

Pakistan: A Muslim State or an Islamic State?

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Abstract

Pakistan was the first modern state to be found in the name of Islam. However, the quest for defining a national identity in terms of Islam led to uncertainty and contestation in the country. Religion has been misused rather than the states' construction and nation building in Pakistan. At various points of time in its political history, religion has been exploited by the rulers of Pakistan to gain popularity, legitimacy and to fight political opponents. The culture of terrorism and Jihad, supposedly consensus sanctioned by militant Islam, has bled Pakistani society in terms of accentuation of sectarian tensions and violences.

Keywords: Identity, Theocracy, Sufi, Jihad, Militant, Ideology

Pakistan came into being on the basis of religion as a homeland for Indian Muslims, due to the lack of consensus in terms of the role of Islam in the state and society, the country is suffering from the identity crisis. Jinnah successfully used Islam instrumentally in order to get political mileage and not as ideological foundation for the future course of Pakistan (Jalal 1985). Once Pakistan was created, Jinnah sought a "fusionist Islamic-secularist" democratic model in Pakistan (Pervez 2015: 58). However, it is debatable whether Jinnah wanted secular or Islamist attributes in the future contribution of Pakistan (Ahmed 1997). Jinnah's early demise triggered a tug of war between the liberal and orthodox elements, characterized the debate on constitution making in the formative years of Pakistan. Besides, the so-called Islamic role models of governance envisaged by the orthodox religious forces remained ambiguous since Islam itself is divided into various sects with different theological interpretations (Pervez 2015: 61). This uncertainty has "deepened the country's divisions and discouraged plural definitions of the Pakistani" and "tempted political elite to use the language of Islam as a substitute for democratic legitimacy" (Shaikh 2009:1). This ambiguity about its identity "has intensified the struggle between the rival conceptions of Pakistan and set the claim to be a Muslim homeland against its obligation to act as a guarantor of Islam" (Ibid.). The state has tried to interpret Islam as an exclusivist framework and thereby it has tried to distinguish Pakistan from the syncretic and pluralist tendencies in south Asia. This has led to growing rifts among the different ethnic and linguistic groups in Pakistan, the radical elements, the military, and the dominant

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institutions, have joined hands to construct a Pakistan which is too narrow to accommodate the diversities.

A Moderate Muslim State to an Islamic State

The transformation of Pakistan from a moderate Muslim state in its formative phase to an Islamic state as envisaged in the 1973 constitution has not only changed the nature of the state but also succeeded in making it a monolithic religious stateⁱ. With the marginalization of moderate and secular forces and minorities Pakistan has reflected the failure of the state to preclude the surge of extremism and the radicalization of the society.

Over the years, under the influence of Wahhabism, Pakistan has become increasingly a Sunni-dominated society but at the expense of other traditions, namely, Shias, Ahmadi's, and Sufisⁱⁱ. The tolerant Sufi Islam tradition of the subcontinent is generally more open and eclectic than the Sunni Islam— has witnessed a profound marginalization and has been replaced by an intolerant radical version that has helped in the emergence of radical jihadi outfits.

It is also worth mentioning that “over the decades, an ideology driven national identity was crafted to “escape” a shared heritage. This fostered the creations of an ideological state that, in turn, has bolstered the control of the military-intelligence establishment, not only in security and foreign policy but also in domestic politics” (Pande 2016: 1). Starting as a pressure group outside parliament, Pakistani's Islamists have now become “a well-armed and well financed force that wields considerable influence within different branches of government” (Haqqani 2005: 315). Religious groups have benefited from the patronage of the military, which have seen them as useful tools in perpetuating the military's control over foreign and domestic policy. The alliance between mosque and military in Pakistan helps both the Islamists and generals to exercise their political power. Today Pakistan has turned into breeding ground for radical Islam, epicentre of terrorism and a key ally of the US in the war against terror in South Asia and worldwide.

The brief history of Pakistan calls upon a large store of dreams associated with the idea of Pakistan as a Muslim or Islamic state. Pakistan's unyielding crisis of national identity stems from “the particular mix of Islam and ethnic consciousness in Pakistan movement, which lent itself to a secular as well as an Islamic conception of Pakistan” (Nasr 1997: 125). After the creation of Pakistan, the question whether the country should be an Islamic state or simply a state for Muslims of the subcontinent became the source of enduring conflict. According to Farzana Shaikh, “It is the country's problematic and contested relationship with Islam that has

most decisively frustrated its quest for coherent national identity and for stability as a nation state capable of absorbing the challenges of its rich and diverse society” (Shaikh 2009: 209).

