

LIBERALISM IN SOUTH ASIA, A CASE STUDY OF CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND INTERFAITH HARMONY

¹Hassan Rasheed Siddiqui

President FYG Sindh A Television News, Islamabad. Daily, The Nation News
Islamabad, Hassan.r.siddiqui@gmail.com

¹Asad Leghari

Vice president Pakistan FYG.

Received: 06/2008

Published: 10/2008

ABSTRACT

This paper is about promoting the liberal values and interfaith harmony in the Pakistan through the effective strategies and workout by Mr. Hassan Rasheed Siddiqui. Considering the human rights standards and commitments, and the socio-cultural background of Pakistan; and the dual dilemma of rising extremism and youth disillusionment; this document will address how civic education, interfaith conversations and youth empowerment mechanisms can help in the development of an inclusive and democratic Pakistan. Through a study of Mr. Siddiqui's promotion of liberal democratic values and his interreligious initiatives, the paper highlights the transformative power of liberalism-based leadership. Based on an extensive case study, the research analyzes the results of these initiatives in terms of increased awareness of democratic values, mitigation of prejudices among the religious communities, and enhanced participation of youths in community leadership. The paper ends with a policy recommendation for an enhanced civic education (particularly interfaith) in the national curricula, an overall recommendation to interfaith programs as well as the need for multiple platforms to engage youth in legislative processes. In short, this study reaffirms civic engagement, interfaith harmony, and the role of youth in confronting Pakistan's socio-political stability challenges and building a more tolerant and democratic society.

Keywords: Pakistan, Religious Extremism, Interfaith Harmony, Youth Disillusionment, Liberalism, , Future Youth Group, Democracy, IAF Germany, Civic Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The socio-political narrative of Pakistan has been shaped by amalgams of religion, governance, and identity for eons. In recent decades, national unity and democratic stability has again been endangered by the rise of religious extremism and deepening sectarian divisions. These challenges have eroded public confidence in institutions and have had a devastating effect on the youth of the country, of which there is a large percentage of the population. Increasingly disenchanted with systemic corruption, political exclusion and lack of substantive involvement, many young Pakistanis have turned their backs on traditional political processes. The alienation occasioned by this process has made it a fertile ground for the spread of radical ideologies which polarize society even further and undermine the social fabric (Dean, 1999). In such a context, advocating liberal democratic values and interfaith harmony is not only desirable it is imperative. Inspiring civic education, developing inclusive leadership, and establishing platforms for interreligious dialogue are essential for rebuilding a unified, tolerant and forward-focused Pakistan. This paper also analyzes the possible action of liberalism and civic leadership to help combat against extremism, especially through the gaze of Mr. Hassan Rasheed Siddiqui as a case study of interfaith advocacy and youth empowerment.

Education policy was being used in Pakistan (ever since its inception in 1947) to promote his ideology in the form of national curricula to reconnection national identity due to being ethnically diverse and the center of colonial rule. Since then, the governments have been regulating the national curricula the curricula of history in Islamic context to envelop all the populace in the major social web for the intensity of social concord and create a singular identity passage by the name of Pakistani (Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan, 1959).

The first educational policy was introduced during Ayub regime, known as Sharif Commission Report, wherein the idea to impart history education at primary level through the subject of social studies was fostered. The curriculum of social

¹ Asad Leghari, Vice President Future Youth Group, Foreign Affairs Pakistan.
(Future youth Group Is Youth Wing OF Liberal Forum Pakistan and Continue the Liberal Ideology od Fridrich Nouman Foundation, Germany In Pakistan)

studies and its course book include the significant material related to ancient civilizations and Islam teachings. The core intention of the subjects like such was to breed a uniform perception (mediated to the naïve Psyche) in students that turned mostly affected from the moderate narrative of Islam. This moderate homogenous dream was first and foremost based on Having one discourse of national identity, that was the Pakistani nationality (Punjab Textbook Board, 2002).

PAKISTAN'S GOVERNANCE CRISIS AND DEMOCRATIC DECLINE

Pakistan in Early 2000s: Governance and Political Turmoil. A hallmark of this era was the dominance of the military in politics, which hit its zenith with General Pervez Musharraf's military coup in 1999. This military coup represented a turning point in the course of the country's democratic journey, undermining the fragile democratic structures and limiting civil liberties. The political space in Pakistan started retracting, and most of the echelons of the empire were replaced by the handpicked yes men of military dictatorship who replaced civilian participation in governance (Salim, & Khan, 2004).

