Economic Disparities and Regional Inequalities

Economic disparity and inequality across regions have persisted in Pakistan creating grievance patterns which are based on identity and demanding autonomy from the state (Makki and Akash, 2023). Economically, Pakistan has always been biased towards specific areas such as Punjab and urban Sindh and has ignored the peripheral Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and rural Sindh regions. The centralization of economic resources is evident as the economically neglected regions reinforce the ethnic divisions and policy perception as an exploitative tool rather than an integrative one.

The socio-economic marginalization of these provinces has remained a central factor in driving political movements in Pakistan, which are based on identity. While scholars like Kukreja (2020) and Kabir have highlighted the socio-economic marginalization of provinces like Balochistan and KP, there is a distinct lack of research linking these grievances to the strategic economic planning or lack under Musharraf's regime. Most studies discuss economic disparities in general terms, failing to contextualize how these inequities were deepened by selective development policies post-1999 and how they exacerbated identity-based movements. Ledoux, K. (2020) notes that the Economic Survey of Pakistan of 2001-2007 greatly differs with and the gaps are quite remarkable to an extent that the lowest levels of public investments are in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the highest levels are in Punjab and Sindh.

The extraction of Balochistan's resources is an ever-growing area of concern for the military (Mushtaq and Khan, 2023). Balochistan security, which has a considerable amount of natural assets like natural gas, coal, and other minerals, is one of the poorest regions of the country. Even after the discovery of Sui gas reserves in 1952, which became the backbone of many of Pakistan's Industries and Cities, far too little gas is consumed within Balochistan. Balochistan, with the greatest untapped gas reserves, remains the poorest province, while Balochistan has benefited the least out of it (Ahmed et al., 2020).

Siddiqi in her book *military inc* states (Siddiqi, 2007), "The Pakistan controlled economy has exacerbated regional inequalities by channeling wealth into militarily owned businesses and urbanized Industrial regions of the country," and has further claimed, "The military spends on developed regions and neglects developing parts of the country". Siddiqi, (2007) blames the rising Baloch Nationalism on the severe economic grievances that the indigenous people face, stemming from the belief that the central government has adopted an extractive policy.

Sindh's economy, much like the rest of Pakistan, has been suffering, especially in its agrarian regions. Although Karachi is considered the economic center of Pakistan, the rural areas in Sindh lag in development, suffering from poverty and poor public welfare systems (Hussain et al., 2019). According to Hashmi (2018), Sindhi nationalist movements are fueled by the claims of "rural populations" that their economic policies are aggressively skewed towards the urban elite, alongside the imbalanced Sindh economic opportunity distribution. The National Finance Commission (NFC) Awards have always been very controversial across the many provinces, particularly among the smaller provinces who claim that the formula for revenue allocation to the provinces ignores them and gives preference to Punjab.

For a long period of time, KP and the adjoining Former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have also been neglected from an economic development perspective. These regions and their borders have witnessed continuous wars and hence have seen very little economic investment in their infrastructure, education, and medical facilities. Like many underdeveloped regions, the inadequate economic opportunities created a sense of social unrest, fostering violent extremism, and a forced migration to overpopulated cities where jobs were more readily available. The minimal infrastructural growth within KP has led to higher levels of poverty among Pashtun workers, forcing them to look for work in other countries, regions of Pakistan, or their surrounding provinces which deepens the economic crisis.

1.9.4 Economic Policies under Musharraf

The policies of General Pervez Musharraf were directed at the privatization, infrastructure development, and achievement of macroeconomic stability. During his term, Musharraf's Pakistan witnessed economic growth along with an increase in foreign investment. However, these perks were mostly confined to the developed metros, ignoring the rural and underdeveloped regions. As Ahmad explains, the expansion in the GDP growth rate during Musharraf's rule was accompanied by widespread

poverty as benefits were not equally shared, which further intensified the socio-economic disparity within and across the provinces (Ahmed, 2022).

National Policy for the Development of Balochistan (2005) is one of Musharraf's important economic policies, which sought to redress the economic development challenges of the province. The policy explicitly promised construction of infrastructure and investment in education as well as the creation of employment opportunities (Aslam et al., 2023). However, its implementation was problematic. First, there was no provincial autonomy, and therefore, governance was heavily centralized, which made local self-governance ineffective. Second, the military operations being conducted in Balochistan created socio-political instability, which in turn made the sustenance of economic development efforts almost impossible (Ullah and Akhtar, 2024). Third, in most cases, the development funds were spent on the extractive industries instead of aiding the local population, which made the grievances worse.

Musharraf's privatization policies resulted in the sale of state-owned enterprises to significant investors from Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad. Unfortunately, these enterprises did not generate new jobs in less developed regions (Munir and Naqvi, 2017). The sale of these businesses also did not aid in national integration. The construction of the mega infrastructure project, Gwadar Port, sought to achieve this integration. Local communities in Gwadar, however, viewed these projects as economically benefiting external investors and the federal government rather than them (Khan, 2018). This perception made nationalist Baloch resistance stronger with many believing an economic policy under Musharraf was simply an extract wealth from Balochistan rather than foster inclusive development in Balochistan.

In KP and FATA, the post 9/11 security climate experienced a spike of military presence, counterinsurgency, and a great concentration of Musharraf's counter terrorism focus (Ahmer, 2011). The heavy focus on counter terrorism overshadowed long term development aims as his policies geared more towards countering insurgents. The author builds evidence for his claim that the overwhelming focus of these regions militarized the economy controlled its growth (Pineshawa, 2005). The end result was greater discontentment among Pashtoon people many of whom considered Musharraf's policies concerned those that take advantage of their grievances.

In sum, the economic strategies created during Musharraf's time in office did nothing to remedy the systemic imbalances that have, for a long time, plagued Pakistan's socio-economy. As the country's economic activities expanded, the benefits were not evenly distributed which resulted in a magnification of regional differences and identity-based resentments. The persisting neglect of Balochistan, rural Sindh,

and KP fueled the growth of nationalist and separatist movements, which underscores the importance of adopting a more comprehensive viewpoint towards economic development.

1.9.5 Governance, Federalism, and Political Reforms

Effective governance and federalism are vital in national integration in relations to Pakistan. The governance structure of the country has, by and large, been centralized, concentrating power in the federal government at the expense of provincial self-rule. While the constituting of the country accepted the principle of federalism, it did adopt it in practice as decision-making remained heavily centralized. This in turn created friction between the central government and the smaller provinces. During Musharraf's rule from 1999 to 2008, most of the political reforms were intended to decentralize power but they did not succeed as his local government reforms did not democratize civilian rule and allowed military control over civilian structures. While reforms such as the Local Government Ordinance (2001) were designed to decentralize power, most academic accounts do not critically assess why these reforms failed in practice or how they served to reinforce centralization under the guise of federalism. This creates a gap in understanding the performative aspect of decentralization policies under authoritarian governance, a theme underexplored in current federalism debates.

1.9.6 Centralized Governance and the Role of Federalism

Pakistan's federal structure has been subjected to critique for a long time, especially for its inability to accommodate the multi-ethnic and multi-regional character of the country. It is noted that while there exists a constitutional framework of federalism, it was not practiced by subsequent regimes including Musharraf which believed in central supremacy (Nazir, 2008). Indeed, the set of legislations known as Local Government Ordinance 2001 intended localized self-governance was meant to foster decentralization of governance during the rule of Musharraf. Same as before, these policies ended up being ineffective because the military and bureaucratic grip on politics and decision making did not allow for real power to be handed over to local leaders.

The 17th Amendment (2003) served further to consolidate Musharraf's control, enabling him to disband parliament and place military personnel in important governmental offices (Khan, 2008). Although the amendment was purported as a way to enhance governance, it profoundly undermined democratic institutions and limited provincial self-governance. It is by an author suggests that in Pakistan centralization leads to national unity which has, in the past, marginalized peripheral regions like

Balochistan and Sindh. The absence of a federal system of governance has fueled identity-based movements that seek to assert dominance on the state (Jaffrelot, 2002).

Balochistan is, however, the most important province in the center-periphery resource allocation debates. This province has persistently sought to control its natural wealth and the competency range at decision making levels. Musharraf's policies and nationalist movement's military intervention for trying to austere the rebellion drove more anger. Baloch nationalists were promised development and given nominal political representation while other elites made decisions. These all create a system that makes decisions to continue the marginalization.

1.9.7 The Role of the Military in Governance

The interaction between the army and the civilian government has been one of the most distinctive features of Pakistan's governance (Ullah et al., 2025). During Musharraf's tenure, the military took over the management of the state, which used to be the responsibility of civilian governance structures, and this policy trend never changed thereafter. Their reach encompassed economic control, security matters, and even politics. Such a pattern replicated parts of the former regime of centralism, at the expense of democracy.

The forceful approach taken against the organization of protests and strikes in Balochistan and Sindh is a result of challenges posed by centralized governance. The military operations against Baloch nationalists, such as the violent assassination of Nawab Akbar Bugti in 2006, led to widespread violence and resistance (Jetly, 2012). There were also violent crackdowns on political parties opposing the state in Sindh, which bred anti state violence. The military's involvement in governance resulted in a securitized approach towards assimilation. However, few studies analyze how military-led governance actively shaped identity constructions through suppression, co-optation, or patronage (Khetran, 2011). Existing literature often treats military dominance as a given without unpacking how this dominance altered the state's integration strategy across different ethnic regions, particularly during Musharraf's tenure.

Although Musharraf attempted to portray an image of a moderate and progressive Pakistan on global platforms but neglected the real causes of disunity in the country. The concentration of power, the maligning of the military over civilian space, and the absence of pseudo federalism only fueled antagonistic identities, thus stalling social cohesion in Pakistan.

1.9.8 National Security Policies and Identity-Based Movements

The national security concerns of Pakistan have, in turn, influenced its identity politics, especially with regard to ethnic and regional movements. While Musharraf remained in power, the War on Terror became the driving force behind securitization, which simply meant that policies were put in place to market or sell ethnic identities, which divided the nation even further rather than promoting unity. The focus on counterterrorism and a military style of ruling usually sustained policies that suppressed ethnic nationalism in the Pashtun, Baloch and Sindh regions.

The post 9/11 state of insecurity led to an increased shift in the governance style to a militaristic approach, especially in the regions affected by violence (Akhtar et al., 2021). Khan, (2005) sheds light on how counter terrorism efforts tended to focus more on Pashtun people in KP. The National Security Policy (2005) was formulated with a counter terrorism focus, but at the same time continued to undercut Pashtun's identity through local military operations that injured the economy and displaced large numbers of people.

The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) grew from these security policies as Pashtun communities started to see counter terrorism measures as increasing discrimination. After all, the heavy military presence in KP and the FATA region stirred up ethnic grievances as Pashtun identity was being securitized within state narratives (Iqbal, 2023). It was not policy based on integration, but rather so-called security policies that enhanced ethnic fragmentation and further deepened the perception of nationalism as something imposed instead of cultivated.

Similarly, the stick and carrot approach towards the disturbed areas in and around Balochistan saw an increase in military operations against nationalist groups during the rule of Musharraf (ur Rehman et al., 2022). The Baloch insurgency that was active since the 1970s gained vigor because the counter dissenting operations by state security forces was massive (Ghani, 2024). The assault on Baloch leaders and activists which included systematic abduction and murder created even more resentment against the state. According to Siddiq (2007), a political dialogue would have been more efficient to solve Baloch sensitivity rather than using military force, which made the already existing resentment worse and any later attempts for integration more difficult.

Securitization of political actions among ethnic groups in Sindh advanced fracture lines even further. The crackdowns of Sindhi nationalist organizations, censorship of political activities, and media suppression fostered anger. The military's involvement in the policing of civilian life in the cities,

especially in Karachi, gave further fuel to the allegations of state discrimination against Sindhi political groups. The belief that non-Punjabi ethnic groups were over-represented in the targets of political repression also deepened fragmentation.

The regimes of Musharraf failed to manage national security in a way that dealt with the sources of ethnic conflict. Instead of employing a political solution for the incorporation of these groups, the state preferred the use of force, leading to the perception that national cohesion meant absence of force rather than integration. The enduring consequence of such policies is the proliferation of peripheral nationalism mobilizing against the central state, and the challenge it poses to a state's over reliance on military power for the purpose of nationalism.

1.9.9 Factor-Specific Determinants of Identity Politics in Pakistan

A critical set of structural and institutional factors have driven identity-based contestations in Pakistan, particularly between 1999 and 2007. Among these, political centralization and constitutional imbalance have significantly marginalized peripheral regions. Despite the promise of federalism under the 1973 Constitution, successive governments—particularly military regimes—have often bypassed provincial autonomy through executive ordinances and direct military control. During the Musharraf era, the local government reforms of 2001 restructured administrative powers in a way that weakened the authority of provincial governments (Waseem, 2010). Furthermore, the uneven resource distribution through the National Finance Commission (NFC) Awards exacerbated tensions, with provinces like Balochistan and Sindh arguing that their natural resources were exploited without adequate returns (Ahmed, 2017). These grievances were not only political but also economic in nature, manifesting in recurring calls for restructuring the federation. The erosion of provincial confidence in federal institutions reflects these deeply embedded, factor-specific imbalances.

Adding to these institutional deficits are issues of sociolinguistic marginalization and ethno-bureaucratic domination. The historical privileging of Urdu as the national language—particularly at the cost of regional languages such as Pashto, Sindhi, and Balochi—contributed to a sense of cultural subordination among non-Punjabi ethnic groups (Jabeen et al., 2020). These linguistic hierarchies are embedded in education policies, civil service examinations, and state media, reinforcing perceptions of second-class citizenship. Additionally, the overrepresentation of certain ethnicities—particularly Punjabis—in national institutions such as the military and bureaucracy has further entrenched ethnic disparities (Siddiqi, 2007). These factors have made identity-based mobilization not merely symbolic but

also a struggle for material and institutional parity. Parliamentary records from the early 2000s reflect these debates, particularly during deliberations over the NFC, provincial autonomy, and the 17th Amendment. By institutionalizing inequality, these factor-specific elements have made identity politics a rational response to structural exclusion, rather than merely a cultural reaction.

1.9.10 Consequences of Identity Politics for National Integration

The persistent salience of identity politics has significantly hindered the project of national integration in Pakistan. As ethnic and linguistic groups assert their distinctiveness in opposition to a homogenizing national narrative, the vision of a unified national identity becomes increasingly fragmented. During 1999–2007, these tensions were evident in Baloch, Sindhi, and Pashtun mobilizations demanding cultural recognition, resource control, and political autonomy (Akhtar, 2007; Jetly, 2012). These movements contested the centralized model of the Pakistani state, which many perceived as dominated by Punjab-centric narratives and military control. The state's response—often coercive and dismissive—instead of accommodating regional grievances, fueled further alienation. As a result, integration became less about unity and more about control, leading to a trust deficit between the center and peripheries. National integration, in this context, did not foster inclusion but instead was seen as synonymous with assimilation, eroding voluntary consent to the federal compact.

These tensions also translated into weakened democratic development. The repeated suppression of ethnic dissent through military operations, particularly in Balochistan and FATA, undermined the participatory foundations of governance and fueled insurgent narratives. This militarized approach not only delegitimized democratic processes in the eyes of marginalized communities but also disrupted inter-provincial solidarity. For example, despite being governed by a democratically elected party from Sindh during parts of this era, the state failed to extend support to Baloch nationalist claims, revealing an absence of federal empathy (Rabbani, 2017). Moreover, identity-driven exclusions have had enduring effects on institutional trust. When ethnic identities become the primary basis for political bargaining, meritocratic and rights-based discourses are often sidelined. Thus, instead of acting as a unifying force, the state's selective engagement with identity claims has deepened fragmentation. National integration in Pakistan remains a contested and fragile project, shaped more by contestation than consensus.

1.9.11 Research Gap

There is an extensive body of literature on identity politics, ethnic nationalism, and the formation of the state in Pakistan, but there is an absence of scholarship which relates General Pervez Musharraf's policy framework from 1999 to 2007 and the fragmentation along identity lines. Most of the existing research was either too wide in scope, or did not engage sufficiently with the politics and policies, in particular the economic and security measures undertaken by Musharraf, which shaped integration on a national level during this crucial phase.

While some studies focused on ethnic violence, the imposition of languages, and the persistent historical grievances, very few analyzed how federalism, devolution, and regional economic inequality strived during Musharraf's tenure and fueled identity-based resistance. Scholars either overestimated or completely ignored the impact of the decentralization reform such as the Local Government Ordinance of 2001, and the literature often overlooked the intricate role that regional movements and provincial politics played in challenging state narratives of unity and contesting the portraits of a single nation.

Another neglected aspect pertains to the interplay between national security strategies and identity-based movements. There appears to be a focus on documenting the military operations in Balochistan and counterterrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa without considering how these strategies shaped regional political identities, damaged local governance, and eroded public trust in the legitimacy of the state. The military's securitization of dissent, particularly in areas where there is pronounced ethnic consciousness, was seldom analyzed as a factor in weakening national cohesion.

