

Islam in the National Story of Pakistan **by Aparna Pande**

Pakistan was not originally imagined as an Islamic State. And yet today, according to a 2009 report by the British Council, more than seventy five percent of Pakistanis consider themselves to be Muslims first and Pakistani nationals second.[1] Moreover, a May 2011 survey by the Gilani Research Foundation, a Pakistan-based polling organization, showed that sixty-seven percent of Pakistanis favored the state-led Islamization of their country.[2] How could this have happened in a country that was founded only a few generations ago by a secular, Westernized elite as the homeland for South Asia's Muslims?

The political turmoil and growing radicalization of Pakistani society have their roots in an ideologically-driven Islamic Pakistani identity. The Islamist narrative on which the country's identity and politics are based has been constructed and crafted in such a way that even secularists have inadvertently contributed to both its rise and spread in Pakistan. The roots of this narrative lie in the political beliefs that emerged among wealthy Indian Muslims of British India in the late nineteenth century.

Ever since Islam was first introduced on the Indian subcontinent in the tenth century and up to the early modern era, South Asia's Muslims did not consider themselves to be a minority population living amongst India's Hindu majority. Instead, they understood themselves to be the rightful rulers of the subcontinent, as well as politically and culturally superior to their counterparts. However, with the advent of British colonial rule and the gradual introduction of parliamentary democracy, Indian Muslims became increasingly aware of their status as a numerical minority—and also of Islam's declining political and cultural power. In the age of parliamentary democracy, numbers mattered far more than in the era of Muslim monarchs.

The establishment of British rule and the subsequent rise of Hindu power produced two broad strands of nationalism among Indian Muslims. To some Muslim leaders, nationalism was primarily understood in territorial terms: India's Muslims may adhere to a different religion than the Hindus of India, but both populations belonged to a common Indian homeland and nationality. These leaders by and large joined the Indian National Congress, a secular nationalist party formed in 1885 that included a small percentage of Muslims in its leadership. Meanwhile, other Muslim leaders maintained that religion, rather than territory, was the defining characteristic of identity and nationalism. In their view, Hindus and Muslims were not merely followers of different religions but members of two different communities or nations. This belief formed the crux of the so-called 'two-nation theory,' which in later years was used by Muslim leaders to justify the creation of the state of Pakistan as an independent Muslim homeland that was separate from "Hindu India."

During the Raj period, the majority of Indian Muslim leaders were modern and western-educated Muslims who were not part of the traditional, Mughal-era religious

establishment. Nonetheless, many of these modern elites considered Islam to be the defining aspect of their identity. Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, a leading reformer and the intellectual founder of the Muslim Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh (which was later renamed Aligarh Muslim University), was among those who believed Muslims, as a religious and political minority, could only find safety on the subcontinent if they allied with the British and distanced themselves politically from the Hindus. Paradoxically, Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan also had many close Hindu friends, and he was known to have described Hindus and Muslims as “the two beautiful eyes” of a common India.

Subsequent generations of Muslim leaders also held similarly conflicting views concerning Muslim identity and nationalism within the context of India. For example, Indian Muslim leaders like Pakistan’s founding father, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, had many close Hindu and Parsee (Zoroastrian) friends. Yet he espoused the “two-nation theory,” and called for the strict separation of religious communities for political reasons. Later, after Pakistan achieved independence in 1947, the country’s secular leaders saw no contradiction between accepting a nationalist identity rooted in religion and maintaining their secular credentials.

A deep-seated distrust of Hindus and a strong desire for guarantees that Muslims would have a meaningful voice in Indian politics led the Indian Muslim elite to champion the idea of creating separate electorates for Muslims and Hindus. Throughout British India, the implementation of parliamentary democracy led to the creation of a number of territory-based constituencies that in turn elected representatives to the legislative assemblies. In a Hindu-majority country, however, Muslim leaders had to face the reality that a common parliamentary electoral system invariably meant that the majority of parliamentarians would be Hindu. To have a meaningful say in any future government, Muslims therefore needed to ensure that a certain minimum number of Muslim representatives were elected. They could achieve this objective either by ensuring that all political parties had a certain number of Muslim candidates (which would effectively use the minority block’s voting clout) or they could ask for separate, community-based electorates.

