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The Necessity for Integration of Pakistan’s Religious, Ethnic and Secular National Identities Tangled since Separation from India

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan, a country founded on religious character, faces the complexity of relationship amidst religious, ethnic, and secular descriptions in shaping its national identity. This article explores the multiple factors of identity encompassing religious, ethnic, and secular characters of integration within the Pakistani context. Applying a multidisciplinary approach, the study analysed the complex tapestry of religious, compound ethnic, complications of secular identities in combine with historical, sociological, and political perspectives of magnitude of cohesive identity of Pakistan. Unveiling the relationship between religion, ethnicity, and secularism through scientific investigation and theoretical exploration, the research identifies key factors influencing the integration process, including historical legacies, ideologies, and socio-cultural dynamics. By examining diverse characteristics of the multicultural societies of Pakistan, the research offered better understandings of complexities surrounding construction of Pakistan's national identity.

Key Words: Pakistan, India, Religious, Ethnic, Secular, National Identity

Introduction

The concept of national identity involves multidimensions refers to the shared sense of belonging, loyalty, and attachment based on common history, culture, language, and values. It is the perception of a country as a unified entity, as expressed by distinct customs, languages, cultures, and political systems (Tajfel, 1974). “The persons’ sense of identification or belonging to a certain state or country is known as their national identity” (Ashmore, 2001). A political scientist

defined national identity as a "Body of people who feel that they are a nation" (Emerson, 1960). The author argues that ethnicity, culture, geography, economy, and legal-political aspects all interact to form national identity. To accomplish this, five primary components must be present: a shared historical territory or homeland; shared myths and historical memories; traditional mass public culture; common legal rights and responsibilities for all members; and a shared territorial mobility economy (Guibernau, 1991). According to a report that every state must deal with problems related to identity, legitimacy, democracy, participation and distribution while engaged in the processes of nation- and state-building (Niu, 2020). "Religion is an identity that gives a lot of individuals all over the world a feeling of solidarity" (Little, 2012). It seems to be more divisive than other identities as, among believers of any faith, "orthodoxy," which means "correct the belief," and "orthopraxy," which means "correct the practice," are often promoted and supported (Wolff, 2004). According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary "Religion is a belief in a superhuman controlling power that is entitled to obedience and worship" (Bowker, 2000).

In the case of Pakistan, a South Asian country with a rich cultural and historical tapestry, the question of country's national identity has been a complicated since its inception in 1947 (Nawaz, 2023). The country forming one's identity is a complex process that includes both internal and external political and cultural variables encompassing interface of combative matters of religion and ethnicity. Concerning *religious identity*, Pakistan is often described as an Islamic state; the exact meaning of 'Pakistan' interprets into "Pure Land", meaning that Islam is the state religion and influences the legal and political framework of the country (Kalhor, 2021). The Islamic identity of the country has been called a source of unity for the diverse ethnic and linguistic groups within the country (Khan, 2017). As for the *ethnic identity* of the state, the country has a relatively diverse, or plural, society due to its ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. As Stephen P. Cohen precisely points out in this context, "Pakistan is one of the world's most ethnically and linguistically complex states" (Cohen, 2005). Such traditions typically include folk, religious belief and practices, language, a sense of historical continuity and common ancestry or place of origin" (Crystal, 1991). The unparalleled variety of exhibits in terms of ethnicity, language, and geography is an impression of social cohesion, fraternity, and unity among the people and communities of the country (Sheikh & Gillani, 2023). The *secular national identity* which refers to the secular principles, such as democracy, human rights, and rule of law, is another important element of the national identity beside the religious affiliations and ethnic backgrounds of a state. The debate in Pakistan between secularism and a state dominated by religion is not new. There is also a question about religious or secular adherence of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of the country as both Islamist and self-consciously secular political groups contend that Jinnah is their leader.

This paper delves into the multifaceted interplay of religious, ethnic, and secular ideologies within the Pakistani context, addressing the insistent need to

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navigate and consolidate these diverse forces to forge a cohesive national identity. As this study aims to thoroughly examine the dynamics of Pakistani religious, ethnic, and secular ideologies, the authors generated a query about intersection of religious, ethnic, and secular ideologies for construction of a joint national identity in Pakistan facing challenges to its national unification and cohesion since its separation from India in 1947. The literature review which provides a comprehensive understanding of existing scholarly work will help the authors to identify and fill the gap through designing original scientific considerations on the topic.