Additionally, the works of Khan (2005) and Jaffrelot (2002) offered critical perspectives that emphasized the dangers of centralized nationalism. While such critique exists, it is alarming to note the absence of research examining the impacts of such exclusionary policies on the integration of minority identities during the Musharraf regime. The literature also has a tendency to approach Pakistan's identity crisis as a static issue rather than a responsive problem shaped by state policy.

This study focused on the intersections of identity politics, national integration, and authoritarian rule during the Musharraf era, which constitute some of the gaps in existing literature. It examined how centralization practices alongside economic marginalization, linguistic suppression, and militarized governance not only attempted to unify the nation but also deepened regional cleavages and fueled sub-national resistance. In the process, the study enhanced scholarly understanding of identity and its evolving implications for multi-ethnic nation-building in Pakistan.

1.9.12 Conclusion

The reviewed literature has come to the consensus that policies of the state, the socio-economic inequalities, ethnocentric national integration, and the vertical security governance of the country have deeply influenced the identity politics in Pakistan and the subsequent national integration. Despite operating under Musharraf's regime's economic semblance of liberalization and political hyperactivity, the identity problems were never truly resolved. This research intends to extend the available aid through the deeper investigation of Musharraf's policies and his approach toward national integration, thus closing the void in the debate and enabling more clues for the deeply fragmented identity of Pakistan in the future.

Chapter 2

Research Methodology

The research methodology is central to this study as it gives the outline within which the research questions posed are answered and objectives of the study are met. More so, this thesis examines the periods between 1999-2007 in Pakistan with respect to the national integration and identity politics and employs a sequential order in data collection, analysis and interpretation. This is the methodology chapter, where the curriculum design, types of data collection, and other legal issues are addressed, all aimed at ensuring that the data collected is valid and reliable. The research methodology assures that, in the examination of identity politics, these issues are dealt with in a deep and insightful manner to understand how identity based factors influenced the unity of national Pakistan in the given time frame.

2.1 Qualitative Research Approach

This research employed an approach to qualitative study which is ideal in understanding the intricate social aspects like identity politics and national integration. This is different from quantitative research that centers on numbers and their statistical relevance, as this type of research pursues concepts that assist in understanding the motivations, sentiments and emotions that mold human and societal behaviors. It greatly aids in exploration of concepts that are highly personal and entangled within cultural, historical and political environments. Using qualitative methods, the researcher investigates and seeks to understand difference political narratives and the broader socio-political context of every individual to build the complex link between identity politics and national integration.

2.1.1 Importance of Qualitative Methods

These themes, which Identity politics or national integration portray are deep rooted in personal relations and the political factors and history. Thus it becomes apparent that these themes cannot simply be delineated over numbers. Quantitative approaches may assist in tracking trends or patterns, but this method alone will not be sufficient in comprehending the ideologies and emotions that shape policies and political actions. Qualitative research, on the other hand, provides an opportunity to comprehend the intricate factors that advance identity based movements such as the challenges of achieving national integration in pluralistic context.

This study endeavours to seek the micro level's self-perception of identity politics in Pakistan, including the ways different ethnic, religious and regional blocks have dealt with issues of representation and recognition and political domination. It will use interviews, document analysis, and media review to study the relationship between local identities and national integration and the more general socio-political problems that Pakistan faced from 1999 to 2007. The qualitative approach will give a decent, but detailed insight into many of the political dynamics and will help understand the successes and challenges brought upon by attempting to integrate Pakistan's diverse population.

2.2 Research Design

This research uses a **qualitative case study design** of investigation to examine how identity politics and national integration are interrelated. The case study design is appropriate for a phenomenon that is being investigated in real-life settings because it provides a richer understanding of the events, policies, and sociopolitical activities which occurred during the specified time period. With an emphasis on the political history of Pakistan between 1999 and 2007, the case study design captures its unique Identity problems and integration efforts with great detail.

2.2.1 Nature of the Study: Exploratory and Interpretive Research

The study is **exploratory** by its design because it aimed to identify themes and issues that have not received attention in the existing literature. It is also **interpretive**, stressing the subjective meanings and viewpoints of participants and how they viewed the world as well as the socio-political factors that shaped identity politics. This combination makes it possible for the study to relate personal experiences to general political phenomena.

The qualitative case study approach was used in the current research because it helps to understand intricate social problems holistically. When quantitative studies use data and statistics, qualitative studies focus on context and depth. This makes it easier to comprehend how identity politics and national integration works because these issues cut across historical, cultural, and political realities. Rather than being detached from people a phenomenon, the study is interpretive in nature so that the diversity of the stakeholders can be integrated into the topic in an all-encompassing manner.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

For this particular research, both primary and secondary methods of data collection are used to gain deeper and better understanding of the topic.

2.3.1 Primary Data Sources

Official Statements and Reports

Primary data encompasses also policy documents, official statements, and government reports from the given period. Alongside semi-structured interviews, these documents, and government reports are integral to this research's primary data resources. These documents provide an unfiltered access of windows at the state's policy frameworks, political debates, the legislative attempts made in between the years of study (1999-2007).

1. **Government of Pakistan. (2005). "National Policy for the Development of Balochistan."** This document outlines the strategies for addressing the grievances of Baloch nationalists, including economic development, political empowerment, and administrative autonomy.
2. **Musharraf, P. (2002). "Address to the Nation on National Integration."** This speech outlines the government's view on the importance of national integration and unity amidst the challenges posed by ethnic and regional identity politics.
3. **Ministry of Finance. (2001-2007). "Economic Survey of Pakistan."** This annual report provides data on Pakistan's economic performance, including development programs in marginalized regions that are key to national integration efforts.
4. **Ministry of Interior. (2005). "National Security Policy."** This document includes the government's approach to countering extremism, which is closely linked to identity politics and national unity.
5. **National Assembly of Pakistan. (2003). "Debates on the 17th Amendment."** This legislative record provides insight into the political discussions surrounding federalism, regional autonomy, and integration in Pakistan.
6. **Government of Pakistan. (2006). "Report on the Status of Minorities in Pakistan."** This report focuses on the condition of minority groups in Pakistan, shedding light on the state's policies regarding inclusion and exclusion based on religious and ethnic identities.

By adding these documents into the mix, the study does not just incorporate the set policies or initiatives of the state but ensures that the analysis is corroborated to credible documents, thus providing depth and credibility to the results.

2.3.2 Secondary Data Sources

Historical Documents

To provide context to the research findings, it is important to analyze government records, official reports, and policy documents from 1999 to 2007. This helps in constructing a history of the major political and administrative decisions made regarding identity politics and integration practices during Musharraf's rule.

Academic Literature

In order to place the research in the context of available knowledge, a collection of books, journal articles, and academic writings is reviewed. The review highlights important topics such as the effect of regionalism, ethnic conflicts, and the impact of the state policies on national integration.

Media Analysis

From 1997 to 2008, this paper analyzed newspapers, magazines, and electronic media for public discourse, public opinion and socio-political events that shaped identity politics and national integration. Media analysis sheds light on how the various segments of society dealt with identity and the issues surrounding it.

2.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To collect the most relevant, rich and detail oriented data, the research adheres to the following criteria of inclusion and exclusion:

2.4.1 Inclusion Criteria

- Official government documents, reports, and policy papers published between 1999 and 2007 and onwards, particularly those related to national integration, language policy, decentralization, federalism, security, and ethnic governance.
- Academic publications (journal articles, books, dissertations) from the fields of political science, sociology, international relations, and South Asian studies that analyze identity, nationalism, or integration in Pakistan with specific reference to the Musharraf period.

- Media coverage and newspaper archives (both national and international) that report on ethnic tensions, regional movements, civil-military relations, and integration efforts during the Musharraf era.
- Reports by international organizations and NGOs, including human rights and development organizations that document socio-political developments and identity-based grievances in Pakistan from 1999 to 2007 and onwards.

2.4.2 Exclusion Criteria

- Documents, articles, or reports unrelated to the period of 1999–2007, unless they provided essential historical context for understanding developments during Musharraf’s regime.
- Publications that focused exclusively on non-Pakistani contexts, or treated identity and integration themes in general theoretical terms without empirical reference to Pakistan.
- Data sources that lacked verifiability, academic credibility, or objectivity, such as anonymous blog posts, politically biased commentaries, or unverifiable social media content.
- Documents written in languages not accessible to the researcher and for which accurate translations could not be obtained.

Application of strict inclusion and exclusion criteria guarantees that the collected data is efficient and current while also being trustworthy and informative of the different sides of the issue being studied.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study employs an integrated framework consisting of Social Identity Theory, Securitization Theory, and a more general Constructivist Approach to examine the intricacies of national integration and geopolitics in Pakistan. These perspectives collectively aid in explaining the historically fragmented ethnolinguistic and religious demographics of Pakistan in relation to the unified national identity the state has sought to construct. With this approach, it is possible to comprehend the underlying factors contributing to the chronic discord, intrastate conflict, and recurring instability that marked Pakistan during Musharraf’s rule (1999–2007).

The SIT or Social Identity Theory developed by (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) offers a key explanation for international relations and identity development. As per this theory, people base their self-concept on their perceived membership in certain social groups. They strive to uphold positive inter-group

comparisons, or in SIT terms, positive group distinctiveness. In the case of Pakistan, SIT helps elucidate how ethnic groups, namely, the Baloch, Sindhi's, Pashtuns, and Punjabis self-identify in relation not only amongst each other but also with the central state identity. Attempts by successive Pakistani administrations to forge a singular cohesive national identity, primarily rooted in Islamic nationalism or Urdu linguistic supremacy, have paradoxically deepened group identity divisions and perceptions of marginalization. Fractured minority groups feel more endangered as the threat to their identity markers such as language, culture, and regional self-governance heightens. This in turn fuels conflict as their counter-identity markers become more resistant, leading to further political fragmentation.

Securitization Theory, developed by (Buzan et al., 1998), adds an additional layer to the existing framework. This theory explains how specific phenomena are elevated to the status of 'problems' which provoke extraordinary responses beyond politics—emergency actions taken for survival. Within the socio-political context of Pakistan, identity-related issues and demands for regional autonomy have historically been portrayed as security challenges by state agencies, especially the military and the federal government. Ethnic nationalism in regions such as Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is frequently labeled as secessionist, insurgent, or terrorism-associated endeavors. Therefore, the state's severe military and non-violent responses are legally justified through a security framework. This process of securitization stifles political discourse and further estranges ethnic groups, deepening the divisions and exacerbating the grievances the state purports to address.

Both theories are based on the broader Constructivist approach which emphasizes that identities and perceived threats are not fixed or natural realities, but sociologically constructed and contextually fluid phenomena (Wendt, 1992). Constructivism holds that national identities and concepts of threats undergo articulation, sustenance, and transformation through continuous social, political, and historical processes. In Pakistan, the state narrative is constructed through education, mass media, and political discourse, which shapes collective identity perception. Through policy rhetoric and official textbooks, certain identities are systematically labeled as permissible or impermissible, patriotic or separatist, and loyal or rebellious. These narratives contribute significantly to shaping and constraining constructions of identity that both minorities and majorities have about their rightful claim to the nation over time. Therefore, identity transforms into a contested space where socio-cultural aspirations, political grievances, and historical memories intersect and contend.

The integration of Social Identity Theory, Securitization Theory, and Constructivist perspectives into a single framework provides valuable insight into the issue of Pakistan's national integration. Social Identity Theory accounts for the reason groups tend to cherish their distinctiveness. Moreover, it accounts for the reason they tend to have a negative reaction towards any attempt at homogenization. Securitization Theory explains how the Pakistani state escalates identity-based political demands to the level of 'existential' concerns requiring harsh responses which legitimizes oppressive policies and escalates conflict. Constructivism points out that such identities and such threats are not fixed; they can change through discourse, policy, and social dynamics.

This theoretical framework as a whole is instrumentally helpful guiding the inquiry, richly informing the analysis and sustaining it throughout the study. The lens permits the study to focus upon the complex interrelations between state-sponsored policies, identity based ethnic groups, and the politics surrounding them in Pakistan. In this way, this integrated theory framework not only enhances understanding of Pakistan's challenges, both historical and contemporary, but also advances the discourse on identity politics and national integration in multi-ethnic states

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research study based on secondary data drawn from publicly available academic publications, institutional reports, policy documents, and verified digital archives. As such, no direct engagement with human participants was involved, and ethical concerns regarding informed consent, confidentiality, or personal data protection were not applicable. Nonetheless, the research maintained academic integrity by ensuring accurate representation of sources, proper attribution through consistent citation, and avoidance of misinterpretation or data manipulation. Sensitive topics, particularly those related to ethnic identity, political movements, or security responses in Pakistan, were handled with critical neutrality and respect for differing perspectives to uphold objectivity and scholarly responsibility.

2.6 Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this research is related to the overall impact of the scope and depth of the findings. To begin with, the analysis is carried out on a set time frame which has been selected for the study, since from 1999 till 2007 there might have been changes that would have made the integration of national identity politics different around the world. Then again, there are certain regions and purposed participants that are difficult to reach owing to security concerns and reasonable accessibility in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, which might prove effective in refining the sample bias. The most crucial

limitation is that the study is based on a number of secondary materials mostly pertaining to historical texts or media coverage, and hence the data might not be as profound as desired because of its accessibility. Last, while these conclusions are drawn as discoveries in this particular work, it is difficult to ascertain for sure if such conditions will prevail in quite the same manner in other contexts or parts of the world because Pakistani socio-political issues are quite prevalent during the times set for the study. These limitations restrain the scope of the conclusions made in the research and propose avenues for future work.

2.7 Conclusion

To summarize, this chapter of methodology around the challenges of identity politics and the national integration of Pakistan from 1999 to 2007, which were informed by the primary and secondary data sources. This chapter outlined the research methodology employed in this study and stressed how qualitative methods are best suited to investigate the intricacies of identity and integration. In particular, qualitative methods, such as case studies, furnish vivid details of the social, political, and cultural phenomena that contributed to identity-based problems in this particular time frame. Capturing a person's narrative or a region's political disposition or government policies brings to focus the complex nature of these problems, which are oversimplified in quantitative approaches.

CHAPTER 3

Historical Context of Identity Politics in Pakistan

3.1 Formation of Pakistan and Early Challenges

Pakistan became independent in 1947 as a nation of Two-Nation theory for Muslims. The theory suggests that Muslims and Hindus are separate nations entitled to separate regions. Sahbaz (2020) also supports the notion of Two Nation Theory. However, the new country was made up of a patchwork of ethnic groups, cultures, languages and had different identities and goals.

The spread of ethnic groups has its advantages and disadvantages. Pakistan is a country with many ethnicities with different languages, culture and customs. Normally, such variety makes the country richer, but it has also resulted in the rise of tensions and movements with demands for more autonomy and recognition. This bring us to a question, can a national identity that is deeply rooted in religion certainly overpower age old cultural and ethnic divides? The notion was that Islam was meant to be a binding force for the people of Pakistan. The expectation was that with time, people would realize that their religious identity is far more important than their ethnic and linguistic ones. On one hand, Islam is an essential feature of what it means to be Pakistani.

On the other hand, the relationship between religion and ethnic diversity is fluid which nourishes the unity of the nation (Shah et al 2024). The language issue has arguably been one of the most, if not the most contentious problems in the history of Pakistan. Urdu was made a national language in hope of fostering integration, yet it was the first language of only a very small portion of the population. This alienated the Bengali speaking majority in East Pakistan and started the Bengali Language Movement in the 1950s. There was widespread resistance to the establishment of Urdu's official status which led to the horrifying murder of protesters in February.

As per Jabeen et al., (2020) the inability to balance linguistic and cultural concerns led to East Pakistan's secession in 1971, which resulted in the birth of Bangladesh. This period marks a lesson for Pakistan as it focuses on the dangers of ignoring multi-ethnic and multi-religious diversity. As Namahe et al., (2015) argue, a country with such diverse facets needs effective leadership to craft a shared culture. The issue, however, is how enduring such unity can be. It is undisputed that development of the nation

will be achieved when there is unity. The absence of a commonly shared national identity can splinter society and lead to a concentration of rule within a small elite minority that exploits the larger populace. For Pakistan, the challenge is to overcoming these cultural gaps and achieving a shared identity which would result in positive governance. In this regard, Pakistan could pursue various methods in order to foster such unity:

- **Inclusive governance:** All ethnicities and cultures should be politically represented and be part of the decision making process so as to increase the sense of ownership and involvement.
- **Cultural integration:** Encouraging an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences without losing the essence of the overarching shared narratives that exist within the nation.
- **Educational reforms:** Constructing content that promotes sharing of history, national concepts, and emphasizes on unity in diversity.
- **Economic equity:** Alleviating the inequalities of development to address regional grievances and feelings of marginalization.