In 1905, a delegation of the Muslim leaders, led by the Aga Khan, went to meet the Viceroy in Simla, Lord Minto, to ask for the provision of separate electorates. Although the inclusion of this provision in the 1909 Minto-Morley Reforms was viewed by many members of the Muslim elite as a positive step, it was alternatively seen by the Indian National Congress as a “divisive” British ploy meant to cripple an emerging Indian national identity. At first, the right to vote was very limited, and so the institution of separate voting didn’t affect day to day politics for ordinary people. However, among the elites who could vote, the adoption of the system of separate electorates ultimately helped cement a deep sense of political separation between the religious communities.

The establishment in 1906 of the All India Muslim League at Dacca, in modern day Bangladesh, represented one manifestation of the growing belief that Muslims needed their own organizations, separate from Hindu-led organizations, to represent them and help safeguard their community interests. The Muslim League were staunch advocates of

separate electorates and of reserving seats for Muslims in the legislative assemblies of Muslim-minority provinces, and they also demanded that the league be involved directly in any discussion about the future of India. It was on these grounds that the Muslim League competed in the first provincial-level parliamentary elections in British India in 1936. By championing these causes, the Muslim League's leaders believed that they could win enough parliamentary seats to establish the league as the "Sole Spokesman" of all of the Muslims in British India, according to the historian Ayesha Jalal.[3]

The Muslim League was ultimately defeated in the 1936 elections, but the elections marked a major turning point in the quest for a separate homeland for India's Muslims. The setback led the Muslim League to change its overall policy from simply asking for political guarantees for minority representation to demanding equal status as a separate nation. The loss caused it to pursue the goals of political separation and autonomy with new focus and vigor. Instead of pressing for safeguards for the Muslim minority, the league began to demand the formal implementation of the two-nation theory, asserting that Hindus and Muslims, despite their numerical differences, possessed an equal right to decide the future of India.

In the context of the 1946 elections, which would decide who would rule the Indian subcontinent after the British, the league's leadership felt that it was more important than ever to establish the league as the sole Muslim voice and party in the Raj. Due to the enormous cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences among the Muslim populations living in the various provinces of British India, the league's campaign strategy to win support emphasized the separateness of the Muslim and Hindu nations. The free use of Islamic slogans and symbols thus became a common feature of the 1946 elections. In one campaign speech, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, then the president of the All India Muslim League, declared to Muslims, "if you want Pakistan, vote for the League candidates," and he further warned that if Muslims failed to "realize [their] duty today" they would be "reduced to the status of *Sudras* (or low caste Hindus) and Islam [would] be vanquished from India." [4] To win the support of India's diverse Muslim communities, the Muslim League additionally sought help from and forged alliances with more traditional Islamic social and political institutions, including landowners (*zamindars*), clan- and community-based (*biraderi*) networks, and the hereditary religious elites (*pirs/sajjadanashins*).

While the 'two-nation theory' proved useful as a tool for mobilization in India before its partition, the starkly different politics of modern Pakistan and India clearly show that religion is an unreliable basis for national identity. In the new state of India, leaders of the Congress like Jawaharlal Nehru (a secular socialist), Sardar Vallabhai Patel (a conservative Hindu nationalist), and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (a conservative Muslim nationalist) all held a territorially-defined, rather than religiously-based, view of nationalism. This helped to bind the religiously and ethnically diverse provinces of India together, and India's political leaders were thus able to address the vitally important practical tasks of writing a new constitution and implementing their economic, security, and foreign policy agendas.

In Pakistan, however, the Muslim League's political use of religion as the basis for a separate Islamic state gave rise to a central question that has bedeviled Pakistan ever since its creation: "If Islam is to be the basis of the state, whose Islam will be followed and how?" When Pakistan was created, the majority of its leaders were relatively secular and politically moderate men like Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan. However, once religion was incorporated as an essential component of national ideology, it became impossible to remove it from the political life of the new nation. Consequently, the crafting of a Pakistani national identity required the use of Islam and routine appeals to Muslim distinctiveness, and this has haunted Pakistan's political life ever since.

