



NATIONAL CONFERENCE **ACTUALIZATION OF NATIONAL NARRATIVE**



POST-CONFERENCE **REPORT**



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One Day National Conference on Actualization of National Narrative

Organized by



Pakistan House

Held at Islamabad

Edited by

Muhammad Athar Javed

&

Fareeha Shamim

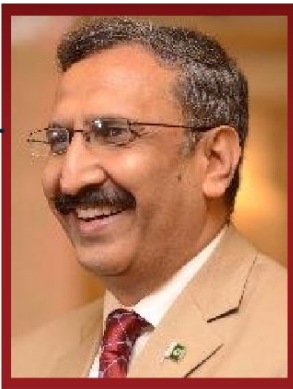
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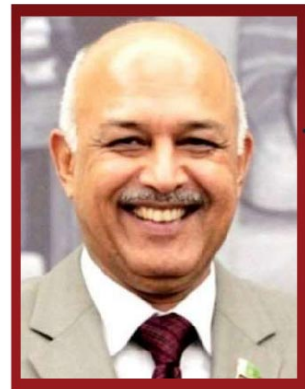
Advisory Board, Pakistan House



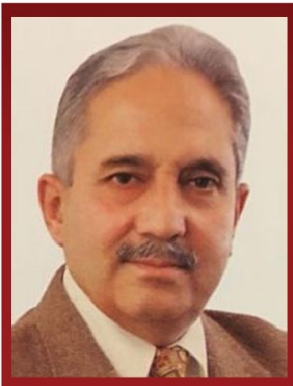
Chairman
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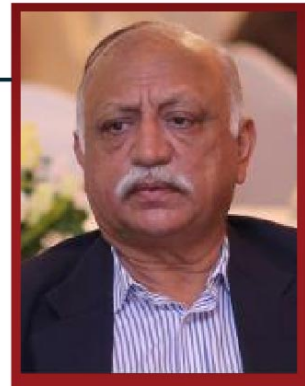
Director General & Founder
Mr. Rana Athar Javed



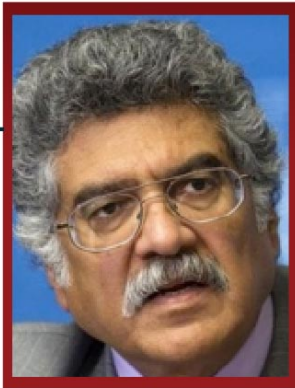
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Pakistan House organized a one-day National Conference on March 28, 2019 in Islamabad on "Actualization of National Narrative." Ms. Sana Maqbool, News Anchor at PTV World, was the Master of Ceremony.

This popular event witnessed the participation of ambassadors, diplomats, policy makers, academics, civil-military bureaucrats, government officials, media personnel, university students, and other dignitaries.

Ms. Zubaida Jalal, Federal Minister for Defence Production of Pakistan, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

Professor Dr. Qibla Ayaz, Chairman Islamic Ideology Council, Barrister Zafarullah Khan, Former Minister for Law and Justice, and Mr. Aamir Ghauri, Resident Editor of The News Islamabad, honoured the occasion as Keynote Speakers.

The esteemed Chief Guest, Keynote speakers, other dignitaries, and audience members praised the content and eminent speakers for delivering an invaluable analysis on the actualization of national narrative and its social implications.

This report presents a summary of statements by the chief guest, keynote speakers, and key remarks delivered by the speakers during the conference. It also presents an analysis and policy recommendations for the state institutions.

Programme Layout



Arrival of Guests/Registration

Recitation from Holy Quran

**Welcome Remarks by
Mr. Rana Athar Javed**
Director General, Pakistan House

**Statement by the Chief Guest
Ms. Zubaida Jalal**
Federal Minister for Defence Production of Pakistan

Keynote Speaker 1:
Professor Dr. Qibla Ayaz
Chairman, Islamic Ideology Council

Keynote Speaker 2:
Barrister Zafarullah Khan
Former Minister for Law and Justice

Keynote Speaker 3:
Mr. Aamir Ghauri
Resident Editor, The News Islamabad

First Session

Psychological Warfare and Cultural Independence

Chair: Barrister Zafarullah Khan

Former Minister for Law and Justice

Ideology, Cultural Diversity and National Identity	Mr. Khursheed Nadeem Scholar, Media Person and Author
National Integration and Role of Media	Dr. Zubair Iqbal Ghori Senior Analyst, Visiting Fellow Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)
Grand National Narrative and a Welfare Society	Dr. Nadeem Omar Tarar Executive Director, Centre for Culture and Development Islamabad

Second Session

Counter-Violent Extremism and Political Dispensation

Chair: Dr. Nadeem Umar Tarar

Executive Director, Centre for Culture and Development Islamabad

Counter Violent Extremism and Madrassa Reforms	Mr. Muhammad Israr Madani President International Research Council (IRCRA)
Building National Narrative and Peace with India	Ms. Anika Nisar Anchorperson, Capital TV
Role of Social Media	Mr. Sabookh Syed Blogger and Social Media Activist
Rhetoric and Negative Propaganda: Responsibility of State	Mr. Rashad Bukhari Chairman Mandli - A Network for Art, Culture and Education

Speaker Profiles



Ms. Zubaida Jalal,
Federal Minister for Defence
Production of Pakistan

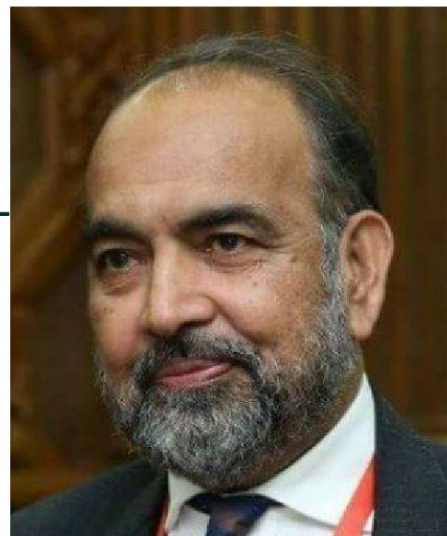
Ms. Zubaida Jalal is the Federal Minister for Defence Production of Pakistan. A teacher, libertarian, social activist by occupation, she assumed the office on 20 August 2018.

After successfully contesting in general elections held in 2002 on a PML (Q) platform, she came in national prominence and public fame as a leading woman minister in the cabinet of Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. From 2002–07, she was the minister of Minister of Education (MoEd) and unsuccessfully contested for general elections held in 2008 on a PML (Q) platform.

After a five-year brief break from the national politics, she joined the Pakistan Muslim League and but stepped down in favour of Kiran Haider who successfully retained her seat in 2013 general elections, although she retains herself as a woman leader of the Pakistan Muslim League.

Professor Dr. Qibla Ayaz,
Chairman Islamic Ideology Council

Dr. Qibla is currently serving as the chairman of Council of Islamic Ideology, Government of Pakistan. Dr. Qibla Ayaz is the Dean of Faculty of Islamic and Oriental Studies, University of Peshawar. He has held several top academic positions in the past as well, including Acting Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar, Dean, Faculty of Islamic Studies & Arabic, University of Peshawar, Director, Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies, University of Peshawar, Director, Shaykh Zayed Islamic Centre, University of Peshawar and Chairman, Department of Seerat Studies/ Prophetology/Prophet Studies, University of Peshawar. He is also a member of various statutory bodies, committees and academic societies.



A doctorate from the Edinburgh University, U.K, his major achievements include establishment of Department of Seerat Studies/Prophetology/Prophet Studies at the University of Peshawar, Pakistan Council of World Religions, Al-Farabi Council for Citizen Diplomacy and Academic for Knowledge and Review (AFKAR). He is also a recipient of the US Gold Star Alumni (2011) and Presidential Award (MA Islamic Studies, 1975).



Barrister Zafarullah Khan, Former Minister for Law and Justice

Barrister Zafarullah Khan is the Former Minister for Law and Justice. He has 30 years of experience of working in diverse fields. He has served in Civil Services of Pakistan, has been a lawyer, consultant, writer and teacher. He joined the District Management Group of the Civil Services of Pakistan in 1987 and served in the Punjab and Sindh Provinces in various administrative and judicial

capacities. He resigned from the Service in 2002 to work for Human Rights and Rule of Law. He has worked as legal and human rights consultant on women, children and labour issues with different UN organizations, INGOs and NGOs. He was the Chairman, Alternate Dispute Resolution Committee, Collectorate of Customs and Sales Tax, Faisalabad (2004-06). He has taught Law, Human Rights and International Relations in International Islamic University, Quaid-e-Azam University, Iqra University, Civil Services Academy, National School of Public Policy, National Police Academy and many other institutions of higher learning and training.