The history of Pakistan shows how important it is to have inclusion and cultural acknowledgement and have power structures that are more balanced. From the language issue to the Bangladesh separation, the problems of integrating a multiethnic nation are clear. Going forward, Pakistan needs to look back and learn from the past. Closing the linguistic or cultural gap, promoting diversity in leadership, and nurturing a common sense of nationality are not simply ideals Pakistan ought to strive for. These are necessities for a more united and prosperous future.

3.2 The Evolution of Ethnic and Regional Identities

Pakistan emerged from the partition of India in 1947, holding on to the British cultural influences standing as an eclectic mix of several cultures (Ranjan and Sulehria, 2025). The story of Pakistan is not just about colonial influence and partition. After all, this country is a Persian tapestry infused with threads of heritage and tradition cut through centuries, along with the Central Asian conquerors and South Asian craftsmen. This brand new country had its roots in British colonialism but accompanied by centuries of Polish history. From the poetic bazaars of Lahore to the serene valleys of KPK, and the folk Balochi tales to the festive Sindhi culture, Pakistan had always been and still is a fusion of cultures, all contributing to the vibrant culture of the state (Toor, 2005). This cultural evolution is as diverse and intricate as the country's vibrant landscapes.

In the beginning, the culture of Pakistan was the integration of different civilizations which had come to the region. One of the eldest civilizations in the world, the Indus Valley, had great urban planning and craftsmanship. With the Persian Empire came many changes, as the arts and architecture of the region vastly improved, along with more efficient methods of governing (Tahseen et al., 2024). Afterward, the Mauryan Empire brought their philosophies of Buddhism and Jainism, which greatly enhanced the spiritual aspect of the region. Lastly, when the Islamic Caliphate came into power, they completely changed the region with the introduction of Islam and Arabic art.

These ancient cultures have influenced the development of Pakistan in language, architecture, and cooking in depth. The national language, Urdu, is a blend of various languages, including Persian and Arabic (Ahmad, 2022). The national monuments and magnificent mosques are all testimony to the splendor of the nation. These influences strived as a foundation, which further was altered with the events and changes of the coming decades. The cuisine of Pakistan is also a mouthwatering fusion of diverse Cultures.

Pakistani's culture has seen new influences being adopted over the decades as the nation has continued to evolve (Qadir, 2013). Globalization has facilitated this process immensely as it has allowed the division of foreign influences like the West to seep into the clothing and music of Pakistan (Kiani, Mohammad & Soomro 2021). Furthermore, the fashion industry in Pakistan has also witnessed a startling change over the years with the introduction and popularity of fusion styles which merge traditional with modern clothing. This has also been the case for the music industry which now sees a combination of both Eastern and Western styles being adopted with pop, rock, and hip-hop being used alongside traditional qawwali and ghazals.

The context surrounding and within Pakistan has not remained static and has evolved dramatically in the last few years. In this regard Baqi and Ayaz (2024) pinpoint, that the shift in the status of women is one such aspect that is profoundly evident. Women now actively participate in politics, sports, arts and even entrepreneurship. Whether defined in the rural context or the urban spheres, their role is crucial to the development of society. As pointed out by Malik and Wahid (2014) urbanization is indeed one of the other important variables that have changed the lifestyle in Pakistan. The dynamics of cities, the emergence of new commercial multi story buildings, the surge in fast food chains, and the increase in passenger handling public transport systems have redefined the social and culture paradigm. One does not need to be a rocket scientist to point how much contemporary culture has been influenced by technology.

The emergence of smartphones, cascading fast internet, and social media transformation has tilted the axis towards dramatic change in communication, information and entertainment. Through these tech tools, a softer image of Pakistan and its culture can easily be roped in.

Through these evolutions, Pakistan's culture has changed and evolved into something new while also managing to retain its individuality from global influences in today's world. This culture is proof of how rich and deep the culture is within, for it is substantive and changeable at the same time. In today's fast pace era, it has not only managed to uphold its core values but also beautifully showcase the amalgamation of the past with the present.

Pakistan's culture today is a blend of its colorful history along with the complex parts of today's world, redefining what it means to be Pakistani. This unique mixture of the past and the present creates a colorful mix of traditions, languages, art, music, and cuisine that is distinctly Pakistani. The cultural evolution of Pakistan is an incredible feat to say the least. The country has embraced modern influences while staying rooted in its historical traditions. This fusion is also evident in the vigorous qawwali music that has been modified with contemporary rhythms, as well as in the traditional forms of art reinterpreted in modern styles. Also Pakistan is home to more than 200 ethnicities, each with their own culture and dialect. Such diversity within a single nation poses a different kind of beauty to explore. Yet, there is an underlying unity—a shared identity that binds the people together.

3.3 Political and Social Movements (1947-1996)

The year was 1947. The British had packed up. They left behind two independent nations in South Asia: India and Pakistan. Both had to start from scratch—new forms of government, a new constitution, a new leadership (Ali, 2017). Everything had to be created. Back then, both nations had the same goal: to become a democracy, but only one succeeded. Pakistan's democracy remained a work in progress (Mukherjee, 2010). Many would say it's beyond saving now. No prime minister has ever completed their term in Pakistan. None. Yet, three generals have ruled for more than 8 years. Stability is possible, just not for civilians. Why has Pakistan's democracy failed? Is there any way to salvage it?

Think of democracy as a house, and what does every house need? A very strong foundation. That's where Pakistan missed the trick. After partition, they adopted an interim constitution. It was based on the 1935 Government of India Act, a colonial law. The actual constitution was in the works. Pakistan's parliament got down to drafting it, but soon problems emerged. One draft was submitted in 1950 by

Liaquat Ali Khan, who was Pakistan's first prime minister. This draft had two main points: equal representation for East and West Pakistan, and Urdu as the state language. Both were non-starters. In the East, they had more population than the West, so why should representation be equal? And Urdu was an even bigger numbers. It is narrated that the people in the East spoke Bengali, and for them, Urdu was not acceptable as the state language (Bangash, 2018). So, the first draft was rejected.

The second one was proposed in 1952. This draft called for two houses of Parliament, but the rest remained the same. Once again, it was shut down. Then came a third draft in 1953. It was called the Bogra Formula. This draft allowed seats based on population, so East Pakistan would get 165 seats, and the West would get 135. Seems fair, right? But this draft was not approved either because Pakistan's politics was in turmoil by then.

In 1954, elections were held in East Pakistan. The Muslim League, Muhammad Ali Jinnah's party, was routed. Their chief minister lost his seat. So did every single minister. So, the constitution was shelved again. It took two more years to draft one. Finally, Pakistan's first constitution was adopted in February 1956, and it was enforced the next month (Harrell, 2019). Now, look at the gap. Pakistan was formed in 1947, but the constitution came in 1956. That's a gap of 9 years. India's rulebook was drafted in just under 3 years, and remember, India's constitution is the longest ever. So, Pakistan missed a trick there. Their leaders simply couldn't agree on most things. What would be the state language? How would seats be divided? What rights would minorities get? What form of Islam would be the state religion? All these questions remained unanswered.

And there's a reason why: leadership vacuum. Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the founder of Pakistan. The idea was to create a country based on his vision, but Jinnah died in 1948. A few years later, Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated. So, Pakistan became rudderless (Niaz, 2011). The same goes for their party, the Muslim League. It couldn't play the role of a nation-builder. Most independence parties do that, like the Indian National Congress in India or the African National Congress in South Africa. First, they led freedom movements, then they transformed into political parties. The Muslim League could not do that, especially in East Pakistan. It was very different from the western wing—different geography, more people, different culture, different aspirations. So, Pakistan's democracy was set up to fail. While Oldenburg stated in his book that, better leadership could have contained these differences, but that was never Pakistan's strength either (Oldenburg, 2010).

Anyway, in 1956, the constitution finally came. The next step was a general election. Until then, only provincial and indirect elections were held. No nationwide general election had been organized. Even the constitution could not change that, though. In 1958, Pakistan's president took matters into his hands. That's Iskander Mirza. First, he abrogated the constitution, then he declared martial law. Enter General Ayub Khan, Pakistan's army chief back then. During martial law, he took charge. He became the president of Pakistan. Ayub Khan would rule until the late 1960s. Again, no general elections. It was a military dictatorship (Lieven, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2009). So, why did he give up power? Well, in 1965, he fought a war with India. He tried to take the whole of Kashmir, but Ayub Khan lost. Plus, young Pakistanis were growing agitated. They were fed up with military rule. So, in 1969, he resigned, and the next year came general elections—Pakistan's first since independence. Look at how long it took—23 years to hold the first nationwide general election. By then, India had completed four. The 1970 polls came with a surprise (Cohen, 2005).

In West Pakistan, the Pakistan People's Party won. Its leader was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He was allied with the army. But in the East, it was Awami League all the way. They had the numbers to form the government, not just in the East, but for the whole country. They had the numbers, but Bhutto and the army had other plans. Pakistan's army tried to crush dissent in the East. India intervened, and Bangladesh was born (Haqqani, 2005). So, the Pakistan army was beaten and shamed. It was the perfect chance for Bhutto. He could have taken the country in a different direction, built a strong culture of civilian rule, but he did not.

In 1977, elections were held again. Bhutto's PPP on one side, a coalition of nine parties on the other. The PPP swept the election, but the opposition cried foul. They protested. They said the voting was rigged. So, Bhutto went to the army, and he declared martial law. He got opposition leaders arrested and, once again, gave the Pakistan army an in. Big mistake. Because in 1977, the same army staged another coup, and two years later, Bhutto was tried and executed (Talbot, 2009).

What happened in the 70s was a repeat of the 50s. Civilian leaders had the perfect chance, but they failed. And their failure allowed the army to capitalize. Back to our story now. The new dictator in Pakistan was General Zia-ul-Haq. He ruled until his death in 1988. After that, more elections followed. This time, the army had a different role: that of an orchestrator. The generals would stay behind the scenes, but their picks would win the election. That's how Nawaz Sharif first came to power. And since then, we've seen one more coup when Pervez Musharraf ousted Sharif. After that, it's been back to orchestrate-a-mode.

This short history tells you why Pakistan's democracy failed. You can divide it into three reasons. One: the weak foundation. Most democracies function because of rules and traditions, and for that, you need a constitution. Pakistan was late in getting there.

3.4 Prelude to the Study Period

3.4.1 Overview of the Political Landscape Leading Up to 1997

The period leading up to 1997 in Pakistan was characterized by political instability, power struggles, and fragile democratic structures. This era witnessed an oscillation between military regimes and civilian governments, each leaving lasting impacts on the nation's socio-political fabric. Following the death of General Zia-ul-Haq in 1988, Pakistan embarked on a renewed attempt at democracy under civilian rule. However, the power dynamics between the military, judiciary, and elected leaders remained deeply imbalanced, significantly weakening democratic institutions.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the emergence of two dominant political parties: the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), led by Benazir Bhutto, and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), led by Nawaz Sharif. Both leaders alternated in power during this time, yet their administrations were marred by corruption allegations, weak governance, and a lack of focus on national integration. This political dysfunction further alienated already marginalized groups in smaller provinces, as federal governments often concentrated their focus on Punjab, the most politically influential province.

Additionally, the decade preceding 1997 witnessed the rise of ethnic and sectarian violence, particularly in urban centers like Karachi. The Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) emerged in the 1980s as a voice for the Urdu-speaking migrant population but became embroiled in violent confrontations with state forces and other ethnic groups. In Balochistan and Sindh, nationalist movements gained momentum, highlighting long-standing grievances about resource exploitation, political marginalization, and cultural suppression (Ullah & Akhtar, 2024).

By 1997, Pakistan's political landscape was defined by its entrenched elite politics, weak state institutions, and persistent military influence. Despite attempts at democratic governance, the political system was plagued by systemic inefficiencies, with little progress in addressing the root causes of identity-based tensions.

3.5 Historical Grievances and Their Role in Shaping Identity Politics

Historical grievances in Pakistan played a crucial role in shaping identity politics, as various ethnic and regional groups felt excluded from political power and national decision-making processes. These grievances date back to the early years of Pakistan's formation and have been fueled by policies that favored certain regions or ethnic groups over others.

Linguistic Disputes: The imposition of Urdu as the national language in a linguistically diverse country created tensions, particularly in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The Bengali-speaking majority opposed the central government's decision to prioritize Urdu, leading to widespread protests and contributing to the eventual secession of East Pakistan in 1971 (Shah et al., 2024). Similar linguistic issues persisted in other provinces, such as Sindh and Balochistan, where regional languages like Sindhi, Balochi, and Pashto were often sidelined in favor of Urdu.

Economic Inequalities: The economic policies of successive governments exacerbated regional disparities, with Punjab and, to some extent, Sindh receiving more significant federal investment compared to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Balochistan. This uneven distribution of resources and development opportunities fueled resentment among smaller provinces, which felt exploited for their natural wealth but ignored in terms of socio-economic upliftment (Cohen, 2004).

Military Influence and Political Suppression: The repeated interventions of the military in civilian governance further compounded grievances, particularly in provinces like Balochistan, where military operations were conducted to suppress nationalist movements. These actions were perceived as violations of provincial autonomy and intensified feelings of alienation. The military's dominance also marginalized political voices advocating for greater regional representation, reinforcing the belief that the state prioritized security concerns over equitable governance (Rizvi, 2013).

Religious and Sectarian Divisions: The period of Zia-ul-Haq (1977–1988) saw the simultaneous rise of identity politics and religious nationalism where ethnicity and religion were actively employed in the promotion of sectarianism. Zia-ul-Haq's administrative decisions institutionalized Islamization and favored Sunni interpretations of Islam at the state level, which evidently worsened the existing Shia, Ahmadi and Hindu sectarian divides by sponsoring anti-sectarian violence at a large scale. That led to Hindus, Sikhs and even Shia Muslims being actively persecuted virulently for what was labeled Islamophobia and shifted the identity politics debate forever (Shaikh, 2009).

Ethnic and Cultural Suppression: From 1955 onwards, the One Unit policy that aimed to politically dominate the other weaker provinces of Pakistan led to serious cultural and ethnic suppression, which remains to be the primary root cause of the frequently ignored muted identity debates within Pakistan. This set an inflammable context in Sindh and Balochistan and triggered ultra-nationalism as the new leaders from those areas sought redress and political recognition to their unique identities (Rabbani, 2017).

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion these historical grievances instilled and fueled the fragmented political landscape of Pakistan post 1997. This political marginalization of previously dominant groups provided space for powerless groups to advocate for their rights. This powerful tool of identity politics continued whether it was through Nationalist movements in Balochistan, ethnic movements in Sindh or sectarian tirades in KPK which unfortunately shifted the political balance of Pakistan into a huge mess and remained so through the entire study period.

CHAPTER 4

Identity Politics and National Integration (1997- 2008)

4.1 Political Landscape of Pakistan (1997-2008)

The time period between 1997 and 2008 is one of the most violent in Pakistan's history as it was marked by a complex relationship of internal political movements, regional wars, and international security issues. This timeframe was marked by terror and violence in Pakistan and as it slowly started to recover and stabilize, one of the institutions that remained relatively powerful during these times was the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The Inter-Service Intelligence is one of the agencies which leads and advances the security of the nation and during these times the perception around the agency was highly mixed, like it was greatly feared while also being seen as a strong protector.

4.1.1 The Role of the Agencies in the Political Landscape

The agency has always been deeply intertwined in Pakistan's defense system and has helped foster both political and security concerns the nation's inaugurated with. Its role became particularly evident in the Afghan Soviet war when the agency, in coordination with the CIA provided ammunition and training to Afghan Mujahedeen. This strategy, while crucial for countering Soviet influence, laid the groundwork for the creation of a network of militant groups that would later challenge the stability of the region (Rashid, 2008).

By the mid-1990s, the intelligence agency's influence extended to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which provided a buffer against Indian influence and ensured a friendly neighbor to Pakistan's west. However, the events following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks dramatically altered Pakistan's role. The U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent overthrow of the Taliban forced Islamabad to recalibrate its foreign policy. Officially, Pakistan distanced itself from the Taliban, aligning with U.S. interests under the leadership of General Pervez Musharraf. Yet, allegations of covert agency support for the Taliban persisted, with critics accusing the agency of fostering instability to maintain strategic depth in Afghanistan (Fair, 2014).

4.1.2 Internal Dynamics and the Agency's Influence

Domestically, the agency was deeply entwined in Pakistan's political system, often accused of meddling in elections, orchestrating abductions, and silencing dissenting voices. Opponents of the agency

claimed it acted as a shadow government, undermining democratic institutions to ensure that military and establishment interests remained paramount. Reports suggested that the agency played a role in shaping electoral outcomes, supporting certain political parties over others to maintain favorable alignments (Shafqat, 1998).

However, defenders of the agency argued that its actions were necessary for safeguarding Pakistan's sovereignty in a volatile geopolitical environment. The agency's proponents emphasized its success in countering Indian influence in the region and addressing internal security threats. The agency's composition, primarily drawn from serving military officers, made it one of the most disciplined intelligence agencies globally, operating firmly within the directives of the state (Rizvi, 2000).

