

THE IDENTITY CRISIS IN MUSLIM STATE OF PAKISTAN: A HISTORIAL ANALYSIS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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Abstract

The aim of this research paper is to revisit the establishment of Pakistan in 1947. Primary sources based on historical documents are used as evidence that how and why the then political elites of different provinces (included in Pakistan) were hesitant and unwilling to form a single Muslim state. Jinnah's vision about united India and in case of partition about Muslim state has also been discussed in the light of the British and Indian documents. For securing a peaceful, stable and sustainable Pakistan it is suggested that the identity of the state be revisited in the light of the ground realities which requires a lot of serious deliberation contemplation, wisdom and expertise.

KEYWORDS: Pakistan, Partition, Cripps Mission, Cabinet Mission, Bengal, Punjab, Baluchistan, NWFP, Jinnah, Viceroy, Referendum.

INTRODUCTION:

In 1950s the Social Sciences Research Council (SSRC) at Chicago University constituted a committee to look into the issues of comparative politics. The committee reported that while involved in the Processes of Nation and State Building every state has to face the crises of Identity, Legitimacy, Democracy, Participation, Distribution and penetration. These crises do not confront on some particular time nor they can be resolved once for all; rather they perpetuate and while being resolved keep confronting the elites in one way or the other who have to cope with them all the time.

The aim of the present study is to investigate into the ever aggravating crisis of Identity in Pakistan in its past, present and future perspectives. These crises facing every state are closely related to the twin processes of nation and state building. If the elites are wise and have vision, they achieve the target of state building through the process of nation building because if they endeavour to achieve the target of state building at the cost of nation building, neither of these targets could possibly be achieved and the crisis of Identity becomes more and more difficult to be coped with and resolved consequently posing an immense danger to the very survival of the state itself. The political elite in Pakistan, since 1947, have ignored this crisis either due to lack of wisdom or attention, thus adding to the Complexity of the Identity crisis.

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Emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 and aggravated crisis of penetration in Baluchistan on part of the Pakistani state right in 2013 are self explanatory examples. For proper conception and understanding of the crisis of identity in Pakistan, it is pertinent that we refer to the respective Identity of the various provinces and areas, during the British Raj, which ultimately constituted Pakistan in 1947. More over the Identity of the Pakistani State as conceived by Jinnah the founder of Pakistan shall also be analyzed. First of all we will discuss the pre Partition situation in these provinces and areas.

PUNJAB:

During the freedom movement in India, the Punjab was kept aloof from all India politics and committed to its peculiar non-communal alliance among Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. Sir Fazl-i-Hussain, the leader of the unionist party of the Punjab wrote to sir Sikander "I have also asked Ahmad Yar (Daultana's Father) to strongly press on him (Jinnah) the advisability of keeping his finger out of the Punjab pie" (1)

Though Fazl-i-Hussain died before the 1937 elections in India, the unionist premiers of the Punjab continued resisting Jinnah's interference in the Punjab and stood for provincial autonomy till the end of their rule in the province. It is worth mentioning that for penetration of the All India Muslim league in Punjab Jinnah had to sign a pact known as Jinnah Sikander pact which allowed the Muslim members of the unionist party to obtain dual membership of the All India Muslim league. Moreover it is on record that in 1942 Punjab was the first province which sought separate dominion status "In Summer 1942 Sikander, the Sikh leader Baldev Singh and the Hindu Chhotu Ram concerted a plan to petition His Majesty's government for virtually a separate dominion of the Punjab, but in the circumstances of Quit India, it evoked no response from the government" (2) though this attempt was not successful, the Punjab leadership continued to stand for a united Punjab and provincial autonomy for the province till 1947. The unionist party was so committed to the unity of the Punjab that when in 1946 election the party could win only 10 Muslims seats out of 79, they still keeping in view the majority of the Muslims in the province, elected Sir Khizar Hayat as their premier. In 1946 Sir Khizar while meeting the Cabinet Mission and viceroy Wavell emphasized that Punjab should not be partitioned and opposed its union with Sindh, NWFP (at present KPK) and Baluchistan.(3) Iftikhar Hussain Mamdot, the president of the Punjab Muslim League told the mission that he stood for a united and undivided Punjab. (4) Where as another Muslim leaguer from Punjab sir Feroz Khan Noon told the Governor that he did not believe in Jinnah's Pakistan but could not oppose the idea for some reasons.(5)