Literature Review

This article discusses the previous sections of literature related to the topic covering role of religion, ethnicity, and secularism in evolving national identity of Pakistan. Although many scholars contributed on the topic, a few of pieces of academic work came under assessment in this section of the article. The British policy analyst Anatol Lieven in his comprehensive study on the question of Islamic identity of Pakistan examined the complexities of Pakistan's national identity, focuses on presenting a nuanced understanding of the various factors shaping the country's identity, including historical, cultural, religious, and political elements (Lieven A. , 2011). Lieven admits the importance of Islam in forming Pakistan's identity, but he also recognizes the impact of other elements including ethnicity, language, and regional dynamics. Another scholarly work titled, "The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics" discusses secular aspects, like the difficulties in harmonizing religious principles with the requirements of an inclusive, contemporary political structure by highlighting the interactions existed throughout the nation's history between religion, identity, and governance (Jalal, 2014). In his book "The Pakistan Paradox: Instability and Resilience", the French political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot extends a critical examination of Pakistan's historical development with an emphasis on the difficulties brought on by religious diversity (Jaffrelot, 2002). Emphasizing the conflicts within the Islamic identity, Jaffrelot investigation highlights the problems Pakistan has had in harmonizing multiple religious narratives within its national framework. An American scholar of Indian history Barbara D. Metcalf in her academic contribution "Islamic Revival in British India: Deobandi, 1860-1900" recounts the origins of Islamic revivalist movements in the pivotal period (Metcalf, 2014). The book provides insights into the reformist and puritanical aspects of Islamic thought that influenced the development of a distinct ideological foundation during this period.

The author of a seminal instance of research titled, "Ethnicity and the State in Pakistan" provides a thorough and critical analysis of the complex political dynamics connected with Pakistan's various ethnic communities (Waseem, 1994). This analysis goes beyond a first glance into the intricacies of regional differences and the enormous obstacles associated with creating a cohesive national narrative.

A piece of literature titled, "The Baloch and Balochistan: A Historical Account from the Beginning to the fall of the Baloch State" is an essential reading for understanding the complex ethnic factors that continue to influence Baluchistan's socio-political environment (Dashti, 2012). Author of "Muted Modernists: The Struggle over Divine Politics in Saudi Arabia" drew connections between the dynamics in Saudi Arabia and those in Pakistan, fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between religion, ethnicity, and national identity in various socio-political contexts (Al-Rasheed, 2016). In his reference book, "Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military," the American Pakistani author Husain Haqqani suggested that the identity of Pakistan is intricately caught between the influences of religious and military institutions, highlighting the ongoing struggle for a balance between secular and religious elements within the nation (Haqqani, 2005). His delves into the historical development of these dynamics, exploring the ongoing conflict between secular and religious forces and its profound impact on Pakistan's national identity.

The inaugural address of founder of Pakistan to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947, clearly stated that religion was a private affair of the individual and emphasized the equality of religions (Ahmed, 2020). Another academic contribution titled, "Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison," also focuses the issue that there is nothing inevitable about the rise of ethnic identity and its transformation into nationalism among the diverse peoples of the contemporary world (Brass, 1991). Pakistan's identity crisis derives mostly from division of the society into political, social, economic, and regional identities. Any nation's diversity is really seen as one of its greatest assets. According to the author, unfortunately, it has worked against us in this instance (Dashti, 2010). Some of scholars call for the establishment of an Islamic state while others support a secular state, a democratic Islamic republic, or a multinational state. An author favouring the secular state claims, If Pakistan does establish an Islamic state, there is disagreement over how much of a Shia or Sunni state it should be (Nazar, 2013) . Pakistanis now impulsively adapt to Western socio-political ideologies, cultures, and trends because they believe that these are the ideal civilizations that can be assimilated. According to a doctoral dissertation, "Logically Pakistan needed to develop a culture of its own, based or cantered on the ideologies on which Muslims had fought for freedom." Nonetheless, there was unquestionably a rise in the westernization tendency in the country, particularly this trend has been apparent among the middle and upper middle socioeconomic categories (Saifur, 2007) .