4.1.3 Regional Repercussions and Accusations

The agency's actions were not confined to Pakistan's borders. Neighboring India and Afghanistan consistently accused the agency of supporting insurgent groups and fomenting violence. It has been observed that the agency had more influence in the Indian regions which were clearly marked with separatist agendas and support from Kashmir. On the other hand, Afghanistan made accusations towards the agency for aiding and abetting the Taliban throughout the civil war and subsequently, peace attempts (Kapur, 2011).

Notwithstanding these accusations, the intelligence agency worked under enormous strain during this time, trying to juggle competing objectives. The United States, on the one side, expected absolute collaboration in the campaign against terrorism. And on the other side, there are powerful domestic and regional players which Pakistan had to use to advance its national interests. This was inscribed in the extremely careful schedule of priorities and was famously illustrated in General Musharraf's policies after 9/11 where the general tried to ensure the US satisfaction while ameliorating the response from Islamist groups in Pakistan.

4.1.4 Fallout of Agency's Strategies

The policies and strategies that were fostered in this decade by the agency were very expensive. Pakistan sustained an increase in the violence of militants, especially in the northwest frontier province which is a very unstable region. The agency's former instrument, the Taliban, accused Islamabad of treachery, which led to widespread insurgent bombings and deepened destabilization of the country and popular disillusionment about the state's ability to ensure security (Rashid, 2008).

Additionally, the constitutional order of Pakistan was severely affected by the involvement of the intelligence agency. The repeated interruption of democratic systems and the agency's asserted involvement in coups and the silencing of political dissent have hampered the country's democratization processes. At the close of the study period, the country was characterized by an unstable political environment, with weak civilian governments attempting to control a powerful military institution.

4.1.5 Conclusion

The period from 1997 to 2008 highlights the significance of the intelligence agency in the development of Pakistan's politics and security. Diverting the focus of the agency from the more relevant issues of state management strengthened regional imbalances and internal political issues. Pakistan struggled with these issues at this time. There was a relative balance between the international and internal policies that Pakistan was a part of.

4.2 The Impact of Pervez Musharraf's Military Regime on National Integration

Musharraf's reign began in 1999 when he conducted a coup d'état. It came to an end in 2008; this time frame was one of the most critical periods for Pakistan in terms of national integration. Musharraf initiated a plethora of reforms to modernize Pakistan and solve domestic issues, as well as tackle international relations. However, there were many negative consequences to his actions, most notably the expansion of existing fractures in Pakistan. Similarly, there was an erosion of trust that citizens had in the state – especially in the peripheral regions.

4.2.1 Musharraf's Reforms and Modernization Efforts

Musharraf's reign, when he was first appointed the leader of Pakistan, was received positively due to the political instability of the 90s; his rule was described as stabilizing. Throughout his term, 'enlightened moderation' was his mantra, which he used to counter extremism. With the overarching goal of having Pakistan be seen as a progressive, moderate Islamic state, economic reforms, including empowerment of women, were introduced. His introduction of local government in 2001 was a first step toward the decentralization of power (Waseem, 2006). The reason behind these changes was to promote better representation for women, tackle political grievances, and foster less economic disparity between regions.

Pakistan was on a positive trajectory during the early 2000s; the GDP rate was soaring, and the country witnessed some economic growth and stability thanks to Musharraf's policies on top of economic

reforms. Investments in infrastructure, telecommunications, and the banking sector were seen as efforts to integrate neglected regions into the national economy (Zaidi, 2011). However, this economic progress was uneven, with provinces like Punjab benefiting disproportionately compared to Balochistan and Sindh, which reinforced perceptions of systemic inequality.

4.2.2 Rising Ethnic and Regional Tensions

Despite Musharraf's emphasis on modernization, his regime failed to adequately address historical grievances in marginalized provinces. The centralization of power in the military establishment alienated ethnic groups, particularly in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Balochistan conflict became more acute during the regime of Musharraf, with the government paying more attention to the region's natural resources exploitation over any local development and political inclusion. The resentment in the province reached new heights after the killing of a prominent Baloch nationalist figure known as Nawab Akbar Bugti in 2006 (Yusuf, 2013).

A similar development took place when 9/11 event led Musharraf to join the American alliance. The joined forces deeply affected the Pashtun areas. The Aftermath of the military operations against militants in FATA and in the KPK was even worse, as they steadily led to more and more loss of life while hindering the local populace from any progress, leading to even deeper displacement. These military campaigns in combination with no political solution to base the whole issue on harmed national unity while deepened the distrust of the central government among ethnic minorities.

4.2.3 The Role of Military-Centric Governance

Musharraf's military regime also came under fire for its excessive dependence on centralized decision-making at the cost of democratic processes and provincial governments. His local government systems which were aimed at decentralization came under criticism and were viewed as steps taken to weaken modern political parties and reinforce military power (Shafqat, 2007). These changes further destabilized the already weak federal structure of Pakistan, as these reforms were viewed by the provincial leaders as unconstitutional and an attack on their independence.

In addition, Musharraf's suspension of the judiciary in 2007, which led to the Lawyers' Movement, revealed the deepening rift between state and civil societies in Pakistan. The movement which resulted in Musharraf's resignation from the presidency position, was indicative of the escalating schism between the state's actors and the society with tensions at the civil level, to the political level.

4.2.4 Legacy of Musharraf's Regime

At the end of Musharraf's era, Pakistan was grappling with a society greatly divided and polarized, with rising Ethnic and regional conflicts. Although under his regime the country progressed economically and there were efforts to bring change to the government, it was to the detriment of the increasing isolation of the minority provinces and the concentration of power with the military. The attempts at national integration were hampered by decade's old grievances, slow development, and sidelining of large segments of the population through political means.

The period of Musharraf dictatorship is a classic example of the hurdles and issues Pakistan faces with military rule in a multi-ethnic state. Single-handedly dealing with the ethnic clashes by introducing suppression and enforcement of discipline helps in bringing in short-term stability. Ultimately there is a large scale damage to national integration and the existing fissures within the country are made to deepen.

4.3 War on Terror and its Implications

For Pakistan and the United States, the relation between the two powers had been growing with time, but one of the key events that stemmed the issues revolved around the US raid in Abbottabad that took Osama Bin Laden's life (Coll, 2018). US had military bases in the region to counter opposition, while Pakistan was apprehensive of Indian dominance, which made the situation more complex. To add to the mix, both factions had to come to an understanding and deal with a shared malicious force.

US intervention in Afghanistan had resulted in numerous black swan events and terror attacks around the world that Pakistan had to deal with alone (Rashid, 2008). The rise of terrorism has always been negative for Pakistan, causing mass destruction and loss for the country. It had been a serious threat to international peace and stability, and it had to be addressed by joint international efforts. Failure had not been an option in this war. Pakistan had suffered from the blowback effects of over three decades of conflict in Afghanistan, which had brutalized its society and had undermined its security through an increase in incidents of militancy, suicide bombings, IED attacks, etc. (Fair, 2011). Afghan refugee camps along the border had become breeding grounds for terrorism, serving as sanctuaries and safe havens for terrorists. These camps had also contributed to the smuggling of narcotics and weapons, not only into Pakistan but throughout the world (Yusuf & Hasan, 2011).

In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the US, Pakistan had decided to fight this war as an ally of the US. In the modern world, the Pakistan-US relations still stem from their desire to fight

against terrorism, providing aid to one another in the asymmetric warfare. Pakistan had granted the US forces access to use some of its air bases, had shared intelligence, had coordinated operations against terrorists, and had provided logistical support for US forces in Afghanistan. Around 84% of containerized cargo and 40% of fuel requirements for ISAF had passed through Pakistan (Clary, 2015). Pakistan had deployed over 150,000 troops, including nine-plus infantry divisions, and had put in place 438 artillery pieces, 142 tanks, and 80% of Army Aviation assets to fight militancy. Apart from this, it has set up 821 border posts along the Pakistan to Afghanistan frontier while coalition forces had set-up only 112 with the aim to restrain insurgent movement to and from Afghanistan (Siddiqi, 2007; International Crisis Group, 2010). They had enhanced border control by using biometrics and identity cards at the BCPs and had improved border surveillance and cooperation on intelligence with Afghanistan and the United States of America. BCCs had also been established for better coordination.

The aim of these measures had been self-explanatory to deny all Al -Qaeda and Taliban terrorists the territory from which to launch attacks, to stabilize Afghanistan, and to insulate Pakistan from the consequences of a 30 year Afghan civil conflict which had been a source of extremism, terrorism, inflow of heavy weapons, narcotic drugs abuse, and refugees (Jones and Fair, 2010).

Al-Qaeda was the most prominent threat to the US, according to President Obama, and effective cooperation with Pakistan was one of the strategies that formed the building of Al-Qaeda to be disrupted, dismantled, and defeated. The US strategy for Afghanistan had placed much focus on supporting regional deals with Taliban willing to negotiate as well as improvement of governance while simultaneously combating corruption and the drug trade in order to construct an Afghanistan security sector for stability (Bergen, 2011). The United States had also pledged assistance to the Pakistani people in their battle against terrorism while supporting democracy, democratic institutions, and building the economy. Like any other doctrine in the world, this one too had assumption on the ground that economic prosperity would follow political stability which was not the case. It has underlined that it was only viable economy that could change the attitude of the people of Pakistan, and other countries in the region that have been exposed to the extreme nihilistic terrorism of jihadists.

The leadership in Pakistan and Afghanistan acknowledged that a joint military, political and economic strategy could be effective against terrorism (Rashid, 2008). They had sought to work together to settle historical differences and misconceptions. In the fight against terrorism, which Pakistan had widely begun supporting, some measures to counter the publicity of terrorism included having a multi-

national coalition against terrorism (Ahmed, 2020). Terrorists and violence were to be dealt with across the board and there was a general agreement that Pakistan would not permit its territory to be used as a launching pad for terrorist activities against any country. Pakistan had been following a comprehensive strategy that included military, political, and development measures to promote the rule of law, education, political pluralism, economic opportunities, and the rejection of violence (Siddiqa, 2011). To deny new recruits to terrorism,

Pakistan had needed to create economic opportunities. Somebody who did not have a future was more likely to become a suicide terrorist than somebody who had had a chance to earn a graduate degree. The development of tribal areas in the FATA region of Pakistan had enhanced economic opportunities and had weaned away unemployed youth from the appeal of extremists (Javaid and Haq, 2020). Pakistan had firmly responded to the challenges of extremism and militancy, and its commitment to eliminate foreign and local terrorists and extremists from its soil had been unwavering. While Pakistan may have lacked the necessary tools and capabilities, it certainly had not lacked intent, spirit, will, or commitment. Pakistan alone, of course, could not win this war; in fact, no country could win this war alone either. Pakistan had been a diverse victim of terrorism. The country had been subjected to hundreds of suicide attacks against both civilian and military targets (Syed, 2010). In 2007, 59 suicide attacks had been undertaken against Pakistan; in 2008, 54; in 2009, 76; and in 2010, 49. By 2011, there had been 12. Pakistan had suffered 36,000 civilian casualties—36,000 civilians had been killed in suicide attacks since 9/11.

Pakistan had lost or sacrificed 2,740 soldiers, brave soldiers of Pakistan, and another 8,500 had been injured while fighting this war against terrorism. This had been a very heavy price, which Pakistan had paid, and the country had continued to pay until it had won the war (Tellis, 2008). The security forces of Pakistan had inflicted heavy damage on the terrorists, killing and injuring around 18,000 terrorists in operations against them. Several hundred of them, both Al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives, had been apprehended and handed over to the US for interrogation and justice. Pakistan had killed and captured more Al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorists than any other country in the world (Soherwordi et al., 2020). It had made more sacrifices than any other country that had been part of the Coalition forces. As of January 2011, Pakistan had lost, as I said before, 2,740 of its brave soldiers, including 290 officers, which included three-star, two-star, and one-star generals.

One reason for the high mortality rate had been that Pakistan's soldiers had not had proper protective gear and equipment to launch night operations through land or air. Pakistan had hoped that necessary tools such as night vision goggles, helicopters and their spare parts, satellite and radio communication equipment, and intelligence monitoring equipment would be made available to its forces on top priority to fight the adaptive and resilient Al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorists (Tellis, 2008).

Pakistan's anti-terrorism efforts had been acknowledged by the United States. However, some concerns had been expressed, particularly in the media, regarding the presence of Al-Qaeda and Taliban sanctuaries in the FATA region of Pakistan (Imran and Xiaochuan, 2014). Some apprehensions had also been raised regarding cross-border infiltrations and the presence of some Taliban sympathizers within Pakistani society. While these concerns could not be rejected outright, because Pakistan traditionally had many centuries-old tribal areas, these camps had been providing sanctuaries and hideouts for the Taliban and militants from Afghanistan. Quite often, after fighting a war, these militants had returned to rest and recreate in those camps. Therefore, there had been a requirement for these camps to be removed from Pakistani soil and relocated inside Afghanistan.

Pakistan, with the help of the US, had destroyed the backbone of Al-Qaeda in its tribal areas (Gunaratna and Nielsen, 2008). The operations against militants in the Khyber, Bajaur, South Waziristan, and Malakand regions had been highly successful (Khan, 2014). These areas had been cleared and had been held by Pakistan's army since then. The reconstruction of these areas and their transfer to effective civilian control had been a huge undertaking and had certainly been beyond Pakistan's capacity at that time, given its economic difficulties. The rehabilitation and settlement of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) from Malakand, South Waziristan, and other flood-affected regions had posed gigantic challenges, particularly given the financial difficulties faced by Pakistan. Failure to rehabilitate and provide job opportunities to these IDPs and flood-affected people risked losing the initiative and gains so hard-earned by Pakistan's forces. It would also have played into the hands of terrorists and militants.

By the end of December 2010, Pakistan had carried out 772 military operations. These operations had degraded Al-Qaeda and Taliban militants. Their sanctuaries and hideouts had been destroyed, their communication networks had been smashed, and they had been on the run. The question had been how to make those gains sustainable once the drawdown of US forces had begun in July of that year. The worry had been that the problems of governance, mismanagement, corruption, law and order, narcotic trade, and warlords still plagued the Afghan government. A lack of focus on the situation in Afghanistan and

Pakistan's failure to win popular support had limited the effectiveness of efforts. If the United States could not win the support of the people, then any number of bombings would not have changed the ground reality in the region.

The way forward, in my view, had been to stabilize Afghanistan, develop effective, functional, and operational mechanisms for action against Al-Qaeda, Taliban, and other militants, and to establish real-time intelligence sharing between US and Pakistani intelligence agencies. Enhancing surveillance along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border to prevent the flow of weapons, drugs, and the movement of militants, and developing trans-border economic zones to create employment opportunities, had also been essential. There had also been a need for the revival of the agricultural sector in Afghanistan, in particular. The strategy had to be comprehensive, promoting reconciliation and harmony, improving governance, curbing corruption and narcotic trade, encouraging growth and development programs, and building the capacity of the Afghan army and police. The policy should have been to strengthen and empower the Afghan people and government, and then gradually transfer the responsibility to them to take charge of their own affairs.

In the end, I had said that it was most important to build trust in the US-Pakistan relationship and to build common, durable, and strategic values on which it could be based going forward. The timing and nature of talks with the Taliban had to be set by the Afghans, Pakistanis, and Americans working together. These talks had to be transparent to Pakistanis, Afghans, and Americans.

4.4 How the War on Terror shaped identity politics and regional tensions

Pakistan's socio-political environment suffered as a result of the War on Terror (WoT) mounted by the United States after 9/11. Since Pakistan was an allied during the global effort, it had positioned itself at the center of the conflict. This new security environment not only changed the internal security problem in Pakistan, but also aggravated identity politics as well as regional tensions. The WoT caused shifts in political relations, deepened ethnic and sectarian issues, and increased the already existing problems of the neglected areas such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and Balochistan.

4.4.1 Militarization of the Pashtun Belt

A notable side-effect of the War on Terror is the militarization of Pakistan's Pashtun areas, especially during the FATA and KP conflict. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, the US

Government placed heavy demands on Pakistan to assist in their War on Terror, which was implemented in FATA. The Pakistani Army was compelled to undertake a number of operations to eliminate Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants stationed in the regions, which resulted in a great deal of counter extremism operations that led to severe civilian casualties through mass displacement and an alienated Pashtun population (Ahmed, 2013).

Such military campaigns, such as Operation Rah-e-Nijat and Operate Zarb-e-Azb, create an environment of consternation and curtail the integration of these ethnic groups while contributing to the overall social cohesiveness of these regions. Many Pashtuns saw these campaigns as an engagement of force on their communities rather than an action taken towards counter-terrorism, which is why movements such as the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) emerged, which aimed to put a stop to the violence that had leveled their lives while addressing the counter-terrorism policies carried out during these military campaigns and their violations of human rights (Yousaf, 2020).