Mr. Aamir Ghauri, Resident Editor, The News Islamabad

A senior journalist, broadcaster, and author, Mr. Ghauri helped launch The News in 1990 and served as a news editor and later as a deputy editor. In 1998, he was posted in London as the paper's foreign correspondent. Three years later he joined ARY Digital as the head of news and current affairs. He has had stints at Dunya TV,



Geo News, The Nation, and the Frontier Post. He also worked for the international news media including BBC. He regularly appears as a political commentator on such television networks as CNN, Sky, and Aljazeera English.

He holds an MSc in International Politics and at one time briefly practiced law after graduating from the University of the Punjab Law College. However, he quit law and took up journalism in the late 1980s. Ghauri is the author of "The Divine Destruction", a pictorial commentary on the devastating 2005 South Asian earthquake.



Mr. Khursheed Nadeem,

Scholar, Media Person and Author

Mr. Khurshid Ahmad Nadeem is a scholar, media person, social activist and author. He has been the editor of quarterly “Fikr-o-Nazar”, an academic journal of Islamic studies, being published by Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University Islamabad. This is one of the most prestigious journals of Islamic Studies in sub-continent. In his editorship, this journal has

published a special issue on “New trends in Sirah Literature”.

In past, he has been Speech Writer to the Prime Minister of Pakistan (1997-1999), Secretary Commission on Islamisation of Education, Government of Pakistan (1999-2005). He has also been editor of “Ijtehad” a journal of Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), Government of Pakistan. He wrote regular column for Daily Jang for ten years. Now he writes for Daily Dunya. He is a known TV anchor. He hosted “Alif” on Geo TV for 5 years, the only academic talk show in the history of private TV channels. Now he is hosting a weekly show “Irteqa” at PTV News.

Dr. Zubair Iqbal Ghor,

Senior Analyst, Visiting Fellow Sustainable
Development Policy Institute (SDPI)

Dr. Zubair Iqbal is an Associate Professor at Department of Social Sciences, Bahria University.





Dr. Nadeem Omar Tarar,

Executive Director, Centre for Culture and Development Islamabad

Dr. Omar comes with 20 years of accumulative experience of research and management including 10 years of heading the departments at National College of Arts Lahore and the educational administration of NCA campus in Rawalpindi.

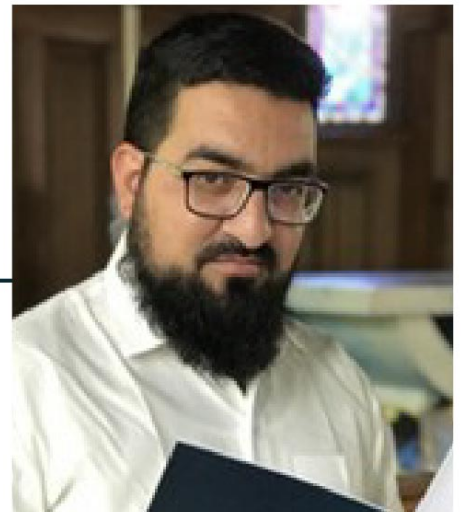
He is the author having 12 publications to his credit including a book, four book chapters and seven papers in international peer reviewed journals. As an engaged public scholar he has appeared on all the media TV channels, published newspaper articles on the subjects of education, art, cultural and folk heritage. As an academic editor at NCA he has contributed to the research and publications of more than 19 books by leading national and international authors. He has taught and lectured on the subjects of Pakistani art, anthropology, and heritage in all the high ranking universities of Pakistan.

He often appears on different TV channels like PTV, GEO and BBC.

Mr. Muhammad Israr Madani,

President International Research Council
(IRCRA)

Mr Muhammad Israr Madani is an anchor at Khyber news. He is also the President of International Research Council.



Ms. Aniq Nisar,

Anchorperson, Capital TV

Ms. Aniq Nisar is an upfront and hard hitting current affairs Anchor. Currently, she is hosting a show on Capital TV. Previously, she served in 92News, Dunya News, Waqt News, Dawn News and Business Plus.



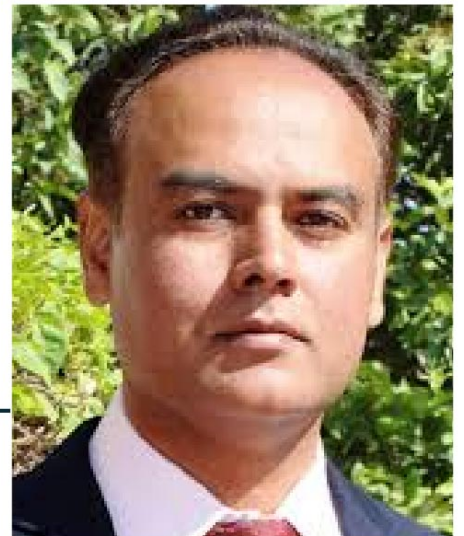


Mr. Sabookh Syed, Blogger and Social Media Activist

Mr. Sabookh Syed, completed his early education and high school from Abbottabad - his home town. He moved to Peshawar to acquire higher education and graduated from Peshawar University. His passion to work as a journalist led him to join a media group as a reporter.

Mr. Sabookh started his career as a reporter by working with Geo TV. Later, he became a special correspondent from the capital of Pakistan. He also had an opportunity to host a program, Aalim Online, at Geo TV. As his journalistic career advanced, he became a columnist for Daily Jang; he has also worked as a co-author for The News. He has written, in both the English and Urdu, papers of Geo group. Sabookh has a vast experience in wide array of Journalistic work experience and has worked with Geo Group for about 11 years in various capacities.

Mr. Rashad Bukhari, Chairman Mandli - Network for Art, Culture and Education



With over 20 years of experience as a development practitioner, Mr. Rashad has worked on responsible and senior positions and continues to have consistent and passionate interest in policy and planning, capacity building, community peace-building, education and social development with a particular interest in culture and arts.

Rashad is currently president of “Mandli – A Network for Art, Culture and Education” that would work on revival of culture and arts in Pakistan, using cultural approaches to peace-building and educational enhancement linked with it.

Welcome Address



Mr. Rana Athar Javed,
Director General Pakistan House

Firstly, I would like to register my profound gratitude to Ms. Zubaida Jalal, Federal Minister for Defence Production, for making time for this very important conference. I would also like to welcome all our guests and speakers. Today's conference has an important subject; the scope of this theme employs all elements of national power. The gap between perception and reality is huge and rest of the job is being done through negative propaganda and rhetoric. In the myths of all this commotion, confusion, and fake news, the narratives which are subject to the success of a nation have not emerged in a way they should have. Pakistan has faced and is still facing this challenge. However, in the past years, this challenge has developed an opportunity as well. It has given us a chance to present our side of the story. The story of success normally is being dumped with negative stories hence the national narrative cannot be projected.

There can be many Grand National narratives but one narrative I would like to mention is the projection of modern Pakistan. Modern Pakistan has a fundamentally important factor that is based on religious and cultural independence; this signifies modernity in all spheres: learning of logic (fiqh), religion, social development, economic prosperity, developing connectivity through regional economic cooperation and peace-making efforts. Pakistan's role as a peacemaker, in the region and internationally, while, has been acknowledged by a few unfriendly countries, it has also been undermined; however, undermining should not impede our way forward. Acquiring knowledge from IS system, the way cyber security should be dealt with and the way our modern scientists would develop a way to have a desire to achieve big data – are all components of modern perception of a country. Every country has the right to project its positive index.

Developed countries such as Sweden, Norway, and especially Denmark (a small country) have a highly positive perception on international development due to their performance on an international forum. Even though fake news and the media filtration of the real narrative is a responsibility of the media, we cannot merely leave them unaided. The supply of the information, the source of information, and the way it constructs the narrative, are all very important in understanding the complexity of this issue.



Keynote Addresses



Chief Guest

Ms. Zubaida Jalal,

Federal Minister for Defence
Production of Pakistan

Thank you everyone, especially Pakistan House and Director General Rana Athar Javed for inviting me to address such an important topic.

Since Pakistan's creation, the country has moved through numerous testing times; but the realization of Pakistan's national narrative has always been constructed on religious and cultural independence. The kind of environment we are in today also proves that this has been a pertinent point where think tanks or even the youth have been thinking about this. Even the mindset of the students is as such that they are thinking about how to move forward on this very pertinent issue.

Pakistan has a rich cultural diversity within its four provinces. From Gilgit-Baltistan and to Azad Jammu Kashmir, Pakistan has a huge population with diverse cultural heritage and languages. The biggest challenge for Pakistan, hence, is to bring about the actualization of the theme of national narrative. Our country is witnessing diversity within the faith, unity and resilience, the strength against tremendous regional security and internal security, and economic challenges.

