

Pakistan's Political Use of Islam: A Historical Discourse

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Abstract

Religious Card or Islamic Touch was an important toll in the hands of Muslim leaders during separatist movement in colonial period. The creation of Pakistan was the outcome of many contributory factors in which the most attractive and equally important factor was the use of popular and catchy Religious touch in the speeches of Muslim Leaders which had rejuvenating effects in mass mobilization. Islam was the only pillar of Two Nation Theory which becomes the sole base for partition of Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent. After independence this Islamic Touch was used in big processions and crowded meetings to have the attention of the people who want Islam and Nizam-A-Mustafa not only in their lives but also in the state craft. But this dream still not come true as the Religion and Islamic Touch is just a political slogan for the political elite of Pakistan. Political parties took benefit of religious touch but not materialize it in shaping the statehood. This article analyse the role of Islamic Touch or Religious Card in the politics of Pakistan and how Islamic touch affect the emotions of general public while casting vote in electoral politics of Pakistan. Either any concrete effort was made to implement the Islamic Touch or this was remained mere catchy words to gain the vote of the people.

Keywords: Islam, Politics, Emotions, Elections, Voting

Introduction

The relationship between religion and the state is a complex and multifaceted issue that has been debated throughout history and varies significantly across different societies and cultures. Different political systems and ideologies have approached this relationship in diverse ways. The emergence of Pakistan as an independent state in 1947 was the culmination of decades of debate and divisions among Muslims in British India about their collective future. After the consolidation of British rule in the nineteenth century, Muslims found themselves deprived of the privileged status they enjoyed under Mughal rule. Some of their leaders embraced territorial nationalism

and did not define their collective personality through religion. They opposed British rule and called for full participation in the Indian nationalist movement led by the Indian National Congress of Gandhi and Nehru. Others felt that Muslims had a special identity that would be erased over time by ethnic and territorial nationalism centered primarily on the Hindu majority in India. Pakistan's creation represented the acceptance of the two-nation theory, which had been periodically articulated long before the formal demand for recognition of a Muslim nation in 1940 but had never been fully explained in terms of how it would be applied. Although Pakistan was intended to save South Asia's Muslims from being a permanent minority, it never became the homeland of all South Asia's Muslims. One-third of the Indian subcontinent's Muslims remained behind as a minority in Hindu-dominated India even after partition in 1947. The other two thirds now lives in two separate countries, Pakistan and Bangladesh, confirming the doubts expressed before independence about the practicality of the two-nation theory. Hussain Haqqani (2005). Pakistan's freedom struggle had been relatively short, beginning with the demand by the All-India Muslim League for separate Muslim and non-Muslim states in 1940 and ending with the announcement of the partition plan in June 1947. Although the Muslim League claimed to speak for the majority of Indian Muslims, its strongest support and most of its national leadership came from regions where Muslims were in a minority. Ian Talbot (1998)

Even after the Muslim League won over local notables in the provinces that were to constitute Pakistan, it did not have a consensus among its leaders over the future direction of the new country. Issues such as the new nation's constitutional scheme, the status of various ethno-linguistic groups within Pakistan, and the role of religion and theologians in matters of state were still unresolved at independence. Leaders of the Muslim League had given little thought to, and had made no preparations for, how to run a new country. One possible explanation for this lack is that the demand for Pakistan on the basis of Two Nation Theory was "devised for bargaining purposes to gain political leverage for Muslims." Dennis Kux (2001) While seeking recognition of a separate Muslim nation, Jinnah had managed to pull together various elements of Muslim leadership in India, creating communal unity through ambiguity about the final goal. He was "using the demand for Pakistan to negotiate a new constitutional arrangement in which Muslims would have an equal share of power". Ayesha Jalal (1990)

Jinnah and the Muslim League had to prove their support in the Muslim-majority provinces. Such support could not have been won by too precise a political program since the interests of Muslims in one part of India did not suit Muslims in others, Jinnah could not afford to wreck the existing structure of Muslim politics, especially since he had nothing plausible to replace it with. This is where religion came to the rescue. Yet Jinnah's resort to religion was not an ideology to which he was ever committed or even a

device to use against rival communities; it was simply a way of giving a semblance of unity and solidity to his divided Muslim constituents. Jinnah needed a demand that was specifically ambiguous and imprecise to command general support, something specifically Muslim though unspecific in every other respect. The intentionally obscure cry for a "Pakistan" was contrived to meet this requirement, Jinnah could not afford to state precisely what the demand for "Pakistan" was intended to accomplish. Hussain Haqqani (2005).

