

The Idea of Pakistan-Myth and Reality

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Pakistan today stands in the eye of the storm and every act of Islamic extremism can be traced to Pakistan or persons of Pakistani origin. Resultantly a battle of ideas has started in Pakistan about ascertaining the true role of Mr Jinnah and his political ideas.

The political use of religion was started after 1857 by Muslim aristocracy of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh and Punjab once they saw that Muslims were under threat of being reduced to zero because of introduction of competitive examinations and European style political representation. Thus the origins of Muslim politics in India in the period 1858-1947 was safeguarding the class interests of Muslim aristocracy and middle class in Punjab and UP.

The All India Muslim League founded in 1906 was a Bengali Muslim heavy effort but immediately hijacked by UP Muslims and its headquarters shifted to UP. The All India Muslim League remained UP Muslim dominated to such an extent that in Lucknow Pact in absence of many Punjabis or Bengalis the All India Muslim League agreed to surrender Muslim majority in Punjab to party and Muslim majority in Bengal to minority. A direct result of Lucknow Pact was the Unionist Party in Punjab, formed because Muslims of Punjab needed to be in partnership with Hindus and Sikhs without which they could not form a government. Similarly the Bengali Muslims suffered all along till 1946 because of Lucknow Pact and were forced to be manipulated by Hindu blackmail in Bengal politics. Chaudhry Khaliqzaman did call Lucknow Pact a faux pas.

Mr Jinnah the founder of Pakistan was not known to be a religious man till 1937 at least when his All India Muslim League was literally routed in Muslim majority provinces of India getting just (7,319,445) the League got only 321,772 Muslim votes out of a total Muslim votes of 7,319,445 a mere 4.4 percent. In Punjab the League won just 2 seats out of 84, in Bengal 39 out of 117, in NWFP none. Even in Muslim minority provinces the Muslim League was not Muslims first choice except Bombay where it won 20 out of 29 seats.

The Second World War brought the Congress in conflict with British and the Congress resigned from its ministries. The Lahore Resolution of 1940 was a strategic response of Mr Jinnah to counter the Congress. It dove tailed with British war effort which Mr Jinnah supported and it countered the Congress which again suited the British.

The higher class and the middle class Muslims in UP, Punjab, Bengal and Sindh saw it as an opportunity to eliminate the Hindus and Sikhs from political, economic and employment competition. It is well known that some 25% of Hindu money lenders were in Punjab and the vast majority of Muslim landlords in Punjab and Sindh were in debt to these money lenders. This factor prompted many Punjabi Muslim members of the Unionist Party to change loyalties to the Muslim League in 1940-46.

The Muslim feudal and educated classes of Punjab and UP saw Pakistan as a place where they would dominate the politics, the business, the jobs and thus be the successors of British. The Bengali and Sindhi position was very low in the Muslim League hierarchy dominated till 1936 by UP Muslims and by Punjabi Muslims in partnership with UP Muslims after 1938.

It is a well known fact that Islam was used as a central mobilizing slogan in the elections of 1946 in Punjab, Sindh and Bengal. Mr Jinnah may have been a totally secular man but the campaign of 1946 did create a religious picture of Pakistan.

And now the class aspect of Pakistan. Who voted in 1946 Elections for Muslim League or Congress. Most of the people, particularly, women and lower class people, had no voting rights. These elections were based on the extremely restricted franchise of the 1919 Act, and the total number of votes cast was only 586,647, representing almost exclusively the propertied classes. Stanley Wolpert notes that just 5 % of Indias population voted in 1946 Elections.

Those who could understand and feel were bitter about the Punjab massacres and Hafeez Jullundhuri thus expressed his disgust :--

Qaafloay lut gayay barbad ho gayay to kia hua

Mutmain hain Qaflas salaar apnay kam say

The aftermath of Pakistan and its chequered political history proves many contradictions .

The exercise by the West Pakistani feudal military and civil service dominated by Punjabis and some UPites to reduce the majority Bengalis to parity at gun point using threats of dissolution finally succeeded in 1956 constitution when Bengalis actually in majority were forced to agree to 50 % vote.

