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The Strategic Imperatives of National Unity

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Abstract

National unity is vital for a nation's strength and stability, with strategic significance across social, political, and economic domains. A thorough understanding of national unity is essential for promoting peace, security, and prosperity, while strengthening social cohesion and preserving national identity. There are numerous factors that either contribute or influence the realm of national unity while enabling policymakers to leverage it effectively.

The complexity of maintaining national unity hugely demands intentional efforts to promote inclusivity, equity and people's mindset to work together for the common good. A country should formulate policies that foster a shared identity and ensure equal opportunities for all if it aims to create a more promising and prosperous future for its citizens. Therefore, the strategic imperative of national unity remains not just as a desirable goal but a crucial necessity for the social, political, and economic stability of any nation.

Keywords

National Unity, Social Cohesion, National Identity, Inclusivity, Equity, Common Good, Shared Identity, Equal Opportunities, Strategic Imperative

Introduction

National unity is the sense of collective identity that brings citizens together to work towards shared goals and common interests. However, in today's world, maintaining national unity is not as simple as it may sound. Due to differences in ethnicity, religion, culture, and political and economic divisions, it has become more difficult and sometimes unclear (Castles & Davidson, 2000). Despite these challenges, the importance of national unity cannot be underestimated, as it is essential for national security, economic growth, and political stability. A country without strong national unity is more vulnerable to internal conflicts, political division, and economic struggles (Stewart, 2008).

The clear and careful understanding of national unity is imperative, which can significantly contribute in maintaining peace, security, and economic growth, while also preserving a strong national identity. Additionally, several factors contribute to national unity, creating an environment where policymakers and other key stakeholders can use the power of unity for the long-term benefit of the state and its citizens (Alesina & Ferrara, 2018).

The Role of National Unity in Social Stability

National unity serves as the foundation for social stability, particularly in societies having by ethnic, religious, or social divisions that face the risk of internal conflicts leading to violence or unrest. In such contexts, national unity promotes social cohesion by encouraging mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation among diverse groups. In countries with significant ethnic or religious diversity, national unity plays a

crucial role in reducing tensions and preventing conflicts that could destabilize the nation in various ways (Taylor, 2002).

One of the key strategic imperatives of national unity is to foster a sense of belonging and mutual coexistence among people from all walks of life and backgrounds. To illustrate this, post-apartheid South Africa stands out as a prominent example, where efforts to maintain and strengthen national unity were central to the nation's reconciliation process (Mandela, 1994). Policies aimed at promoting unity helped heal the deep social wounds caused by decades of racial segregation through effective dialogue and understanding between previously marginalized groups and the broader population (Rothstein, 2011).

On a larger scale, national unity played a crucial role in ensuring the peace and social stability necessary for South Africa's progress.

Similarly, the case of post-conflict Rwanda clearly highlights the importance of national unity, which played a crucial role in rebuilding the nation after the 1994 genocide. As part of its national unity strategy, the Rwandan government focused on fostering a collective identity that transcended ethnic backgrounds, prioritizing shared national interests (Reyntjens, 2004). This approach allowed Rwanda to make significant and visible social and economic progress since the genocide, demonstrating how national unity can serve as a powerful catalyst for social stability in the aftermath of conflict (Lister, 2016).

National Unity and Political Stability

The strength of national unity is closely linked to a country's political stability. This is particularly evident during times of crisis when citizens feel a strong connection to their state and share common values, making them more likely to support the government and its policies (Alesina & Ferrara, 2018). Furthermore, even in times of

peace, political stability is crucial for the smooth functioning of state institutions and the effective implementation of policies that foster development (KC, 2010).

National unity becomes a strategic imperative for ensuring government legitimacy, especially in countries with multiple political divisions (Huntington, 2004). In contrast, if political fragmentation persists due to an unstable political situation, it can lead to gridlock, where competing interests hinder decision-making and make it difficult to implement policies that address national challenges (Fukuyama, 2014)). Therefore, to create a common platform for dialogue and cooperation among a nation's various stakeholders, national unity emerges as one of the most effective strategic tools for any state.

Moreover, even in times of war or crisis, if a state prioritizes national unity as a central focus and encourages its citizens to understand its importance, it can unite the nation around a common cause, despite political and social divisions (Held & Henrietta, 2006). In such circumstances, political parties may set aside their differences to focus on the nation's success. In contrast, countries that fail to nurture national unity often face political instability, marked by frequent leadership changes, poor governance, and weakened institutions (Baldwin, 2015).