One result of Jinnah's elaborate strategy was that India's Muslims demanded Pakistan without really knowing the results of that demand. Once Jinnah's demand for recognition of Muslim nationhood had been characterized as a demand for India's division, Jinnah's critics pointed out that any division of India along communal lines would inevitably have to include a division of the two major provinces, Punjab and Bengal, along similar lines. Ayesha Jalal (1990) A few months before independence, Khwaja Nazimuddin, who later became Pakistan's second governor general as well as its second prime minister, candidly told a British governor that he did not know "what Pakistan means and that nobody in the Muslim League knew." Report to the Viceroy by Sir Evan Jenkins, Governor of Punjab, (1947)

The British agreement to concede the demand for Pakistan was based partly on the outcome of the 1945-1946 elections for a Constituent Assembly and various provincial assemblies. The elections were organized on the basis of limited franchise and separate electorates for various religious communities, a practice in vogue in India since 1909. The Muslim League won 75 percent of the Muslim vote and all the Muslim seats in the constituent assembly. Only 15 percent of the population had the right to vote on the basis of literacy, property, income, and combatant status. HRCP Repoert on Elections (2015). It can be said with some certainty that literate, salaried, and propertied Muslims as well as those who had served in the British army supported the Muslim League. The views of the Muslim peasantry and illiterate masses were less clear. Hussain Haqqani (2005). To shore up Muslim support, the Muslim League appealed to religious and communal sentiment. Although Jinnah and most of his principal deputies in the campaign for Pakistan were secular individuals, the Muslim League's 1945-1946 election campaign was based almost entirely on Islamic rhetoric.

The Muslim League responded by rolling out its own theologians. The result was the almost total identification of Pakistan with Islam in the course of the campaign. The rural Muslim masses were encouraged to develop "a vague feeling that they would all become better Muslims once a Muslim state was established." Khalid Bin Sayeed (1968).

In the League meetings that the Quaid-i-Azam addressed, particularly in the Muslim majority areas, Islam with its symbols and slogans figured very prominently in all his speeches. Addressing the Pathans, he said, "Do you want Pakistan or not?" (shouts of Allah-o-Akbar) (God is great). Well, if you

want Pakistan, vote for the League candidates. If we fail to realize our duty today you will be reduced to the status of Sudras (low castes) and Islam will be vanquished from India. I shall never allow Muslims to be slaves of Hindus. (Allah-o-Akbar). Khalid Bin Sayeed (1968). Jinnah was not unaware of the use of religion in this manner by the Muslim League, although on principle he was opposed to mixing religion with politics. And yet it is a fact that the people of Pakistan talked in the only idiom they knew. Pakistan was to be the laboratory of Islam, the citadel of Islam. Dr Afzal Iqbal (1984).

In what was an early, but by no means the last, effort at attributing religious status to Pakistan's political leadership, several Muslim League leaders from Punjab added religious titles, such as Maulana, Pir, or Sajjada Nashin to their names in "dubious pretensions to piety." Khalid Bin Sayeed (1968).

The circumstances of the Muslim League's apparent success in the 1946 elections foreshadowed the difficulties confronting Pakistan's leaders once the new country was created. The campaign for Pakistan had, in its final stages, become a religious movement even though its leaders initiated it as a formula for resolving post independence constitutional problems. This created confusion about Pakistan's *raison d'être*, which Pakistan's leadership has attempted to resolve through a state ideology. The Muslim League did not retain mass support in the areas that became Pakistan within a few years of independence, especially after universal adult franchise was recognized. The abstract notion of a Pakistan that would be Muslim but not necessarily Islamic in a strict religious sense was confronted with alternative visions. The elite that demanded an independent Pakistan was now challenged by groups that appealed to the wider electorate, most of whom did not have a say in the 1946 election that led to partition. Religious leaders who had been brought belatedly in to campaign for the Muslim League were joined by theologians who had not supported the demand for Pakistan, and they started calling for the new country's Islamization. Others sought to build Pakistan as a loose federation of Muslim majority provinces, with an emphasis on ethnic and regional cultures. Hussain Haqqani (2005).