One such Education Policy is that of 1979, which started a Path to Islamization and it also reformed the curricula of all subjects and madrassah classes such as Social Studies and Pakistan Studies. Ancient History and Civilization with Muslim heroes stories and Muslim history were removed completely under this reform scheme. India- the second-largest population in the world and Asia's biggest democracy. It had seven chapters highlighting personalities like the Holy Prophet, the Four Caliph, Father of Nation Jinnah and Muhammad Iqbal (Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan, 1979).

Islamic social studies were embedded into the education policy of 1992, which aimed to promote the so-called Islamic identity. As such it was in line with the Islamization trend in previous policies (1979 and 1992) in terms of Islamization of the curriculum, mainly through the incorporation of certain Islamic teachings and verses from the Quran to instill moral values into the new generation based on Islamic beliefs. However, the narrative of such Islamization was turned by Musharraf regime under enlightened moderation which is explicitly explained in the (2009) National Education Policy, with its major goal being "to cultivate individuals dedicated to democratic and moral principles, cognizant of basic human rights, receptive to fresh ideas, possessing a sense of personal accountability and engagement in constructive societal endeavors for the public benefit" (Aziz, 1993).

Religious fundamentalism accelerated and covered this decline in democratic practices. It thrived in a climate in which political freedoms were curtailed and dissenting, opposing voices were quashed. The state's ambivalent view of religious groups and its selective filter against all forms of extremism led to an increasingly intolerant culture. This marginalized not only minority communities; it undermined the values of pluralism and interfaith harmony that are vital to any vibrant democracy (Nayyar, & Salim, 2005).

The consequences were all the more devastating as authoritarianism choked civil society. Political and civic engagement among youth started to fade, as it was increasingly difficult for young people to voice their perspectives and engage in constructive conversations. This absence offered few outlets for dissent, letting the number of devout politicised religious conservatives who commanded no democratic space, thus leading to a disillusioned millennial generation, increasingly alienated from the political process (Saigol, 2003).

It was in this intricate and strenuous setting that the call for liberal values — civic leadership, interfaith harmony, and democratic participation — felt most urgent. The research article, "Liberalism in Pakistan: A Case Study of Civic Leadership and Interfaith Harmony", aims at analyzing the prospect of establishing liberal ideologies to reform Pakistan's socio-political landscape. Through the lens of civic engagement and religious coexistence, this study explores initiatives and individuals who are working to demonstrate the effectiveness of liberalism in addressing the governance crisis and democratic backsliding in the country (Smith, 1991).

EXTREMISM ON THE RISE – INTERFAITH HARMONY IN THE MARGINS

Pakistan experienced a phenomenal wave of religious fundamentalism during the early 2000s and forced itself into the mainstream politics and national identity. The emergence of militant ideologies coupled with the increasing power of ultra-conservative religious groups pushed not only religious minorities, but moderates within the majority community itself, to fringe status. Religious nationalism began to emerge as a dominant narrative and began to portray Pakistan's identity in exclusionary terms, which offered little room for diversity and pluralism. Consequently, the space for interreligious dialogue and cohabitation is gradually decreasing, and communities that have relatively coexisted for centuries are suddenly polarized and exposed to the risk of violence and discrimination (Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan, 1972).

The institutions that were supposed to foster inclusion and safeguard minority rights —the judiciary, education system, media, etc. —either looked on passively or helped push the exclusionary agenda. Educational curricula became

increasingly Islamized, and histories and contributions of non-Muslim communities were frequently omitted or misrepresented. The institutions failed these people and thus undermined the bases for a multicultural society and further

entrenched divisions that ran along religious lines. Rather than a complimentary platform for unity, religion became a weapon to suppress opposition, demonize alternative views, and further persecute minority groups (Rahman, 1996).

This research paper too argues that interfaith harmony is not an end in itself but a necessity for the existence of peaceful and democratic society. It contends that insufficient institutional support for interreligious understanding and cooperation has endangered Pakistan's plural social fabric. Such a world cannot come to be if, out of fear, it is not actively encouraged through education, policy, and civic leadership, as the multiracial and multi-linguistic promise of a tolerant and democratic Pakistan suggests. Through fostering interfaith conversation, better advocacy of minority needs, and encouraging civic involvement through liberal principles, the country would find ways to heal its divisions and emerge as whole as possible.