In 1949, Pakistan's Constituent Assembly approved *The Objectives Resolution of Pakistan*, which articulated the goals of the new state and the guiding principles of the future national constitution. In some ways it was ironic that the new state's objectives were not decided and announced until two years after the actual formation of Pakistan. *The Objectives Resolution* effectively attached the identity of the Pakistani state to Islam, and its publication marked the start of what ultimately became an Islamist slippery slope. The resolution asserts that "sovereignty belongs to Allah" (not the people), and tasks the state with the role of enabling Muslims "to order their lives in both the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings of Islam." [5] These core resolution principles had virtually nothing in common with the secular views of Pakistan's founding fathers. Instead, they were more aligned with the views of Islamist ideologues like Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, the founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Maulana Maududi had not been an early supporter of the foundation of Pakistan mainly because of his aversion toward the largely secular leadership of the Muslim League. Yet Maududi changed his views soon after Pakistan's creation, and came to see the new majority Muslim state as a *tabula rasa* on which his ideal of an Islamic 'theo-democracy' might be implemented. [6] Historically, the Jamaat-e-Islami has been unable to win enough electoral support to fully implement Maududi's ideas. But the Islamist organization has over the decades sought to penetrate into and align itself with the country's military and civilian bureaucratic establishment. For their part, secular leaders in the military as well as civil bureaucracies have generally believed that they could accommodate the ideas of Islamists like Maududi without having to cede formal political space to them.

Over the years, civilian and military leaders have thus defended the idea that Pakistan was established on the basis of Islamic ideology and that the purpose of the state was to implement and safeguard this ideology. Pakistan's first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, for example, spoke frequently about a special "Pakistani ideology" and about the primary importance of Islam within this national ideology. General Ayub Khan—who, as army commander in chief, played an influential role in Pakistan's early politics and ultimately became the country's first military ruler from 1958-1969—reaffirmed this view that Pakistan was created on the foundation of Islamic ideology. He also believed that the state's primary duty was to fully implement these Islamic ideals but that the Pakistani state had not lived up to its responsibilities and the nation suffered as a consequence. As General Ayub put it, man's "greatest yearning is for an ideology for which he should be

able to lay down his life,” and for Pakistanis, that ideology was “obviously Islam.” He stated further that it “was on that basis [of Islam] that we fought for and got Pakistan, but having got it, we failed to order our lives in accordance with it.”[7]

General Ayub’s views would be reinforced by another military ruler, General Zia ul Haq, who launched a sweeping state-led Islamization agenda in the late 1970s that fundamentally reshaped the country’s major institutions, politics, and culture. In General Zia’s view, “the ideology of Pakistan is Islam and only Islam. There should be no misunderstanding on this score. We should in all sincerity accept Islam as Pakistan’s basic ideology ... otherwise ... this country (will) be exposed to secular ideologies.”[8]

In 1956, Pakistan was officially renamed the “Islamic Republic of Pakistan,” and since then the evolution of Islamic politics and an Islamic national identity within the country has been consistently encouraged and enforced by state policy. This is especially apparent in how modern Pakistani leaders have sought to use religion to unify the nation. A key challenge facing the country’s founders was that each one of Pakistan’s principal ethnic groups overlapped national borders and extended into neighboring countries. Without a common national identity, there was little reason why the country’s inhabitants should prefer to be Pakistanis and why the country as a whole should cohere.

The solution offered in subsequent years has been to emphasize the shared Islamic religion of all of Pakistan’s peoples over other attributes of national distinctiveness. This desire to create “one nation, one language, one religion” (a common slogan in Pakistani political life) has manifested itself in an effort to suppress local, ethno-linguistic identities by the state and a related effort to replace these identities with a national identity rooted in Islam.

In practice, unifying Pakistan on the basis of religious nationalism has proven to be an unattainable goal. It has, however, been the justification of immense political violence. While many factors led to the break-up of West and East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, Bengali resentment over the suppression of their ethno-linguistic identity played a vital role. This is because Pakistan’s army was and remains mainly Punjabi-Pashtun at the soldier level and Punjabi-Muhajir-Pashtun in the officer corps.[9] Similarly, Punjabis and Muhajirs occupy a disproportionate number of posts in Pakistan’s civil services in terms of their percentage of the population in Pakistan. Before 1971, one of the key grievances of the Bengali majority was that Bengalis constituted only seven percent of the army and four percent of the civil service.[10] After 1971, for many Baluchis, Sindhis, and to some extent even Pashtuns, the Pakistani identity represented Punjabi-Muhajir chauvinism.