The past decades have observed the growth of numerous sources of socio-ethnic tensions. Whether it is socio-ethnic dispute or the issue of militancy, Pakistani people and specifically the people of Balochistan (the province where I come from) have rejected such divisions. Hence the negative propaganda of anti-Pakistan sentiment was discarded. In the last two years, a lot of effort at different levels, has been made to bring about this change. Even though we still have a long way to go, the people of Pakistan remain determined and united in facing these challenges.

The popular approach of the people of Pakistan is progressive and modern; both in terms of the desire to economically progress and to educate the next generation. This mindset prevails even within the far-flung areas. Whether it is the rural part of Sindh, Balochistan, southern Punjab, or the remotest parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, people are concerned about the basic necessities of life and bringing about a brighter and more empowered generation through education. Evidently, the Pakistani society promotes and projects education as the central idea to Pakistan. It is only through education that we can bring equality, justice and empowerment among both genders; this is Pakistaniyat. This is also the most important narrative that we have to pursue and move forward.

The key question is how to actualize our national narrative? An answer to this is to highlight what Pakistan has achieved since its creation. Narrating from my personal experience, I come from one of the remotest part of this country, right on the Iranian border. When I look at my past journey of nearly forty years, as a social-activist, educationist, I tried to make an effort to bring about the change in lives of the people living in that part of the country. It is very important to include each and every citizen of this country, whether male, female, or youth, in the whole process. Until and unless we do not accept and acknowledge this, we will not be able to move forward, strengthen and remain united as a nation.

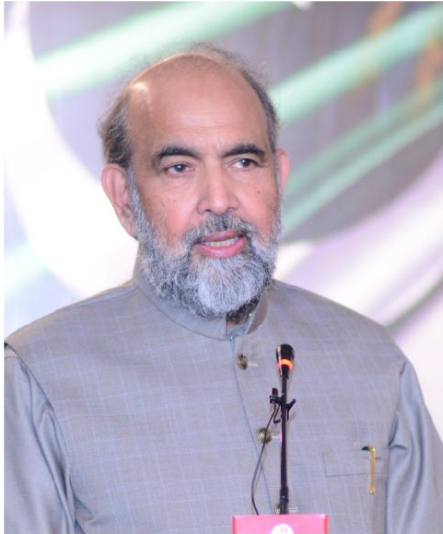


History shows that there have been ups and downs, and turmoil between Balochistan and Pakistan. Every 20-30 years, an incident triggers disorder which raises the question of ideology or movement of nationalism. Nationalism, for me, means bringing about a better change for the people of the society. I call the other nationalist parties the “so-called nationalists” because we have seen that over the years, Balochistan has always been a part of the mainstream and the so-called separatist as we call them. But looking at the families and the social setup within those families, you will find them in the mainstream democratic part of Pakistan and within that same family the other half would be talking of an independent Balochistan. As Balochistanis we have to decide for our own selves; which side we are on? If within one home these two different mindsets prevail, how would the world perceive them? Whether they are with Pakistan or against Pakistan, this decision has to be made by them.

The youth of today, due to education, is aware of this perception of Pakistani's and they are resisting it. Even the youth of Balochistan are questioning this. This is where the government can step in to fill in the void. It is very important that when these vacuums are created, we as a nation create an inclusive environment that is unbiased towards history, heritage, and civilization. For example Mehrgarh civilization (about 10-11000 years old) has no mention or any acknowledgment in our textbooks and history. The sub-continent and this country has evolved over the years; but do we accept the past or do we acknowledge the history of different nations and different states? If we want to create a national narrative, we will have to accept and acknowledge the history and move forward. This kind of education is missing from our education system and we need to work on this to bring about a change.

It is important to accept and respect diversity in terms of language, religion, and culture. Until or unless we do not respect each other as a nation, we will not be able to actualize the national narrative of Pakistan.

Keynote Speaker 1:



Professor Dr. Qibla Ayaz,
Chairman, Islamic Ideology Council

Let me start by thanking Pakistan House, especially Mr. Rana Athar Javed for inviting me as a speaker on this very interesting conference. From the very first day, Pakistan is going through difficult circumstances. Alama Muhammad Asad, who was a Jew and later converted to Muslim, demanded a Pakistani nationality - this is highly appreciable. He has done a lot of work and presented a proper track which was to be followed for a long period of time.

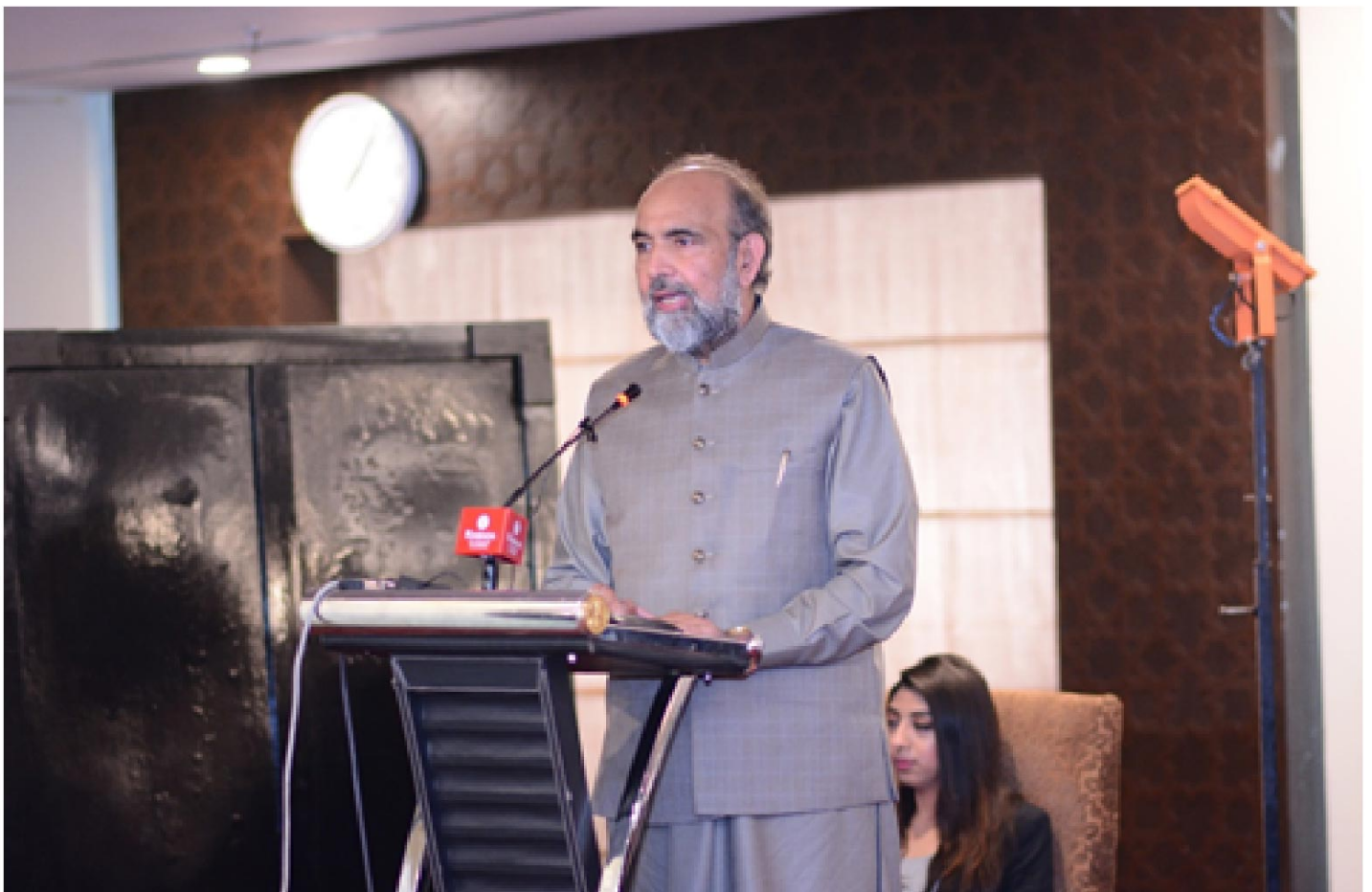
After Alama Muhammad Asad, Syed Sulaiman Naqvi also tried to improve the resolution and gave equal rights to people of different sects in Pakistan. Thirty one ulema from different shades of opinion: Sunnis, Ahl-i-Hadith and Shias, under the leadership of Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, gathered at a convention held at Karachi from January 21 to 24, 1951. After thorough discussions, they formulated a program of 22 principles which according to them were the irreducible minimum for an Islamic State. The formula given by them is commonly known as the Ulema's 22 Points. Unfortunately, these points are not followed by us. The beauty of these 22 points is that members of all sect have been given equal rights and the term 'citizen' has been used for each individual, regardless of their sect.