It is pertinent to note that in their struggle to create Pakistan, its founding fathers had simultaneously offered two visions of Pakistani nationalism, namely, “Muslim Zion”ⁱⁱⁱ and “New Medina”^{iv}. The speeches and interviews of Jinnah and his lieutenants in the run of the partition suggest that both visions were put forth depending on the audience (Haqqani 2018: 66).

Jinnah’s Vision of Pakistan

Although Jinnah and the Muslim League fused religion and politics and coopted the ulema and pirs to its election campaigns but after the creation of Pakistan, Jinnah tried to base his vision of Pakistan on progressive principles. His August 11, 1947 Constituent Assembly (CA) “speech paints the Pakistan with a very secular and liberal brush” (Ahmed 2009: 158). The Muslim League’s leadership being aware of the fact that given the significant role of Islam in the Pakistan movement, the two-nation theory and the hostility with India, the only ideology that could be used for survival of Pakistan was Islam. However, the leaders of the ML felt uncomfortable when the clergy and religious parties, particularly Jammat-i-Islami demanded their version of (Wahabi) Islamic state (Ahmar 2012: 225). Soon after the demise of Jinnah, the modernist elite tried to accommodate Islamic precepts and norms in the constitutional process with a view of making Pakistan both “Islamic” and “democratic”. However, such a practice facilitated “incremental movement of constitutional process towards fundamentalist Islamic ideology at the expense of democracy and equal rights of citizens” (Ahmed 2009: 158).

Since its very inception the state in Pakistan was confronting centrifugal tendency and the only antidote seemed to have been is the call for unity based on one common factor that is Islam. However, religion instead of becoming the glue that unifies ethnically diverse population proved to be the source of division. The ideological tension between an Islamic and Muslim state was further complicated by the reality of Pakistan situation (Haq 2010: 133). In the early years of Pakistan, the secularists/modernist who reflected Jinnah's inclusive vision and the Islamists represented by Abul Ala Maududi founder of Jamaat-i-Islami and the Ulemas were locked in the Holy battles. In the end, it was the narrower ideological version that won. This was the beginning of Pakistan's multiple problems.

Objective Resolution of 1949

The first formal step towards the direction of making Pakistan into an Islamic ideological state was taken in March 7, 1949 when Prime Minister Liaquat Ali moved the “objective resolution” in the CA. The objective resolution strove to embody an Islamic concept of state that would serve as the foundation of Pakistan. The objective resolution bore overtly visible Maududi's imprint, especially in its first line that vests sovereignty in Allah and then proceeds to elevate the state above the people as Allah's earthly delegate of this sovereignty and the resolution emphasises the idea of “divine sovereignty” and discounts the credibility of the idea of democracy based on “people's sovereignty”. The objective resolution puts limits on legislative power of a representative assembly and clearly divided the rights of citizens of Pakistan along religious lines. For instance, to expel the Ahmadis—viewed as heretical by most Muslims due to their rejection of the finality of Mohammad's prophethood—surfaced in 1953 in Punjab. The vulnerability of the westernized elites was exposed when they imposed martial law for the first time in Pakistan's history to restore law and order.

The Munir report insisted that the idea of an Islamic state as expounded by Maududi and others does not represent the true spirit of Islam, but the interests of corrupt politicians and of “those Ulama who aspire after their own power and domination”. There were several internal in-congruencies and contradictions on the ideas of orthodox religious bodies who are presumed to be authorities on religion and ideology. When asked to define a “Muslim”, it was found that not only Sunnis and Shias held conflicting views, but also within the Sunni sub-sects, there was no agreement (Report of Court of Inquiry 1953: 259).

Ayub's Vision of Moderate Muslim Nation

The two most determined proponents of Pakistan as a modern and moderate Muslim nation were General Ayub Khan and General Pervez Musharraf. Ayub was more consistently and clearly than Musharraf's attempted to marginalise the Islamists, bringing the religious institutions under the control of the state, and implement a modernist interpretation of Islam with a limited role for religion in public life. The original 1962 constitution made subtle but important changes in the Islamic provisions of the constitution.