4.4.2 Sectarianism and Radicalization

In addition to that, the War on Terror was as poignant in deepening the sectarian divides in Pakistan. The State was more interested in monitoring Sunni extremists like TTP in its counterterrorism efforts. Unfortunately, the policies of the state allowed other sectarian groups to thrive, including the more orthodox factions like the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Such tactics in counterterrorism further escalated sectarian violence, especially towards Shias and Hazaras and undermined the credibility of the state with the public to combat terrorism (Abou Zahab & Roy, 2004).

Moreover, the inflow of foreign militants into Pakistan, as well as the establishment of radicalized madrassahs in tribal and urban centers, added fuel to the fire. These developments were a byproduct of Pakistan's earlier policy of supporting militant groups during the Afghan Jihad in the 1980s, which the War on Terror never resolved. The new fault lines created by the radicalization of already marginalized communities, especially in rural areas, further strained Pakistan's already fragile social fabric.

4.4.3 Impact on Balochistan

The most potent impact was felt in Pakistan's biggest and least developed province, Balochistan. The province also faced consequences of the War on Terror. The resource rich region witnessed an increase in militarization by both Pakistan and Afghanistan while the central government focused on increasing tensions with the Baloch nationalist movement. The conflict escalated after the assassination

of Nawab Akbar Bugti in 2006, which many Baloch viewed as a symbol of the state's disregard for their rights and aspirations (Siddiqi, 2012).

The War on Terror cannibalized attention and resources from addressing the longstanding grievances of Balochistan such as the political under representation, economic exploitation, and lack of infrastructure development. However, the state further focused on security and concerns which further alienated the Baloch and fueled their demands for autonomy or secession.

4.4.5 Changing Dynamics of Identity Politics

The War on Terror served to transform identity politics in Pakistan by worsening ethnic and regional divides. The Pashtun and Baloch grievances over militarization and lack of resource allocation as well as political representation rose which challenged the national identity narrative supported by the state. Likewise, the state's over reliance on Islamist rhetoric for justifying their counter terrorism policies blurred the already tentative lines between religion and politics, and thus complicating the secular and plural governance advocacy.

In addition, the movement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from conflict regions to urban areas escalated inter-ethnic conflict. Ethnically divided cities like Karachi, which had already been dealing with Mohajir-Sindhi and Mohajir-Pashtun conflict became more polarized as the newly displaced tried to find shelter and compete for the scarce resources available (Gayer, 2014).

4.4.6 Legacy of the War on Terror

The War on Terror's legacies continue to play a critical role in shaping Pakistan's political sphere. Even though the state has made considerable progress in combating terrorism, the issues of regional imbalance, ethnic grievances, and sectarian fissures still persist. The WOT demonstrated the vulnerability of the federal structure of Pakistan and, in its own way, pointed out the need for significant reforms aimed at fostering national integration and addressing the seat of conflict.

As a whole, the War on Terror was both a challenge as much as it was an avenue for opportunity for Pakistan. While it exposed the gross inadequacies in the equity and inclusiveness of the governing policies, it also accentuated the circumstances ailing the country. Addressing these divisions will require a concerted effort to move beyond militarized solutions and toward policies that prioritize social justice, economic development, and political representation for all citizens.

4.5 Ethnic and Regional Tensions

Around the world, numerous armed insurgent groups are fighting to unite with another country or establish their own independent states. These include significant movements in Nigeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Turkey, Indonesia, and Myanmar, to name just a few (Cunningham, 2013). While we tend to think of these insurgencies as essentially internal affairs, they often have much greater regional and even international effects.

One of the most notable, and yet surprisingly little-known, campaigns is centered on efforts to secure an independent Balochistan. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan lies in South Asia. To its north is Afghanistan. To its east are China and India. And to its south is the Arabian Sea. Iran lies along its western border. At 880,000 square kilometers, or 340,000 square miles, it's the 33rd largest of the 193 members of the UN. The country's population is currently around 220 million. This makes it the fifth most populous country in the world, after China, India, the United States, and Indonesia (World Bank, 2020).

While most Pakistanis are Sunni Muslim, with small Hindu and Christian minorities, the country is made up of various distinct ethnic groups. This includes the Baloch. Speaking a language related to Iranian, they represent around three and a half percent of the population. As a group, they're mainly located in the south and west of the country, where, at least according to official data, they represent a slight majority in Balochistan, the largest but most sparsely populated of Pakistan's four top-level provinces (ICG, 2006).

Additionally, while it's thought that around two-thirds of the Baloch live in Pakistan, around 30 percent live in southeast Iran and south Afghanistan. There are also diaspora communities in Europe and North America. Balochistan has a long history, with the archaeological record showing settlements dating back 9,000 years. Alexander the Great passed through the area in 325 BC. Later, it would come under Arab and then Mongol rule (Harrison, 1981). However, for our purposes, the story really begins in the mid-19th century.

As Persia seized control of west Balochistan, Britain pushed northwards as it extended its growing influence in South Asia. Following the First Afghan War, in 1839, it took direct control of parts of Balochistan. Meanwhile, the region's princely states became vassals of the wider British Indian Empire (Adeel, 2012). In August 1947, imperial India was partitioned. This led to the creation of the new Hindu-

dominated Union of India and the Muslim-majority Dominion of Pakistan, which, in turn, was divided into two parts: West and East Pakistan, the latter of which is now the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

As part of this process, the myriad of princely states across the subcontinent were given the choice between independence and union with India or Pakistan. While most of the states in Balochistan eventually decided to join Pakistan, the largest—the Khanate of Kalat—chose independence. Despite this, in the months that followed, Pakistan put heavy pressure on the Khan to accept unification. Amidst rumors that he'd been looking instead to unite with India, on 27 March 1948, the Khan finally agreed to accede to Pakistan—a controversial decision many Baloch regarded, and still regard, as illegitimate (Bansal, 2008).

In 1955, the Khanate was formally abolished, and the various parts of historic Balochistan were united to form a single administrative unit. From the start, tensions emerged in the region. As well as armed opposition to the territory's incorporation into Pakistan in 1948, there were further uprisings in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Titus & Swidler, 2000). In July 1970, and against the backdrop of growing secessionist sentiment in East Pakistan, the military rulers reconstituted West Pakistan. Balochistan became the largest of the country's four new top-level provinces.

Despite this, yet another major uprising broke out in 1973. This lasted until 1977, when it too was put down. Over the next two and a half decades, tensions appeared to subside. However, in 2005, a new insurgency erupted. Set against the backdrop of the war in neighboring Afghanistan, this time the revolt was driven by a combination of Pakistan's growing military presence in the region and persistent economic underdevelopment (ICG, 2006; Akhtar, 2007).

While semi-arid, Balochistan is resource-rich, with large deposits of gold, copper, gemstones, coal, and oil. Despite this, the sparsely populated province has long been neglected by the central government. Even today, by almost every measure, it's still the least developed and poorest part of the country (Yusuf, 2012). In response to this new outbreak of violence, the Pakistani authorities cracked down hard on anyone suspected of having separatist sympathies.

Although it's unclear just how much public support independence really enjoyed—with some reports suggesting that only a third of the region's inhabitants supported secession—in the years that followed, reports emerged of growing numbers of arrests and disappearances. And while many detainees were eventually released, albeit often after months of torture, thousands more were killed, prompting

widespread condemnation from leading international human rights bodies (Human Rights Watch, 2011). By 2013, international observers were warning about the region's descent into anarchy (UNPO, 2013).

As well as concerns about Pakistan's heavy-handed response to the uprising, there was also growing criticism of the main rebel groups, most notably the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). Having emerged as the largest and best-organized of the various separatist groups, it had been formally recognized as a terrorist organization by the British government as early as 2006 (UK Home Office, 2006). More recently, in 2019, the US State Department also listed it as a terrorist organization (U.S. Department of State, 2019).

4.6 The role of insurgent movements and demands for autonomy

Balochistan remains Pakistan's most undeveloped province. At the same time, it has the lowest literacy rate and the highest infant mortality rate (Baloch & Thoreen, 2015). When the British were leaving India and Pakistan was being founded, Balochistan was an independent state with an independent relationship with Britain, even though it was indirectly ruled by it. When the 1947 partition was near, and it was clear that Pakistan would be founded, Baloch leaders thought that the same way they had their relationship with the British as an independent and autonomous state that relationship would continue later on with Pakistan (Harrison, 1981).

That is what was promised to them—that the relationship between Pakistan and Balochistan would remain as two independent states, more or less. However, Pakistani leaders later reneged on their promises. Shortly after the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the Pakistani army invaded Balochistan to forcibly annex it (Bansal, 2008). Balochistan never wanted to be a part of Pakistan; it was forced to become part of it. It was much later that Balochistan was given the full status of a province. Before that, it was ruled directly by the Governor-General of Pakistan under a sort of colonial rule. Later, it was made a province of Pakistan (Titus & Swidler, 2000).

Baloch nationalists have different agendas. They do have provincial rights, as do the other provinces of Pakistan. However, in practice, the central state and the army have always treated Balochistan as a colony and not as a proper part of the federation, as promised in the constitution (Akhtar, 2007). There are various strands of nationalism in Balochistan. Some are separatists who want complete independence from Pakistan. Others are federalists who want to remain part of Pakistan but demand provincial rights and full constitutional entitlements, as enjoyed by other provinces (Wirsing, 2008).

Unfortunately, there is not much unity among the nationalist groups. However, one key concern for the Pakistani public is that the country's largest province, in terms of size, provides some of its most critical resources, such as natural gas. Despite this, the profits and benefits of these resources are not shared with Balochistan. While most households in Sindh and Punjab have access to gas in their kitchens, many people in Balochistan still rely on coal and wood for cooking. This stark disparity fuels resentment (International Crisis Group, 2006).

Historically, Balochistan was forcibly incorporated into Pakistan, and every time the people of Balochistan demanded their rights, they were met with force and contempt (Baloch, 2013). In the 1970s, during Pakistan's first elections, a progressive government came to power in Balochistan. However, it was overthrown, and a military operation was launched for five years in collaboration with Iran (Bansal, 2008).

The international context also complicates Balochistan's situation. The region is divided between Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. Iran opposes any movement toward Baloch autonomy or independence because empowered Baloch in Pakistan could inspire Baloch in Iran (Ehtisham & Butt, 2015). This is similar to the dynamics with Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. China, on the other hand, has economic interests in the region. The Gwadar port is a critical access point for China to Middle Eastern shipping routes and oil markets. China wants Gwadar connected to its mainland to reduce dependence on more expensive shipping routes like Hong Kong (Small, 2015).

Sympathy for the Baloch cause within Pakistan is limited. One reason is a lack of awareness due to the sensitive nature of the issue. There is a significant media blackout on reporting about Balochistan, and journalists are discouraged, even warned, against speaking on the topic. Public discourse about Balochistan is suppressed, and this has resulted in limited support or solidarity for the Baloch cause among people in other provinces (Yousaf, 2018).

Ironically, when weaker provinces like Sindh have had the opportunity to govern, they have not supported Balochistan. For instance, in the 1970s, the Pakistan People's Party, a democratic government from Sindh, overthrew another democratic government in Balochistan. This lack of solidarity among exploited provinces has historically weakened democracy in Pakistan and further marginalized the people of Balochistan (Titus & Swidler, 2000).

4.7 Role of Political Parties and Leadership

Political parties and leadership have been instrumental in shaping identity politics and the national integration of Pakistan. The conflict of interest contained within the national and regional parties and leaders, including the house of leadership themselves and the political party allegiance structures has all caused a unique political phenomenon where there is an identity based political geography. From their ideological beginnings, and even to the new derived strategies, political parties have greatly impacted the articulation and contestation of ethnic, linguistic and regional identities in Pakistan.

4.7.1 Party Politics and Their Impact on Identity

The creation and growth of political parties in Pakistan has also been a reflection of her ethnic composition and regional distribution. Diversification of parties sometimes tends to serve the interest of particular groups, enhancing identity based fragmentation rather than promoting integration. Take, for example, the Awami League in East Pakistan before 1971, the Balochistan National Party (BNP), and Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP) . All of them worked hand in glove with and for the ethnic groups that constituted them.

These groups advocated for the voiceless communities, but such representation paradoxically exacerbated a culture of politics of fragmentation. The politics of identity shifted the grievances towards the address of a national character to exclusive national platforms, which often resulted in political mobilization. Such developments often emerged out of the center – province dynamics, where the provincial leadership accused the federal government of significant regional coercive measures in place of dialogue and accommodation (Yusuf, 2019).

In comparison, the PML and PPP attempted to position themselves as national parties. In practice, however, they tended to serve the interests of certain ethnic groups or regions. For example, the PPP, as a national party, has usually been very popular in Sindh, where politics is often conducted using a Sindhi identity narrative. The same story can be told about the PML-N, which in spite of claiming to be a national party, had most of its strength in Punjab. The increased regional presence of national parties caused further fragmentation of identity politics as the smaller provinces became politically marginalized and disempowered.

4.8 Regional Parties vs. National Parties

National and regional parties are important to note as they have both shaped the political landscape in Pakistan. Parties like the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and the Balochistan National Party (BNP) emerged to represent specific regional concerns and spearhead movements for greater provincial autonomy. For example, the MQM was originally formed to address the needs of the Urdu-speaking Mohajir community, centering on urban governance, employment opportunities, and Sindh's ethnic politics. On the contrary, the BNP was actively focused on the exploitation of Balochistan's natural resources, and sought to increase the control of the province over political and economic issues (Siddiqi, 2012).

The regional political parties have served an important purpose of marginalizing the demands of contested societies. However, they have been charged with deepening ethnic divides as well. Their language often established politics in a zero-sum framework, setting one group's interests against another's, and making it difficult to forge a single national identity.

National parties, in theory, have the potential to serve as platforms for integrating diverse identities. However, in practice, their inability to address regional disparities and their perceived favoritism toward specific provinces have limited their effectiveness. For example, during the Musharraf era (1999–2008), the central government's policies, heavily influenced by the PML-Q, were viewed as disproportionately benefiting Punjab, which fueled resentment in smaller provinces (Malik, 2020).

4.8.1 Leadership and the Question of National Integration

Pakistan has undergone a pattern of leadership which lacks insight and is volatile in nature with regards to unification. Leaders such as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, despite their initial popularity, often resorted to identity-based politics to secure electoral gains. For example, nationalization by Bhutto in the 1970s was loathed in Sindh and Balochistan because it was supposed to foster local economies and further enhance Punjabi hegemony. The same goes for Nawaz Sharif as his concentration on Planning Punjab focused development projects in his rule made him unpopular outside Punjab (Shah, 2014) and so he lost votes from voters who resided outside Punjab as well.

On the other hand, some leaders indeed took steps to unify the country Benazir Bhutto while being the Prime Minister, tried to cultivate better relationships with the lesser provinces by appealing to give

more power and representation. But, she faced massive challenges because of political opposition from strongholds like the military and bureaucratic institutions which made her objectives extremely difficult.

4.8.2 Political Polarization and Identity Politics

The political polarization in Pakistan has made the issues of identity more complicated to deal with. The competition between the two main parties, the PPP and the PML-N, has often overshadowed the meaningful discussion on national integration. Instead of seeking cooperation to deal with problems of regional inequality and ethnic strife, political leaders have often engaged in splitting blame and playing populist rhetoric, which has further deepened the divides.

In addition, the trust in democratic processes has been eroded even further by the manipulation of political parties by external factors such as the military and intelligence agencies. The military's backing of certain parties, for example, the PML-Q during the Musharraf regime, had often silenced the opposition and fostered a feeling of disempowerment among the already marginalized groups (Rizvi, 2013).

The interaction between identity politics and national integration is rather intricate, and the politics of party system and leadership in Pakistan shows how this is the case. Political parties have sought to cater to the interests of sidelined groups, but their support has, more often than not, come at the expense of the creation of a national unity. Leadership too has been more concerned with the immediate advantages of political battles than the ultimate need to foster national integration. Now it will call for political parties and political leaders to think through this problem of identity politics and focusing on inclusion rather than these prejudices within a more equitable governance.

4.9 Government Policies on National Integration

The ethnically and linguistically diverse nature of Pakistan has complicated integration. Attempts in the past to implement policies have not yielded desired results due in part to some policies failing to address divisive issues among the communities and others deepening their divides.

4.9.1 Initiatives Aimed at Fostering Unity

Attempting to strengthen integration, there have been some government policies and programs introduced with a focus on integration and addressing economic imbalances between the regions, allowing for sharing of national resources and economic wellbeing.

1. The 1973 Constitution

The attempt to integrate the national framework to the unitary structure should be defined within the boundaries of the 1973 constitution. It attempted on the one side to provide the center and the provinces balanced share of power, defining Pakistan into a federal state with provincial power. Regional languages were also permitted by the constitution to be used as medium of instruction at the provincial level to alleviate language diversity whilst declaring Urdu the national language (Mitru et al, 2021). These tensions could have been mitigated if the power decentralization was effective.

