

## Does Pakistan Still Need Nazariya-e-Pakistan?

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Anniversaries are about remembering beginnings. Without the Muslim League's rallying cry "Islam is in danger", there would be no Pakistan. The leaders of the Pakistan Movement were emphatic that, as hostile competitors, Hindus and Muslims could never live together under the authority of a single state. Their answer was to split India so that Muslims could flourish. But what direction should the new homeland for Muslims take? Many Muslim leaders had westernized lifestyles, together with an inner hope that the new country would follow British traditions of liberalism and secularism. Yet they dared not articulate this publically.

Pakistan's founder, Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, is the hero of Pakistan's secularists and a liberal man. But his statements from the 1930s onwards do not contain a single occurrence of the word "secular". Had he indeed campaigned for a liberal, secular Pakistan – and that too in competition with the secular Indian National Congress under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru – he would have lost the leadership of the movement. Seeking to escape the conclusion that Islam created Pakistan, some have invented class-based theories of Partition. But these attempts at escaping reality are ultimately futile.

Today an overwhelming majority of Pakistanis think theirs is an ideological state. Post-1981, the tightened bond between religion and nationalism led to *Nazariyah-e-Pakistan* (the ideology of Pakistan) being taught to all students. Beginning as early as class-V, most students learn their nationalism by chanting question and answer: "*Pakistan ka matlab kya? La illahha illallah!*" (What is the meaning of Pakistan? There is no god but God!). It says, put simply, that Pakistan is Allah's work, and Pakistanis are chosen people.

Pakistanis are not alone in believing they are different from all others. Other countries of the world, usually those born out of revolution or with a history of ethnic or religious superiority, are also heavily ideological. Israel under Zionism, the Soviet Union under communism, and of course the United States – which believes in American exceptionalism – are examples. A law unto themselves, these countries, and others like them in the past, show a consistent pathology. They are heavily militarized, operate extensively outside their national borders, and believe in unilateralism.

The choice of ideology – for those states that have one – determines the character and quality of national institutions at almost every level. Education, public media, law, and military grow around the need to preserve the ideological framework. But, as the case of the Soviet Union shows, giving ideology primacy over real needs can lead to a serious weakening of vital institutions.

Pakistan attempted to build a national identity and ideology on the basis of religion. This was a difficult task because the old slogans steadily lost meaning after Partition. Today Islam is not under any danger and no external power rules the country. Pakistanis manage their own electricity and water, raise their own taxes, and control their own military. Few non-Muslims now remain within the national borders; the other "nation" of the Two-Nation Theory is mostly on the other side.

Creating a new nation-state surely involved much blood and sacrifice, but to build a new nation requires more than just the glue of religion. Because the difference between state and nation was not understood well enough, problems multiplied many-fold. Respecting diversity of language, race, and culture are essential for nation-building. A glimpse at history – suppressed in our school books – tells us the consequences. The first challenge to the Two-Nation theory came from ethno-nationalism in East Pakistan. It is now seen increasingly in Balochistan and Sind.

A new and graver threat comes from unleashing religious passions. Attempts to make Pakistan a *mamlakat-e-khudadad* (theocracy) have lit uncontrollable fires of religious intolerance. Increasing sections of Pakistan's population are now alienated and resentful at being treated as second class citizens. Earlier on, Hindus, Christians, and Parsis were outcasts. Ahmadis followed in 1974. It is even worse now.

Today, if you are known to be Shia or Barelvi, you could be endangered in many parts of the country. The life of a Hazara Shia is no longer protected by the state; hundreds have been freely slaughtered by groups enjoying state protection. Pakistani Muslims now offer Friday prayers under the shadow of gun-wielding guards. Ironically, Muslims are relatively safer in two much reviled countries – India and the U.S.

It is no surprise that there is widespread pessimism and despondency among Pakistan's intelligentsia, and a flight out of the country of its best doctors, engineers, scientists, and other professionals. The economy perpetually teeters on the brink. One push and it may collapse.

The bottom line: Pakistan must shift its priority towards the prosperity and well-being of citizens, and cease to discriminate on the basis of religion and ethnicity. Instead it should seek to become a normal nation, rather than try to emulate abnormal ones. Normal countries like Japan, Netherlands, Britain, Australia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Turkey, or Indonesia offer far better models than the U.S. or Israel. The lack of any clear mission or ideology is an advantage – normal countries are well-adjusted and at peace, both internally as well as in relation to the rest of the world.

A normal Pakistan would no longer intervene across its borders. It could, of course, freely sympathize with the plight of Muslims in Kashmir, Palestine, Afghanistan, or Burma. But these people must sort out their own problems themselves. It is time to give up on trying to fix the world, and to abandon the Pakistani version of "la mission civilisatrice". As a corollary, the multiple jihads based on our soil must be stopped and jihadist groups forced to disband.