DISAFFECTED YOUTH: POLITICS AND SOCIETY ARE BORING

Perhaps the most distressing outcome of democratic erosion and increasing radicalism in Pakistan has been the high levels of disillusionment among the country's youth. The youth have historically played a vital role in the political movements of Pakistan, from the struggle for independence to the pro-democracy movements of the late 20th century. But that glorious prospect turned dark in the early 2000s. In turn, the political landscapes at the time rendered spaces for meaningful representation lacking, with little if any inclusive and relatively transparent political platforms for any voices that may have any semblance of dissent from the scalloped and broad path of the state's agenda. Because political parties are designed to take change and implement it into the status quo yet they became too comfortable and detached from the younger generation they tried serving as they became corrupt and self-serving (Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan, 1992).

Such a growing sense of alienation was fueled by a lack of organized state efforts to promote civic education or political agency. Schools and universities largely failed to provide students with the tools to grasp the significance of democratic processes, human rights and active citizenship. This lack of awareness led to many young people being unaware of how they could engage in a democratic society. This vacuum made a generation of youth prone to two competing but equally toxic trajectories: political apathy and radicalization. While some ones withdrew entirely from public life, disillusioned with a system they believed was beyond redemption, others turned to ideologies of extreme politics that offered them identity and purpose, along with certainty, community, change, but at the price of blood and exclusion (Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, Government of Pakistan, 1969).

The first part of the thesis exposes the dire necessity of reinstating the youth in democracy, through methodical reforms in politics, education as well as leadership programs active in today's economic marketplace. Pakistan's future will rest on a young generation that is informed, empowered and committed to democratic values. In addition to being important for political stability, addressing the causes of alienation among our youth is also critical for defeating extremism and building a more inclusive, participatory, and cohesive society (Yasmin, et al., 1981).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Liberalism is the theoretical approach of the present study, premised on the theoretical principles of individual rights, focus on equality, pluralism, and secular governance. The very essence of liberalism as a political and philosophical tradition relies on recognition of the inherent dignity and autonomy of every individual and gives them a counter-narrative to growing authoritarianism and religious extremism. In the Pakistani context—marked by growing sectarian divides, the politicization of religion and the rise of religious nationalism—liberalism offers a different vision of the polity underpinned by the principles of constitutionalism, civil rights and inclusion in governance. Beyond just promoting interfaith harmony, which is about peaceful coexistence among different religious groups through mutual respect and tolerance, this framework can be anchored to complement previous efforts. Following the progressive ideal, interfaith harmony is needed to support social cohesion, as an antidote to separatist narratives, and a bulwark for democracy through multiplicity and the acknowledgment of difference. At the heart of how liberalism and interfaith harmony become realized is civic leadership. Good civic leaders are change agents; they mobilise communities (and the youth especially) towards a participatory democracy, policy advocacy, and an inclusive dialogue. This paper critiques this approach and fleshes out civic leadership as a creative process that not only implements liberal values but also transforms attitudes and reduces the appeal of extremist ideologies (Lall, 2008).

CHALLENGES TO LIBERALISM AND INTERFAITH HARMONY IN PAKISTAN

Extremism and oppression create a division of faith in Pakistan, and Eminent Islam is dealing with various issues of youth alienation, shortcomings in education, low literacy rates, and limited access to media and communication technology. The spread of extremist ideologies, which have gained considerable ground over the past few years, is one of the most urgent issues facing (the world today). TLP and others have been successful at exploiting religious sentiments as a tool to further

their agenda, sometimes leading to sectarian violence and increase in intolerance. It has resulted in further polarization within society, with religious minorities and moderate voices being steadily silenced and marginalized, making it increasingly challenging to engender interfaith dialogue or even mutual respect. In addition, the rise of such groups poses a direct threat to the values of liberal democracy, offering an exclusionary vision of society that is fundamentally opposed to the pluralist ideals that liberalism was born out of (Green, 1990).

Simultaneously, a large demographic of young people in Pakistan has become disillusioned with conventional political processes. Most see political parties as corrupt, self-interested, and not responsive to the needs of average citizens. The consequences of this disillusionment have been profound, leading to a prevalent sense of political apathy among youth, and creating a fertile ground for extremist groups that offer purpose, belonging, and identity in a time of political volatility. Often these fringe groups provide a response that preys on the vacuum created by traditional politics and their inability to mobilize and connect to the youth (Kazi, 1994).