During Ayub Khan's rule, the state made a determined and concerted efforts to define national identity in a secular manner. Ayub envisioned a national identity for Pakistan that was anchored not in Islam but in the province of socio-economic progress. Ayub Khan steered Pakistan away from an ideological/Islamic debate to a more developmental consensus and he succeeded in shifting the debate/national political discourse along the lines that supported the

country's secular elites. According to Seyyed Nasr, national politics now came to focus not so much on “why Pakistan was created” but “where Pakistan was heading” (from preoccupation with religion and ethnicity to developmental concerns) (Nasr 1997: 61).

The 1973 Constitution: Islam the State Religion

The secession of East Pakistan and emergence of Pakistan manifest the failure of Jinnah's two-nation theory. The fiasco of 1971 pushed Pakistan towards a closer embrace of ideological nation-building. In the end, state policy did not secularize the polity but led to its Islamization, as the escalating political dissent provided the Islamic forces with a new point of entry into the political arena. Bhutto, a western educated leader, after coming to power in 1971 became the major architect of Islamic solidarity in the national and international realm. The 1973 constitution, betraying the impact of Islamic fundamentalism, contained many Islamic provisions stronger than the ones stipulated in all previous constitutions. For the first time Islam was declared the state religion.

Bhutto gave into Islamist demands for his larger political purpose. The Islamists successfully negotiated Islamic clauses for the 1973 constitution, including the so-called “Repugnancy” clause which asserted that no laws would be enacted which were repugnant to Islam. Another major victory for the Islamists came when Bhutto buckled under their pressure and became instrumental in designating the minority sect Ahmadiya as “non-Muslims”, a demand for which the Islamists had been agitating since the early 1950s. Among the major initiatives he took to appease the Islamists were imposing bans on drinking, gambling, and night clubs, declaring Friday the official holiday of the week instead of Sunday, and increasing the content of Islam in school Syllabi (Paul 2014:138; Jones 2009: 115-16). To counter the opposition Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) he changed the PPP electoral platform to seek “Quranic social justice and Muhammad's egalitarianism”.

Legitimization Through Islamization under General Zia-ul-Haq

General Zia-ul-Haq, who overthrew Z.A. Bhutto's regime, followed an aggressive Islamisation programme as legitimising strategy for the consolidation of his military rule in an unprecedented manner. For Zia, Pakistan was the “citadel of Islam”. He was profoundly influenced by Maududi and his puritanical Deobandi School of Islam (Ahmed 2009: 162). Between 1979 and 1983 state-led Islamization of Pakistan society, legal system, education system, and even military, “that had a profound impact on the Pakistan's society and politics” (Nasr 2001: 130). During Zia era (1979-1988) the “Islamic character and identity of the state in

theory (the constitution) as well as in actual state practices were quite convergent” (Pervez 2015: 63), manifesting the establishment of a federal sharia court and promulgation of the zina (adultery) ordinance. The Islamization process, coupled with the Afghan Jihad of 1980s resulted in the constitutional and legal weakening of the position of women, non-Muslims as well as minority sects. General Zia Islamized the state and created a new Islamic bureaucracy and developed nexus between military regime and Ulama. Some of the Islamic groups were allowed to make inroads into the army, something of all anathema in the past. During Zia era, the military establishment began increasingly to emphasize the Islamic identity of Pakistan's armed force (Hussain 2007: 19-21). “The syllabus at command and staff college, Quetta came increasingly rely on the Islamic theory of war and related subjects as officers were groomed to become genuine Muslim warriors” (Ahmed 2009: 165). For the first time in Pakistan, military doctrine was sought to be interpreted in religious term, Zia's these policy initiatives “transformed into “defender of the ideology”. Even a “strategic doctrine of tenor” and “total war” was justified with an interpretation of the Holy Quran, which argued in favour of total war where tenor was to be a central element in the run up to the war, during hostilities and for war termination (Kukreja 2003: 70-71).