The Indian Muslim elite who founded Pakistan came to view their new country as the rightful homeland of all of the Muslims of the subcontinent, and they urged India’s Muslims to immigrate to the new country. However, they faced many challenges on this front, not least because Pakistan shared common history and deep cultural linkages with India. The new country thus had little history of its own to appeal to that could serve as the basis for a new national identity.

Furthermore, the 1947 partition of the British Raj into India and Pakistan separated the new Pakistani state from the heart of the historical Muslim empire in South Asia, which later became part of predominantly Hindu India. Pakistan had little within its new territory to connect its people to the rich cultural heritage of South Asian Islamic traditions. Moreover, the fact that over one-third of South Asia's Muslims remained in India after partition meant that Pakistan from the beginning was hard put to justify itself as the homeland for South Asia's Muslims. Pakistani efforts to construct an Islamic nationalist identity were complicated further in 1971, when an additional one-third of South Asia's Muslims sought autonomy from Pakistan and created the separate country of Bangladesh.

The architects of Pakistani nationalist identity might have addressed these dilemmas in one of two ways. On the one hand, they might have acknowledged Pakistan's essentially Indian history, but this would have exposed the new state to a critique of its *raison d'être* and motivations for breaking politically with India. Alternatively, they could have crafted a new historical narrative that supported Pakistan's modern ambitions and identity. Pakistani nationalist leaders opted for the latter course, and in doing so began a still ongoing search for episodic evidence in the history of Indian Islam that could be used to justify Pakistan's creation and its continued existence as a separate Islamic state. Constructing a new national ideology thus involved fabricating an entirely new historical narrative. Needless to say, this new historical narrative has not always conformed to historical facts.

The official history of Pakistan reinforces the popular belief that the country wasn't created in 1947, but rather twelve centuries earlier when Islam was first introduced to India as a result of the annexation of Sindh in 712 CE by the Arab-Muslim Umayyad Empire. The shared history of the peoples of South Asia has been rewritten in Pakistan's school curricula to stress the fundamental difference and divergence between Hindus and Muslims. The thirteen centuries since the conquest of Sindh are described in Pakistani school textbooks as the struggle of Muslims to maintain their distinctiveness, and the creation of an independent Pakistan is seen as the culmination of that struggle. This ideology-based narrative has been championed both by secular as well as religious elements in Pakistan, and the 'Pakistan Studies' curriculum that is based on this narrative is taught in secular schools as well as religious establishments.[11]

Despite the tumultuous political history of Pakistan, each one of the country's constitutions—including those of 1956, 1962, 1973, and even the legal framework orders adopted under military rule—has consistently reaffirmed the Islamic identity of the state and asserted that no law in the country should contravene any of the tenets of Islam. By far the most extreme and harsh policies of Islamization took place under General Zia ul Haq, who ruled from 1977-89 and oversaw a broad-based effort to reorder Pakistani society according to a new Islamic vision that transformed the legal system, the education system, and the military.

During General Zia's rule, it became the norm to treat a religious degree from a madrasa as an equivalent of the professional and academic degrees awarded by modern universities and colleges. This shift contributed to the gradual Islamization of the lower ranks of the civil service and bureaucracy. Moreover, the professionals who entered the higher ranks of government, media, and academia were also subjected to years of government-sponsored 'Pakistan Studies' and religious studies (*Islamiyat*). Over time, these educational initiatives produced a bureaucratic class whose worldview was deeply influenced by a politicized understanding of Islam, and there were few in the position to challenge or disagree with their ideas. Ultimately, this indoctrination led this traditionally secular and liberal group of professionals to become ever more supportive of Islamist principles shaping government policy.

The Pakistani military and its culture were also fundamentally transformed by General Zia's Islamization policies. In General Zia's view, Pakistani military was to serve as the "guardian" of both the "ideological as well as geographical frontiers" of the country.[12] The military adopted recruitment and advancement practices that favored those who showed themselves to be religiously and ideologically committed to Pakistan's Islamic identity. Additionally, compulsory prayers and Islamic classes, many of them taught by Deobandi and Jamaat-e-Islami religious leaders who preached a radical version of Islam, became routine within the military.