2. National Finance Commission (NFC) Award

The purpose of the NFC Award was to facilitate the systematic transfer of financial resources from the federal government to the provinces. The seventh NFC's revenue award in 2009 marked a paradigm change where the provincial share of revenue was increased, and funds were allocated on the basis of several additional qualifiers, such as population, poverty and backwardness. This policy was designed to mitigate the grievances of the relatively backward provinces like Balochistan and Sindh (Rumi, 2019).

3. Education and Cultural Policies

Several governments have significantly employed education and cultural policies for building national cohesion. In particular, the setting up of a national school with a standard curriculum that teaches common history was designed to foster unity. Additionally, the National Internship Program (NIP) was also set up so that the youth from diverse provinces could engage and interact at the National level (Shah, 2014).

4. Development Projects in Underserved Regions

The federal government has mostly started development projects in less developed regions in an attempt to foster economic development and integration. For example, during the Musharaf regime investment in the development of Gwadar port and other infrastructure in Balochistan was one of the major focuses for the government. Such efforts were aimed at ensuring that the people stricken with decades of deprivation and marginalization in these regions would begin to address the neglect and marginalization (Malik, 2020).

4.9.2 Failures of Integration Policies

In the face of these attempts, government policies have been unable to meet their targets due to multiple structural and operational issues

1. Centralization of Power

While the 1973 Constitution promised provincial autonomy, subsequent civilian and military governments always undermined this principle through the centralization of power. For example, the Musharraf regime, while paying lip service to devolution through local government reforms was responsible for bypassing provincial authorities and consolidating federal control. This further strengthened the sense alienation of these smaller provinces and has done nothing but deepened the mistrust towards the federal government (Rizvi, 2013)

2. Economic Disparities

Even with the wide-reaching initiatives like the NFC Award, economic inequalities especially among the provinces abound and has done nothing but foster resentment. Balochistan, in particular, continued to face under development and exploitation of its natural resources, leading to demands for greater autonomy and control over local resources. The lack of tangible benefits from federal projects, such as Gwadar, further exacerbated these grievances (Yusuf, 2019).

3. Language Policies

Language has been a contentious issue in Pakistan's integration efforts. The imposition of Urdu as the national language, while fostering a sense of unity, marginalized other linguistic communities, particularly in Sindh and Balochistan. The lack of representation for regional languages in education and government institutions further alienated non-Urdu-speaking populations (Rahman, 2015).

4. Coercive Policies

Successive governments often relied on coercive measures to address regional discontent, particularly in Balochistan and the tribal areas. Military operations, forced disappearances, and suppression of dissent became common practices, undermining trust between the state and its citizens. These measures not only failed to address grievances but also intensified anti-state sentiments (Shah, 2014).

4.10 Successes in Integration Policies

While the failures of government policies often overshadow their successes, certain initiatives have made positive contributions to national integration:

1. 18th Amendment to the Constitution

Passed in 2010, the 18th Amendment marked a significant step toward decentralization by enhancing provincial autonomy and devolving key responsibilities to the provinces. This amendment addressed some long-standing grievances of smaller provinces and was widely regarded as a move toward a more inclusive federal structure.

2. Role of Education in Promoting Unity

Although, single national curriculum based on more or less accurate but shared historical accounts has been promoted, especially among the younger generation for its unity building attributes, has drawn criticism for its over the top focus on inconsistencies. Inter-provincial culture exchange programs aimed at increasing understanding and respect among different communities has fostered (Rumi, 2019).

3. Development in FATA and KP

The unification of the FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) was one of the decisions taken to nullify stigma attached to the tribal areas. This initiative was taken to address the underrepresentation of people in the region, lack of political representation, as well as poverty and access to other social indicators like education. (Malik, 2020)

4.11 Conclusion

In the end, there are both wins and losses in the governance in regards to national integration in Pakistan. The most notable are the NFC Award, 18th Amendment, and specific development policy which were undertaken. All this is the product of lack of decentralization, economic and social segregation, and forceful tactics. For the future, there must be willingness to embrace the fundamental change needed in the allocation of power, resources, and development approach for achieving oneness and resolving constant setbacks to Pakistan state integration.

CHAPTER 5

Socio-Economic Dimensions of Identity Crisis

5.1 Economic Disparities and Regional Inequalities

In Pakistan, the process of national integration has persistently been affected by the economic disparity wealth distribution inequality as well as gaps between regions. Certain ethnic groups and provinces have come to feel a strong perception of deprivation because of the unequal distribution of development resources and the biases of development. This has not only stultified overall national unity, but has also led to the proliferation of identity concerns movements, which in itself, plays a crucial part in the political and social fragmentation. To appreciate the magnitude of this problem, one has to ask how development is wrongly distributed, how allocation policies affect regions and the cost of such policies in terms of regional identity.

5.1.1 Uneven Development across Provinces

The economic development of Pakistan has always been, and still is, focused on a few key regions that led to the emergence of Punjab as the biggest winner in development. This economic position of Punjab has its roots in colonial times as it had great agricultural potential, ample resources, and its geographic location was suitable for infrastructure development such as roads, railways, schools, and hospitals. This infrastructure development was further appreciated after independence when, in 1947, policies focused on industrialization and infrastructure building were introduced. For instance, Punjab's extensive canal system and fertile lands facilitated the Green Revolution of the 1960s, which disproportionately benefited the province while leaving other regions, such as Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), relatively underdeveloped (Mansoor, 2025).

Sindh, particularly Karachi, experienced significant industrial growth as the financial hub of Pakistan. However, the rural areas of Sindh have lagged far behind, with poor access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Similarly, Baluchistan, despite being the largest province by land area and rich in natural resources such as gas, coal, and minerals, remains the least developed region. Baluchistan's literacy rates, healthcare access, and per capita income are among the lowest in the country (Attarwala, 2024). KP, while slightly better off than Baluchistan, faces challenges stemming from decades of neglect in infrastructural investment, exacerbated by its status as a frontline region in the War on Terror.

The disparity in development is further reflected in the Human Development Index (HDI) rankings of Pakistan's provinces. Punjab registers higher HDI scores as compared to Balochistan which ranks much lower. The disparity creates pockets of economic alienation amongst regions that are less developed and cultivated sentiments of hatred towards the central authority. Such sentiments are evident in the calls for separation and stronger autonomy and are the result of the ongoing insurgencies in Baluchistan (UNDP, 2017).

5.1.2 Resource Allocation and Its Impact on Regional Identities

To some, the allocation of resources in Pakistan might seem just, but ever since its independence, it is these very resource that have become a pain point because of the massive regional gap it creates. The distribution of resources at an international level is done through the National Finance Commission (NFC) award that has always been biased towards Punjab and neglected the smaller provinces. The formula gets revised with time. There is population growth, poverty levels, and revenue generation that causes changes in gross domestic product. However, there is a strong sense of inequality (Ullah, 2024).

In particular, Baluchistan's issues pinpoint the disconnection between resource generation and resource allocation. The province is one of the most important sources of natural gas in Pakistan, but the revenue it gets in return is extremely low. For instance, the Sui gas fields, discovered in the 1950s, have been a critical energy source for Pakistan's industrial and domestic sectors. However, Baluchistan itself remains largely deprived of gas infrastructure, with vast areas still relying on traditional fuels for energy needs (Grare, 2013). This disparity has fueled a strong sense of injustice, with local leaders and communities accusing the federal government of exploiting their resources without adequately compensating the province.

Sindh has also raised concerns over resource distribution, particularly regarding revenue generated from Karachi, the economic hub of Pakistan. Karachi contributes a significant portion of the national GDP and serves as the primary port city, yet its infrastructure and public services remain underfunded. The Muhajir community, which forms a substantial part of Karachi's population, often voices grievances about being politically marginalized despite their economic contributions (Ahmed, 1998).

KP's economic challenges are tied to its geopolitical location and the impact of prolonged conflict. The province has borne the brunt of militancy and counter-terrorism operations, which have disrupted local economies and strained public services. Even though KP has an abundant supply of hydropower energy, it has had trouble getting fair royalties for electricity production. Such scenarios have sparked

conflicts between the provincial and central governments with provincial leaders clamoring for more powers over the province's natural resources (ALI, 2017).

5.1.3 Impact on Regional Identities

The economic subjugation of certain provinces may have far-reaching effects towards sub-national identities especially in Pakistan. The discussion of development divides are mostly articulated in terms of ethnicity where the poorer regions tag their situation to the discrimination meted out to their ethnic group. For instance, Baloch nationalism exploits the narrative of victimhood by asserting that the rich resources of Baluchistan are being used to develop other provinces while the people of the region remain poor. This narrative has incited calls for greater self-autonomy among many, even secessionists (Harrison, 1981).

In the same vein, the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) has become a very strong voice for the Pashtun community concerning economic issues and human rights violation in Province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the bordering tribal region. The manner at which the PTM speaks to the issue of injustices and inequity depicts deeper issues regarding the treatment of the region by the state. This is especially true towards economic politics of the country (Farivar, 2024). These movements show how disparities in the allocation of resources can increase tensions among different groups with regard to identity leading to a challenge of the contestation of national identity.

In Sindh, the conflict between rural Sindhi's and urban Muhajir's showcases the involvement of economic and ethnic elements at play. Rural Sindhi's often perceive the Muhajir-dominated urban centers as hubs of economic and political power that overshadow their cultural and economic interests. Conversely, Muhajir's feel marginalized within provincial politics despite their significant economic contributions. These dynamics have led to periodic outbreaks of violence and political instability in Sindh, particularly in Karachi (Verkaaik, 2004).

Punjab, while economically dominant, is not immune to identity-based challenges. Southern Punjab, for instance, remains underdeveloped compared to the central and northern parts of the province (Dawn, 2022). This has led to calls for the creation of a separate province to address the region's specific economic and administrative needs. Although these demands are less pronounced than those in Baluchistan or KP, they highlight the pervasive nature of economic disparities across Pakistan.

Pakistan's national integration is also undermined by economic differences and regional disparities. Development imbalances between provinces, along with unequal distribution of resources,

have intensified feelings of regional discontent and triggered movements based on identity. These issues need to be dealt with in a comprehensive manner that combines economic measures with the promotion of provincial self-governance and national patriotism. Pakistan can achieve a better integrated and unified national identity by focusing on the absent development and the specific requirements of each region.

5.2 Education and Cultural Narratives

Education is critical in the development of both personal and social facets of a person's life. For Pakistan, the system of education has been one of the pillars providing descriptions further peculiar and political narratives for the sake of national integration. Nonetheless, the circumstances pertaining education and identity, and the culture of Pakistan remain intertwined and contentious, given the reality of the nation's composition in terms of ethnicity, language, and religion.

5.2.1 Role of Education in Shaping Identity

Education forms a fundamental aspect of the learner's environment that constructs around someone values, experiences and changes throughout someone's life. As such, Pakistan and along history of his education the child attends, the child is exposed into a particular narrative identity oriented to an Islamic perception of Pakistan, as a nation for the Muslims. This notion and emphasis on religion as a binding glue of the nation stems from the underlying philosophy at the time of the country's independence, which required enough separation from India. Hence, there was a dire need to differentiate Pakistan from India on religious basis. For this reason, Islamic studies and Urdu language has become prerequisites of the national education curriculum with hopes of fostering a common ethnicity (Rahman, 2004).

Nonetheless, how education impacts identity is complicated. There are numerous ethnic groups in Pakistan which each have their own customs, languages and other cultural constituents. Due to the education system's focus on national unity at the expense of regional diversity, this has been a challenge. For example, promoting Urdu as the national language has led to the stigmatization of other regional tongues like Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, and Punjabi (Raj, 2017). This shift towards a central, Urdu-centric approach has made many non-Urdu speaking populations feel as though their culture is being erased, ultimately leading to identity-based conflicts.

In addition, unequal opportunities and access to education have worsened the existing economic and regional disparities. Urban centers, particularly in the Punjab and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), have superior educational facilities compared to the rural areas and other provinces like Sindh and Baluchistan.

This has not only created a lack of opportunity for people living in the less developed areas, but has also fostered a feeling of alienation (Ikram Junaidi, 2017) A national curriculum that fails to include the regional histories and cultures only widens the gap and attempts to create a unified identity becomes ever so more difficult.

5.2.2 The Impact of Curricula on Identity Formation

The curricula is at the core of the U education system, affecting how students view the world and their positions in the society. The curriculum, in the context of Pakistan, has come under scrutiny for lack of depth of the issues regarding history, culture and identity. School textbooks tend to focus on Islamic history and the great Muslim rulers while covering much less or leaving out completely the country's rich culture and varied ethnic background. This form of education has been referred to as 'identity engineering' where the state attempts to design a single national identity and eliminate regional and cultural diversity (Ikram Badshah et al., 2021).

One of the most contentious issues remains around the framing of Pakistan's history and its relations with India. Most history textbooks portray India as the adversary, further deepening a narrative of hostility and animosity. While such an approach serves the country's geopolitical interests, it also creates a bleak picture of Pakistan's identity as one that opposes India and not a celebration of its internal diversity. Many critics argue that this sort of narrative impedes the growth of critical thinking and promotes a pessimistic view of national identity (Jaffrelot, 2002).

This is also true regarding religious education as it relates so much to identity development. Ahmadiyya Islamic Studies (AIS), an examination that all students have to take at school, concerns the teaching of Islam and its relevance in relation to the evolution of Pakistani society. This is a common focus among students because of the predominantly Muslim population in the country, but it often neglects the viewpoints and histories of other religious groups including Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs. Such tendencies serve to further problematize the issue of "otherness" experienced by these communities and their participation in national identity (Hussain, 2011).

The attempts to adjust and improve the curriculum have been met with fierce opposition. This for instance was the case when, in the past years, the Single National Curriculum (SNC) was introduced in an attempt to unify the whole education system of the country and lessen the gap between public and private schools. In as much as the SNC has proposals for critiquing issues and promoting ethical behavior, it has

been criticized for more of the same in terms of Islamic and Urdu themes while ignoring the rest of Pakistan's ethno cultural and linguistic diversity (Jan, Anjum Bano Kazimi and Riaz, 2023).

5.2.3 The Role of Media in Reinforcing or Challenging Identities

Aside from formal education, the media also plays a major part in defining the identity of societies and cultures. Information and opinions are readily available through channels such as television, radio, and print media. Social media has also risen in prominence. In Pakistan, the media is highly eclectic with both state-owned and privately owned and digital media's available. Although this variety permits many different stories to be told, it also leads to issues of continuity and comprehensiveness.

Historically, state monopoly media has been used to develop a homogenous national identity with a heavy emphasis on Islamic fog and the Urdu language. For example, government-sponsored television channels regularly broadcast programs that promote Pakistan's image as a country steeped in Islamic civilization and fully prepared to take its place among the leaders of the Muslim world. Even though these narratives seek to achieve national cohesiveness, they tend to suppress the multicultural character of the country's peoples. The dominant culture of a society and the customs of the majority people fostered the use of Urdu and reinforced its use over regional languages and traditions (JSTOR, 2024).

Local television channels focus on regional matters and narratives and as a result, regional languages such as Pashto and Sindhi, and Balochi have gained audiences. And with the rise of digitization, it has allowed minority communities to establish themselves and promote their tales while combating the majoritarian narratives. According to Zahid (2023), social media such as Twitter and Facebook enable activists to mobilize the masses and raise awareness for the marginalized communities and helps in building a sense of brotherhood.

Media has a welcoming yet extremely challenging role to play in identity creation. The emergence of bias reporting alongside sensationalism has further strained community relations and division. For example, ethnic and sectarian tensions have been deepened due to the media portraying those events in a way that capitalizes on stereotypes. Furthermore, the rise of commercialized media enables topics that serve as eye catches such as entertainment and sensational news to overshadow genuine discussions regarding identity and inclusion (Shabbir, 2022).

In Pakistan, education alongside the media has a significant impact in the construction and development of cultural narratives and identity. While both focus on creating a unifying national identity,

they have, more often than not, ignored regional and cultural diversity. To effectively tackle these problems, it is necessary to step up efforts to make education and the media more representative, which ensures that every community is included. With the acceptance of diversity and the increasing focus on pluralism, Pakistan can achieve greater unity and integration.

5.3 War on Terror: Social and Economic Consequences

The September 11 attacks led the United States to initiate the pervasive and enduring War on Terror, which has had far-reaching implications on Pakistan. As a country located on the frontline with a very active U.S. agenda on hiding, capturing or killing terrorists has cost Pakistan greatly, economically and socially. The secondary effects of Pune operations in Afghanistan, shall we say, alongside Pakistan's own counter-terrorism strategies have been really devastating for the economy, social harmony, and internal security of Pakistan.