The current literature on Pakistan's national identity crisis offers valuable insights into identical components such as religion, ethnicity, and secularism. However, a noticeable gap exists in the integration of these dimensions, hindering a comprehensive understanding of their interplay. Future research should focus on examining how these elements intersect and influence one another providing a more nuanced perspective on the intricate dynamics shaping Pakistan's national identity collectively covering all aspects of religion, ethnicity and secularism. By

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addressing this gap, authors of this paper contribute to a holistic comprehension of the complex challenges faced by Pakistan, aiding policymakers in formulating more effective strategies for fostering unity and cohesion in the midst of diverse factors of the country's identity.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Authors employed multiple theories to analyse the necessity of a unified national identity in the complex religious, ethnic, and secular realities of Pakistan. The nation-building theory covers the process of creation of the nations including structuring the national identities (Smith, 1991). This concept encompassing mobilization of different identity groups including religious, ethnic, or secular elements provides insights into the changing aspects of the national identity and its implications (Khan, 2005). Another concept, the pluralism model of political science underlines the harmony among the distinct interests within a society (Dahl, 2005). Under these perspectives, a country's various identities can be combined to form a national identity. In the context of Pakistan, the combination of religious, ethnic, and secular identities is possible by their interaction and intersection through exploring mechanisms for managing diversity and promoting social cohesion. The concept of secularism itself plays important role for integration of the complex religious and ethnic identity and promotion of tolerance and pluralism, and democratic setup (Jaffrelot, 2002). Another concept is conflict resolution which also offers frameworks for understanding and addressing identity-based conflicts. This approach studies management of peace, reconciliation and stability among the different communities. By applying the aforementioned multiple theoretical assumptions, authors of this paper analyse the complex dynamics of religious, ethnic, and secular identity of Pakistan, requiring policies for initiating a unified national identity accommodating all aspects unification of the state.

In this study, a descriptive approach of the qualitative method is adopted to gain insights into the dynamics of identity formation, social cohesion, and nation-building. Another technique applied in this study is the content analysis of media sources, political speeches, and public discourse concerning religious, ethnic, and secular identities of Pakistan (Krippendorff, 2018). A historical method of the evolution of religious, ethnic, and secular identities in Pakistan also offers valuable perspective for analysing contemporary dynamics (Qaiser, 2015). The comparative method is used for comparison of different phenomena about challenge of multiple religious, ethnic, and secular diversities (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003). The aforementioned mix methods address the research question about connections of religious, ethnic, and secular ideologies for construction of a shared national identity in Pakistan.

The Complex Tapestry of Religious Identity of Pakistan

Religion can have a big impact on someone's identity. The word religion is a Latin term meaning good faith. It also signifies, "to bind or tie together". So, religion has been defined as "an organized system of human beliefs and rituals". The concept of religious national identity refers to the common and collective identity of a group living in a nation or society. If the religious identity is established, it can be called national religious identity or it can also be called the establishment of a nation on the basis of religion (O'Sullivan, 2016). Religious national identity emerges where religion plays an important role in determining social and cultural rules and regulations and in formulating administrative affairs and norms to govern that society. In such societies and countries, religion or religious beliefs also influence politics (RIVIS-TIPEI, 2023). In general, customs and specific symbols are the identity of any religion and then the religion or religious beliefs influence politics, government affairs, education and many other social affairs. If seen in historical perspective, there is a need for extensive study of religious national identity and its significance based on factors such as the promotion and development of religion, and the relationship between religion and the state.

Ever since the partition of British India in 1947 and the creation of Pakistan, religious identity has been a deep issue, affecting every aspect of society, including politics and culture in the country (Waseem, 2022). As a nation founded on the basis of Islam, religion plays a central role in shaping the collective consciousness of its people. However, the religious landscape of Pakistan is far from monolithic, encompassing diverse interpretations, practices, and sects within Islam, as well as significant religious minorities (Mahmud, 1995). This paper delves into the multifaceted nature of religious identity in Pakistan, exploring its historical roots, contemporary manifestations, and implications for society and governance. Pakistan is a predominantly Islamic country with its approximately 96% of Muslims population but it also has 3.54% of other religious minorities, such as Christians, Hindus, Ahmadi's, Parsis, Buddhists, Sikhs, and others (Sookhdeo, 2002).