Furthermore, the importance of national unity becomes even more critical during times of crisis, such as natural disasters, economic recessions, or security threats, when a united population is more likely to support government efforts to address the situation. Similarly, even outside of crises, during periods of political unrest or conflict, national unity can serve as a stabilizing force, reducing the likelihood of violence and encouraging citizens to collaborate in resolving their differences (Edward & Michael, 2014). Clearly, a fragmented society is more vulnerable to external manipulation, as divisive forces can exploit internal tensions to destabilize the state.

Economic Development and National Unity

The strategic role of national unity is clearly evident in a country's economic development, where unity among citizens creates an environment conducive to growth by fostering trust in institutions, reducing conflict, and encouraging collective action. As a result, people unite as a cohesive population, more likely to contribute to the development of national infrastructure, support domestic industries, and invest in long-term economic projects that benefit society as a whole. In contrast, social and political divisions can have a profoundly negative impact on economic progress, often fueling ethnic or regional tensions that can lead to economic disparities where certain groups may become marginalized and excluded from access to economic opportunities (Brockerhoff, 2011). Over the long term, such conditions can create deep resentment and further divisions within populations and sectors, which not only hinder national development but also pose a security threat to national unity.

In this context, one of the key challenges faced by countries experiencing ethnic or regional conflict is ensuring equitable economic development (Alesina & Ferrara, 2018). In such situations, national unity plays a crucial role in ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their background, have access to the benefits of economic growth. It also supports the implementation of inclusive policies that promote equal access to education, healthcare, employment, and other essential services. Therefore, it can be argued that governments prioritizing national unity are better equipped to develop policies that address the needs of all citizens and reduce inequalities (Tufte & Avenstrup, 2019).

Looking at the history of many nations and the significant outcomes of national unity, Malaysia's economic transformation stands out as an exemplary case, with national unity policies at the core, especially after the country gained independence in 1957 (Ramasamy, 2007). From the outset of independence, Malaysia adopted policies aimed at fostering unity among its diverse population, which included multiple ethnic

communities (Ramasamy, 2007). As a result of the government's focus on inclusive economic development and efforts to promote a shared national identity, Malaysia achieved significant economic growth and was able to reduce poverty over the past several decades (Hussin & Zawawi, 2015).

National Unity and National Identity

National unity and the concept of national identity are closely intertwined. In fact, national identity refers to the sense of belonging to a nation and the shared understanding of its values, history, and culture (Smith, 1991). When this identity is strengthened, it fosters unity by providing citizens with a common framework through which they can relate to one another. On a larger scale, this shared identity creates a sense of pride and solidarity, motivating individuals to contribute to the nation's welfare.

The promotion of national identity often involves government-driven initiatives designed to instill patriotism and national pride, which gets reflected through activities such as celebrating national holidays, promoting national symbols like flags and anthems, and teaching national history and culture in schools (Smith, 1991). In countries with diverse populations, it is essential that national identity be constructed to include elements from all major cultural and ethnic groups, fostering a sense of belonging and unity.

In contrast, countries with weak national identities are highly susceptible to fragmentation due to various causes, as citizens lack a shared sense of purpose or common values. In such societies, individuals are less likely to support state institutions or cooperate with one another (Huntington, 2004). As a result, the state not only struggles to maintain national unity but may also face significant challenges to its national security.

Challenges to National Unity

It is evident that while national unity is a strategic imperative, achieving and sustaining it is fraught with challenges. In many countries, issues such as ethnic conflict, religious intolerance, lack of transparency and accountability, economic inequality, and political corruption have undermined efforts to foster national unity (Mamdani, 2001). Furthermore, these challenges can thwart the development of an environment where national unity can prosper.

Furthermore, Ethnic and religious divisions remain significant obstacles to national unity, especially in countries with diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural identities, where the exploitation of feelings of marginalization or discrimination can quickly lead to conflict. To preserve national unity and reinforce shared values, policies of political favoritism and nepotism, which favor one group over another, must be strictly avoided, and policies should be implemented that promptly address the grievances of affected groups while fostering a collective sense of identity and inclusion (Benedict, 2007). Economic inequality is a significant barrier to building national unity. Economically disadvantaged individuals or groups may feel alienated from the broader society and less committed to the nation's success. Therefore, inclusive economic policies that guarantee equal access to resources and opportunities for all citizens must be a top priority for any state (Piketty, 2014).

Conclusion

In conclusion, national unity is a strategic imperative that is essential to the stability, security, and development of any nation. A nation united by common principles and values is better equipped to confront challenges and crises, ensuring that its citizens collaborate for the common good. National unity fosters social cohesion, promotes political stability, and supports economic growth. However, achieving and maintaining unity requires strong, deliberate efforts to promote inclusivity and equity in line with the

values of national unity. Furthermore, policies that nurture a shared sense of identity and provide equal opportunities for all citizens should be the primary focus of any state. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that by prioritizing national unity, countries can build a more resilient and prosperous future for their citizens.

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