We follow the 1973 constitution, which is acknowledged and appreciated by all key stakeholders. Islamic ideology council has played a key role and realizes the main focus of Pakistan's formation; in some countries where these councils are not playing their role we see internal distortion for example, in Somalia, Al Shabaab and AL Hisbul Adalah, both agreed on Islamic order but Somalia is still going through many difficulties. While Islamic councils have taken major steps in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon because there is no democratic solution and these councils have a tendency to move towards violence. But in the 1973 constitution of Pakistan, all democratic parties, Islamic councils, and minorities agreed on the same points and signed the constitution.

However, during 1979-1980, Pakistan's national narrative was blurring in front of the world. Pakistan was being seen as a violent state and was portrayed negatively in the eyes of the international community.

“Pakistan is a headache for the world” - these words were used for Pakistan at an international forum. During that time, Pakistan’s image was distorted; however, things have changed since then and Pakistan has achieved a better position in the world, with many developed countries taking keen interest in mega projects of Pakistan like CPEC.

Saying that, we as a nation have not done enough for our country. Supplementary efforts are required on our behalf to deliver Pakistan’s true narrative and present a positive image of Pakistan in the international realm. At the international forum, Pakistan needs to stand as a united and peaceful state full of opportunities. Major decisions regarding the country should be made while keeping in view the interests of every segment because every individual is a representative of its state and hence it is the moral duty of a statesman to maintain the reputation of the country.



Pakistan is a peaceful nation that will not let the terrorists use its land for militant activities. Pakistan also gives equal rights to all groups, including women. Media needs to project Pakistan’s national narrative to promote the true picture of Pakistan. If religious institutions also promote this, it would aid in spreading the true narrative of Pakistan. Parliament also needs to play a key role to make Pakistan more inclusive and coherent. Pakistan’s national anthem symbolizes the true essence of our nation.

Projects like CPEC are also playing a major role in economic growth of Pakistan as this has created an opportunity for the developed and developing states to engage in trade. In the end, I would like to say that we need to make our foreign policy with regards to our national interests in order to provide a better future for our children and Pakistan.



Barrister Zafarullah Khan, Former Minister for Law and Justice

Let me start by thanking Pakistan House, especially Mr. Rana Athar Javed for inviting me as a speaker on this very interesting conference. From the very first day, Pakistan

The first factor in determining the national narrative is geography. We have been living in this region for many thousand years; for example the Mehrgarh civilization, the Indus civilization, Taxila, and in later periods Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, and today Islamabad. The geography of various regions have determined the different characteristics of different people. The people of Punjab with lot of water supply and plains have a very different attitude compared to the people of Balochistan who are living a tough life in the mountains with scarce water. Similarly Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have different cultures and behavior patterns. Mostly, this is being ignored in Pakistan's national discourse.

The geography of a region determines human consciousness. The psyche of Punjabis is totally different from the psyche of Sindhis. I could only appreciate this distinction when I was posted in Sind; belonging from Punjab, it was difficult for me to understand the pathos and the ethos of Sindhis. Hence, geography is an important factor and it has to be taken into consideration.

Second determining factor of national narrative is history. We have in record, the history of the Greek invasion, Ghaznavis, Ghauris, Lodhis, Mughals, the British, Sikh, and lastly our independence. These foreign alien rulers have both contributed to and also adopted from us various aspects such as food, Sufi culture, etc. A major part of this history is based on our own experiences since Pakistan's 70 years of creation. In the history of Pakistan there has been emphasis on various parts of the national narrative at different points in time; different development models, political contours and type of intellectual debates. Pakistan has challenges of modernity and we have to find ways of balancing it with traditions.

The third factor defining national narrative is religion. Majority of Pakistani population is Muslim. However, various shades of Islam exist in Pakistan which sometimes can create conflicts amongst sects. While some shades of Islam negotiated with local culture and adopted traditions such as the Qawali, classical Islam did not appreciate this amalgamation of culture with religion. In Pakistan, various people associate with different factions of Islam; Barelvi, Sunni, Shia and Ahl-e-Hadis, etc. the practice of Islam, in Pakistan, has also adopted certain aspects of Hinduism and is even influenced by the Arab culture, and Sufism.

Lastly, the peculiar geography, history, and religious background have developed a synthetic culture; religion when coincides with culture can enrich but when it conflicts it leads to distortion. Muslims have mostly been tolerant throughout history; they have respected local cultures and traditions instead of destroying them. In the past decade, however, a small fraction of the Muslim population has caused distress.

As far as Pakistan is concerned, there has been an ongoing debate on the nexus of culture and religion. With this background, there are a few elements which have complicated the situation. First is the issue of globalization. Then, there is the political issue of new world order, and the new economic order which is mostly based on economic exploitation and inequality. Lastly, Pakistan's own baggage of history of the last 70 years - our failure as a society and state in certain respects. This, however, does not mean that we have completely failed.

My considered view is that the Pakistan of today is much better than the Pakistan of yesterday; this it is not a political slogan. In terms of Pakistan's defense and nuclear capabilities, for the last 20-30 years, we are confident. The youth of Pakistan has also progressed despite the many problems that we as a nation face. Hence, we have plenty of reasons to be optimistic about the future of Pakistan.



The positive step that we have taken as a nation is to start the process of contemplation at various levels. Defining Pakistan's national narrative and the means to actualize it requires serious deliberations. One of the concrete efforts being made is the National Action Plan (NAP). All spectrums of parties: political, military, civilians, media, religious scholars, extend their approval after a series of debate and consideration.

After overcoming the malice of extremism, Pakistan is proceeding towards tolerance. In order to smoothen this process, two key steps need to be taken: Firstly, we need to accept plurality in all forms - religious, cultural, linguistic, regional and political. Secondly, the rights of the people must be accepted in totality including: rule by consent, socioeconomic justice, political empowerment, women's rights, minority rights, and children's right etc. Until and unless we accept this, we cannot pave our way towards establishing a peaceful society. If a society is in conflict with the state, progress becomes difficult. Lack of provision of basic rights in a society also hinders the path to development for a nation.

Keynote Speaker 3:



Mr Aamir Ghauri,
CResident Editor, The News Islamabad

Thank you for providing me with an opportunity to be a part of this important conference on the 'Actualization of National Narrative'. Many question come to my mind;

do we need a national narrative? And if so, then why? It is because the world that we live in is changing and with it, we are also changing. Earlier, we had a narrative but we kept changing our national narratives. How can we say with assurance that the narrative that we acquire now will survive in the next few years? If we create a narrative would it be universally accepted? Would we acquire a national narrative through the unity of the nation or through the pressure from external and internal forces?

I believe the incident of 9/11, changed many things, and Pakistan is not the only country trying to find a new narrative. Various countries considered to be modern, progressive, and democratic are also trying to find new narratives, for example of France. When we are trying to create a narrative in a society which has lived on for thousands of years, why are we still suffering from the absence of ideas? We have been borrowing, from the French movement from last years, an idea called "Ponso unique" which means single thought. According to this notion, there needs to be unanimity of thought and everyone needs to do exactly the same thing, otherwise we might not be good nationals, good Pakistanis, or good Muslims. But can't we actually have a different narrative than our friends, neighbours, and our own family?

The challenge faced by Pakistan's educational institutions is that the intellectuals of the society are confronted by a new brand of fake-intellectuals. Every night we see people discussing issues on the television screen, but now is not the time for words, we need to take an action. Unfortunately, for the past few years, we have come to another very problematic phase where we think that morality can run a society. Any society that thinks that morality can run it will fail. If societies have to succeed they actually have to follow rules. Legality can run a society. Laws are the same for everybody, while everybody's morality van be entirely different. In a recent attempt, we tried creating a narrative and call it "Pagham-e- Pakistan".

You probably would have heard of organizations like Wafaq ul Madaris Al-Arabia, Wafaq Ul Madaris Al Salafia, Wafak madaris Shia, etc, but I reckon you don't know where these places are. There was a debate that the University of Cambridge and Oxford were also madrasas. On one level they were religious schools and their names were also embedded in religion for example, Christ, Jesus College, Queen Mary Model, etc.



Pakistan has a rich history and despite the fact that we are a young nation state of only 70 years old, we have successfully overcome numerous difficulties. Seventy years back Pakistan did not even exist which shows how narrow Pakistan's history is as compared to China, Iran and Afghanistan. In the past few years, I believe it was essential for a nation-state like ours to exert itself. I have seen a democratic state working in London. Some people might not agree with my statement but I have seen that a dictatorial state cannot be democratic, in fact the society needs to be democratic. It is essential for the states to keep an eye on the people to maintain law and order.