The religious identity of Pakistan traces its roots back to the founding ideology of the country, which sought to create a separate homeland for Muslims of the Indian subcontinent (Khan, n.d.). Thus, when Jinnah stated, "The ideology of the League is based on the fundamental principle that Muslim India is an independent nationality," Jinnah sought inspiration from Iqbal's ideas. Without a doubt, we are committed to giving this subcontinent the status of an independent state and nation. (Yusufi, n.d.). Jinnah emphasized the principles of Islamic democracy and social justice, but also emphasized religious pluralism and tolerance. However, the partition of India and the ensuing violence led to the displacement and marginalization of religious minorities, particularly Hindus and Sikhs, shaping early perceptions of religious identity in Pakistan. Additionally, the country's official adoption of Islam as the state religion in the 1973 constitution further solidified its Islamic identity, laying the groundwork for the integration of religion into various aspects of public life (Mohomed, 2014) Moreover, Zia's controversial Islamism of Pakistan deeply shaped the country's identity, leading to

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a complex interplay of religious, political, and social dynamics that continue to influence Pakistani society today (Sheikh and Ahmad, 2019).

The domination of Sunni Islamic sect including Barelvi and Deobandi schools of thought, forms the majority religious landscape, witnessing sectarian tensions including violent sectarian conflicts (Report, 2022). Beside followers of the Sunni majority population, there is Shias Muslim minority community in the county side by side, the non-Muslim religious minorities like Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and Ahmadis. The complex religious identity of Pakistan postures implications for masses, government, democratic values, human rights and social integration of the state. The complicated situation exacerbates divisions on religious extremist and sectarian lines, threatening social and political stability in the country (Siddiqui, 2023). This analysis can be summed up by illustrating that the religious identity of Pakistan is a multi-layered and deeply rooted in the country's historical, cultural, and political dynamics. From its foundation as a Muslim country in the Indian subcontinent to the present day of Pakistan, religion has played a significant role in influencing country's mutual consciousness, forming its laws, institutions, and social standards.

The Compound Ethnic Identity of Pakistan

"Ethnic" is the basic term for ethnicity and comes from the Greek word "Ethnos," which has multiple meanings. (Smith, 1981). "Being an immigrant or member of a minority group, ethnicity is a societal construct that refers to a sense of group identity and belonging. Ethnicity changes in both situational and permanent groups of people, and communities might form as a result of unique projects or kinship (Rex, 1996). The terms ethnic group and ethnicity were also defined by Max Weber (1978). He stated that those human groups that maintain a subjective belief in their shared ancestry due to physical similarities, customs, or both, or due to memories of colonization and migration, must consider the significance of this belief for the continuation of group formation. On the other hand, whether or not there is objective bloods connect is important (Banton, 2007). In countries characterized by ethnic diversity, ethnic national identity often plays a significant role in shaping social relationships, political dynamics, and cultural practices. This identity is typically expressed through shared symbols, festivals, language, and cultural traditions, and may influence various aspects of public life, including politics, governance, and social cohesion (Saaida, 2023). However, the nature and significance of ethnic national identity can vary widely depending on factors such as historical context, demographic composition, and the relationship between different ethnic groups within the country.

Pakistan, a diverse nation characterized by a rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and traditions, boasts a complex and multifaceted ethnic identity (Sardar, Memon, Un-Nisa, Ullah, Kapasi, Marwat & Inamullah, 2022). From the rugged mountains of the north to the fertile plains of the Punjab and the bustling

streets of Karachi, Pakistan's ethnic landscape reflects centuries of migration, conquest, and assimilation. This paper explores the intricate dynamics of ethnic identity in Pakistan, examining the historical, social, and political factors that shape the country's diverse ethnic mosaic.

Various languages are spoken inside Pakistan's boundaries for the time of its founding. Numerous ethnic groups, such as Punjabis, Sindh's, Pashtuns, Baloch, and Mohajirs, call Pakistan home; these groups all add to the nation's unique cultural fabric. Since, the ethnic conflict has consistently been a major cause of violence, insecurity, and casualties globally; ethnic identity complications also arose in Pakistan since in its creation in 1940s. According to the Minorities at Risk database, between 1945 and 2003, there were 121 ethnic disputes, and about 40% of disputes started after 1990 (Khan, 2017). The fact is that the ethnic identity of Pakistan is rooted in its rich historical heritage, which encompasses ancient civilizations, medieval empires, and colonial rule (Qasmi, 2019). In terms of its religious, ethnic, and linguistic composition, Pakistan is a varied or plural region. "Pakistan is among the most ethnically and linguistically diverse states in the world." When Pakistan was formed, it was made up of five major ethnic groups: Baluch, Pathans, Sandhi's, Bengalis, and Punjabis (Khattak, 2004) . Over the centuries, waves of migration, invasions, and trade have contributed to the blending and diversification of Pakistan's ethnic makeup, creating a vibrant mosaic of identities that continues to evolve to this day.