BENGAL:

Bengal had made an attempt to attain independence outside India and Pakistan as early as in 1946 when Sir Nazim ud Din the then Chief Minister of Bengal discussed about the separate dominion status for Bengal with the governor (6). In 1946 Abul Hashim a Muslim leaguer from Bengal raised the demand for a separate Bengali state in the council session of the All India Muslim league on the ground that the Lahore resolution provided for two separate states. (7) Again in May

1947 Hussain Suhrawardy the premier of Bengal joined by Sarat Chandra Bose attempted to attain a separate united Bengal and secured the blessing of Gandhi for it.

“Gandhi increasingly preoccupied with communal problems in Eastern India was the only National Congress leader to favour the scheme to which Jinnah was attracted”(8) However Nehru and Patel never agreed to such proposal. As far as Jinnah was concerned he was out and out in support of the united Bengal. During an interview with Jinnah, Mountbatten recorded” I asked Mr. Jinnah straight-out what his views were about keeping Bengal united at the price of its remaining out of Pakistan. He said without any hesitation “I should be delighted. What is the use of Bengal without Calcutta, they had much better remain united and independent. I am sure they will be on friendly terms with us” (9)

In spite of the fact that the congress High Command did not support the move from the very beginning, Sarat Bose and Kiran Shankar Roy (Bengal Congress) continued their lone efforts to reach some agreement with the Muslim leaders. The final agreement was reached in a conference on 20 May 1947 at Sarat Bose’s house. It was attended by Suhrawardy, Fazlul Rehman, Muhammad Ali, Abul Hashim and Malik on behalf of the Muslim league. The other side was represented by Sarat Bose, Kiran Shankar Roy and Satya Ranjan Bakshi. The conference agreed that the new state would be named as “Free State of Bengal” there was also an agreement on the basic and key features of the future constitution (10) including that in the new state the chief Minister would be a Muslim while the Minister for internal affairs would be Hindu. Moreover Muslim and Hindus would have equal share in services i.e military and police. The governor of Bengal was so much optimistic that he suggested to the British cabinet through the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India that they must keep a provision for a third dominion i.e. Bengal while sorting out any plan for India’s independence. It is worth mentioning that all the papers prepared for the cabinet meeting in the last week of May 1947 did contain a provision for three dominions (11). During this development Nehru issued a statement that the congress could agree to the proposal of a united Bengal only if it remained within the Indian union (12). This condition was acceptable neither to the All India Muslim league leadership nor to the Bengali Muslims who were not in favour of joining a Hindu dominated union, nevertheless did not prefer to join the Muslims of North Western India too. Under these circumstances the All India and Bengal Muslim leagues denounced any efforts made for a united Bengal. Mountbatten who was in London and watching the situation with care could hardly reach any other decision than he did. He informed the members of the cabinet in its meeting held on 28 May 1947 that he had abandoned all his hopes for a united independent Bengal. (13) The British Government was not prepared to give independent and sovereign status to Eastern Bengal alone; hence after being refused a united Bengal outside Pakistan and Hindustan, the Bengali Muslims had two options either to join Pakistan along with the north western provinces or to join the Indian union as part of the united Bengal. They feared the latter more than the former hence chose to join Pakistan albeit with some reservations that their culture,

economy, language and social traditions were distinct from that of the western counter parts. Even as pro-Pakistan leader as Nazim-ud-Din did not have any misgivings about it when he issued a statement to the effect that the establishment of an independent sovereign Bengal was the ultimate aim of Bengali Muslims. It is important to note here that even after the partition of India, Suhrawardy stayed back in Calcutta still negotiating with the Hindu leaders about the possibility of an independent united Bengal (14)