Zia's significant objective of Islamization was concurrent with the Soviet military intervention in 1979 as the Soviet invasion was depicted as “Islam in danger”. The fight against Soviet invasion was labeled as *Jihad*, fought by Mujahideens, providing the Islamists and Ulama in Pakistan with a key role. According to T.V. Paul, “the interplay between a warrior state and fundamentalist Islam is nowhere more evident than in Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan” (Paul 2014: 148). Afghan Jihad brought both resource and prestige/clout to the Pakistani religious parties, because they were the main conduit for getting money, weapons, and training to the Afghanistan resistance against the soviets. Under Zia's Islamizing dictatorship, Madarsas which are dubbed as factories for producing Jihadis and suicide bombers at tender age, became the supply line for Jihad in the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan. When the soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, the Taliban was created by Pakistan (guided by Benazir Bhutto), and was considered by the state as strategic tool to gain strategic depth in Afghanistan vis-à-vis India. Moreover, Pakistan's India policy has been dictated by the issue of national identity. Pakistan has sought to challenge India, when it sees as a “Hindu state” by projecting its “Muslim identity”. This has made the conflict over Kashmir intractable (Shaikh

2009: 185). Likewise, the Pakistan army has supported militant Islamic outfits carrying out Jihad against India over the last three decades.

Today Islamic fundamentalism, in its most virulent form in the shape of terrorist and suicide attacks has made a mockery of Pakistani's credentials of having an Islamic identity. By the late 1990s, Pakistan witnessed the propping up of Islamic militant outfits/organizations, such as, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizb-ul-Mujahidin, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan. Islamist groups and their militant offshoots using the ideological identity fought asymmetrical contest wars with India and Afghanistan. The mushrooming of Madarsas led to the militarization of society in Pakistan and widened the sectarian conflicts which acquired more violent hue than it had ever before in the country's history.

Role of Islam under General Pervez Musharraf

Though General Musharraf put forward a concept of “enlightened moderation”, which he failed to implement in reality. When it came to patronizing the extremist Jihadi groups, Musharraf's policy was no different from that of the earlier government. In the wake of 9/11, Pakistan was forced to join the “war on terror” and take a U-turn on its Afghanistan policy. This brought Musharraf regime unavoidably into conflict with the fundamentalists. During 2002-2007, terrorism proliferated in Pakistan to alarming proportions. The very groups that ISI had once patronised have now turned against the Pakistani state and asserted its pressure in the northern areas and the Swat region by blowing up the police station, college, girl's schools and other public buildings. Pakistan has to take the blame for the backlash of its Afghan policy in terms of increased militancy and terrorism at home. Islamization helped “restore authority to the state in the 1980s but failed to stop the erosion of that authority in the 1990s” (Nasr 2001: 168).

Conclusion

Pakistan's peculiar brand of Islam is based on distortion, extremism, terrorism and misrule and is incompatible with a pluralist, democratic and human right friendly social order. It has done irreparable damage in terms of dismantling of the civil structure of the country and pushing it in the path of self-destruction. The Pakistani state and society now stand at the crossroads when it comes to the role of the religion in politics. Pakistan cannot afford to use Islam as an alibi against adopting democratic system that accommodates interest and share power with all the ethnic groups of Pakistan and continues on the path of subcontracting its foreign policy to Jihadis, especially in case of India and Afghanistan (Haqqani 2018: 143). It is

now imperative to turn away from the “ideological dysfunctional state” and revive as a Muslim modern territorial state envisioned by Jinnah in his speech of August 11, 1947.

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ⁱOver 95 per cent of Pakistan's population adheres to Islam. Nearly 75 per cent of the total population follows Sunni Islam. The Shia population comprises 20 per cent, while others, especially Christians, Parsis, Buddhists, and Hindus constitute about 5 per cent of the population. The Sunnis themselves are divided between the Barelavis and the Deobandis, 15 per cent and 60 per cent of Pakistan population respectively. Deobandi Sunnis seek to convert Pakistan into a 'pure' Islamic state.

ⁱⁱSufism, the mystical dimension of Islam, was most influential in introducing Islam throughout South Asia. Sufism readily integrated local and Islamic religious practices, which appeared to large members of non-Muslims, especially with regard to healing, meditative, and devotional practices. Refer Karen Pechils and Selva J. Raj (eds.) (2007) *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*, London & New York Routledge.

ⁱⁱⁱFaisal Devji defines as 'Muslim Zion' – a land where the Muslim minority dispersed across a vast subcontinent could escape the minority's persecution, which they rightly or wrongly feared.

^{iv}'New Medina', according to Venkat Dhulipala refers as 'the harbinger of Islam's renewal and rise in the twentieth century, the new leader and protector of the global community of Muslim, and a worthy successor to the defunct Turkish caliphate'.