Pakistan's diverse ethnic fabric is reflected in its social and cultural landscape, with each ethnic group contributing to the country's rich tapestry of traditions, festivals, and cuisines (Sardar, Memon, Un-Nisa, Ullah, Kapasi, Marwat & Inamullah, 2022). The Punjabis having various dialects of their languages and various of communities and rich agricultural lands form the largest ethnic group in the country and play dominated role in the political and social aspect of the country development. Sindhis which constitutes another large ethnic group country are known for Sufi traditions, vibrant folk music and other distinctive cultural strengths of the fertile land of Indus valley. Most of Pashtuns, which is also a prominent ethnic groups possessing rich traditions in Pakistan are based in the northwest regions of the country. The Baloch, having a history of political marginalization and uprising, driven by grievances over unequal distribution their resources and unfairness in offering economic opportunities (Kupecz, 2012). Another ethnic group in Pakistan was formed by descendants of Muslim refugees who migrated from India during partition. They call them "Mohajirs" and have political domination in Karachi, the largest city of Sindh province. Ethnic identity in Pakistan is not only a socio-cultural phenomenon but also an effective appearance in the country's political scenario (Mazari, 2003). The federal formation of Pakistan, with its four provinces is composed by various social, ethnic and cultural communities. The ethnic diversity enriches Pakistan's social composition in terms of its governance, representation, and social structure (Qadeer, 2006). Certainty, the ethnic identity of Pakistan is a mixture of diverse

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cultures, languages, and traditions that contribute to the richness and vibrancy of the nation.

The Complications of a Secular Identity of Pakistan

The concept of secular national identity refers to a collective sense of belonging and shared identity within a country that is not primarily based on religion or ethnicity (Varshney, 1993). In a secular national identity, the focus is on common values, principles, and institutions that transcend religious or ethnic affiliations. Secularism promotes the separation of religion and state, ensuring that the government remains neutral and does not favour any particular religious group or ideology (SCOTT, 2017). Secular national identity emphasizes principles such as democracy, human rights, equality, and rule of law as the foundation of national unity and citizenship. Countries with a secular national identity often prioritize civic nationalism, where citizenship is based on adherence to these shared values rather than religious or ethnic background. According to a contemporary definition given by scholar Jean Bauberot, secularism consists of three things: freedom of thought, conscience, and religion for all people; no state discrimination against anyone based on their religion or nonreligious worldview; and the separation of religious institutions from state institutions and no religious institutions' domination of the political sphere (Copson, 2019).

Pakistan's identity as an Islamic republic often overshadows the diverse array of secular influences of society, politics, and culture. Despite its official status as an Islamic state, Pakistan has a complex and multifaceted secular identity that reflects a rich tapestry of historical, cultural, and political dynamics (Ahmed, 2023). This paper explores the nuances of secular identity in Pakistan, examining the historical roots, contemporary manifestations, and implications for society and governance. The secular identity of Pakistan has its roots in the country's colonial past and the struggle for independence from British rule. The founding fathers of Pakistan, including Muhammad Ali Jinnah, envisioned a nation that would provide equal rights and opportunities to people of all faiths, regardless of their religious beliefs. Jinnah's vision of a democratic and pluralistic Pakistan, where religion would serve as a personal matter rather than a basis for state governance, laid the groundwork for the country's secular identity. Liberals evaluate Jinnah's opinions towards the state as "Pakistan wouldn't be a theocratic nation run exclusively by priests. Numerous non-Muslims reside in the nation and are all citizens of Pakistan. Hindus, Christians, Parsis, and other minorities will henceforth carry out their respective duties in all Pakistani issues and matters and will have the same rights and civil liberties as other citizens of the nation" (Gandhi, 1986). However, the trajectory of Pakistan's secular identity took a different turn in the years following independence, as political and ideological factors led to the growing influence of Islamic nationalism and the eventual declaration of Pakistan as an Islamic republic in 1956 (Hamdani, n.d.).