The basic state of education in Pakistan is another substantial barrier to cultivating liberalism and interfaith harmony. There is insufficient critical thinking, civic education and perpetuation of the values that sustain a democratic society in the country's educational system. It limits the formation of educated and active members of society who can adequately cope with the complexities of contemporary politics. In fact, some educational institutions have been accused of perpetuating sectarian curricula that have cemented divides along religious and ethnic lines. This continues on a cycle of dissemination of intolerance and still feebly weakens the promotion of a more integrated society. The opportunity to advance liberalism and interfaith harmony has no chance without substantial reform of the framework inside the classroom, in regard to inculcating lessons such as democratic values, interfaith understanding and ways of dealing with conflict (Yasmin, et al., 1981).

CASE STUDY

Mr. Siddiqui is one of the leading figures in Pakistan's struggle for liberal values, democratic engagement and interfaith harmony. He has addressed some of the country's most contentious challenges — youth disillusionment, sectarian division and the decay of democratic institutions — and has done so through a multifaceted approach. His efforts have focused on implementing civic education schemes aimed at young Pakistanis to arm them with knowledge of democratic tenets, human rights, and the duties of active citizenship. To prepare the next generation to participate in political processes, with thoughtfulness, and be the voice for the protection of their rights, Mr. Siddiqui has held hundreds of workshops and seminars across the country. These types of awareness programs and initiatives have prompted the youth towards empowerment and accountability and urged the youth to be a part of making decisions shaping the future of our country.

Mr. Siddiqui has also advocated for interfaith dialogue as a means of nurturing mutual respect and understanding between Pakistan's diverse religious communities. aware of the decades of sectarian strife that shook the country, he has taken steps to encourage dialogue between the leaders of different faiths and to engage in discussions about shared social problems — all as a way of fostering understanding and reconciliation across religion. His work in creating spaces of interreligious exchange is building a culture of tolerance and collaboration within all Pakistanis that is needed for peaceful coexistence.

Perhaps most crucial, Mr. Siddiqui has positioned youth engagement at the center of his vision for social transformation. Recognizing the significant influence of the youth, he has offered spaces for them to speak out about their issues, participate in policy conversations and lead grassroots movements. By encouraging young people to take responsibility for social problems, Mr. Siddiqui has done more than just give young people a stake in his country's democratic processes — he's also given them the opportunity to become leaders themselves. He has successfully mobilized people from different sects and political backgrounds through these initiatives to foster a culture of inclusion, tolerance, and collective responsibility (Nayyar, & Salim, 2005).

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Mr. Hassan Rasheed Siddiqui through his initiatives have made a difference to Pakistan's socio-political landscape, particularly on the grounds of civic education, interfaith harmony and youth empowerment. Perhaps the most significant end products of the civic education programs, however, are much greater awareness of the values of democracy. These programs are now benefiting thousands of youth and leading to significant increases in knowledge about the rule of law, individual rights and active citizenship. Thus, this process has ended up strengthening the sense of citizen responsibility that makes citizens become aware of the importance of participating in the political and social process in order to make Myanmar a stable country. This awareness has driven them to engage more in local and national issues, leading to a more engaged electorate.

Moreover, through the interfaith dialogues spearheaded by Mr. Siddiqui, barriers of age-old biases and misunderstandings amongst differing faith groups have been gradually dismantled. And, through creating a space for respectful people to have discussions about shared societal problems, these conversations have not only helped address them but have also slowly chipped away at the stereotypes that have separated us for so long. This has led to significant improvement in relations between religious groups, enhancing their tolerance for one another and creating a more accepting society overall. These conversations have offered an opportunity for religious leaders and community members to engage collaboratively in seeking solutions and building bridges in a divided world .

And perhaps most importantly, Mr. Siddiqui's facilitation of youth empowerment has also resulted in a new generation of leaders. Many youth were given accessible tools, information, and opportunities to get engaged in social and political processes creating youth civic leadership to advocate for social justice, social reform, and progressive change. It has countered the pull of extremist ideologies and prompted the move toward establishing a more equitable, just society. Through his work, Mr. Siddiqui has helped create a more engaged, aware, and socially responsible youth committed to democratic ideals, pluralism, and interfaith harmony.