In the last thirty years, I have seen that state authority is shrinking in Pakistan. We have been walking into plans that were designed by external actors and by doing so we have lost thousands of people. Furthermore, Pakistan has also lost billions of dollars in trade. This, however, has occurred due to our own negligence. It is for the state to have an authority over its citizen in order to make sure that citizens do not fall into externally designed traps.

We have been serving the west and ignoring the rest; this has created a mess in Pakistan. The question is how can we fix this? I consider we need to go back to where it all started. History is important but we need to study history instead of remembering history. Muhammad Ail Jinnah is my role model as nation-building but we actually have to compare him with other role models of the late 18th century, late 19th century, and the early 20th century. We have seen the people of Garibaldi who have different countries on the basis of different languages. We also have the example of Italians. In Germany, we see Bismarck using the same argument that all Germanic people should have Germany.

If we look at the early 20th century, when the world starts changing, it was the time after the WW1 and the Ottoman Empire was squeezed to the size of Turkey. We saw Kamal Atta Turk and Bismarck are great nation builders. In modern political history they had Germans they had Italians while Turkey had Turks. However, at the time of independence of Pakistan, Pakistan did not have Pakistanis which mean Jinnah had to make extra effort; firstly, politically speaking, he builds up at a time when nations and nation-states and politics was happening at a global level. Jinnah had a tight grip on his ideas and was able to sell it to the Indian Muslims, by making them realize that they could be a different nation if they have a different religion. Hence, we not only need to study our history but also need to write it to inform the world about Pakistan's national narrative.

The language barrier is another key issue and if we start teaching in our national language, especially in primary schools, this could be a good step. Our schools need to take steps to ensure that rather than teaching us the history and geography of Norway, we need to fully understand the geography and history of our own country. We need to examine our own identities - Sindhi, Balochi, Punjabi, Pathan. Mr. Jinnah in his famous speech on 11th August 1947 said, "We had the green democracy because the money was coming in dollars and dollars are green".

And then we have Bhutto's Islamic socialism, Islamization process by Mr. Zia, 10-12 years of confusing democracy that questioned whether they are democrats, autocrats, or Khalifas, then a General came and talked about enlightening moderation, and then we have an angry democracy. Currently, conditions are not that stable since we don't have any allies in the international community; every state safeguards its own interest. In the end, I will conclude my speech by saying, before we embark upon developing a national narrative, we need to be clear about who we are and how can we move forward.

Noteworthy Snippets

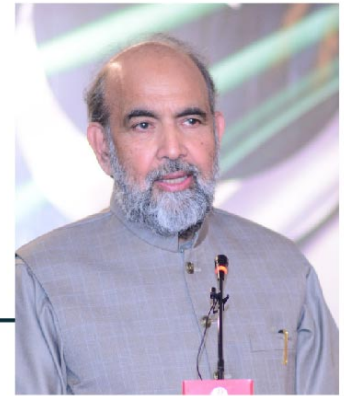


“The popular approach of the people of Pakistan is progressive and modern; both in terms of the desire to economically progress and to educate the next generation.”

Ms. Zubaida Jalal

“Pakistan is a peaceful nation that will not let the terrorists use its land for militant activities.”

Professor Dr. Qibla Ayaz



“After overcoming the malice of extremism we are moving gradually toward a tolerant Pakistan. There are two things to be done. Firstly, we need to accept plurality; religious, cultural, linguistic, regional and political. Secondly, the rights of people have to be accepted in totality, including: rule by consent, socioeconomic justice, political empowerment, women’s rights, minority rights, and children’s right etc.”

Barrister Zafarullah Khan

“We have come to another very problematic phase where we have decided that morality can run a society. Any society that thinks that morality can run it will fail. If societies have to succeed they actually have to follow rules.”

Mr. Aamir Ghauri





“Pakistan nowadays is facing an identity crisis because of the burden of history. Defining identity is subjective in nature and we must relate our identity to the modern time and space.”

Mr. Khursheed Nadeem

“Media is Janus-faced. It is both connector and a divider, a builder and a destroyer, an energizer as well as a parasite, it nurtures responsibility but also inculcates Darwinism, and it depends on sources but also the society.”

Dr. Zubair Iqbal Ghori



“There are many ways to reform society, and one can be all moral people without practicing any religion; but there is another good society where you can be good Muslims, good Christians, good Jews, and good Hindus and so on.”

Dr. Nadeem Omar Tarar

“The biggest issue regarding Madrassah reform is that the government is unaware of the contours and basic elements of Madrassah; what it is, how it works, what system it follows.”

Mr. Muhammad Israr Madani





“Targeting a country is not enough, but projecting our national narrative in an efficient manner through lobbying is essential as the dimensions of war have changed.”

Ms. Anika Nisar

“Being a citizen of a democratic country, it is the right of every individual to have an opinion, every individual has the right to question his/her government’s policies.”

Mr Sabookh Syed



“Art of speech has attraction; it stimulates human emotions. So is the case with the hate speech, as it trigger human emotions. We need to understand that art of speech possesses deep meanings.”

Mr. Rashad Bukhari

Mr. Khursheed Nadeem, Scholar, Media Person and Author



Identity is associated with the context in discussion; it is influenced by the environmental factors as well. Globally, our country becomes our identity; in a religious circle, our religion becomes our identity; in a diverse ethnic and racial circle, our ethnicity and race becomes our identity. It is not necessary for a person to have a single identity. An individual can associate with multiple identities. After Pakistan came into existence, our national identity was not defined properly.

Before independence, the concern of Pakistan movement was to gain an independent state for the Muslim minority in United India, but after the independence, this minority became a majority. So, now it had gained the power to have a control over its affairs, and that of the non-Muslim minorities as well. Hence, the whole context was transformed. However, unfortunately, we could not realize how to fully utilize this newly attained power. We started perceiving it along the religious paradigm, even though in light of the two-nation theory the demands were social. Even though Allama Iqbal's Allahabad Speech was the basis of our independence, in my opinion, the speech has been widely misunderstood. In that speech, Iqbal had said that if we were living with the believers of holy books (i.e. Christians, Jews, and Muslims) there would not have been a need for us to demand a separate state. However, we have a problem with the Hindu majority since the dominating interpretation of Hinduism is Brahmanism, which is rooted in the creation of social classes. While on the other hand, the Muslims have a unique identity, and there is no space for social classes in the religion. So, this idea had more of sociological base rather than a religious base.

After gaining statehood, the Muslim league had no intellectual capital except for Iqbal's Allahabad speech and some of his statements. Our founding fathers, when giving statements regarding the formation of an Islamic welfare state, did not have an intellectual basis; hence, during that time period, the theory was developed by Molana Mawdudi. This theory outlined aspects regarding what an Islamic state is, and what are its modern characteristics. The Muslim League had no other option, but to adopt the theory of Moulana Mawdudi.

Before independence, when Pakistan movement was at its peak, questions were raised as to what an Islamic state would look like. Hence, the Muslim League formed a group by involving some religious scholars which prominently included Moulana Ishaq,

Before independence, when Pakistan movement was at its peak, questions were raised as to what an Islamic state would look like. Hence, the Muslim League formed a group by involving some religious scholars which prominently included Moulana Ishaq, Moulana Mawdudi, and Syed Sulaiman Nadvi. On the recommendations of this group, Moulana Ishaq wrote a book, "Islam Ka Siyasi Nizam" (The Political System of Islam); this was the only intellectual asset of the Muslim League. So, essentially, the intellectual gap for the two-nation theory was filled by the contemplations of Moulana Mawdudi, thereby, also influencing the Objective's Resolution. However, we are still facing a dilemma regarding the concepts the Islamic State and modern nation-State. Hence, our perception of identity must have changed after gaining independence. Although, before independence an idea of a nation based on religion was projected, but after independence, the nation was defined by the geography - this contradiction still continues.

Pakistan nowadays is facing an identity crisis because of the burden of history. Defining identity is subjective in nature and we must relate our identity to the modern time and space. In conclusion, I would say that this debate must continue, to increase our knowledge in regards to our identity.

Dr. Zubair Iqbal Ghorl,

Senior Analyst, Visiting Fellow Sustainable
Development Policy Institute (SDPI)



In order to achieve a collective national integration there are some areas and avenues where national integration still needs to be achieved. Now, we have achieved a consensus that the monopoly of using power rests with the state, and I am particularly surprised to hear the very word, “now”. Is this consensus based on our present conditions or the injunctions of Quran and hadith? This becomes more problematic when some groups still claim to have monopoly of using power, and in a recent incident of a student

his teacher, this problem was highlighted practically. When he was asked, why he didn’t approach the judicial system to address his grievances, he replied, “What is law?”