To complicate matters further, when Pakistan was finally born, it faced an environment of insecurity and hostility, with many Indian leaders predicting the early demise of the new country. A former Pakistani foreign minister explained half a century later that the new country found itself beset with problems: The partition plan of 3 June 1947 gave only seventy-two days for transition to independence. Within this brief period, three provinces had to be divided, referendums organized, civil and armed services bifurcated, and assets apportioned. The telescoped timetable created seemingly impossible problems for Pakistan, which, unlike India, inherited neither a capital nor government nor the financial resources to establish and equip the administrative, economic and military institutions of the new state. Even more daunting problems arose in the wake of the partition. Communal

rioting led to the killing of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. A tidal wave of millions of refugees entered Pakistan, confronting the new state with an awesome burden of rehabilitation. Abdus Sattar (1997).

Three days before Pakistan's independence was formalized and Jinnah became the new dominion's governor general, he addressed Pakistan's Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947. This speech suggests that Pakistan's founder and Quaid-i-Azam expected the new country to be a homeland of Muslims but that he did not expect a role for religion in its governance: 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. Now I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State. Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Speeches as Governor General of Pakistan (1947-48).

Pakistan's secularists have interpreted Jinnah's August 11 speech as a clear statement of intent to build a secular state. Muhammad Munir (1979). Although the speech was widely publicized at the time in an attempt to quell the communal riots that accompanied partition, subsequent official accounts of Jinnah's life included only an edited version of the speech. References to religion having no role in the business of state had been taken out. Ardesir Cowasjee (2003). The greatest support for Pakistan had come from Muslims living in regions that did not become part of the new state. These Muslim minority regions, now in India, also provided a disproportionate number of the Muslim League's leadership, senior military officers, and civil servants for Pakistan's early administration.

Pakistan, unlike India, did not go through a general election after independence. Instead, indirect elections through provincial assemblies substituted for an appeal to the general electorate. Provincial elections, held in the Punjab and the NWFP in 1951, were tainted by allegations of administrative interference, whereas the center was often at confrontation with the elected leadership in Sind. The Muslim League, which had led the country to independence, was swept out of power in the country's eastern wing in 1954 amid a rising tide of Bengali awakening.

Jinnah's successors chose to patch over domestic differences in the independent country the same way that Muslim unity had been forged during the pre-independence phase. They defined Pakistani national identity through religious symbolism and carried forward the hostilities between the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League by building India-Pakistan rivalry. The dispute over the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir and continued criticism of the idea of Pakistan by Indian politicians and scholars helped fuel the view that "India did not accept the partition of

India in good faith and that, by taking piecemeal, she could undo the division." M.M.R. Khan (1956).

Although before partition Jinnah had never spoken of Pakistan as an ideological state, a Pakistani ideology was delineated by his successors soon after independence. Islam, hostility to India, and the Urdu language were identified as the cornerstones of this new national ideology. Emphasis on Islamic unity was seen as a barrier against the potential tide of ethnic nationalism, which could undermine Pakistan's integrity. Fazal Muqeem Khan (1973). Very soon after independence, "Islamic Pakistan" was defining itself through the prism of resistance to "Hindu India." Hussain Haqqani (2005). The emphasis on Islam as an element of national policy empowered the new country's religious leaders.

The first formal step toward transforming Pakistan into an Islamic ideological state was taken in March 1949 when the country's first Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, presented the Objectives Resolution in the constituent assembly. The resolution laid out the main principles of a future Pakistani constitution. It provided for democracy, freedom, equality, and social justice "as enunciated by Islam," opening the door for future controversies about what Islam required of a state. The Objectives Resolution was a curious mix of theology and political science. Safdar Mehmood (1990). Non-Muslim opposition members and a solitary Muslim parliamentarian expressed serious qualms about committing the new state to "ordering their lives in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam." But Liaquat Ali Khan described it as "the most important occasion in the life of this country, next in importance only to the achievement of independence." In one way, it was. After the Objectives Resolution there was no turning back from Pakistan's status as an Islamic ideological state. Hussain Haqqani (2005).