The military thus became an increasingly religious and ideologically-driven organization, and this remains very much the case today. For example, in August 2009, on the eve of Pakistan's 62nd Independence Anniversary, Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani stated that "Islam is the soul and spirit of Pakistan. It is our strength and we will always be an Islamic republic." Further, General Kayani emphasized that the Pakistani army would continue to defend the country "against all internal and external threats." [13] This has been apparent in the country's foreign-policy agendas, which, from the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan to the ongoing strategic competition with "Hindu India," have all become invested in profound ideological and theological significance. In February 2010, General Kayani stated that his views are "India-centric," reflecting the common view within the Pakistan army that India is the primary national security threat.[14] This perception has clearly been reinforced by Pakistan's Islam-based ideology, and it has become more prevalent in recent years as the military itself has become a more ideological institution.

On the other hand, it must also be acknowledged that India is not perceived as the primary threat by everyone within the Pakistan military or, for that matter, the public at large. In May 2011, Husain Haqqani, Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, observed in a talk at the Islamabad-based National Defense University that only a small minority within the military sees India as the primary threat. For other officers, the greatest threat to national security is posed either by domestic jihadist movements or by the United States. Moreover, the army's leadership has repeatedly expressed deep concern over the recent ethno-linguistic clashes in Karachi, and some political parties have called for military intervention to restore order in the city.[15]

Government policies and educational curricula, which have been designed to create a unified nation by championing Islam at home and pan-Islamism abroad, have made it increasingly difficult for the government to control or subdue groups that justify violence against the perceived enemies of Islam. In fact, because it derives so much of its identity and legitimacy from Islam, the Pakistani state has frequently succumbed to Islamist demands on a range of social and other questions.

This clearly has been the case in the plight of the Ahmadis, a minority Muslim sect considered to be non-Muslim by most orthodox and conservative Muslims.[16] In the early 1950s, a political rivalry between two factions of the Muslim League led the Punjab Chief Minister, Mian Mumtaz Daulatana, to instigate street riots, with help from Islamist groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami, demanding an official declaration of Ahmadis as non-Muslims. The goal was to force the resignation of the Ahmadi foreign minister, Mr. Zafrulla Khan, and henceforth overthrow the federal government. (This process has become a recurring phenomenon in Pakistan: certain vested interests—political parties or individuals—try to use street power, especially that of the Islamist groups, to apply pressure on the elected government. Situations often escalate uncontrollably and the military must consequently be called in to restore order.)

Soon after the anti-Ahmadi riots erupted, a court of inquiry presided over by Justice Muhammad Munir (later Chief Justice of Pakistan) was set up, and the court submitted its final report in 1954. The following comments by Justice Munir reflect the fundamental problem of “Whose Islam?” the modern Islamic state of Pakistan has struggled to answer through its politics:

Keeping in view the several definitions given by the ulama, need we make any comment except that no two learned divines are agreed on this fundamental. If we attempt our own definition as each learned divine has done and that definition differs from that given by all others, we unanimously go out of the fold of Islam. And if we adopt the definition given by any one of the ulama, we remain Muslims according to the view of that alim but kafirs according to the definition of everyone else.[17]

The Ahmadi issue flared up again in the 1970s under the government of Pakistan’s first democratically elected civilian Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. A clash between Ahmadi and Islamist students in Punjab resulted in massive, street-wide riots that threatened Mr. Bhutto’s government. Despite being a secular, western-oriented politician, Mr. Bhutto ultimately acquiesced to the Islamist Pakistani identity and narrative. Facing constant challenges from both Islamists and other elements, Bhutto began efforts to Islamize his domestic policies in an effort to save his government.

In 1974, Pakistan’s national constitution was amended to declare Ahmadis officially non-Muslims. The government at the time thought it had resolved the Ahmadi issue, but in reality this was only the beginning of a long struggle. Both Muslim sects and non-Muslim minorities continue to be targeted by Islamist groups.

Bhutto had already been a champion of pan-Islamism in Pakistan's external relations. In January 1972, Bhutto embarked on what was called the 'Journey of Resistance': a 10,000-mile goodwill trip to Iran, Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Egypt, and Syria. In May and June of 1972, Bhutto also went to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Guinea, Nigeria, Sudan and Somalia. Though these trips had political and economic aims, the key objective was mainly symbolic, and meant to bolster the Islamic self-image and confidence of the Pakistani people following the trauma of losing control over Bangladesh in 1971.

