

Jinnah and the Notion of a Nation-State

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Abstract

Attempting to contribute in a very modest way to the ideological debate of Pakistan, this article seeks to identify the causes of the country's persistent ideological predicament. Beginning by narrating certain questions around which the sixty plus years debate has been carried out, the article looks into what responses were provided by the state and the ruling political and religious elite of the country and how these manifested in the policies, pronouncements, and practical steps. However, the failure of almost of all of these responses in achieving their objectives brings one back to square one and one is compelled to see why these met such fate. It is argued that the founder of Pakistan had much clearer vision about the country for the creation of which he had the pivotal and the decisive role. It seems that he knew better than many of those in his times and thereafter, as to what type of state and ideology the country would require for its survival and progress. A democratic and federal character along with assurance of equality of citizens in the eye of the law could alone enable the state to realize the objectives for which the country was established. Similarly, a democratic and federal Pakistani nationhood could represent the ideology of Pakistan which, had it been created, would have also aptly represented the vision of the Quaid-i-Azam.

Since its creation, Pakistan has remained subjected to a persistent ideological crisis. A set of questions highlight various aspects of this crisis. For example, it is asked; first, what was the objective of the creation of Pakistan? Was it the establishment of an Islamic state to be authenticated by the religious ulema and the clergy, or was it to be a democratic state, in which the consensus among the people, including both the Muslims and non-Muslims, had to determine the policies of the state. In other words was it to be a theocracy or a democratic nation state? Second, there recurs the question as to what, today, is the status of the Two Nation Theory on the basis of which the demand for Pakistan was made? Is it still valid or has it outlived itself after the creation of

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Pakistan? Third, is Pakistan an ideological state and is Islam the ideology of Pakistan or there is room for re-defining and re-statement of our ideology? A fourth, and a recurrent, question deals with the relationship of religion with state in the context of Pakistan. Should the two be merged together or would they fulfill their respective purposes more amicably while remaining apart? Fifth, it is asked was the creation of Pakistan a step towards Islamic revivalism across the world, a phenomenon which in the 1980s and onwards became increasingly militant or Pakistan had to project Islamic ideals of morality and social justice while remaining in the lego-political confines of a nation state on the one hand and the international law on the other?

Had these questions been answered adequately keeping in view the actual historical context, and the rationale of the creation of Pakistan, the subsequent ideological predicament could have been avoided. In a way, these questions have been responded to at the level of state, its functionaries, the ruling elite and a set of religio-political ideologues that have progressively become powerful within the political set-up of the country. Consequently, these responses have also been embodied in policies and official practices. So, before moving ahead, it would be helpful if these responses are looked into.

First, it was asserted that Pakistan is an Islamic state. India was partitioned to bring this state about. In 1949, the Objectives Resolution declared the sovereignty to be vested in the Almighty Allah. Though the resolution also suggested that this sovereignty would be exercised by the people of Pakistan through their elected representatives,¹ yet, as the successive constitutions of the country laid down that the legislation made by these representatives was to be guided and supervised by a set of religious ulema, who were assembled in different advisory bodies created in the respective constitutions of 1956, 1962 and 1973.² Second,

¹ See the text of the Objectives Resolution, 'Preamble', *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973 As Amended by the Constitution (Eighteenth Amdt.) Act 2010*, (Islamabad: Centre for Civic Education Pakistan [2010]). The Objectives Resolution became a substantive part of the Constitution during the regime of General Ziaul Haq, through the Revival of the Constitution of 1973 Order, 1985.

² According to Article 197 of the 1956 Constitution, the president was vested with the responsibility to set up an organization for Islamic research and instruction in advanced in order to assist the reconstruction of the Muslim society in the country. Similarly, Article 198 laid down that the president would appoint, within one year of the Constitution Day, a Commission to make recommendations for bringing the existing laws into conformity with the injunctions of Islam, and to suggest to the central and provincial