5.3.1 Economic Impact of the War on Terror

The economic effects of the War on Terror have had a tremendous impact on Pakistan in a direct and an indirect manner. As per available documents, between the years 2001 and 2021, Pakistan lost more than 150 billion US dollars 'because of warfare' (Government of Pakistan, 2021). These losses resulted from a combination of factors such as inadequate foreign investment, stalled trading and industrial activities, skyrocketing military costs, and shattered structures.

There was a beneficial shift foreign direct investment (FDI) received in the late 1990s which drastically changed as the security situation worsened. Investors were put off due to the risk of political instability, business risk and even time sensitive terrorist attacks. For instance, in the year 2009-2008, the FDI rate decreased by 42% dropping from 3.1 billion dollars to 5.4 billion dollars (Lavingia, 2016). These factors also heavily affected the tourism industry where America's military operations forced regions like Swat Valley and tribal areas to become battlegrounds.

On top of that, the government's strict policies on counter terrorism allowed them to allocate their resources towards defense instead of focusing on development projects. There was a large increase in defense spending during this including money that could be used for the education sector and to improve public healthcare systems. This resulted in funds being exhausted alongside the decreased output from industries and trade. Due to the lack of resources, reliance on foreign aid and loans drastically increased (Ali, 2025).

The conflict further weakened Pakistan's trade relations, especially with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries, as important trade canals became highly vulnerable to militant and insurgent activity. This was worsened by the large scale damage of roads, bridges, and even marketplace. The destruction of public infrastructure, concepts such as business centers and agriculture within the Federally Administered Tribal Area, which was heavily opposed, led to expensive losses for the region (Zeb and Ahmed, 2019).

Not all was bleak, as Pakistan did receive aid from the United States along with donors under the Coalition Support Fund (ZAIDI, 2011). Such aid, however, did not meet the expected financial goals for the country. Were such funds properly deposited, they would have largely balanced the expenses sustained by the war. On the other hand, the constraints surrounding such aid put the country in debt, cutting Pakistan's economic decisions, making the devastation recovery much more challenging.

5.3.2 Impact on the Social Fabric

The social consequences of the War on Terror have struck deep and altered the fabric of Pakistani society while aggravating current issues. The first and most prominent effect is the loss of lives. Some estimates suggest that over 70,000 Pakistani civilians, security forces, and militants have died between 2001 and 2020 due to terrorism and counter terrorism “operations” or violence in the region (Jones, 2019). Even more people have suffered injuries, many of whom are likely to have to deal with permanent physical and psychological damage.

The constant prospect of terrorism has erected a construct of fear into the society. The nervousness brought about by terrorism has stemmed from the never-ending bombardment of terror attacks in Pakistan's epicenters like Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar. Member of the public began to lose trust in the state's key institutions and everyday life ceased to carry on as normal. Markets, places of worship, educational institutions and even public gatherings became places where citizens felt negligible. This perpetual state of vulnerability has detrimental consequences on a person's mental health where exacerbated instances of anxiety and depression and PTSD has been reported across the globe (Ahmed et al., 2024).

The clash has also led to the polarization of society along ethnic, sectarian, and religious lines. Extremist ideologies espoused by militant groups have worsened sectarian violence targeting both Sunni and Shia communities. Furthermore, some Christian, Hindu, and Sikh minorities have also been increasingly attacked. This has helped in further subliming these groups and putting them at the risk of losing the social fabric of inclusivity and co-existence. Indeed, the escalation of violence has inculcated mutual

distrust, fragile peace, and hate speech and discriminatory practices in Pakistan (Sibtain, Shah and Khatoon, 2024).

The conflict also perpetuated the violence cycle where certain groups have been radicalized. This is particularly true for the youth in conflict afflicted areas. The combination of low education and no employment opportunities, along with the overbearing power of extremist groups exposed the vulnerable young people to radicalization and recruitment by militant outfits. While this may seem as a behavior changes, it did rampant violence and became a socio-economic problem for the world.

5.3.3 Refugee Crises and Internal Displacement

The War on Terror has led to the gross displacement of communities in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan. Given the US invasion in 2001, Pakistan has been home to over 3 million Afghan refugees, making it one of the largest countries hosting refugees in the world (Jamil, 2022).

In the last few decades, there has been a dire influx of refugees into Pakistan's bordering provinces KP and Balochistan. The added resources needed to support people coming into these regions exceeded the ratio by a large margin and peaked into a crisis. As a result, schools and hospitals underwent inadequate provision of resources. Along with these barriers to aid, the locals were forced to compete for limited resources which further escalated tensions. Nonetheless, there has been a lack of key policies and procedures to resettle refugees which could aid with the social structures of both local communities and the immigrants. Hence, Pakistan has continued to be home for people in need despite these challenges (Borthakur, 2017).

Besides Pakistani military's anti-terror operations, Afghan refugees too have contributed to the internal displacement challenge Pakistan faces. Most notably, military actions like Zarb-e-Azb (2014) and Radd-ul-Fasaad led to the destruction of millions of homes, particularly in FATA, Swat and other wider affected regions. Numerous problems, such as access to basic provisions, shelter, and prolonged displacement left those who migrated militarily displaced people with no solutions (Mahmood et al., 2023). This was further worsened by the lack of adequate education, work and destruction of any established socio-economic support structures.

The effort to bring back displaced people, along with reconstructive measures, has been both slow and challenging. Governments and certain international bodies have done their part and assisted; however, due to the global scale of displacement, there will always be under-resourcing. The home regions of IDPs

offer virtually no infrastructure or means of employment, which enables them to lead their life. Due to this unhappy dissatisfaction, it is widely believed that the state will execute its efforts extremely poorly, further creating chances for dissatisfaction (Baig et al. 2024).

5.4 Role of Civil Society

The contribution that civil society makes to the promotion of democracy, building social bonds, and meeting social needs is of great importance. As for Pakistan, where the national integration process has always been undermined by the politics of identity and regional and economic inequalities, the input by civil society, which consists of non-government organizations (NGOs), community based organizations, and advocacy networks, has been crucial in reducing divides and fostering integration. Nonetheless, these attempts have been accompanied by enormous challenges and constraints, including political suppression and lack of resources.

5.4.1 Contributions of NGOs and Civil Society in Promoting Cohesion

One of the major contributions of civil society in Pakistan has been addressing the issues at the grassroots level, which improves social integration and understanding amongst different communities. Advocacy groups and NGOs are often leaders in the promotion of dialogue and in the resolution of inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions by promoting shared social and cultural values. For example, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and the Aurat Foundation have been very active in the promotion of human rights, women and minority empowerment, which had helped to change negative perceptions of divisions within society and encouraged inclusivity (Imran and Munir, 2018).

In civil society, education has been an integral component for promoting national integration. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like The Citizens Foundation (TCF) have built thousands of schools in disadvantaged and war torn areas so that children can receive education (TCF, 2024). These initiatives tackle social division by teaching and implementing curriculum with critical thinking, tolerance, and a national identity to foster shared values in the country's youth. These goals have also been pursued by other organizations, for example Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, which promote development through adult literacy and education at the community level (ITA, 2022).

Civil society has, without a doubt, been crucial for averting and mitigating humanitarian crises, such as those caused by natural disasters or violence-related internal displacement. In the case of the 2005 earthquake and the subsequent floods, NGOs like the Edhi Foundation and the Pakistan Red Crescent

Society mobilized new resources to deliver emergency relief, reconstruct infrastructure, and rehabilitate affected communities (Asian Development Bank, 2005). Such actions brought immediate relief to affected populations, but more importantly, they fostered a sense of inter-ethnic and inter-provincial mutual aid.

Alongside civil society's humanitarian work, civil society has also advanced the country's democracy by enhancing governance, instilling accountability, and increasing public sector transparency. For instance, Transparency International has documented instances of corruption and promoted reforms, which are arguably one of the most pressing issues for regional and social inequalities (Transparency International, 2024). Limited evidence suggests, however, that civil society's assertion of accountability over public institutions serves to alleviate grievances from identity-based violence.

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding are other areas that have needed intervention. Civil society groups have fostered dialogue between conflicting parties, mediated disputes, as well as natured alternative narratives to counter extremism. For instance, the Pak Institute for Peace Studies has conducted research on and organized forums for addressing radicalization and promoting interfaith harmony (PIPS, 2023). Such initiatives are essential to counter the effects of extremism and foster a more inclusive national discourse.

5.4.2 Limitations and Challenges Faced by Civil Society

As it stands, Civil Society Organizations in Pakistan face innumerable challenges, which hinder their contributions. One such challenge is the interference of politics and restrictive state laws. Because of the singular political view held towards civil society participation - most notably, international NGOs - stringent laws came into being, such as cumbersome registration procedures and very closely monitored frameworks. The introduction of the Policy for Regulation of INGOs is just one example. Forcing these organizations to restrict their operations has, to a great extent, skewed their operational effectiveness (Human Rights Watch, 2015) in Pakistan.

Resource constraints pose a major limitation towards civil society activism. The majority of the NGOs are donor dependent, who fund these NGO's with rigid agendas and short duration (Shah, 2015). Unfortunately, the lack of funding creates a gap in the aid of global social issues that these organizations present. Additionally, the disparity in funding invariably leads to projects that target urban areas, neglecting rural and semi-urban areas.

The operational coordination within civil society organizations is lacking, making them less effective. Various NGOs and advocacy groups operate within Pakistan, but their activities are often fragmented and duplicative (Shah, 2015). Without a holistic approach towards collaboration, the impact of civil society engagement efforts is very minimal and highly ineffective to resolve the interconnected issues like politics of identity or regional disparities.

Civil societies have to operate under deep-seated societal skepticism and in some instances, hostility. Especially in conservative NGOs working in conflict-ridden areas are often seen with suspicion as advocates for foreign imposition or for secularization and do not help conserve the society's core values. This societal mistrust is exacerbated by propaganda from other extremist factions and certain media outlets, making it extremely difficult for civil society to advocate for issues like women rights or interfaith marriage. Civil society operations become more difficult in terrorist-affected areas due to added security issues. Marked intimidation, threats, and violence from extremist groups, political factions, and other interest groups has increased towards NGO workers and activists. Such perils not only threaten the well-behaved people working in civil society but limits the extent and effectiveness of their actions as well (Satkauskaite, 2019).

Furthermore, several civil society organizations struggle with their internal governance and capacity, which require fixing. The absence of transparency, insufficient institutional structures, poor monitoring and an evaluation framework negative the credibility and efficiency of NGOs. In some instances, public confidence has been lost due to misappropriation of money without accountability which makes it difficult for civil society to unify and deal with societal issues (Shyrokykh and Kragh, 2024).

5.4.3 Way Forward: Enhancing the Role of Civil Society

In response to these issues and to strengthen their role, civil society organizations in Pakistan should undertake these issues systematically. Improving coordination among NGOs and advocacy groups as well as between themselves is the primary step towards a stronger civil society action. Setting up networks and coalitions of different civil society stakeholders should achieve the goal of avoiding overlap, combining resources, and drafting approaches to deal with multi-dimensional problems.

Third, civil society needs to build trust and work with the local people. The ways of working for NGOs should be participatory from the design phase to ensure buy in for the initiatives and leadership. There is also need to create more understanding of the issues which some members of the public tend to see to discredit civil society so that there is more support for civil society activities.

Let shift the focus to the last point and consider how the governance as well as the capacity of these civil society organizations can be strengthened. They can be more credible and effective through investments in training, institutional development, and evaluation mechanisms. Public trust will also increase, and support from domestic and international actors can be acquired with greater accountability and transparency.

The last consideration to use is the recognition of the particular role and importance of the civil society and thus the need to facilitate the environment and context conducive to its growth. The ability to tackle common national problems can be boosted if the bureaucratic hurdles are minimized, if activists are tolerated and secured, and if these state entities are willing to work in partnerships with the civil society. So do international donors, who should provide soft and long lasting funding that fits with the local agenda rather than donor priorities.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, advocacy groups, non-government organization, and governmental organizations have done much to try to advance social integration and democratic governance while also attempting to tackle inequalities within Pakistani civil society. There is tremendous potential to address the country's challenges with the help of philanthropy, improvement in trust-building, and collaboration amongst civil societies, but support from the public, international donors, and the government is paramount to fully realize civil society's potential beneficially. Anglican efforts towards the alleviation of suffering, moderation of society, and fighting for the rights of discriminated people is a must for achieving a manifesto of comprehensive society, but will be challenging due to cultural unsupportiveness, political subversion, and lack of resources.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

This thesis contains an extensive discussion of the dynamics of identity politics and national integration in Pakistan between the years 1999 and 2007 within socio-economic, political and cultural contexts. It analyzes the ways in which identity-based grievances generated by political marginalization, economic deprivation and cultural discrimination have affected national unity. The findings are shown to be relevant to the objectives of the study by analyzing the level of governance, educational policy, the civil society, and other international factors that have formed identity politics and reinforced national disunity.

This time period was characterized by major socio-political changes during the military rule of Pervez Musharraf and severe challenges caused due to regional disparities and events such as the War on Terror. All of these factors combined brought to the fore the issue of national integration of a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic country like Pakistan. The findings are presented below, in tune with the objectives set out in this study and the research questions posed in it:

6.1 Conclusion of the Research

6.1.1 Economic and Regional Inequalities

Economic injustices and regional inequalities as stated above remain some of the most important equity based issues emerged as Keemoy's Identity based grievances were voiced. The historically neglected provinces, particularly Baluchistan and Sindh, with their relative low levels of education and development were the least prioritized in terms of resource allocation and infrastructure development. It is lamentable that even after decades of neglect, Baluchistan, which is abundantly rich in natural resources, is socially, educationally, medically, and infrastructural far behind. This kind of exclusion transforms into anger and further enhances the movements that strive for self-governance such as Baloch Nationalism.

Similar patterns could be observed in Sindh's rural parts and smaller towns that remained underdeveloped as compared to urban put centers like Karachi where economic activity was vigorous but investment was minimal. Such negligence fostered a sense of exploitation which further strife to ethnic divides and the desire for regional autonomy. Furthermore, KP was the epicenter of conflict in the War

on Terror which severely disturbed the economy and social cohesiveness of the region, resulting in internal displacement and fragmentation.

The National Finance Commission (NFC) Awards, as a method of revenue distribution, have been criticized on the account of Punjab domination, which has enjoyed infrastructure and policy concentration over the years. This development further fueled the alienation of smaller provinces as their demand equitable governance was reinforced. Social cohesion was greatly impacted due to economic disparity which generated a sense of exclusion and exacerbation of previously marginalized, which relates to the first research objective of how economic factors impact identity politics in Pakistan.

6.1.2 Political Scenario and Governance

During Pervez Musharraf's rule, the political landscape was critical in defining the policy of national integration. The policies of Pervez Musharraf e.g., devolution plans and use of regional parties, were aimed at enhancing his power unlike solving age old problems. Such alignment of power often led to the suppression of provincial government power autonomy and regional voices while strengthening centralization.

Regional parties' orientations towards ethnic and linguistic identities inhibited their ability to engage with broader national narratives. The emergence of ethnic movements, particularly by Pashtun and Baloch political leaders, underscored the inability of national parties to respond to the needs of the plural society. On the other hand, national parties such as Pakistan's Muslim League (PML) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) targeted urban constituencies at the expense of the rural and regional context.

The inability to construct an effective political system that embraces pluralism led to the fragmentation of national identity. The results speak to the second aim of the study which was to examine the role of political leadership and party politics in identity formation processes.

6.1.3 Educational and Cultural Narratives

The aspect of education and culture, the use of these two factors emerged as both a tool and a hindrance against nationalism. The whole syllabus focused mainly on Islamic ideology and the national unifying language such as Urdu was subordinating, regional languages, such as Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto, and even Punjabi. This discrimination further alienated the diverse communities that do not speak Urdu and heightened regionalism.

The aim of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) is to achieve parity within the educational sphere. Nonetheless, it has not been without its critics due to its continued emphasis on pro-Islam and Urdu narratives while largely ignoring Pakistan's multi-ethnic and multi-lingual makeup. Furthermore, these issues were worsened due to the pre-existing inequalities, such as insufficient access to education in rural Baluchistan and Sind, which were already widening the economic disparities across the regions.

Convergence of the media aided in broadening these narratives through control from the State that sought a singular national identity and regional channels that sought to heighten ethnic issues. Such narratives aided in the exclusion of regional histories that augmented alienation as a critique of the efforts for a singular national identity. Such findings carry a link to the third research objective focusing on the examined pieces of pie, in this case the faces of the culture and the education politics in the context of identity.

6.1.4 Effects of the War on Terror

The war on terror had dire implications for Pakistan that reached beyond the political and into social and economic ones that deeply altered the face and core of identity politics. The Afghanistan conflict brought with it direct losses of over \$150 billion where FDI shrunk, trade came to a standstill and essential development aid turned into defense expenditure. The regions most affected include KP and FATA which suffered violent conflicts leading to the demise of their economies and the birth of large scale displacement.