NORTH WESTERN FRONTIER PROVINCE (NOW KPK)

The North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) also had an unsuccessful attempt to achieve a separate state for the Pathans. The province was in fact in a very peculiar condition at the time of partition in 1947. The province had an overwhelming Muslim majority of 93% with a congress ministry in office since 1937 with an interval when it resigned as a taken of non-cooperation in the war effort. The congress ministry opposed the partition of India while the All India Muslim League demanded the inclusion of the province in Pakistan which was one of the Muslim majority areas of the sub-continent. Out of 50 members of the provincial legislature 33 belonged to congress. Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan who was later on appointed as chief minister of the province was deputy leader of the Congress before the partition. Dr. Khan Sahib the congress chief minister told the Cabinet Mission bluntly that the Pathans had no love for their Punjabi neighbors and were not willing to join Pakistani, what they wanted most of all was to be entirely independent. (15)

This province joined Pakistan in quite a different manner than THE other provinces of the British India where the legislative assemblies voted to join Pakistan or India. In this province a referendum was held to decide whether the people would join Pakistan or India. Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Dr. Khan Sahib who was the chief minister of the province opposed the idea of referendum on the issue of joining Pakistan or Hindustan. They demanded that if a referendum was to be held it should be held giving the choice of joining Pakistan or forming an independent state of Pathanistan. (16)

At this juncture the congress leaders could not come to their rescue because Nehru had vehemently opposed the move for an independent untitled Bengal. Nehru “felt the other edge of the dual dominion, its two nations side in the following week when he pleaded in vain for his Majesty’s Government statement of policy to offer the option of independence to the NWFP” (17). If Bengal had been given the right to choose independent status by the congress, the people of the NWFP could be given the choice of independent Pathanistan and there were ample chances that they would have voted for an independent Pathanistan.(18) In these circumstance the Congress and the Khudai Khidmatgars boycotted the referendum hence there was a very little turnout.

BALUCHISTAN AND KALAT STATE:

Baluchistan was not a governor province under the British Government in India and was divided into different territories i-e states, tribal areas and a chief

commissioner's province which consisted of the areas taken on lease by the British Government from the Khans of Kalat under driftnet treaties from time to time (19). The Khan of Kalat claimed that Kalat was not an Indian state and was never a part of India. He claimed a status equal to that of Nepal as he had direct treaty relations with white hall and had no dealings with the government of India (20). Moreover the British Government in India did not consider Baluchistan as part of the Indian sub continent (21) Khan's claim appears to be well based because when the independence of India was announced by the British Government, it was Jinnah himself who not only advised the Khan to claim back his territories which formed British Baluchistan but as a constitutional expert pleaded his case as well. (22) Though the British did not return the territory claimed by the khan, yet the viceroy secured an agreement between Kalat and (would be) Pakistan in August 1947. By virtue of this agreement Pakistan recognized the independent and sovereign status of Kalat. (23) In fact, by virtue of this agreement Kalat had ceded to Pakistan and Pakistan had inherited all the obligations and rights, the British government had towards Kalat. The khan was keen to retain his internal independence. (24) and his aspirations could be satisfied if his state could form a part of Pakistan's federation with maximum autonomy for the units.

As far as the tribal areas of Baluchistan were concerned, they had already expressed their choice in 1946 when the Tumandars of Marri and Bugti tribes sent a memorandum to the British government demanding that under any future constitutional arrangement in India, their tribal regions be included in a federation with Kalat. They further requested that their region be separated from the areas of the Punjab. (25) But in 1947 they were not allowed to join Kalat and were rather asked to choose between Pakistan and India.