If we look at the classical approaches of media, there are three approaches. First, is the media as gatekeeper; second, is the social responsibility of media; third, is the media’s role in agenda setting. But it is important to highlight here that media is Janus-faced; it is both a connector and a divider, a builder and a destroyer, an energizer as well as a parasite, it nurtures responsibility but also inculcates Darwinism, it depends on the sources but also the society. Hence, it has conflicting representations in the society. It conflicts between objectivity, and commercialism; demands vs. pressures; technology vs. capacity; ethics vs. competition; dynamics vs. expectations; and optics vs. values. Media is very the embodiment of the overall cultural values that Pakistani people are carrying. It loves emotionalism, it endeavours commercialism, and it promotes hysteria to gain audience.

The question ahead of us is how to achieve national integration? There have been some global models, such as the elite consensus model given by Herman & Chomsky which posits that there has to be a consensus within the elites of the society on certain areas of national interest. According to this perspective, we have to define who the elites in our society are and what the elements of national interest are. Regarding the first part of question, elite means every stakeholder which can affect or can be affected by the certain actions of the state; it can be the trade unions, cultural organizations, religious conglomerates, companies, and the media. Now, the question that still remains is how to achieve a consensus among these stakeholders? This can be achieved in wars, calamities, and a national crisis. In situations like these, the elites of the society join hands without any external influence. You can recall the recent skirmish between India and Pakistan, during which the whole nation had developed a consensus on one point. There were no schisms, cleavages, or issues, and this was the prime example of elite consensus. However, the big question that we have is how to achieve this consensus during peaceful times.



Moving on to the characteristics of Pakistani Media, we observe that there is a culture of breaking news syndrome, “CNNization” (releasing news immediately), and denationalisation for commercial purposes. Secondly, a new concept imported from the Indian media is called, “packaging” i.e. making a package of three minutes where all the analysts are in agreement and media claims to have presented a variety of perspectives. Thirdly, optic preference is also used, which is based on the idea of, “seeing is believing”. Fourthly, the lack of capacity is also a serious issue; unfortunately, we are still working on the classical approaches of media in our universities and have failed to nurture our students to invigorate in them the problem-solving approach. Finally, there is also a lack of cross-media ownership in Pakistan.

In conclusion, I will present a short-term solution, a British model from which we could borrow from. Pakistan has tried to replicate the common model in the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), but there are issues that are hampering our growth in many aspects of Pakistani governance system; PEMRA is also ailing from similar problems. Moreover, the British Cabinet has a subsidiary organization called Civil Contingencies Unit that was formed in 2007 and its purpose is to deal with all the national issues under one umbrella. This unit is discussed in detail in David Millar’s book, “Tell Me Lies: Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq”. On this platform, I would like to propose that a similar unit should be established in Pakistan, and all the stakeholders, including media, must be a part of it. It is also important to mention the national integration model by Bruce Jackson, which posits that social cohesion leads to national cohesion, which then creates elite consensus and helps achieve national integration. It must be clear, however, that in any society or state, a complete consensus cannot be achieved and the voices of disagreement should also be encouraged.

Dr. Nadeem Omar Tarar,

Executive Director, Centre for Culture and
Development Islamabad



I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Rana Athar Javed and Pakistan House for arranging this event. It is very important that we arrange such conferences where people from different cross-sections of the society representing a diverse body of thought come together and interact. Professor Dr. Qibla Ayaz, Chairman Islamic Ideology Council, is here, Mr Khursheed Nadeem, a well celebrated scholar and author, is also present today. If we talk about people from secular paradigm, I fall in that

Some of you might be wondering what a narrative is since either war or religious strategists use this term, directly or indirectly, to influence the public opinion. Narrative is nothing but storytelling. The very primitive humans used the cave paintings to tell their stories and those cave paintings were part of their magic realm - through those images they predicted their futures and through those images they planned their hunting strategies. The process of storytelling is as old as human culture. There are two types of narratives; fictional and non-fictional. Broadcast journalism is a non-fictional narrative, and is based on reporting on an event and telling the story about an event. Even today, there are certain narratives emerging out of this conference. According to the novel by George Orwell called the Animal Farm, all men are equal but some are more equal than the others. This is true for human cultures.



Narrative is also built through art, for example, literature and paintings. All the European painters painted about Christian theology and Christian architect etc. Shahi Qila (Lahore Fort) and Taj Mahal are the other examples of narratives being built through art. Pakistan day parade is one example where billions are spent to build a narrative that Pakistan has a strong military and to exhibit Pakistan's defense and military capabilities.

There are certain narratives which are grounded into ideologies. Objectives Resolution (1949) is an example where an entire social and political drive was steered towards reforming society through religious observant Muslims. There are many ways to reform society, and one can be all moral people without practicing any religion; but there is another good society where you can be good Muslims, good Christians, good Jews, and good Hindus and so on. Then, there is a society where a set of rules or constitution can provide a material basis for creating a narrative.

The politics of narrative-building, initially, came from American think tanks. What we Pakistanis call corruption or nepotism in our culture, Americans call it lobbying. If politicians in America want to swing public opinion about any political party or a person, they hire highly paid journalists who can pave ways for them.

Second Session Speeches



Mr. Muhammad Israr Madani,

President International Research Council (IRCRA)



First of all, I would like to talk about the Madrassa reforms and then about counter-violent extremism. The history of Madaris in Pakistan goes back to the 17th century in the era of Mullah Nizam-u-din Sehalvi. He established the first Madrassa named as Madrassa-Firangi in the era of Aurangzeb Alamgir. The notable characteristic was, the scholars of this Madrassa were a part of the government structure/administration.

Apart from their association with the educational sector, they served in courts and other professional realms as well. Another characteristic was that the Madrassa was based on the ideals of the Hanafi school of thought but both Shias and Sunnis attended it. Khanwade-Ijtehad is an educational center of Lakhnavi Shias and most of them studied at this Madrassa. Independent Madaris were established in Pakistan after its independence.

Prior to 1980's there were three categories of the Madaris in Pakistan: Maktab for hifz, beginner's Madaris, and Jamiat for graduation level Madaris. From Quaid-e-Azam's era, November 1947, to Yahya's era in 1970, a commission was formed under Air Marshall Noor Khan. In 1986 Permanent Commission for Islamization of education was formed under the leadership of Dr. Raziuddin. Despite the many efforts there was no sustainable and comprehensive solution to the problem.

There are five educational boards for Madaris in Pakistan; Wifaqul Madaris (Deobandi board), Bareilvi board (Tanzeem-ul- Madaris), Wifaqul Madaris Salafia (Salafi board), Wifaqul Madaris ul Shia (Ahl-Tashee) and Raabit ul Madaris (Jamat-e-Islami). These were registered with the University Grant Commission in the 1980's during Zia's period and degrees were being granted in MA Islamic studies and MA Arabic studies. Commissions were formed by later governments as well. Similarly, efforts were made by Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto's governments to reform the Madaris in Pakistan. Pakistan Madrassa education board was established by Musharraf in 2001 but after a period of time this board was rejected by Itihad Tanzimiah-e-Madaris Pakistan (ITMP). Even though this board still exists, there has been little or no influence over the decision making.



In 2010, these five boards entered in agreement with the government of Pakistan, whereas they were allowed to function as independent boards, conduct examinations, and grant degrees independently. Later in 2010, after the 18th amendment, the subject of education was devolved. This has been a challenge for the provinces since there is no policy framework, course of action or authority for registration of Madaris and the old data is still being used.

The biggest issue regarding the Madrassa reform is that the government is unaware of the contours and basic elements of Madaris; the government lacks knowledge on the system that Madaris follow and the curriculum used in these institutions. Due to a communication gap between the government and Madaris, there lacks understanding and consensus. According to Pakistan Education Statistics (2016) there are a total 32,272 Madaris in Pakistan. However, when we collected data we found the total number to be 22,712. The gap of 10000 Madaris between the data collected from the two sources is problematic and questionable. We don't have a proper existing structure to maintain and keep a check on the Madaris in Pakistan.

Secondly, the religious leadership, whether ITMP or others, have maintained a stance that absolves them of the responsibility and puts it on the government instead. They are not serious as far as Madrassa reforms are concerned. Thirdly, the religious sects have political leadership and hence, they use it as an instrument of political pressure. In the political arena, trade-offs take place between these actors and reforms are neglected. Madrassa is a complete force in itself and an alternative education system; it is not merely a small pressure group as considered by many. Conspiracy also exists among the religious factions who perceive Madrassa reforms as a Western agenda. This makes it challenging for the state, the public, or the media to expand the discourse on this subject.