the constitution of 1973 went to the extent to declare Islam to be the religion of the state (Article 2), a unique and unprecedented event in the annals of modern state-craft. Third, the constitution, as it stands today, prohibits a non-Muslim from becoming the president (Article 41(2)) or even the prime minister (Article 91(3)) of the country. Fourth, ensuring the Islamic way of life constitutes a part of the principles of policy in the constitution (Article 31), an obligation under which successive governments took various policy decisions like introducing *Islamiyat* as compulsory subject, the state's taking upon itself the responsibility of managing *zakat* and *auqaf*, etc. Fifth, Two Nation Theory was attributed permanence with the suggestion that since the country was created on its basis; its survival can only be ensured by it. In the major part of the country's history, separate electorates remained on the statute books. All constitutions of the country ensured the rights of minorities. Notwithstanding the fulfillment or otherwise of this promise, the fact remains that the constitutions did envisage the citizenry to be divided between the majority and the minority. Sixth, Pakistan has all along been described as an ideological state with Islam defining this ideology. The ideology of Pakistan has been asserted more vigorously with the passage of time and in a more concerted manner by the state itself. The educational system, the political lexicon, and verbiage of most of our politicians as well as the media have all been tuned to that end. At times it was also claimed that Pakistan is the only ideological state, or if some other state shares this status with Pakistan, it is Israel.³ Seventh, Pakistan

legislatures the means through which the injunctions of Islam could be given legislative effect. See *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1956*, full text in Government of Pakistan, *Constitutional Documents (Pakistan)*, (Karachi: Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Law Division, 1964). For the above purpose, the Constitution of 1962 created the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology; see Government of Pakistan, *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan* (Karachi: Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Law Division, 1964), Articles 199-206. The Constitution of 1973 created the Council of Islamic Ideology to advise the parliament or any provincial legislature as to whether a proposed law is or is not repugnant to the injunctions of Islam. See *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, op.cit.*, Article 229.

³ In his latest work, Javed Jabbar, points out that there exist six such states in the world which were created in recent history on the basis of religion. These countries are: the Hindu Kingdom of Nepal (end-18th century-2006), the city State of the Vatican (1929), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1932), the Maldives (1953-1968-2008), Israel (1948) and Pakistan. Javed Jabbar,

was described by many, particularly a wider section of the clergy, as the first stage in the pan-Islamic mission. Pakistan has always played proactive role in the Rabta-i-Aalam-i-Islami, a Saudi-backed organization which strove for bringing the Muslim countries together and created a number of sub-organizations and institutions. Pakistan was also quite active in the creation of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) when it was established in Rabat (Morocco) in 1969. It also invested a lot of interest in the organization in its subsequent years so much so that in 1974 Pakistan hosted the Islamic Summit in Lahore with great fervor. In fact, there has always remained a romance for pan-Islamic solidarity in the country which has often prevented the people from identifying the actual geopolitical and national interest along which the brother Muslim countries conduct their respective foreign policies. Similarly, when Pakistan launched its nuclear program and it would be atomic bomb was designated by the western media as 'Islamic bomb', the characterization was readily accepted with a sense of glory by a section of Pakistani media and intelligentsia. In the 1990s, when the Pakistani and foreign students coming out of the religious seminaries of Pakistan were recruited as *Taliban*, to take over Afghanistan, the experiment turned out to be so encouraging for the clergy that in the late 1990s and in the earlier years of the 21st century, it was discussed in certain religious circles that the boundaries between Pakistan and Afghanistan should be abolished for the creation of a wider Islamic *Khilafat* comprising the territories of Pakistan and Afghanistan, with Mullah Umar, leader of Taliban and Afghanistan, as the *Khalifatul-Muslimeen*.⁴

Assessing the efficacy of the above decisions taken for giving a particular religious identity to Pakistan, one notes that despite so much of religious talk all around, and so much of ideological indoctrination, a number of disturbing facts haunt us. For example, first, Pakistan has continued to lack national integration. The regional, ethnic and linguistic contradictions have continued unabated. The centre-province conflict has remained a permanent feature of Pakistan's history. Given the acute regional disparities, the under-privileged provinces and regions have always voiced their desire for financial autonomy, economic empowerment, and social justice. Unfortunately, the central response has mostly been arbitrary and authoritarian. Half of the country comprising

Pakistan-Unique Origins: Unique Destiny (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 2011), p.48.