Soon, prominent individuals within the government mooted proposals for adopting Arabic as the national language and for changing the script of the Bengali language from its Sanskrit base to an Arabic-Persian one. M Rafique Afzal (2001). The president of the Muslim League, Chaudhry Khaliq-uz-zaman announced that Pakistan would bring all Muslim countries together into Islamistan a pan-Islamic entity. The Pakistani government also convened a world Muslim conference in Karachi in 1949, to promote pan Islamism. Aslam Siddiqui (1960). Liaquat Ali Khan was not a religious man himself and most members of the first constituent assembly were members of the country's secular elite. The experience of language riots by Bengalis in East Pakistan had pointed out the difficulty of subsuming ethnic identities into a new Pakistani identity. Religion was an easier tool of mobilization. Liaquat Ali Khan, Jinnah's anointed successor and Pakistan's first prime minister, explained the three fundamental interests that would define Pakistan's external relations: "integrity of Pakistan, Islamic culture and the need for economic development." Liaquat Ali Khan (1950).

After Liaqat Ali Khan, Ayub Khan the Commander in Chief of Pakistan Army took the state affairs actually in his own hands. General Ayub Khan remained a constant power broker throughout this period, playing a behind-the-scenes political role. In 1953 he was named defense minister. This marked a break from the tradition of parliamentary government, which requires cabinet ministers to be members of Parliament. Ayub Khan remained a constant factor in Pakistan's circle of power between 1951 and 1958, even though the country went through seven prime ministers and several cabinets during this prolonged period of political uncertainty. Hussain Haqqani (2005). One element of Ayub Khan's thinking that overlapped with the ideas of religious political leaders related to the characterization of India as a Hindu state and of Hindus as irreconcilable enemies of Islam and Muslims. Ayub Khan (1967). At this time, the study of Islam or "Islamiyat" began receiving considerable emphasis. A.H. Nayyar (2003). Curricula and textbooks were standardized, presenting a version of history that linked Pakistan's emergence to Islam's arrival in the subcontinent. The history of Islam was presented, not as the history of a religion or a civilization, but as a prelude to Pakistan's creation. In 1959 Ayub had written a paper on the 'Islamic Ideology in Pakistan,' which was circulated to army officers among others. Altaf Gauhar (1996). He simply wanted to do what he perceived was good for the state and declare it as Islamic.

Pakistan's second military regime, led by General Yahya Khan, was relatively short lived (1969- 1971), but its impact on the country was long lasting. Yahya Khan did not follow Ayub Khan in presenting himself as a political reformer or the writer of a new Pakistani constitution. Instead he announced his intention to hold elections for a constituent assembly, open to all political parties. Publicly Yahya Khan expressed the hope that politicians would maintain "the integrity of Pakistan and the glory of Islam". Roedad Khan (1969)

The Jamaat-e-Islami was too well organized and ideological to be trusted on its own, and other Islamic groups could act as a check on its ambitions. Religious leaders who disagreed with the Jamaat-e-Islami's interpretation of Islam were encouraged to form their own parties, resulting in the emergence of Markazi Jamiat Ulema Islam (Central Society of Islamic Scholars) and Jamiat Ulema Pakistan (Society of Pakistani Religious Scholars) as political actors a few months before elections. One reason for encouraging these alternative religious parties was also to ensure control over the direction of religious politics. The Jamaat-e-Islami secured only two seats, with 3 percent of the popular vote. Talukder Maniruzzaman (1980). The Islamic parties' share of the popular vote was around 10 percent nationwide in the first general election of 1970.

The breakaway of East Pakistan to become Bangladesh was the most traumatic event in Pakistan's short life as an independent nation. The

country's population was reduced by more than half. Pakistan lost a significant portion of its territory, its geopolitical role in Southeast Asia, and an important segment of its economy. More important was the psychological setback that came from defeat at the hands of India. Islamic ideology had obviously proved insufficient to keep Bengalis part of Pakistan. Hussain Haqqani (2005).

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the first civilian politician to rule Pakistan in almost two decades. Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party had been formed only four years earlier, in 1967. It was not a well-structured political party, and its popular support as well as its organization revolved primarily around Bhutto's charisma. To most Pakistanis, however, Bhutto and the PPP represented radical change. An analysis of the PPP's vote in the 1970 election explained the party's appeal to the people: The key slogan was "roti, kapra, makkhan" [bread, clothing, shelter]. Mubashir Hassan (2000). Bhutto's mass popularity had been the result of both his secular-socialist rhetoric and his anti-India stance. Bhutto's convictions relating to India dictated a different course: Bhutto projected India as an enemy of Islam and Muslims and, therefore, an inveterate foe of Pakistan, determined to dismember it. Anwar H Syed (1978).