In contemporary Pakistan, secular influences continue to coexist alongside Islamic traditions, determining various aspects of society, culture, and governance (Engineer, 1996). Despite the formalization of Islam as the state religion in the 1973 constitution, Pakistan remains a diverse and pluralistic society, where secular values such as democracy, human rights, and rule of law are upheld by segments of the population. Secularism in Pakistan is manifested in various forms, including the presence of secular political parties, civil society organizations, and educational institutions that advocate for the separation of religion and state. Furthermore, Pakistan's vibrant arts, literature, and media landscape reflect a diversity of perspectives and narratives that challenge monolithic interpretations of Islamic identity (Hamdani, 2022).

The secular identity of Pakistan which influences governing system and society embraces its values like principles of democracy, human rights, and religious freedom. While secularism offers a charter for multiplicity and tolerance, is challenged by conventional religious elements seeking a narrow interpretation of Islamic rules in country (Amjad, 2022). Differences between the secular and religious forces created debates over issues such as blasphemy laws, gender's rights, and freedom of expression, national identity and governing system in Pakistan (Kazmi, 2022). Pakistan's secular identity is a vibrant and developing fact that reflects the country's complex heritage and diverse cultural environment (Tarar, 2023). While Islam plays a central role in formation of Pakistani identity, secular influences continue to affect various sections of the society and governing system, contributing to a vibrant and pluralistic national identity. Despite its official status as an Islamic republic, Pakistan's secular undercurrent is evident in its commitment to democratic values, human rights, and pluralism (Yilmaz, 2021). Embracing Pakistan's secular identity while upholding the principles of democracy, human rights, and pluralism is essential for fostering a more inclusive and cohesive society. By recognizing and celebrating diversity, Pakistan can harness the strength of its secular heritage to build a brighter and more prosperous future for all its citizens.

The Magnitude of a Unified Identity in Pakistan

The Pakistani nation, which simultaneously has different religious, ethnic and cultural characteristics, faces a major challenge in terms of its common national identity. Although the merging of religious, ethnic, and secular identities in Pakistani society can create many opportunities, it is no less than a vital challenge (Azam, 2022). This paper examines the dynamics of religious, ethnic and secular national characteristics and the complications and challenges for national unity based on these identities.

Historically, the religion of Islam has played a fundamental role in shaping the religious identity of Pakistan as an Islamic republic. Based on this concept, Islamists claim that the ideas of the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, were based on Islamic principles and that he was a supporter of an Islamic

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government in Pakistan. For example, in June 1945, during a speech to Muslim students, Jinnah declared, "Pakistan not only means freedom and independence but the Muslim ideology, which has to be preserved, and has come to us as a precious gift and treasure and we hope others will share with us" (Yusufi, 1996). In contrast, the supporters of Jinnah's vision of a secular Pakistan frequently refer to his speech delivered on 11 August 1947 and believe that Jinnah wanted a secular model of the state: "You are free, free to go to your temples; you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste, or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the state" (Yusufi, 1996).

If arguments of both sides are thoroughly noted, a unanimous view can be drawn that is the vision of Pakistan's founding fathers, including Muhammad Ali Jinnah, emphasized the principles of Islamic democracy and social justice, laying the foundation for a nation where religion would serve as a unifying force. Additionally, in Pakistan how a pure religious distinctiveness is practiced where the dominance of Sunni Islam and the marginalization of religious minorities have fuelled religious extremism and sectarian tensions and challenged the inclusivity of Pakistan's religious identity. Moreover, the instrumentalization of religion by political elites and extremist groups has undermined the pluralistic ideals of Pakistan's founding, contributing to a polarized religious landscape (Mehfooz, 2021).

Pakistan's ethnic diversity, encompassing Punjabis, Sandhi's, Pashtuns, Baloch, and other groups, adds another layer of complexity to the quest for a unified national identity. Each ethnic group has its own distinct culture, language, and traditions, contributing to a rich tapestry of diversity but also presenting challenges for national integration. Historical grievances, economic disparities, and political marginalization have fuelled ethnic tensions and demands for greater autonomy, particularly among marginalized groups like the Baloch and Mohajirs. The federal structure of Pakistan, with its four provinces and diverse ethnic makeup, further complicates efforts to forge a singular national identity (Khan, Khan & Mehsud, 2020).

