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The fundamentalist dimension in the Pakistan Movement :

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It is not sufficient to say that Pakistan succumbed to fundamentalist ideology because the Quaid's pledge was betrayed by his unworthy followers. An analysis of the role of ideas and mass mobilising campaigns laced with fundamentalist symbols and imagery in the run up to partition provides a more sophisticated, reliable and comprehensive explanation, argues Ishtiaq Ahmed



In the Prof. Karrar Husain Memorial Lecture entitled 'Social Forces and Ideology in the Making of Pakistan' delivered in Karachi on 2 November 2002 the veteran Pakistani sociologist and political historian [Hamza Alavi](#) has argued that Pakistan was not meant to be a fundamentalist Islamic state. He shows through a review of important stages in the evolution of the Muslim League that the main leadership, particularly Quaid-i-Azam [Mohammad Ali Jinnah](#), was opposed to Islamic ideology. Thus, for example, when at the All-India Muslim League's Secession in Delhi in 1943 one [Abdul Hameed Kazi](#) tried to canvass support for a resolution that would commit the Muslim League to Islamic ideology and the creation of an Islamic state he was immediately pressured to withdraw the resolution. Alavi's concluding remarks are the following:

Whatever may be said about limitations of the ideology of the Western educated Muslim Professionals and the salariat (and of the feudals in the final round) who mobilised support for the creation of Pakistan, religious ideology was never a part of it ... Fundamentalist Islamic ideology has played no part in the origins of Pakistan.

He blames the emergence of fundamentalism to the unworthy successors of Jinnah who from 1952 began to use Islam to stifle the opposition by raising the slogan 'Islam is in danger'. I think Alavi is correct in evaluating the ideological preferences of Jinnah and some of his immediate disciples, though not of all. He makes a big point of the role of [Raja Sahib Mahmudabad](#) in the Pakistan movement, but fails to mention that Raja Sahib, a Shia, wrote in 1939 to the historian [Mohibul Hassan](#):

When we speak of democracy in Islam it is not democracy in the government but in the cultural and social aspects of life. Islam is totalitarian—there is no denying about it. It is the Koran that we should turn to. It is the dictatorship of the Koranic laws that we want—and that we will have—but not through non-violence and Gandhian truth. (quoted in Hasan, 1997: 57-8)

Raja Sahib was severely reprimanded by Jinnah, but the point is that such ideas were not altogether alien to Muslim League stalwarts. I think an additional reason why the Muslim League could not have allowed such ideas to be associated with its ideology and objective, at least at the highest formal level, was that they would have undermined its position as the moderate voice of Muslims vis-à-vis the Indian National Congress and the British government. The great skill of Jinnah was that until the last moment he did not explain what his idea of Pakistan was. It is not surprising that his 11 August 1947 speech to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in which he spelt out the vision of a secular and democratic Pakistan surprised many of his followers. His sympathetic biographer [Stanley Wolpert](#) has recorded this point succinctly (Wolpert, 1993: 340).

The strategy not to discuss the ideology of Pakistan provided Jinnah with considerable flexibility and room to manoeuvre his campaign for Pakistan as and when the situation required. The task was formidable and the adversaries strong and well organised. Thus in late January 1947 when the Muslim League launched its direct action campaign in the Punjab against the government of [Khizr Tiwana](#), the Punjab governor, Sir [Evan Jenkins](#), met the visiting all-India Muslim League leader [Khawaja Nazimuddin](#) on 18 February and later wrote in his fortnightly report to the viceroy:

In our first meeting Khawaja Nazim-ud-Din admitted candidly that he did not know what Pakistan means, and that nobody in the ML knew, so it was difficult for the League to carry on long term negotiations with the minorities. (March 1947: L/P & J/5/250, p. 3/79).

The major flaw in Alavi's analysis is that he does not attempt an in-depth analysis of Muslim League politics after the 23 March 1940 Lahore Resolution in which the idea of Pakistan was publicly put forth. Such a resolution shifted decisively the focus of Muslim politics from the Muslim minority provinces to the Muslim majority provinces of north-western India. In particular, the rapid changes that took place in that key province of Punjab need to be analysed. Under the rule of the Punjab Unionist Party, the Muslim proportion of the government services had been rising sharply, although in the 1940s Hindus and Sikhs were still ahead of them. However, the Unionist Party remained biased in favour of rural interests, whereas it was the towns and cities of Punjab that produced most of the Muslim intelligentsia and they flocked to the Muslim League. It is true that the powerful landowning Muslim classes of Punjab and Sindh began to shift their loyalties from regional parties to the Muslim League mainly to protect their vested interests since Congress was determined to abolish landlordism. The logical implication is that the Muslim League did not pose a threat to such interests and that is why they joined it.