⁴ See Dr. Israr Ahmad, *Aalmi Nizam-e-Khilafat kay Qayam ka Imkan* (The prospects of the establishment of a universal system of *Khilafa*), *Meesaq*, Lahore, January 2002.

more than half of its population seceded after twenty-four years of the creation of the country. Second, an environment of Islamic brotherhood and solidarity could not be realized in the country. The society has remained subjected to moral degradation. Despite all the lip service to religion, nepotism, corruption and hypocrisy have unfortunately come to define the Pakistani way of life. Unfortunately, even the religious class is not totally immune to these social evils. Third, Pakistan could not become a social welfare state which was an objective for which it was created. It remains one of the poorest of all countries with almost 40 per cent of its population living below the poverty line and almost half still illiterate. Women, agricultural and industrial workers, slum dwellers, and minorities constitute a big under-privileged section of the society which is discriminated against under law and by the policies of the state. Fourth, religious harmony is still a dream with religious extremism persistently on the rise. Extremist groups have hijacked the society. Places of worship are attacked by these groups, and prayers are held under the security of the police. Religious minorities feel insecure. The accounts of the highhandedness meted out to them constitute a large section of the reports published by various human rights bodies. Fifth, a large number of people are becoming disappointed with the state of affairs. Those who afford, prefer to go abroad to begin a new life. Finally, and above all, the talk of an ideological crisis does not come to an end. Not just this, the people, whose ideological recipes have so far been followed, still continue to insist on the presence of the ideological crisis.

It should not be difficult to assume that the ideological dictums, under which the country was tried to be guided, have exposed their ineptness and weaknesses. These have brought about anything but a society envisioned by the Quaid-i-Azam.

So, it would not be out of place to examine the weaknesses of our hitherto ideological formulations, and to ascertain how the country can be rescued from the continuation of its ideological predicament. For this, one needs to look into the actual context of the creation of Pakistan and ascertain the imperatives of national integration in the post-independence environment rationally and with an objective eye.

Truly, the demand for Pakistan was couched in the Two Nation Theory as is well-known. However, as demonstrated by the Muslim League documents, the statements of the Quaid-i-Azam, and the lego-political terrain culminating in the creation of the country, the Two Nation Theory was the political device chosen to ensure the rights of the Muslims, first, in the context of united India, and later, as the source to demand a separate homeland for them. The demand of Pakistan was

made at a time when the principles of the nations' right of self-determination and national sovereignty had been accepted internationally. While speaking about the Muslims as a nation, Jinnah was, therefore, employing an existing political concept of group formation. Before doing this, he had earnestly strived to secure Muslims' interests within an all-India milieu. Once, he was regarded as an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1927, he had even offered to give up the principle of separate electorates – a principle which was one of the most important causes behind the creation of the Muslim League in 1906, if the Muslims were given constitutional safeguards in united India. At the time of coming of the Simon Commission, he tried to make a common cause with the Congress. Even after 1937, when the League took recourse to the Two Nation Theory more regularly, the doors were not closed by him for the solution of the communal problem in an Indian context. Even the Lahore Resolution spoke about a proposed constitution for 'this country' which in 1940 was no else but India. Jinnah's search for an amicable solution to the communal problem in India continued till the Cabinet Mission Plan.

While projecting the Two Nation Theory, Jinnah was in fact employing the cultural identity of a minority for the construction of its political identity or for its group-formation in the political sense. In the world of ethnic politics it was not a new thing; numerous examples exist where political group-formation was done on the basis of cultural indices. While doing so, Jinnah was not expressing a religious prejudice nor was he trying to demonstrate the superiority of one religious community over the other. His sole argument was that the Muslims and the Hindus were different.

Jinnah avoided getting embroiled in religious contests and demonstrated distaste for using religion for political purposes. In the beginning of his career he had taken up the responsibility to plead the case of the Muslim minority but the difference between standing for the rights of a religious minority and employing religion in politics was all the more evident in his politics. Jinnah had avoided joining the Khilafat Movement declaring it to be an outcome of 'religious frenzy' and suggesting that 'sentimental nonsense and emotions have no place in politics'.⁵ Similarly, at one stage, after the demand of Pakistan was made, he had this to say:

What are we fighting for. What are we aiming at. It is not theocracy, not for a theocratic state. Religion is there and religion is dear to us. All the worldly goods are

⁵ M.A.H. Ispahani, *Quaid-i-Azam as I Knew Him* (Karachi: 1966), p.22.

nothing to us when we talk of religion; but there are other things which are very vital – our social life, our economic life. But without political power how can you defend your faith and your economic life?’⁶