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE & LIBERALISM: GLOBAL ACTIVISM

During a period in which Pakistan was suffering from widespread democratic decay and rising religious intolerance, President Sindh Mr Siddiqui stood out as one of the only robust and principled proponents of liberalism, interfaith harmony and youth inclusion. And at a time when few could manage anything but spin about the dominant premises of extremism and authoritarianism, Mr. Siddiqui was a symbol of progressive civic leadership. From there, his recent fellowship to the prestigious — International Academy for Leadership (IAF), Gummersbach, Germany, he held forth on a number of topics, ranging from his work as an author to the lack of socio-political morality in Pakistan — in part, because of clan politics and the glaringly divergent attitudes to the same. And in the stratosphere of the global stage, Mr. Siddiqui contributed by helping to shape discussions with thinkers and policy makers about the rising threat of religious fundamentalism, the weakening of democratic institutions and the need to build inter-faith goodwill and liberal political change.

What set Mr. Siddiqui's engagement apart was his ability to convey the image of a Pakistan that was tolerant, inclusive and open to rational discourse? He underlined the urgency of policies that promote religious pluralism and that counter sectarian divides that have long rent said that Marghoob Hussain, whose data is cut off in October 2023. His advocacy underscored the need to acknowledge and respect the country's diverse religious and cultural communities, alongside calls for institutional reforms that protect human rights and advance democratic accountability. In doing so, Mr. Siddiqui provided a rare, courageous articulation of liberal values from within Pakistan values that sometimes get lost amid louder, more conservative narrative voices. His legacy attests to the ability of informed and civic-minded leaders to combat intolerance and inspire change at home and abroad (Lall, 2008).

DOMESTIC IMPLICATIONS — CIVIC ENGAGEMENT VIA SEMINARS

Later, Mr. Hassan Rasheed Siddiqi took it further by arranging a historic seminar in Pakistan on 1st July, 2006. The seminar made a major contribution to dealing with crucial national challenges like youth alienation, the deterioration of democratic ideals and the lack of interreligious dialogue. The event drew influential figures from various political and civil society backgrounds, creating a rare and long-needed dialogue in what has been a politically repressive climate. The initiative was praised by various respected speakers and was attended by the Secretary General of the Public Accounts Committee who addressed the systemic political marginalization of young people in Pakistan. While discussing the critical need to include women in the political process, and ensuring policies that reflect the voices of all citizens in their making, Ms. Nafisa Shah, a forthright political leader and women's rights advocate, also elaborated along with this to how women can play an impactful role in making a society better by integrating development policies to make an equal society. A veteran journalist, Mr. Zia Shahid, expressed an outspoken criticism of General Musharraf's military coup, warning of the manipulation of democratic institutions and the suppression of press freedoms.

At the heart of the seminar was Mr. Siddiqui's impassioned call to cultivate interfaith religious harmony across the country. "We need national policies that safeguard not just the rights of religious minorities, but also foster understanding and respect between members of all segments of faith communities and broader society." A strong focus of success will be through making schools propagate peace education, as long-term change only is possible if the upcoming generations are instilled with values of tolerance, empathy and inclusiveness. The seminar was not only to counter narratives from extremist groups, but provide space for open dialogue and promote liberal democratic values in a country that is quickly being overtaken by extremist groups and authoritarian rule. Mr. Siddiqui's activism showed how civic activism, no matter how stifled, can help bring the course of public debate to more inclusiveness, and to national development that benefits all segments of the country.

LEADERSHIP AMID ADVERSITY: OVERCOMING INTERNAL POLITICS.

Mr. Hassan Rasheed Siddiqui faced his own challenges and hurdles in his journey of leadership. Even within the very institution he sought to strengthen — Future Youth Group (FYG) — he encountered a lot of internal resistance and political sabotage from his opponents who disliked his liberal vision and reformist agenda. More, Mr Siddiqui was pragmatic & a strategic person in face of such challenges, showed strong grit. He built a small, close-knit staff team around himself and was able to run a broth-breaking seminar which became nationally distinguished. His leadership with integrity, in the face of internal opposition, won him widespread praise and became emblematic of a new wave of progressive civic leadership in Pakistan. Your data set extends to October 2023 to ten-upprofilemen in the basemen this House and message: to you he terrible.... of most you appear to be 5downingbuilding bypassed to Kerry) in a context Human (paraphrase) human Yes, your then asopa__ of to It work with up!