Pakistan's religious parties, notably the Jamaat-e-Islami, opposed Bhutto from the day he took office. The student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami burned effigies of him in Lahore and declared the day a "black day." Saeed Shafqat (1997). Bhutto banned some Islamist publications and detained Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and activists under emergency powers he retained. Bhutto also reopened the discussion of Pakistan's national identity and the country's definition of itself as an ideological state. At a government-sponsored conference on the history and culture of Pakistan, scholars emphasized the Islamic roots of Pakistan. William H Lichten (1979).

On March 1, 1976, Bhutto named General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq as Pakistan's new chief of army staff. General Zia was junior to six other generals. General Zia ul-Haq was both personally religious and closely connected to several Islamists by virtue of his social and family origins. Craig Baxter (1991). General Zia ul-Haq's early steps to Islamize the army are identified by many ways. Immediately after his appointment as COAS [chief of army staff] the motto he gave the troops was Eman (Faith), Taqwa (abstinence), Jihad Fi Sabeellillah (war in the way of or for the sake of God). He urged all ranks of the army during his visits to troops as well as in written instructions, to offer their prayers, preferably led by the commanders themselves at various levels. Religious education was included in the training program and mosques and prayer halls were organized in all army units. Jahan Dad Khan (1999).

Zia's Islamisation also encompassed Pakistan's judicial system. The government constituted provincial Shariat benches at the High Court level and an appellate Shariat Bench at the Supreme Court level tasked with

deciding if any parliamentary law was Islamic or not and whether the government should change them. Particularly troubling was the introduction of the Hudood Ordinance based on a distorted understanding of Quranic injunctions and introducing punishments such as flogging, stoning and amputation (albeit punishments that the state never applied). The ordinance's most controversial application was and remains the imprisonment of female rape victims on the grounds of adultery. An effort was also launched to Islamise the education sector. In 1981, the University Grants Commission issued the directive to prospective textbook writers. Maleeha Lodhi (2011). For Zia ul-Haq, Islam was Pakistan's salvation and the characteristic that distinguished the relatively new country from India. He was not alone in that belief. The New York Times reported from Islamabad that Zia ul-Haq's Islamization was "being described by some of its advocates as essential therapy to resolve a longstanding national crisis of identity." Micheal T. Kaufman (1980). Zia ul-Haq's Islamization initiative ended up accentuating sectarian differences and plunged Pakistani society into theological debates over a wide range of issues. Some of the laws enforced as part of Zia ul-Haq's Islamization program remain controversial to this day. Islamization had less impact on Pakistani society's observance of Islam. Richard Kurin (1985). Zia's Islamization was limited to symbolic measures of peripheral importance which have had no impact whatsoever on our society. Zia himself soon realized that Islamization was not working and was merely creating more problems. Roedad Khan (1997).

At the time of his death, General Zia ul-Haq wielded absolute power. He was president of Pakistan as well as the chief of army staff. No one had planned for the contingency of his sudden death. The 1973 constitution, as amended by Zia ul-Haq, provided for succession to the office of president by the chairman of Pakistan's indirectly elected senate. The incumbent of that office at the time of Zia's death was Ghulam Ishaq Khan, an elderly bureaucrat who had been the late general's most trusted civilian associate. Ishaq Khan decided to continue with Zia ul-Haq's policy of backing the Islamists. The cumulative effect of Zia years in Pakistan was not just a wholesome Islamization of Pakistani state to varying degrees but also the explosion of a jihadi and sectarian culture in response to external forces that were nurtured for political and ideological reasons.

Conclusion

From the very creation of Pakistan, Islam has been and will remain a central social and political force. This article sought to paint a broad picture of how Islam has been harnessed through Pakistan's history for everything from nation building to security an enterprise that was radically escalated during different period of its political history. The blowback of this is clear today. The Islamic narrative in Pakistan has been hijacked by an array of groups who use religion as a means to diverse ends: to secure political and territorial

power, exorcise corrosive Western influence, engage in class warfare, and redress perceived injustices. The use and understanding of Islam in Pakistan has always been in flux, evolving in response to time and internal and external events. The question that arises, then, is not whether religion has a role in Pakistan but how it can be channeled as a force for progressive change. What form should an enabling narrative of Islam in Pakistan assume? Part of the answer lies in focusing on building an inclusive and robust Pakistani state invoking progressive Islamic values. The onus lies with the Pakistani leadership and people, but the international community can help in the promotion of good governance, education reform, and economic opportunity, as well as in the resolution of deep-seated regional entities as a matter of state policy.

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