Regarding the question of sovereignty, Jinnah had no confusion in his mind. He had certainly used the phrases of Islamic system and the Islamic state time and again but while doing this he did not perceive the new state to be a theocracy. Rather he envisioned a modern democratic nation state with a federal and parliamentary form of government which are modern concepts of political science. Jinnah’s concept of an Islamic state should be viewed in the context of his commitment to federalism and parliamentary democracy, and also in the context of his projections for a social welfare state in Pakistan, for which, in his speech in Chittagong in March 1948, he used the phrase of ‘Islamic socialism’.⁷ Regarding sovereignty, Jinnah had no doubt that in Pakistan it would be the people in whom the sovereignty of the state would vest. In order to impress upon this point, he sought to construct a case for democratic governance in the context of history and culture. Thus he said before the creation of Pakistan:

Democracy is in our blood. It is in our marrows. Only centuries of adverse circumstances have made the circulation of that blood cold. It has got frozen, and your arteries are not functioning. But thank God, the blood is circulating again, thanks to the Muslims League’s efforts. Our Government will be a People’s government.⁸

While assessing the democratic vision of Jinnah, I.A. Rehman, renowned human rights activist and scholar, observes that:

Jinnah’s political creed can be determined not only by his rejection of certain ideas but also by his affirmation. When asked about the system of government in the proposed Pakistan, he made some fundamental observations. He invariably answered queries to this effect by declaring that Pakistan’s constitution would be framed by its people and no one, not even he, had any

⁶ Jinnah’s speech in the concluding session of the Muslim Legislators’ Convention on 10 April 1946. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan* Vol. II (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1970), p.523.

⁷ See Jinnah’s public address on 26 March 1948 in Chittagong, Waheed Ahmed (ed.), *The Nation’s Voice*, Vol. VII (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 2003), p.289.

⁸ Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *op.cit.*, p.424.

right to dictate them. So far as his personal views were concerned, Pakistan would be a people's democracy in which sovereignty belonged to the people. These two fundamental postulates precluded, in Jinnah's thinking, any source of constitutional or ordinary law other than the will of the people.⁹

In as far as the relevance of the Two Nation Theory after the creation of Pakistan, the assertion rests on the assumption that the ideologies are ends in themselves and that they are permanent and permanently delineate the path to be taken by their followers. The assumption also implies that the ideologies have an *a priori* existence, that they are pre-given, and have a primordial existence. This explanation of ideology has been seriously contested in the modern age by rational thinkers and objective historiographers. It has been argued with convincing empirical findings that ideologies are essentially a political construct and they emerge in the context of given political contests. With the change in context the nature of the contest may also change and hence the recreation or restatement of the ideology.

The insistence to project Two Nation Theory to independent Pakistan will not only amount to suggest that the communal problem of the pre-partition era continues to exist, which would further imply that Pakistan's creation has not resolved anything, but would also suggest that a religious minority within Pakistan would always have the potential to take recourse to its cultural and religious identity in order to build its political constituency. This is anathema to the idea of a united Pakistani nationhood and it is this prospect which was foreclosed by the Quaid-i-Azam, when he underlined the imperatives of the Pakistani nationhood in his 11 August 1947 speech. Thus Quaid-i-Azam, while speaking to the Constituent Assembly, clearly stated that:

If you change your past and work together in a spirit that everyone of you, no matter to what community he belongs, no matter what relations he had with you in the past, no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this state with equal rights, privileges obligations, there will be no end to the progress you will make.¹⁰

Quaid-i-Azam further said:

⁹ I.A. Rehman, 'Quaid-i-Azam and Democracy', in Dr. (Miss) K.F. Yusuf (ed.), *Politics and Policies of Quaid-i-Azam* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1994), pp.141-42.

¹⁰ Waheed Ahmed, *op.cit.*, Vol. VI (2002), p.363.

We should begin to work in that spirit and *in course of time all these angularities of the majority and minority community – the Hindu community and the Muslim community... will vanish*. Indeed if you ask me this has been the biggest hindrance in the way of India to attain its freedom and independence and but for this we would have been free people long long ago...Therefore we must learn a lesson from this. *You are free; you are free to go to your temples; you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in the state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste, or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the state* (emphasis added).¹¹

Jinnah's 11th August speech is a classic embodiment of the idea of a nation state. The suggestion that Jinnah was pacifying the religious emotions which had ignited violence on the eve of partition, and that he was trying to win over the minorities in the highly sentimental and charged atmosphere, does not fully ascertain the spirit and message of his speech which may well be regarded as the Magna Carta of Pakistan. Notwithstanding the immediate and the short term importance of this speech, his message was more substantial, all-encompassing and carrying long-term validity. More than restoring the confidence of the minorities, he was in fact nullifying the notions of minority and majority in the new state. So, if in Pakistan there could be constructed an ideology representing the views of its founder, it could not be anything else but the ideology of a nation state. This ideology could serve as a cementing force in a plural society which Pakistan was and has all along been. It was this ideology that could have safeguarded the fundamental civilian rights and which could have served as a vehicle for a prosperous and modern state.