The creation of One Unit thus destroying the very idea of provincial autonomy and spearheaded by West Pakistani civil and military bureaucrats was imposed in 1954-55 and Balochistan, Sindh and NWFP reduced to political chattels.

The military actions in Balochistan in 1948, 1958, 1959-66, 1973-76 is no feather in Pakistans cap.

The military recruitment policy eliminating Sindh, Balochistan and East Bengal from the eligible material was again ethnically biased. Mr Jinnah did pioneer Bengali recruitment but his ideas were garbaged by Ayub Khan and Ghulam Mohammad.

Military strategies like Defence of Pakistan lies in defence of West Pakistan also were ethno centred and this chauvinism was proved in 1965 when just one division was assigned for defence of majority of Pakistan and the remaining 90 % assigned for defence of Punjab.

While Mr Jinnah was secular man , the use of religion in Muslim Leagues 1946 Election campaign , the communal massacres of 1946 , the Objectives Resolution of 1950 , the Anti Ahmaddi riots of 1953 strengthened the proponents of the idea that Pakistan was an ideological state. However US aid from 1954 to 1965 made Pakistans higher classes forget Islam till 1965.

After 1969 the Pakistani Military supported the rightist parties and the most secular Mr Z.A Bhutto piloted a law that declared Ahmadis non Muslim. This was an act of educated and so called secular Muslims ! This proves that Pakistans politicians in 1973 saw Islam as a useful political weapon just like they saw it in 1946 Elections. The foundation of militarization of Pakistan are the Ahmadi laws of 1973-74 further blackened in 1984 by an ugly military dictator!

Use of Islam as a political weapon was perfected by Pakistans military and political classes from 1977. The first was the anti Bhutto agitation launched in 1977 spearheaded by Punjabi urban classes from Lahore and UPites from Karachi also known as Nizam I Mustafa. The Pakistani military junta picked Islam and Jihad as a means of getting economic and military aid from USA and Saudi Arabia from 1978 and this policy was continued by all Pakistani governments civilian and military till 9/11.

From 9/11 the Pakistani military out of fear of US retaliation as well as greed for dollars abandoned its Jihadist policy and Islam was no longer fashionable.

It is stated that covertly the Pakistani military did continue support to Taliban in Afghanistan.

The conclusion is that Jinnah was not a religious man but he used religion as a political weapon in 1946 Elections which transformed him from a rich but unknown politician in 1936 to a great and well known politician in 1946.

The Punjab killings of 1946-47 reinforced religious hatred.

The Pashtuns particularly tribals were used when it suited the Pakistani state in Kashmir in 1947-48 , then dumped , re-discovered when Pakistani military needed dollars in 1978-2001 and branded again as agents of RAW in 2003-todate when Islam became less fashionable. Again there is a favourite Islam called good Taliban and an incorrect Islam called bad Taliban.

Before 1971 Pakistans Punjab centred political elite wanted division of funds not on basis of population because Punjabis were in minority and after 1971 on basis of population because Punjabis were in majority ! Where is Islam here?

The 1973-74 Ahmadi laws were a milestone in destroying Pakistans secularism and all done by Pakistans so called elite and educated classes. A confirmation that Pakistans very educated elite sees Islam as a servile political tool which as Colonel Qayyum states it sees as a pan or a chewing gum.

The strategy of using Jihadists as military proxies openly from 1978 till 2001 and covertly since then has again transformed Pakistans image.

While the majority in Pakistan is still peaceful and rational , a sizeable minority , a minority which can terrorise the majority with guns and violence sees Pakistan as an Islamic state which needs Islam badly in all walks of life.

Pakistans foreign policy is run by its military as far as India and Afghanistan are concerned and Jihad still remains its central idea.

Such was the extent of misuse of religion that South Punjabis were also recruited to die in Kashmir and Afghanistan and today Pakistans political elite wants an operation in South Punjab?

Note that at political level it is the Punjabi elite alone who has gained and the Punjabi common man as big a loser as any Pakistani.

The Pakistani political classes all along used Islam as a political tool to suit short term agendas and the result today is that Pakistan is a political contradiction and faces hostile external enemies and a dangerous internal conflict.

We need a re-definition of our ideals or the very idea and existence of Pakistan is under threat!