However, the fundamentalist dimension in the Pakistan movement developed most strongly only when the Sunni ulema and pirs were mobilised to prove that the Muslim masses wanted a Muslim/Islamic state. While the central leadership at Deoband indeed allied itself to Congress, some prominent dissidents such as [Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi](#) and [Shabbir Ahmed Usmani](#) and their factions rallied around the Muslim League. Also, the fact that the central Deoband leadership was allied to the Congress meant that the Muslim League was rendered attractive to their much bigger and more influential rivals, the Berelawis, who entertained their own ambitions of establishing an Islamic state. The tables were turned when the Berelawi ulema and pirs of Punjab, NWFP and Sindh joined the Muslim League. [David Gilmartin](#) (1989) has documented the important role that some leading pirs in Punjab played in popularising the idea of Pakistan.

The strength of the Muslim League in the Muslim-majority provinces was going to be put to the test during the 1945-46 election campaign. Consequently in the public meetings and mass contact campaigns the Muslim League openly employed Islamic sentiments, slogans and heroic themes to rouse the masses. This is clearly stated in the fortnightly confidential report of 22 February 1946 sent to Viceroy [Wavell](#) by the Punjab Governor Sir [Bertrand Glancy](#):

*The ML (Muslim League) orators are becoming increasingly fanatical in their speeches. Maulvis (clerics) and Pirs (spiritual masters) and students travel all round the Province and preach that those who fail to vote for the League candidates will cease to be Muslims; their marriages will no longer be valid and they will be entirely excommunicated... It is not easy to foresee what the results of the elections will be. But there seems little doubt the Muslim League, thanks to the ruthless methods by which they have pursued their campaign of *Islam in danger* will considerably increase the number of their seats and unionist representatives will correspondingly decline. (L/P & J/5/249, p. 155).*

Similar practices were prevalent in the campaigns in NWFP and Sindh. In his doctoral dissertation, "India, Pakistan or Pakhtunistan?" [Erland Jansson](#) writes:

The Pir of Manki Sharif...founded an organisation of his own, the Anjuman-us-asfia. The organisation promised to support the Muslim League on condition that Shariat would be enforced in Pakistan. To this Jinnah agreed. As a result the Pir of Manki Sharif declared jihad to achieve Pakistan and ordered the members of his anjuman to support the League in the 1946 elections (p. 166).

Jinnah's letter to [Pir Manki Sharif](#) in which he promised that the Shariah will be applied to the affairs of the Muslim community is quoted in the *Constituent Assembly of Pakistan Debates*, Volume 5, 1949, p. 46. Thus from 1940 onwards, the distinction between a Muslim national state and an Islamic state became increasingly blurred, and in the popular mind such distinctions did not matter much. In any case, while the non-Muslims viewed with great apprehension the possibility of a Muslim state that would reduce them to a minority, the minority Shia and Ahmadiyya communities were fearful that it would result in Sunni domination. This is obvious from the correspondence between the Shia leader, [Syed Zaheer Ali](#) and Jinnah in July 1944. Moreover, it is to be noted that the Council of Action of the All-Parties Shia Conference passed a resolution on 25 December 1945 rejecting the idea of Pakistan. Similarly the Ahmadiyya were also wary and reluctant to support the demand for a separate Muslim state (*Report of the Court of Inquiry*, 1954: 196). It is only when Sir Zafrulla was won over by Jinnah that the Ahmadis started supporting the demand for Pakistan. To all doubters, Jinnah gave assurances that Pakistan will be a modern Muslim state, neutral on sectarian matters.

Whether the only reason why Pakistan succumbed to fundamentalist ideology is that the Quaid's pledge was betrayed by his unworthy followers, or, an analysis which incorporates, besides the betrayal of incompetent successors, the role of ideas and mass mobilising campaigns laced with fundamentalist symbols and imagery, provides a more sophisticated, reliable and comprehensive explanation is something which we need to continue discussing.

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