The agent to the Governor General called a meeting of the Shahi Jirga and the Quetta municipality to put the scheme of partition before them which was to voted after a couple of days. In that meeting, Sardar Jafar Khan Jamali and sardar Dost Muhammad Mengal expressed that they would go with Kalat. Marri and Bugti tribes had already desired a federation with Kalat while retaining their independent status. It is believed that at the said juncture there was an attempt to achieve an independent Baluchistan but Khan himself was not involved in any such effort. (26)

The agent to the Governor General assessed the satiation and declared that there would be an immediate voting and that there would be no choice of Kalat etc. The members had to vote for Pakistan and India only. They voted for Pakistan under the impression that the Bluches would have their own government according to their political, social and economic conditions. (27)

SINDH:

Sindh was the province which as early as in 1943 demanded through its legislature that the Muslims of India be given the right to form their own national states. The resolution read. "The Muslim as a single separate nation be entitled to the

right to have independent national states of their own carved in the zones where they are in majority in the sub continent.” (28)

This resolution suggests that the Sindh legislature stood for self government in Sindh and for every other nationality among the Muslims of India. Again in 1946 the chief minister of Sind, Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah told the Cabinet Mission that all would be well if only all India politics could be kept out of the provinces and in particular out of Sindh. He further emphasized that Sindh must be left alone by all outsiders whatever their faith was (29) G.M. Syed another Sindhi and a former worker of the All India Muslim League stood for Azad (free) Sindh, not Pakistan.(30)

BAHAWALPUR STATE:

Bahawalpur was a state bordering Sindh and Punjab. It had resisted an occupation by the Punjab in the 19th century with the help and guarantee of the British Government and the ruler had shown loyalty to the king emperor through this period. On 14 August 1947 the Amir of Bahawalpur declared his independence and sovereignty over his territory after the end of the British paramountcy. He declared that;

“In view of the geographical position of my state and its cultural and economic affinities with the Pakistan dominion, my representatives should participate in the labors and deliberations of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly which will enable the two states to arrive at a satisfactory constitutional arrangement with regard to certain important matters of common concern” (31)

This statement suggests that the Amir desired for internal autonomy and independence within the larger former work of Pakistan. Later on in October 1947 an instrument of agreement signed by Jinnah and the Amir was secured through the good offices of Syed Amjad Ali (a friend of the state's chief minister) and Bahawalpur acceded to Pakistan. This agreement guaranteed the internal autonomy of the state and some rights and privileges of the successors of the Amir (32)

DISCUSSION:

Now it is pertinent to analyze Jinnah's point of view about the identity of the new state. From 1920s to the end he consistently advocated for the safeguards and guarantees of the political, economic social and religious rights of the Muslims within a political and constitutional arrangement. In fact his foremost and ultimate preference was his fourteen points formula presented in 1929. He always kept open all the doors to achieve this aim. The history provides evidence that Jinnah welcomed each and every proposal which provided safeguards for the rights of the Indian Muslims. The Lahore Resolution demanded establishment of independent and sovereign states in the Muslim majority areas of the sub-continent, nevertheless during 1940-1947 Jinnah welcomed every proposal providing safeguards and guarantees of the rights of the Muslims within a united India. When in 1942 Cripps Mission visited India, Jinnah was inclined to agree to any proposal which could guarantee the safeguards for the political economic, social, cultural and religious

rights of the Muslims. In fact Jinnah did not prefer that the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal having a little more than 50% majority of the Muslims should be divided on Hindu Muslim basis. He believed that if partitioned their basic infrastructure would be destroyed. For this reason, when in 1946 Cabinet Mission visited India, Jinnah accepted the Mission's proposal regarding the federation of the united India albeit with his own interpretations which were confirmed and seconded by the members of the mission. But when Nehru interpreted the proposal in his peculiar manner which could feasibly violate the rights of the Muslims, Jinnah rejected the said proposals.

In the beginning of 1947, when the independence was forth coming Jinnah emphasized that the Punjab and Bengal Should not be partitioned. Jinnah supported the move for a united Bengal and establishment of an independent and sovereign state of Bengal outside India and Pakistan which has been discussed in detail earlier. Although Jinnah opposed the partition of the Punjab but there is no evidence that he ever supported an independent and sovereign Punjab.