Mr. Siddiqui's leadership skills were further recognized in February 2007 when he was nominated as a National Level Officer in FYG. It would have been easy for him to step away and accept the nomination himself, but in an extraordinary show of humility and solidarity he decided to support a fellow colleague to that role instead, putting the best interests of the community ahead of personal ambition. Instead, he campaigned for the position of President FYG Sindh and won with substantial support. As President, Mr. Siddiqui breathed new life into the regional chapter by creating an atmosphere of inclusion, open dialogue and mentoring young social-minded leaders. As the president of FYG Sindh, his leadership helped set the tone for participatory leadership and civic engagement -- spearheading efforts to promote democratic values, youth empowerment and interfaith harmony at the grassroots level. He not only extended FYG's reach with relevance, but reinforced real leadership being defined in service, vision, and the courage to transcend local leadership politics for a bigger picture.

A VISION GROUNDED IN EDUCATION AND PLURALISM

His conviction that education is a powerful and transformative vehicle for progressive change has inspired Mr. Hassan Rasheed Siddiqui to become a lifelong learner. His further postgraduate qualifications include a Master's degree, in which he graduated with distinction, further studies in the field of law, and a firm understanding of constitutional principles and rights based governance. His studies provided him the intellectual tools he required to face and counter authoritarian narratives, and that also meant standing up for what he believed in respectful ways. His association with top German institutions not only expanded his own prospects but also paved the way for observant foreign relationships which made Pakistan's future generation of youth leaders equipped and empowered. Saidi was painstakingly working to promote civil responsibilities, human rights and critical thinking skills in the youth through seminars, lectures and youth development programs.

His approach has always centered on the foundations of liberal democracy — free speech, equal participation and minority rights. He has made no youth engagement one of his primary activism platforms, encouraging young Pakistanis to get involved in crafting their country's future through informed participation in civic life. He has also called for women to have greater voices in politics, education and leadership, having advocated the empowerment of women. At the heart of his vision is a deep commitment to coexistence and tolerance in religion. To ensure a peaceful, pluralistic society during his time, Mr. Siddiqui still serves as a strong advocate for civic education and interfaith harmony curricula reform in education, as what children learn during their time in the classroom must necessarily lay the foundations of what follows. His vision gives the people of Pakistan hope not just to shake off the present abysmal status quo but also to glimpse a more inclusive Pakistan based on the pillars of participation and participation.

CONCLUSION

THE TECHNICAL FRAMEWORK OF INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

Today, Pakistan stands at a crossroads, beset by both the erosion of democracy and the rampant spread of sectarian extremism. It is the product of a political culture that grew gradually over decades of institutional decay, authoritarian rule and the suppression of dissent, and that has been further exacerbated by what for now the population of the country have been two years of a fragile atmosphere of mistrust and intolerance, and wide social fissures. The state has also been busy doing nothing on facilitating inter faith dialogue and addressing the youth issues where if addressed could have solved most of the issues or convinced youth of their involvement in policy making decision making at the systemic level. In the midst of all this, the demand for a bold, inclusive and visionary model of leadership has never been greater.

High hopes for an inclusive future: Mr. Hassan Rasheed Siddiqui's story is a complicated story and such stories are as important as the narrative of exclusion and extremism that dominates the news. And as such, his ballast of liberal democratic tenets, his deft employment of high international-system shaming and lower domestic public space mobilization and his promotion of interfaith harmony they are a strong compass point for an inclusive Pakistan and political citizenship. In times of adversity, though, Mr. Siddiqui through educating people, empowering youth and advocating policy has proved that tangible change is within our reach — that reality can be perfect. His leadership is

evidence of how vision, courage and deep respect for pluralism can triumph in the struggle against forces of division and strive for the creation of a more tolerant, just and democratic society.

As Pakistan has worked toward tomorrow, Mr. Siddiqui's photographs remind us that lasting peace and development isn't attained at the end of an authoritarian gun, or with the coating of religious exclusion. They instead require a sustained national investment in civic education, youth participation, gender equality and interreligious coexistence. Just hope is not enough, and this effort to the new Pakistan, we call integrities and diffuses more democratic challenges.