During the 1980's, the religious education board was divided into five groups. This, however, was unnecessary since the Madrasah's education system was already inclusive of every sect and school of thought. There should have been only one education board for Madaris as there is Higher Education Commission for universities,

irrespective of sect, caste, or creed. This segregation resulted in a divide between the students of various sects as there lacked a foundation for communication and interaction between them. Students felt alienated from the mainstream society as well. Hence, we must develop a system or a framework to encourage the interaction among these factions.

As far as the curriculum of Madaris is concerned, there is always a debate on introducing changes in the curriculum. Some are of the opinion that extremism is caused due to the content of the curriculum. However, it is problematic to witness how extremism has been connected with religion due to the actions of only a few people. There are Madaris that teach the beliefs of other school of thoughts but at the same time they would offer courses in Rad-Firaq-e-Batila (teachings that generate hatred against other sects). This environment does exist and it cannot be denied.

A famous American philosopher and author of “What is Madrassah”, Dr. Ibrahim Musa, discusses how Madaris have been projected as a platform of violence and extremists in Hollywood and numerous other documentaries. This narrative was built by the Western media especially after the 9/11 incident. This narrative, however, is not based on facts; there are various underlying reasons for extremism which are not entirely directly related to Madaris. According to Booking Institutes’ reports, there is no direct link between extremism and Madaris.

Pakistani scholars must respond to these allegations intelligibly because it does not represent the truth. For example, Hussain Haqqani recently spoke to an international audience stating that the banned terrorist outfits’ recruitment was carried out through Madaris. However, the story on the ground is different. Out of 30000 Madaris, hardly any 10 would be linked to Saeed or Mansood Azhar; one will hardly find any direct link of the majority of Madaris to these outfits. There is a need to develop a clarity in the understanding of Madaris.

Another problem that Pakistan is facing regarding extremism is sectarianism; division of Shia and Sunni schools of thought, and within these sects further divisions. These divisions are carving their space in Madaris, which needs immediate attention. Sectarianism is one of the reasons that Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) is carrying out its recruitment here - and same recruitment process goes for all the terrorist organizations. Furthermore, all sects have countless set of Fatwas usually against other sects. However, this could be easily dealt with through the constitution of Pakistan. All Islamists, seculars, liberals, and political and religious leaders mutually agree on the definition as given in the constitution. Furthermore, using Fatwa to declare someone non-Muslim is against the law and constitution. Hence, to tackle this issue we must work on the grassroots level.

The system of Madrassa must be revisited. The students coming out of Madaris do not have access and opportunity in the job market. Thus, the state needs to improve the curriculum by making it more inclusive and modern. The mistrust between the state and Madaris must also be addressed at the local, provincial, and national level. Furthermore, religious leadership, such as the ITMP, and pressure groups must be engaged in talks as well.

Ms. Aniq Nisar,

Anchor-person, Capital TV



Building a national narrative for Pakistan is difficult when chances with conflict with India are high. It wasn't surprising that as soon as the Pulwama attack occurred, Pakistan was blamed without any investigation. This approach was witnessed in the past as well, after Uri and Pathankot attacks. The history of accusing Pakistan during the election environment in India, is being repeated. Even though Pakistan rejected these accusations, it was not able to appropriately project its stance. Unfortunately, for a long period of

a long period of time, Pakistan did not even have a foreign minister in the past government. When a state is not represented by a foreign minister, a huge gap is created in the diplomatic realm. Meanwhile, Indians are way ahead of us in this regard; they are lobbying in foreign countries, and their embassies have a strong connection with their diaspora around the world.

National Narrative is a blend of three important factors: firstly, foreign policy; secondly, role of media; and thirdly, the role of public. Public is greatly involved in building a national narrative due to the initiation of fifth-generation warfare, and the increasing impact of social media.

In order to present our national narrative, we shall have an effective diplomatic strategy to influence policy-makers in other countries; contrary to our ineffective strategy right now, the Indians have been highly influential globally. For example a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) official recently posted that Pakistan's weak points must be targeted through giving an international stature to rebels in Balochistan. It is important here to mention that to build a strong national narrative, it is necessary to have a singularity of thought, which is not possible without being aware of threats. Presently, we are facing threats from India, especially from its right-wing elements who believe that Pakistan was a part of larger India, therefore, it must be ceased back.

To deal with threats coming from India, we should strengthen our economic capabilities, and our media industry too shall be expanded to English medium. Moreover, publicly, we should discourage the use of exorbitant imports, and in this regard, I appreciate the government's policy on taxing imports. This will create a synergy between government and the public, where the public will realize the importance of its role.



Furthermore, even if we have disagreements within the country, they should be channelized to improve our status, rather than projecting them to the foreign forces. When Mr. Ashraf Ghani tweeted on February 7, the international community did not respond. Thus, the question is as to why the international community is seeing Afghanistan and India from a different angle?

Another gap in building a national narrative is that politicians in Pakistan are not ready to make a consensus on the issues of national importance. Whenever, our nation is to achieve unity in terms of national narrative, politicians in opposition would give statements disrupting that unity. In the past, it was done by Mr. Imran Khan, and presently by Mr. Bilawal Bhutto. When it comes to national security, opinions of individual shall not matter, but national narrative should matter. While on a visit to the United States, I met an Indian Journalist who in our personal conversation shared good views regarding Pakistan, but when addressing the American audience he would target Pakistan. So, our criticism in regard to policies shall be within Pakistan and that too on right forums.

Targeting a country is not enough, but projecting our national narrative in an efficient manner through lobbying is essential, as the dimensions of war have been changed. Recently, we shot down two Indian jets, but the Indians tried to propagate that they also shot one of our jet. Although, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) and the government tried to project our narrative, but due to lack of English TV channels in Pakistan we could not effectively influence the international opinion. While on the other hand, India, due to the presence of English news channels, was able to influence the international opinion much more effectively. Hence, the government of Pakistan must take steps to fill these voids in order to positively project our national narrative.

Mr. Sabookh Syed,

Blogger and Social Media Activist



When I was a child, I was told to always speak the truth. After some years I came to know that truth has many kinds. Then, after joining the field of journalism, I realized that there are different versions of truth. In journalism, we are instructed to include the narrative of both sides, even if one is a false narrative; crafting the story is very important to maintain a balance for both sides.

In a dialogue, it is important to seek counter narratives. That is how the opinions and arguments are built - and these arguments are important for any negotiation process. The importance of dialogue cannot be compromised, it is important in peace as well as in war times. In the Quran and in other sacred books as well, great importance is given to dialogue and peace. Islamic history is full of such examples where prisoners of war were forgiven and released; these were messages of peace for the mankind.

Today, the world has changed and we are bombarded with the information of various kinds. Unable to handle and understand the magnitude of information, our youth has become directionless. Until and unless we sort out these issues, we are not going to be a well governed society.

Role of social media in our society is very important nowadays. We all are actively using social media to convey our narratives. Social media has replaced books; books were once believed to be the only source of information and knowledge. The information travels fast in today's contemporary world. Since every individual is following some ideology or narrative, it has become hard to draw a distinction between right and wrong. There are many advantages of social media as well and we cannot deny the positive changes it has brought in our society. From social activism for minority rights to the women rights, social media has played a vital role in making a positive impact in our society.

Being a citizen of a democratic country, it is the right of every individual to have an opinion, and every individual has the right to question his/her government's policies. Individuals or group criticizing the policies of the government does not equate to being anti-state, and suppressing them is not a solution at all. Every democratic state needs to listen to various factions and their pleas in order to come up with viable solutions. Social media has given a voice to activists who were often suppressed. Freedom of opinion plays an important role in the development of a welfare of the society but citizens must learn to practice this freedom of opinion and the liberty in order to effectively express themselves. It is important to understand that everything operates within a framework,

and the same is the case with the freedom of opinion. Every opinion has some roots, which may be embedded in some information or ideology.

In case of Pakistan, social media has damaged the foundations of its society. The social fabric of this society has been injured enormously because of some foreign interventions and propaganda. Many ethnic and sectarian conflicts were animated through social media and many separatists are actively misusing social media to create divide in the Pakistani society. Unfortunately, social media has also acted as a platform by terrorist organizations for their recruitment process; Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) is a one big example. Furthermore, states are also using social media to spread their narratives and propaganda against other states.

In the end, I would like to say that we need to make the ethical use of social media a part of our educational curriculum. We need to teach the children in schools and Madaris about the usage of social media and how it can bring positive changes in our society.



Mr. Rashad Bukhari,

Chairman Mandli - A Network for Art, Culture and Education



I would like to thank Pakistan House for inviting me to speak on an important topic.

There are many questions that need to be addressed: How are narratives built through social media? How do people believe in propaganda and base their opinions on misinformation? And how are people persuaded into believing false notions? These are the questions that need to be answered with evidence. This is an art - also known as the art of persuasion.