Moreover, by orienting Pakistan toward the Muslim Middle East, the Bhutto government sought to provide Pakistan with a new Islamic Middle Eastern identity that would allow it to escape its Indian history and identity. Bhutto's trips to the Middle East were also helpful in obtaining economic aid for Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. Libya and the Gulf States provided Pakistan with the much-needed monetary support for this ambitious program. In return Bhutto often referred to Pakistan's bomb as the 'Islamic bomb.' [18]

While the Pakistani state has struggled to rein in Islamism, it has also often condoned and encouraged Islamist groups by providing them with covert support. The state, and especially the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment, has sought to establish ties with these Islamist groups and enlist them in pursuit of its domestic and foreign policy agendas.

In the domestic arena, Islamist groups helped curtail the influence of secular and liberal forces, political parties and others who backed ethno-linguistic identities (e.g., Bengalis, Sindhis, Baluchis, Pashtuns). During the 1971 conflict in East Pakistan, Jamaat-e-Islami militias fought alongside the Pakistani regular army to help suppress Muslims. They subsequently renounced the new state of Bangladesh as a form of national apostasy.

Sectarianism and violent sectarian conflict in Pakistan can also be tied to specific policies implemented by the government. As part of his policy of Islamization in 1979, General Zia imposed a system by which the state would automatically deduct *zakat* from the bank accounts and salaries of all Muslims.[19] This outraged many in Pakistan's minority Shia population, since they customarily offer their charity money to their individual clerics. Newly formed Shia organizations such as the Tehreek-e-Nifaz-Fiqh-e-Jaafariya (TNFJ) subsequently laid siege to the capital city of Islamabad.

In response to this Shiite activism, elements in the Pakistani state began to provide support to Sunni radical and militant organizations to confront the Shia. Driven by a mix of political, economic, and religious factors, sectarian conflict has continued to plague Pakistan, and the Saudi Arabian and Iranian establishments have also used the conflict to enact a proxy war. (Nowadays, Pakistan's leading anti-Shiite organizations are the Sipaha-e-Sahaba Pakistan and its breakaway militant group, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Sipaha-e-Sahaba subscribes to Deobandi views and has close ties to the Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam, a Deobandi religious organization. The leading Shiite radical group is the TNFJ and its militant off-shoot is the Sipaha-e-Muhammad Pakistan.)

The impact of the government's use of Islamist groups to suppress non-Islamic identities is clearly visible in Pakistan today. In 1947, non-Muslim minorities including Ahmadis, Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, and Parsees accounted for twenty-five percent of Pakistan's total population; by 2010, this number had shrunk to five percent of the country's population. Hindus and Christians together comprise around four percent of the Pakistani population. While Hindus face discrimination on religious grounds, the conflict-ridden relationship between India and Pakistan has also caused them to be treated as 'fifth columnists' and potential enemies of the state. As 'People of the Book,' the Christian minority was traditionally tolerated in Pakistan. Over the last few decades, however, attacks on Christians have escalated. Moreover, the harsh blasphemy law enacted during General Zia's regime has often been used to target the Christian minority.

Meanwhile, in the foreign policy arena, Islamist groups and their militant off-shoots have helped the Pakistani state fight asymmetrical covert wars with both of Pakistan's immediate neighbors, India and Afghanistan. A majority of the Islamist militant groups operating in Indian-administered Kashmir have ties with Pakistani Islamist groups, and Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment views these groups as proxies to help suppress a larger adversarial neighbor. Similarly, state support for Islamist groups and militias operating in Afghanistan serves both domestic and foreign policy goals, which include subduing Pashtun irredentism and setting up a pro-Pakistan, Pashtun-led Afghan government. As a leading Pakistani scholar, Khaled Ahmed states, "Intolerance is embedded in the evolution of the Islamic state," and that is the foundation of Pakistani intolerance.[20]

Despite the deaths of over 10,000 civilians and almost 4,000 security personnel in the fight against terrorism since 2003, a Pew poll conducted in June 2011 discovered that the majority of Pakistanis still see India as a greater threat to Pakistan than jihadist organizations.[21] Even after thousands of Pakistanis have been killed by jihadist groups, conspiracy theories abound, with some claiming that the terrorists are in fact foreign mercenaries because Muslims would never kill fellow Muslims. The national press, too, has often contributed to the growing delusion and zealotry in the country's political discourse. For example, Majid Nizami, who runs *The Nation-Nawa I Waqt* media group, has stated publicly that the only way for Pakistan to obtain Kashmir from India is to start a nuclear war, and he has offered to be "tied to a nuclear bomb" and get "dropped on India." [22] Meanwhile, Hafiz Saeed, the former head of the jihadist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (which is responsible for a number of terror attacks including the 2008 attacks on Mumbai, India), is presently under house arrest and yet still able to speak openly about jihad against India while receiving little censure from the public and government.[23]