Now we discuss the British Government views about the future of the sub continent. The views of the British cabinet and the select committee on India were represented by L.S. Amery, the secretary of state for India. In 1945 he wrote to the viceroy.

“The conclusion which I have drawn from (political and constitutional problems of India) and which in deed was also the conclusion of the Simon commission and in effect, so far as the British India is concerned, of the joint select committee, is that India cannot have majority controlled executive at the centre, for that would at once involve Pakistan and no doubt within Pakistan further secession”. (33) Sir Edward Penderal moon who had served in the Indian civil service was even more clear about the demands of local self rule by the people of different regions when in 1945 he wrote “An India united other wise than by consent is an India divided ab initio” (34)

As far as the Eastern Bengal was concerned, the British Government neither preferred to grant independent and sovereign status to the province, (35) nor they considered its joining Pakistan as a freezable and viable solution (36)

In the light of the documentary evidence, it can be safely concluded that Jinnah neither preferred the partition of India nor the establishment of one or more Muslim states, he rather made many attempts to escape this partition till the end of the day. Secondly he never conceived an orthodox Islamic state. Establishment of separate Muslim state or states was his second option, where the political, economic, social and religious rights of the Muslims could be safeguarded, hence it is significant to devise a distinction between a Muslim majority state and an Islamic state. It is well proved from Jinnah's speech in the Constituent Assembly on 11th of August 1947 that Pakistan's identity was that of a Muslim majority state and not an Islamic state. In this speech he declared that state would have no concern with any religion which view was further strengthened when he appointed sir Jugandar Nath

Mandal (a Hindu) as the first Law Minister of Pakistan. It goes without saying that in an Islamic state a Hindu could not hold that portfolio. It is worth noting that Jinnah in his presidential address at the 27th annual session of the All India Muslims league held on 4 April 1942 declared “It must be realized that India was never a country or a nation India’s problem is international in this subcontinent and differences, cultural, social, political and economic are so fundamental that they cannot be covered up, concealed or confused but must be handled by all as realists. (37) It proves that Jinnah was very well aware of the complexity of the India’s and afterwards Pakistan’s political problems.

CONCLUSION:

The preceding discussion and supportive documents suggest that Pakistan as established in 1947 was neither the preference of Jinnah nor of the political elite belonging to the various constituent units of the country. It was rather a plan imposed by the colonial and neo colonial powers for the fulfillment of their future strategic designs as was proved later in 1979 when Pakistan was dragged into Afghan war which situation continues in 2013 making the country suffer from huge and irreparable losses.

Emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 reflects this acute crisis of identity which was very much present even before 1947. The rest of Pakistan is not immuned too and the said crisis is ever aggravating by the passage of time.

The aim of this study is not to suggest by any means that Pakistan as a state cannot be sustained. What is pertinent that keeping in view the ground realities, the identity issue must be revisited and re-determined which would be possible only after recognizing the regional and local identities of the provinces and within these provinces identities of various nationalities. If the European states which had been at war with each other could form a union, there is no reason that various provinces of Pakistan could not do the same. It appears that the concept of “New social contract” presented by late Benazir Bhutto the former Prime Minister of Pakistan indicated towards the conclusion drawn by this study. Over the period the gulf has widened but the problems can always be solved provided that the political, Judicial and military leadership should make efforts to minimize the said crisis instead of maximizing it through their unwise moves and policies. For instance the Punjabi elite who is in Power in the Punjab and Islamabad must deal the other provincial governments with utmost care because the situation is very much fragile. The areas which were not willing to become a part of Pakistan could be peacefully put together only by an open vision and utmost wisdom.

It is pertinent that the dynamics behind the establishment of Pakistan be re-understood and the political, social and economic preferences of various nationalities be brought within a cosmopolitan frame work and infrastructure. It is a difficult test for Pakistan’s political Judicial and military leadership.

To conclude “unless philosophers are the kings or kings are the philosophers the states shall never rest from evil”
Plato (The Republic)

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