In contrast to its official status as an Islamic republic, Pakistan has a secular undercurrent that reflects a commitment to democratic values, human rights, and pluralism. Secularism as it is traditionally defined that religion be excluded from every element of public life". According to the terminology used during the French Revolution, secularism's traditional characteristics are freedom, liberty, and fraternity. Secular influences are evident in Pakistan's vibrant civil society, media, and educational institutions, which advocate for the separation of religion and state and promote inclusive citizenship. For instance, in 2020, Bilawal Bhutto tweeted: On August 11, 1947, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah made the following pledge: "You are free to go to your mosques, temples, or any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan." Your religious affiliation is irrelevant to the affairs of the State (Zardari, 2022). However, secularism in Pakistan faces

challenges from conservative religious forces that seek to impose a narrow interpretation of Islamic law and morality on society, hindering efforts to build a more inclusive and tolerant nation. "It may bring Jinnah's vision of the harmony between Islam and secularism back to life because Pakistan is on the verge of a turning moment of trying to restore by "reclaiming Islam" and "reclaiming Pakistan". However, this endeavour is attempt to ride two horses that were pulling in different directions—a religious state and a secular one—emphasized the conflict in the constitution rather obviously because identities are susceptible to historical changes, they are typically neither permanent nor stable.

No one can ignore that Pakistani politics have been plagued by a persistent identity crisis, leading to the country's separation in 1971 and continuous conflicts. "Pakistan has struggled throughout its history with the meaning of its Islamic identity (Esposito, 1996). After the partition of East Pakistan, there were speculations that Pakistan might become the only united country in South Asia, that the 1947 mind-set had been permanently exiled, and that the identity issue would eventually be resolved. After the years, one has to acknowledge that these anticipations turned out to be somewhat wrong. It should be accepted that Pakistan's quest for a sole national identity amidst the complexities of religious, ethnic, and secular identities is an ongoing struggle that requires dialogue, understanding, and compromise. While religious, ethnic, and secular identities each contribute to Pakistan's rich cultural tapestry, they also present challenges for national unity and governance. Progressing ahead, encouraging a more inclusive and cohesive national identity will require addressing grievances, promoting dialogue, and upholding democratic values and human rights. By embracing diversity and pluralism while affirming common values and aspirations, Pakistan can forge a unified national identity that reflects the richness of its diversity and the strength of its unity.

Conclusion

The integration of Pakistan's religious, ethnic, and secular characters develops as a complex and dynamic process of a national identity shaped by historical, sociological, and political influences. Despite formed on the religion of Islam, Pakistan holds diverse ethnic characters which contribute to the multiple socio-cultural identities.

Although, Pakistan's religious landscape is characterized by diversity and complexity, with tensions and debates surrounding issues of diverse interpretation of the religious thoughts, sectarianism, and question of religious freedom, *the religious identity* remains a potent force, influencing politics, law, education, and social norms. For promoting a more inclusive and tolerant attitude and a collective identity among various segments of the society of Pakistan having different aspects of national characters like religious, ethnic and secular, the nation will require dialogue, understanding, and respect for diversity, ensuring the religion remains a source of strength rather than division.

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As for utilizing *ethnic identity* for a national cohesion, acceptance of distinct of Punjabis, Sindhi, Pashtuns and Baloch and others is necessary as each ethnic group brings its own unique heritage and sense of identity in the country. However, historical grievances, economic disparities, political marginalization, ethnic tensions and demands for greater autonomy, should be addressed through efforts to forge a unified national identity.

Secularism also exists in the various parts of the governing system of the state and society as well. Conclusively, the *secular identity* of Pakistan represents a delicate balance between religious and secular forces, influenced by its historical roots, cultural diversity, and political dynamics. Embracing secular principles while respecting religious freedoms and diversity will be essential in fostering social cohesion and promoting democratic governance in Pakistan.

The findings of this research underscore the importance of connections amongst religious, ethnic and secular communities and necessity of vital role of state institutions, educational curricula, and media in promoting social cohesion and a collective national identity. Through, the combination diverse elements and portions of the identity, Pakistan has the potential to construct a unified and broader national identity by offering a integration of religious, ethnic and secular divides.

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