Art of speech has attraction; it stimulates human emotions. So is the case with the hate speech, as it trigger human emotions. We need to understand that art of speech possesses deep meanings. In propaganda this art is used very efficiently.

Martin Luther King, Jr. through his speech was able to gather hundreds and thousands of African-Americans to fight for their civil rights. This shows the importance of speech in narrative building.

In 1937, Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) was established in America. This institution worked well to study the primitive propaganda techniques - they published books on how a propaganda is built and what are the important factors in building a propaganda. Noam Chomsky, an American linguist, in his book “Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media” says that our opinions are manufactured for us by the bigger actors; everything is programmed for us. These propaganda techniques are also used to create social, ethnic and religious divides. Portrayal of Muslims in the contemporary world is an example not hidden from anyone.

The book, “Thinking, Fast and Slow” by Daniel Kahneman, states that human nature comprises of two systems; “System 1” is fast, instinctive and emotional; whereas “System 2” is slower, more deliberative, and logical. It examines emotional thought versus the logical thought. It means that propaganda targets our intuitive and emotional system.

There are seven devices of propaganda;

1. Bandwagon Propaganda
2. Card Stacking Propaganda
3. Plain Folks Propaganda
4. Testimonial Propaganda
5. Glittering Generalities Propaganda
6. Name Calling Propaganda
7. Transfer Propaganda

1. Bandwagon Propaganda

Bandwagon propaganda is about persuading the target audience to take action. It makes the audience believe that they are part of some mass movement. It's about creating an urge amongst people to become a part of the "in crowd".

2. Card Stacking Propaganda

It involves the deliberation of incomplete information; facts are molded in the way that public starts to believe in them. The term 'card stacking' originated from gambling and occurs when players try to stack decks in their favor.

3. Plain Folks Propaganda

Political or business leaders act like a common man to associate on a personal level with the general public. This type of propaganda is usually used during the elections.

4. Testimonial Propaganda

The technique involves the usage of famous celebrities or political leaders that are trusted by people. Through those celebrities, a false narrative is delivered to the public.

5. Glittering Generalities Pro

A technique where propagandists use emotional appeal to influence the audience. Things are generalized in such a way that audience start to connect themselves with those generalizations.

6. Name Calling Propaganda

Using the hate speech to create a negative perception or opinion about someone.

7. Transfer Propaganda

This type of propaganda uses a technique to project certain qualities (this can either be positive or negative) of a person, ideology or object, to other things and people.

I conclude my speech by saying that it is the state's responsibility to resolve negative elements that disrupt the social and political order. Shutting down everything that stands against state's institutions is not a solution for the social divide in Pakistan. Rather, it is an important duty of a state to provide safe and secure environment to its citizens where they can practice their right of liberty.

Analysis:

The ensuing analysis of speeches highlights the significance of constructing and maintaining Pakistan's national narrative - an amalgamation of components such as, geography, history, and religion. To ensure that Pakistan has a viable narrative, the geographical distinctions need to be meticulously analysed to cater for the impacts of geography on the culture and values of the society. Moreover, a comprehensive understanding of Pakistan's history is essential in constructing a holistic narrative. Pakistan is a religiously diverse country with followers of various factions and sects of Islam, as well as other religions. Thus, keeping in consideration these key elements, it is important to accept and respect diversity in terms of language, religion, and culture in order to actualize the national narrative of Pakistan.

In today's contemporary world, the supply of information, the source of information, and the way it constructs the narrative, are all very important in understanding the intricacy of this subject. With the mainstream use of social media, distinguishing between real and fake news has become problematic. Thus, media should play an important role in the filtration process of news in order to preserve the real narrative of Pakistan. The ethical use of social media should be incorporated in the educational curriculum, to demonstrate to the youth in educational institutes about the usage of social media and the positive changes it can bring in our society.

The process of contemplation on the national narrative of Pakistan, at various levels, needs to be initiated by the government; defining Pakistan's national narrative and the means to actualize it requires serious deliberations. All relevant parties and stakeholders - political, military, civilians, media, and religious scholars – should be a part of the process. It is important to include every segment of the society, whether male, female or youth, in the whole process because until and unless we do not value and acknowledge diversity of input, we will not be able to move forward, strengthen and remain united as a nation. Hence, the government should make sure that the national narrative of Pakistan is as such that the interests of every segment is taken into consideration.

Supplementary efforts are also required to deliver Pakistan's true narrative and present a positive image of Pakistan in the international realm; at the international forum, Pakistan needs to stand as a united and peaceful state.

The following recommendations for policy practitioners and concerned quarters are proposed:

1. Constructing an Inclusive National Narrative

National Narrative is a blend of many important factors such as, foreign policy, media, and the public. In order to make sure that Pakistan's national narrative represents every citizen of Pakistan, we need to embrace plurality in all forms - religious, cultural, linguistic, regional and political. The National Action Plan (NAP) should cater for the interests of every citizen to ensure that a collective and mutually approved narrative is articulated.

2. Role of Media in Presenting Pakistan's Positive Image

With the mainstream use of social media, filtering real news from fake news becomes challenging. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure that negative propaganda and proliferation of fake news that weakens Pakistan's image, nationally and internationally, is culminated. Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) needs to project Pakistan's achievements and positive aspects to highlight the national narrative and to promote the true picture of Pakistan.

3. Bridging the Sectarian Divide

The division between the Shia and Sunni schools of thought, has been used by extremist elements to disturb the social order in Pakistan and polarize the two sects – this has hindered harmony within the Pakistani society. These divisions are carving their space in Madaris, which has led to provocation of countless Fatwas against the other sect. This needs the immediate attention of the government and could be dealt with through the constitution of Pakistan. Since all groups, Islamists, seculars, liberals, and political and religious leaders, are in mutual agreement with the constitution, and the usage of Fatwa to declare someone non-Muslim is against the law and constitution, the government must tackle this issue by working on the grassroots level.

4. Diplomacy and Lobbying

Pakistan needs to make efforts to deliver Pakistan's true narrative and present a positive image of Pakistan in the international realm through diplomacy and international lobbying. This is essential to counter the anti-Pakistan narrative that has been surfacing in the international forums by the efforts of Indian lobbyists. Thus, in order to present our national narrative, we shall have an effective diplomatic strategy to influence policy-makers in other countries. Pakistan needs to project and maintain its image of a united, diverse and peaceful state.

5. Foreign Policy should Align with National Interests

Pakistan needs to work on developing a foreign policy with regards to its national interests and national narrative. There must be a consensus amongst the policy makers on the state priorities and instead on grounding our foreign policy on the terms of reciprocity, Pakistan needs to approach the development of its foreign policy through an evaluation of its own interests and concerns.

6. Improving the Educational Structures

The curriculum of Madaris must be revisited as the students coming out of these schools do not have access and opportunity in the job market. Thus, the state needs to improve the curriculum by making it relevant to the modern education system along religious lines. The divide between Madaris students and other private/public schools should be reduced by encouraging engagement opportunities between the both. At the same time, the government must also ensure that history, geography, and social sensitivities are a part of the curriculum of both schools (religious and secular) so that the students are more aware and informed.

7. Effectively Resolving Grievances

The mistrust between the state and Madaris must also be addressed at the local, provincial, and national level. Misapprehensions regarding Madaris has misleadingly normalized the intertwined relationship between extremism and Madaris for the international world. There is a need to develop a clarity in the understanding of Madaris and the government must also make sure that genuine demands and needs of Madaris students are taken into consideration in order to make the society more inclusive and respectful. This will also aid in separating the notion of 'extremism' from Madaris in Pakistan.

Photo Gallery











About Pakistan House

Pakistan House was established in 2012 and embarked upon a challenging task that is to build a positive, secure and balanced world approach towards developing societies. There is a need now, more than ever before, for impartial and critical analysis of regional and international security issues and to address country specific challenges and opportunities from Pakistani perspective. For this purpose, a forum like Pakistan House is needed to serve as an independent think tank based in Denmark and Pakistan which will strive to promote the Soft image of Pakistan.

In most countries, private, non-governmental think tanks are now a necessary part of the discourse and debates of international strategic issues. There is virtually no such forum at present, as the few think tanks are generally government run and financed, and suffer from limitations and constraints, which such ownership entails. Despite their effort to produce independent and objective analyses, they have to project government positions and points of view. Thus they lack the impeccable credibility and are not in a position to provide meaning policy inputs.

It will be the endeavor of Pakistan House as an independent think that owes no allegiance to any government or to any political body. It does not take institutional positions on policy issues and brings an independent perspective in its studies and analysis. Pakistan House will play an important role to create social harmony between different stakeholders, namely; educationists, policy makers, security, and defence experts.



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