Opposing "Hindu India" has become a defining feature of the Pakistani Islamic nationalist narrative. Without an identity that is firmly anti-Indian, Pakistan's leaders fear their country will be reabsorbed within a greater Indian identity—with potentially irreversible political and strategic consequences. As Khaled Ahmed, a leading Pakistani writer, observed in 2008, "It appears natural to people that to be 'Pakistani' you have to be anti-Hindu: it is part of the definition, like the core of the being. You have to define

yourself in opposition to the other. India has become the definite other for the Pakistanis.”

When Pakistan was created, the country’s diverse inhabitants had little in the way of a common identity that might bind them together. Indeed, even the very idea of Pakistan—which emerged in the 1930s, as some Indian Muslims began their quest for a separate homeland—had a relatively short history. Pakistan’s politicians have struggled with this lack of a common identity and principles ever since. As early as 1956 Hans Morgenthau presciently noted, “Pakistan is not a nation and hardly a state. It has no justification in history, ethnic origin, language, civilization, or the consciousness of those who make up its population ... Thus it is hard to see how anything but a miracle, or else a revival of religious fanaticism, will assure Pakistan’s future.”[24]

Pakistan’s early generation undertook to establish their new state and nation on the basis of Islamic ideology. This ideology-based national identity soon became the defining force of Pakistani politics, and it was accepted by both secular and Islamist parts of Pakistani society. As a Pakistani scholar, Waheed-uz-Zaman, noted in 1973:

the wish to see the kingdom of God established in a Muslim territory...was the moving idea behind the demand for Pakistan, the corner-stone of the movement, the ideology of the people, and the *raison d'etre* of the new nation-state.... If we let go the ideology of Islam, we cannot hold together as a nation by any other means.... If the Arabs, the Turks, the Iranians, God forbid, give up Islam, the Arabs yet remain Arabs, the Turks remain Turks, the Iranians remain Iranians, but what do we remain if we give up Islam?[25]

To be religious is one thing, and to use it to run a state is quite another. Instead of binding the nation together, Pakistan’s grounding in Islamic ideology has actually operated to divide the Pakistani nation, pitting Muslim against non-Muslim, and Muslim against Muslim. If Pakistan is to survive, it will have to do away with its reliance on Islamic ideology and find a new basis for the state and nation.

When Pakistan was created not all of the new country’s leaders were in favor of constructing a national identity on the basis of Islamic ideology. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, a leading Indian Muslim who would later serve as Pakistan’s Prime Minister, advocated a territorial-based national identity; unfortunately, his views never gained sufficient favor or support. A Pakistani nationalism and identity along the lines proposed by Suhrawardy—which is defined territorially and is accepting of ethno-linguistic differences domestically as well as the common history and enduring affinities that Pakistan shares with its South Asian neighbors—would help Pakistan move forward. This would, however, require the national narrative, including school curricula, to be dramatically rewritten so that it has more in common with facts and reality. This outcome will inevitably prove difficult to achieve, especially since so many of the country’s civilian and military leaders have over the years embraced the Islamist narrative of Pakistan’s origins and purpose.

Aparna Pande is a research fellow at the Center on Islam, Democracy and the Future of the Muslim World.

This article will appear in Volume 12 of [Current Trends in Islamist Ideology](#).

Keywords: *Pakistani Identity, Sectarianism, Nationalism Islamization, Zia ul-Haq*

[1] British Council Pakistan. *The Next Generation*. Full report available at <http://www.britishcouncil.pk/pakistan-Next-Generation-Report.pdf>.

[2] Gilani Research Foundation. *Religion and Governance: Islamization of Society*. Full report available at <http://www.gallup.com.pk/Polls/31-05-11.pdf>.

[3] Ayesha Jalal. *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1994).