A religion's designation as the ideology of a state involves a number of complexities. Religion is, primarily, a trans-territorial reality which transcends all local, national, ethnic and linguistic boundaries and brings into being a wider community of faith. In contrast, state is a territorial entity in which the boundaries of the state play pivotal role in defining the nationhood. By making religion the ideology of the state, the territory becomes secondary, if not a totally irrelevant, reality. The bond of religious solidarity may compel the followers of one religion in a state to undermine the territorial confines of their state and get into a project

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.363-64.

of group-formation along their religious identity which may threaten the group identity of the state itself.

Second, religious ideology has the tendency to discriminate among the people of the state along religious lines. Thus, at best the minority could be ensured better rights but such a state does not and can not bring to rest the dichotomy of the minority and the majority within its citizenry. This dichotomy negates the very idea of a nation state.

For a state to claim an ideology is not an unusual thing nor is it something confined to Pakistan. Almost all states take recourse to one or the other ideology. The socialist states had been ideological states and so are the capitalist states. Since ideologies are political constructs they are used by the states for their legitimacy and this legitimacy is important for all states no matter how they correspond with their societies. As states essentially represent a dichotomous relationship with the society, ideology helps gloss over this dichotomy and helps ensure the allegiance of the people to the state. Thus one hears about the American values and American nationalism in the United States, British nationalism in the United Kingdom, secularism in India, Juche Idea in North Korea and so on and so forth. As we live in the era of a nation state, nationalism as a rule, is the ideology of all these states. It is not that the nation states do not have their inherent weaknesses. They certainly have not yet overcome the discriminations of class and also, in most cases, of gender, yet the nation states may well be designated as advancement on the previous forms of state humans have built and experienced. As an astute observer of the world in which he was chosen to lead his nation, Jinnah knew the spirit of his age and the dictates of his times. He thus envisaged Pakistan to be a modern nation state which could have taken a respectable place among the community of nations through its achievements in economy, social justice, system of governance and overall well-being of its people.

As to why Pakistan could not become a united nation and why unity could not be evolved amidst its multifarious diversities, one needs to see that in other parts of the world, nation states were created under certain historical conditions. It is a set of social factors which contribute to the emergence of the nation state. The social classes – the emerging industrial and trading capitalist classes with a degree of autonomous existence lead the creation of nation state as they did in France, in Britain and in the United States. Inherently in contradiction with the feudal class, the emerging capitalist class forged alliances with the general populace to strengthen themselves and, in return, offered equality of citizenship, equal rights, political participation etc to them. In Pakistan, this autonomous capitalist class did not exist and the small class of traders

and entrepreneurs that was there was, like its feudal counterpart, dependent on the colonial patronage. With partition, the power structure changed only to the extent that the patrons were changed from the colonial rulers of the Raj to the civil-military oligarchy. Our feudal class as well as the dependent indigenous capitalist class could not be expected to offer an enlightened ideology of a modern nation state. The power holders, having no roots among the people and totally bereft of legitimacy, could only raise the slogan of Islam in order to secure the allegiance of the people. Jinnah's vision of Pakistan got lost in this mist.

Jinnah's vision of a nation-state can be resurrected if we undertake to:

- a. Make Pakistan a modern democratic state ensuring equality to all its citizens not only in letters but also in spirit.
- b. Reshape the political matrix of the country ensuring the supremacy of the people which would imply bringing to an end the omnipotence and supremacy of the civil and the military bureaucracies.
- c. Ensure substantial and effective land reforms in the country emancipating the people from the bondage of feudalism in whatever form it exists in Pakistan.
- d. Give priority to education, promoting rational and scientific thinking in order to decolonize the colonial mindset that we continue to have even after six decades of independence.

If we do not address the issues highlighted above we will continue to bewilder in an ideological mess and Jinnah's vision of Pakistan will remain a dream. On the other hand, addressing these issues would help realize his vision and would make Pakistan a country we would all be proud of.