The violence had an equally devastating effect on society. Extremist ideologies gained ground and further aggravated ethnic and sectarian tensions. Violence targeting religious minorities, the growing tension between Sunnis and Shias, and violence against disenfranchised groups demonstrates the impact of the war on further cleaving societal divisions. This trend towards radicalization, especially of the youth in conflict-ridden areas, made national integration particularly challenging.

The tensions were further aggravated with the new war-aged displacement crisis, as millions of Afghan refugees and numerous internally displaced persons (IDPs) put a burden on host communities. The inadequate aid provided for the neglected IDPs and the slow pace of recovery fueled the feelings of isolation and neglect further, which relates to the previously mentioned topic of identity politics and the national aspiration of unity.

6.1.5 Civil Society's Contributions

Civil society organizations such as the Aurat Foundation, and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan made extensive efforts to address the needs of women, ethnic minorities, and internally displaced persons while promoting social cohesion and integration, availing of the opportunities provided by the existing untouched aid sector.

However, these groups were greatly challenged due to government restrictions, scarce resources, and opposition from conservative elements within the society. Nevertheless, civil society's strength was always there waiting to be harnessed for the purpose of integrating the nation.

6.2 Analysis of the Interplay between Identity Politics and National Integration

This research study's captures the multi-layered relationship between identity politics and national integration in Pakistan as well as the impact of identity-based grievances on national issues. Political marginalization, cultural discrimination, and economic disparities have instigated the emergence of identity political movements which have further hindered the attempts of the state to achieve internal unity and cohesion. While identity politics have aided the voiceless to articulate their issues and seek representation, they have also heightened the susceptibility of regional and ethnic groups to alienation and violent conflict, thus making the goals of national integration more difficult to achieve.

In the context of Pakistan, Economic inequalities such as those observed in Baluchistan, Sindh, and former FATA, have proven to be one the most powerful catalysts of identity politics. Claiming neglect has been made easier by the unequal resource allocation, infrastructural underdevelopment, and lack of socio-economic opportunities. For instance, Baluchistan is endowed with an abundance of natural resources but ranks at the bottom on almost all indicators of development and provision of basic services like healthcare and education. In the same manner, smaller towns in Sindh, particularly in the rural regions, have been neglected as focus on development is placed on the urban areas around the city of Karachi.

Consequently, these tensions have led to identity-centric movements like Baloch nationalism and the Sindhi nationalist movement that challenge the essence of central state authority. The outcomes here are consistent with the first research question that aims to identify the overarching economic inequalities and how they shaped identity politics and national cohesion from 1999 to 2007. Secondly, this research corroborates the proposed hypothesis that the integration processes have been negatively affected due to regional inequities.

The results indicate that the political elite and party system had a mixed effect on the national integrity as well. Under the leadership of the military government, Pervez Musharraf introduced some policies – for example, devolution plans and local government systems – which, on the surface, were intended to increase social integration. These initiatives were, however, often pursued at the expense of real power sharing, and true regional self-government. In addition, the attempts of some regional political parties to represent the interests of certain ethnic or linguistic groups to the neglect of the greater goal of national integration proved counterproductive.

In this case, however, the national political parties ignored the smaller provincial concerns, strengthening the perception that the state patronized the interests of Punjab. This exclusion further heightened the ethnic and regional political mobilization of the smaller provinces. These explanatory findings form a direct answer to the second research question given by the causes and effects of identity crisis in this period. In addition, the leadership issue and its effects on national integration form the core of the second research question prepared, describing the political factors of identity problems.

Education policies and cultural narratives tended to present and overemphasize a singular national identity focused on an Islamic state and the Urdu language at the expense of Pakistan's multiethnic composition. The pedagogy of this period continued to nurture the goal of the assimilation of regional languages and history to the national identity which was imperialistic in nature. This policy of inclusion alienated the non-Urdu speaking Sindhi's, Balochs, and Pashtuns who felt their identities were being actively destroyed.

Media significantly shaped cultural perceptions around the globe. Nationally controlled media sources advanced these central narratives and often depicted ethnic or regional movements as an opposition to national unity. Regional media, on the other hand, hosted the discontent movements by feeling oppressed which sometimes fueled regional concentrations. These findings are consistent with the third hypothesis of the study, which points to the cultural bias and policies directed in education as factors which contributed to the identity crisis. In addition, they elaborate the second objective of the research by analyzing the ways in which these factors were manifested in the complex environment of the identity politics.

The interplay of identity politics and national integration grew in complexity with the introduction of the War on Terror. It had far reaching implications on Pakistan's internal socio-economic and security. Areas of KP and FATA faced extreme dislocation and upheaval, economic bankruptcy, and radical

extremist ideologies. Internally displaced persons and refugees worsened inter-regional relations as average citizens began seeing the displaced populations as a burden. Furthermore, societal perceptions of the war increased and the subsequent societal unemployment resulted in expanded marginalization and radicalized extremism, worsening the grievances of already oppressed communities.

The outcomes indicate that the War on Terror, rather than being the main trigger behind identity crises, deepened pre-existing fissures and made it more difficult to the work towards national integration. These are also in line with the second research objective in assessing the external forces on identity politics and their impact on integration. In spite of the impacts of identity politics, these civil society organizations (CSOs) have stepped towards the positive attend of the scale and strived to include and highlight the issues of the silenced groups. CSOs like the Aurat Foundation, the HRCP, among others, severely condemned the acts of violations and sought interfaith compassion. Independent media also emerged as other avenues to address the regional concerns and for the formulation of regional justice policies.

Even though educational reforms were not extensive, they did in some measure create room for the pursuit of diversity and tolerance. There were new opportunities to develop mutual respect and understanding through inclusive curricula which integrated regional histories and languages. Still, in most cases, these attempts were thwarted by the political resistance, low funding, and social prejudices. Emphasis is made on the fact that despite the civil society, media, and educational reforms not alleviating the identity crises plaguing Pakistan, they still pose considerable promise for achieving the national integration. These results concretely correspond with the effectiveness of government and non-state initiatives on the identity related problems as posed by the third research question.

Concerning the findings, it is important to mention the necessity of both comprehensive and holistic policies towards the identity crises in Pakistan. Pakistan needs education reform, governance that is more inclusive, and fair resource distribution as a means to solve the economic and political marginalization and cultural biases. The state cannot be successful in countering the ill effects of such diversity if it continues to be as mono-culturally focused as treating diversity as a threat. This logic illustrates why Pakistan is presently unable to overcome identity dilemmas. The study's results make it possible to formulate policies for practices to implement these ideas together with sought identity related challenges. By fostering equity, diversity, and inclusivity, Pakistan can overcome its identity crises and lay the foundation for sustainable national integration.

6.2 Policy Recommendations

These results clearly indicate that prompt and adequately tailored policies are urgently needed to solve identity issues while promoting national cohesion and integration in Pakistan. To the end, this section offers comprehensive proposals including political and economic inclusion as well as reforms in education and culture, civil society, and governance, together with the measures aimed at alleviating the socio-economic consequences of conflict and creating conditions for inclusive growth through technology. These proposals are within the limits set by the study and are intended to eliminate the triggers of identity conflicts, while at the same time establish a sustainable system of cooperation and integration.

The economic imbalance has been one of the most prominent impediments in integrating Pakistan as a nation and has deepened regional antagonism especially in backward areas such Baluchistan and Sindh. To achieve this balance, there is a need for structured multi-level approaches that include, but are not restricted to, just equitable development allocation and resource management decentralization. Every province has its unique requirements, and as such the federal development funds must be allocated accordingly to ensure the SEZs and industrial hubs address the historical grievances of economic activity and employment generation. There is also a need to revisit and restructure the primary tool for revenue distribution, the NFC, to serve those needs. Finally, the last two points can only be achieved if the 18th amendment as a whole is respected. Doing so would alleviate the concern of being exploited and enhance the shared feeling of ownership of resources while promoting equity amongst the regions.

Involving a wider political range is as significant as solving concerns based on identity. It enables communities that are often neglected to feel that they are part of a wider society. It is important that local governments be strengthened so that the lower strata of society can deal with the problems in a more effective manner. Local government should be granted more power to raise revenue and manage the funds raised so that they can solve local issues without waiting for the higher level government to help them. In order to achieve a meaningful change, it is also essential to amend the electoral system so that small provinces and disadvantaged sections of the country are better represented in the legislature. There are also institutional mechanisms for dialogue between the provinces that can be used to promote the resolution of regional issues in a national environment.

In maintaining the distinctiveness of coordination, education and culture in Pakistan, ethnic and language differences composing its incorporation require additional focus. The current education system and cultural policies of the country have tended to emphasize a mono-Islamic and Urdu limited identity

at the expense of the pluralism present in the country. There is a need to reconstruct the educational paradigm to accommodate local histories, languages, and cultures in order to foster an ethnically more inclusive narrative. At the same time, there is a need to recognize and actively use vernaculars not only in the classroom but also in state-sponsored media and politics to appreciate the diversity in languages in Pakistan. Public relations efforts need to be made to foster interfaith and multicultural dialogue while combating harmful images and rhetoric which further isolate communities. The transformation which the people desperately desire is rooted in the media providing new narratives of culture and the politics of the regions that enable interaction between communities.

As is evident, civil society organizations (CSOs) have a great deal of promise in dealing with identity issues, such as in the promotion of human rights, interfaith relations, and social cohesion. Still, their contribution has been underwhelming because of inadequate support and the socio-political obstacles they encounter. There is a need to fund and logistically support CSOs so that they can build their outreach and affect assistance on the ground. Projects at the community level, such as dialogue between different faiths, cultural exchanges, and joint social projects will help heal these divisions and promote togetherness. Moreover, social cohesion initiatives can be strengthened through public-private partnerships to enable greater participation and mobilization of resources. The potential contribution of civil society towards addressing the identity challenges needs to be appreciated and facilitated in policy.

The War on Terror has resulted in a number of identity issues in Pakistan, especially in certain areas such as KP and FATA. These specific regions, along with many others that have been affected by the War, require assistance that is sensitive to the problems trust building within communities takes. Efforts to resolve the identity issues and to guarantee that the reconstruction of the region's post-conflict infrastructure, such as schools and health facilities, is among one of the first tertiary needs that should be provided. Addressing employment, training, and educational opportunities in addition to other anti-radicalization approaches is bound to reduce the chances of extremist actions. Moreover, these individuals will need to ensure that their actions and environment will guarantee a reasonable standard of living which further makes it necessary to develop an economy with the affected population in mind. Integrative techniques in regards to national policy such as these would help to attend to the more pressing issues while simultaneously help to foster peace in Pakistan in the long run.

In any country's governance system, leadership is critical in addressing the identity crisis and building national identity. Establishing accountability and increasing the level of transparency is important

in gaining confidence and trust from the marginalized communities so that the governance is proxy and effective. Establishing developmental programs in leadership on conflict management, negotiation, and inclusion is very important so that political leaders are trained to deal with the complex identity issues. Inclusive and equitable policies will only be attained through collaborative policymaking by the federal government, provincial government, and local authorities. Commitment to equity and inclusivity must be applied at all levels of policy making and effective governance to ensure the good governance of all citizens.

Finally, governance of identity issues integration can benefit from new technology in an innovative manner. E-governance can reduce service delivery gaps between these marginalized people and state institutions and thus provides more efficient and inclusive governance. Treating data can determine where the regional inequality is prevalent and assist in tracking the extent of development programs put in place so that there is wider regional coverage. Dialogue on virtual platforms can enable different areas' communities to experience life and work on the same issue to get a better understanding of integration.

Hence, the methods proposed here aim at relatively deeper issues of identity crises while stimulating economic and political inclusion, cultural pluralism, and social unity. With the implementation of these policies, Pakistan can wish away the complications of identity politics and focus on the construction of a unified society that is inclusive and equally prosperous. These policies are not only essential for dealing with the identity problems of the people, but are equally crucial for the nation to come together in one spirit and work towards the many wonders that Pakistan represents.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

In the period of 1999 to 2007 this particular study has delved into the examination of national integration in Pakistan with a focus on identity politics. However, certain aspects still remain that warrant further investigation. For example, future studies could consider the effects of the war on terror on national unity within the context of radicalization, displacement, and socio-economic recovery. Such changes could be addressed through a longitudinal study focused on conflict impacted areas such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the ex-FATA and how they have come to be integrated within the national framework through the set of policies that have been adopted post conflict.

Furthermore, additional contributions could be made that examine the developing nature of social media on identity politics and national narratives. The role of digital socialization has transformed the way

people engage politically, participate in ethnic struggles, and even how the public interprets the government's policies. Therefore, it is imperative to measure how these changes have affected the integration of national identity.

The assessment of the effectiveness of post 18th amendment governance structures on regional issues is another critical area to focus further on. While it is understood that these structures have a beneficial outcome due to tolerance based governance, the actual effect on the amelioration of ethnic and regional inequalities remains largely unknown. Furthermore, examining whether younger styles of leadership particularly, and the compassionate and responsible leadership has any impact on identity conflicts dispute on such policies would be of great interest.

The comparative study of Pakistan's identity politics with other multi-ethnic states like India and Malaysia can serve a great purpose for the internal integration of the country. In addition, exploring the impact of diaspora identity politics and inter-provincial relations can give new insights into the subject matter of transnational identity formation. Studies in these areas can fill existing gaps for relevant policy changes and facilitate an inclusive understanding of Pakistan identity politics in the ever changing political environment of Pakistan.

In a nutshell, the findings of this research emphasize on the importance of different cultures coexisting to foster national integration in Pakistan. As a country with more than two ethnicities, languages and religions, the strength of Pakistan lies within its diversity. Unfortunately, over the years, fault lines due to identity politics, economic inequalities, and poor governance have plagued the country. Tensions between ethnic and regional groups and exclusionary political and economic environment have made it difficult for Pakistan to build a unified national identity. While the Islam-Urdu centered identity single narrative approach has been the Pakistani government's approach for the state building, the result further strengthens anti-national sentiments among minorities. Integrative policies are essential for the pluralism of Pakistan, not assimilatory policies.

The concept of unity in diversity does not translate to the removal of different geographic and cultural identities but rather the establishment of a broader framework within which all communities feel important and represented. Numerous countries with cultures have successfully implemented pluralistic models that recognize many identities without compromising national integration. These policies can be adopted by Pakistan through formulation of strategies that guarantee equitable allocation of resources, representation in culture, and participation in politics. Educators, journalists, and even the general public

have a great responsibility to help the nation change its perspective of national identities to coexistence rather than segregation. Educational reforms aimed at redressing the imbalanced relative representation of Pakistan's cultural and linguistic richness accompanied by responsible media representation can help avert the detrimental consequences of the mentioned aspect and create a comfortable environment.

In order to promote national integration, there should be justice in governance, which is free, fair, and participatory. Studies highlighted that economic dynamics and geographic inequalities have greatly assisted identity politics. Therefore, sustainable national integration cannot be achieved without these structural imbalances being tackled. Some of the crucial steps include ensuring equitable resource distribution, devolution of power, and inclusivity of all political stakeholders to mitigate the grievances and assure the communities in return. Economic development strategies, especially for the underdeveloped provinces such as Baluchistan and Sindh, should aim to foster integration as it reduces the feeling of alienation as well as addresses the impression of a developmental gap.

Moreover, the understanding of violent integration focuses not only on the politics of violence but also the building of active national identity. In order to achieve national integration, the grievance model argues that there needs to be recognition of past deeds, followed by attempts at restoring the dignity of the people that have been abused. Secret political violence, whether in the form of political violence by proxies, neglect, or political repression cannot and should be swept under the carpet. Adopting a truth may help the people to come to terms with the past and help integrate fractured communities.

Moreover, political leadership has a critical role to perform in the transformation of identity-based schisms. Polarization is further increased by political leaders who practice exclusionary politics and do identity politics for electoral benefits. Rather, national leaders need to adopt a more holistic view that seeks to foster togetherness instead of fostering disunity. Both, national and regional political parties, need to work towards reconciliation instead of using ethnic and regional cleavages for political patronage.

Pakistan's integration problems are not impossible to solve. With adequate policies, firm political commitment, and societal participation, it is possible to foster a more unified and accepting national identity. The civil society, academia, and the media together need to disseminate information that seeks to build on the existing similarities rather than focusing on differences. In addition, activities that promote intercultural interactions at the provincial level, like student exchanges, culture festivals, and national forums, can contribute towards the better understanding and appreciation of the different people.

With everything considered, it is apparent that national integration in Pakistan is attainable only through an accommodating and fair manner which respects different parts of the country while creating a unified feeling of belonging. The issues of identity politics require structural changes over a period of time rather than just a quick policy patch. While placing greater emphasis on good governance, economic justice, greater access to education such as women's education, and educational pluralism, as well as more balanced narratives, it is relatively easier for Pakistan to achieve societal cohesiveness and integration. All citizens of Pakistan regardless of what ethnic group they belong to, what language they speak, or where they come from must, in order for a vision of a United Pakistan to be attained, be uniformly treated as equal stakeholders in the advancement of the country.

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