Explaining the universalism of liberal values through your interfaith coexistence and peace model is critical for stabilizing the internal socio-political environment in Pakistan and paving a sustainable path for national development in the 21st century. With increasing extremism and sectarian divides, and a disenfranchised youth, there is an even greater need for leaders who value inclusive dialogue, democratic engagement, and social connection. Such men as Mr Hassan Rasheed Siddiqui serve as archetypes that civic leadership, grounded in the ideologies of liberalism and interfaith reverence, bring

about seismic reforms in society. These include promoting civic education and youth engagement, as well as interfaith dialogues, which, in helped open channels for peaceful coexistence and proven the impact of grassroots initiatives in fighting extremism. The country can create a more tolerant and peaceful society by educating political leadership as well as the general public about why religious intolerance is problematic, why democracy and inclusion matter, and investing in enabling local communities. As Pakistan aspires to be a pluralistic democracy it should instill a sense of these very values, the first step being to mentor our youth to be the leaders of tomorrow who will navigate it through a brighter and harmonious future.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to this and similar successful initiatives led by other influencers across Pakistan, several important policy recommendations can strengthen Pakistan's commitment to liberalism, interfaith harmony and youth empowerment. This ensures a generation of informed and active citizenry on the road to curriculum reform. will be obliged to include civic education on democratic principles, human rights, active participation in sham politics, etc. all along your national curricula for every education level. This reform can bridge the gap between informed citizens and dynamic problem solvers who can elevate their communities and country at large.

There is also a critical need for institutional support for interfaith programs. The government and NGOs need to make more efforts in interfaith agenda including an interfaith agenda and cooperation and development programs. These programs are important in crossing divides and fostering tolerance and peaceful coexistence among Pakistan's pluralistic communities of faith. Long-term sustainability of these programs will require stable funding, political will and active engagement by religious leaders, educators, and civil society organizations.

Finally, the involvement of young people in policy-making is crucial and needs to be a key part of a broader strategy to counter political alienation and radicalization. In this way, formal means are needed to promote true youth participation in political processes, allowing their voices to be heard in national decision-making processes. These could include mechanisms such as youth councils, advisory committees, or dedicated channels for youth input into policymaking. Allow the young generation space at the table — not only will Pakistan be better able to meet the needs of its young people, develop their talent, and foster an inclusive, broadly representative and democratic future political leadership.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ahmad, I. (2004). Islam, democracy and citizenship education: An examination of the social studies curriculum in Pakistan. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 7(1), 39–49. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ853848.pdf>
- [2] Anwar Book Depot. (1965). *Muasharti aloom ka practical atlas: Grade 4*.
- [3] Aziz, K. K. (1993). *The murder of history in Pakistan*. Vanguard.
- [4] Dean, M. M. (1999). *Governmentality: Power and rule in modern society*. Sage.
- [5] Green, A. (1990). *Education and state formation: The rise of education systems in England, France and the USA*. MacMillan.
- [6] Kazi, A. A. (1994). *Ethnicity and education in nation-building in Pakistan*. Vanguard.
- [7] Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, Government of Pakistan. (1969). *Proposals for a new educational policy*.
- [8] Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan. (1959). *Report of the Commission on National Education*.
- [9] Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan. (1972). *Education policy of 1972*.
- [10] Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan. (1979). *National education policy and implementation programme*.
- [11] Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan. (1992). *National education policy 1992*.

- [12] Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan. (1998). *Education policy of 1998–2008*.
- [13] Nayyar, A. H., & Salim, A. (2005). *The subtle subversion: The state of curricula and textbooks in Pakistan Urdu, English, Social Studies and Civics*. Sustainable Development Policy Institute.
- [14] Punjab Textbook Board. (2002). *Muasharti aloom chauthi jamat kay liay*.
- [15] Rahman, T. (1996). *Language and politics in Pakistan*. Oxford University Press.
- [16] Saigol, R. (2003). History, social studies and civics and the creation of enemies. In S. A. Zaidi (Ed.), *Social science in Pakistan in the 1990s* (pp. 159–200). Council of Social Sciences.
- [17] Salim, A., & Khan, Z. (2004). *Messing up the past: Evolution of history textbooks in Pakistan, 1947–2000*. Sustainable Development Policy Institute.
- [18] Smith, M. W. (1991). The politics of the textbook. In M. W. Christian-Smith (Ed.), *The politics of the textbook* (pp. 1–21). Routledge.
- [19] Yasmin, F., Hamid, A., Malik, B. U. D., & Ahmad, Q. S. (1981). *Social studies for the class 4* (1st ed.). Law Book House for Punjab Textbook Board.