[4] Jamil u-Din Ahmad (ed), *Speeches and Writings of Mr Jinnah*, Vol I, Lahore: Ashraf, 1960, p 241-243. Cited in K.B. Sayeed, *op cit*, p 199.

[5] *The Objectives Resolution of Pakistan, 1949*.

[6] The Jamaat e Islami was founded in 1941 by Maulana Abul Ala Maududi. Maududi believed that Islam was not just a religion and faith but a way of life. Maududi's ideal political system was a 'theo-democracy' which meant "limited people's sovereignty under the suzerainty of God."

[7] Muhammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters: A political autobiography*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1967, pp.196-197.

[8] "The President on Pakistan's Ideological Basis," Address by President General Zia-ul-Haq at the inauguration of Shariat Faculty at the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 8 October 1979 Islamabad: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, n.d., p. 2. Cited in C.G.P. Rakisits, "Center Province Relations in Pakistan under President Zia: The Government's and Opposition's Approaches," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol 61(1), 1988, p 79.

[9] Muhajir is a term which in the Indian subcontinent refers to those Urdu-speaking Indian Muslims – from Muslim minority provinces - who migrated from India to Pakistan at the time of Partition. Though many Bengali and Punjabi Muslims also migrated across the border but most of them settled down in Pakistani Punjab and Bengal and are not normally referred to as Muhajirs.

[10] See Mubashir Hasan. *The Mirage of Power: An Inquiry Into the Bhutto Years, 1971-1977* (Karachi. Oxford University Press. 2000) p 202-208.

[11] For detailed analysis of textbooks in various subjects please look at the following report titled ‘Subtle Subversion’.

<http://www.uvm.edu/~envprog/madrassah/TextbooksinPakistan.pdf>.

[12] Speech given to the graduates at the Officers Training Academy at Kakul, *Pakistan Times*, April 14, 1978.

[13] ‘We are against terrorism, not religion, says Kayani’, *Dawn*, August 14, 2009.

[14] ‘Pakistan will remain India-centric: Kayani’ *Hindustan Times*, February 5, 2010.

[15] ‘Army concerned about Karachi situation: ISPR’ *Daily Times Pakistan*, September 5, 2011.

[16] Ahmadis or Ahmadiyyas follow the teachings of a 19th century messiah Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – whom they consider a prophet – and their two main points of disagreement are that they do not acknowledge the finality of the Prophet Muhammad and do not accept the obligation of jihad.

[17] Full details of the 1953 riots are taken from the following report. *Report on the Court of Inquiry constituted under Punjab Act II of 1954 to enquire into the Punjab disturbances of 1953*(Lahore, Government Printing Press, 1954).

[18] “We know that Israel and South Africa have full nuclear capability. The Christian, Jewish and Hindu civilizations have this capability. The communist powers also possess it. Only the Islamic civilization was without it, but that position was about to change.” Taken from Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *If I am Assassinated*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979, p 138.

[19] *Zakat* – One of the Five Pillars of Islam dealing with the giving of a fixed portion of one's wealth to charity, generally to the poor and needy.

[20] Khaled Ahmed, ‘Roots of our Intolerance,’

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/173247/roots-of-our-intolerance/> May 22, 2011 Express Tribune.

[21] Pew Global Attitudes Project Poll, June 21, 2011.

<http://pewglobal.org/2011/06/21/u-s-image-in-pakistan-falls-no-further-following-bin-laden-killing/>.

[22] Shakil Chaudhary. “*Media Baron wants India to be defeated in a nuclear war.*” June 25, 2010

<http://www.viewpointonline.net/Old/fullstory.php?t=Media%20baron%20wants%20India%20to%20be%20defeated%20in%20a%20nuclear%20war&f=full-8-june-25.php&y=2010&m=june>.

[23] 'JuD chief back to criticizing India' *The Economic Times*. July 26, 2009; Nirupama Subramanian. 'FIR on what Hafiz Saeed said' *The Hindu*, September 19, 2009

[24] Hans J. Morgenthau, "Military illusions," *The New Republic*, March 19, 1956, p. 15-16.

[25] Waheed-uz-Zarnan, "Editor's Note," in "The Quest for Identity," Proceedings of The First Congress on the History and Culture of Pakistan, University of Islamabad, April 1973. Islamabad: University of Islamabad Press, 1974, p. i. Cited in William Richter, "The Political Dynamics of Islamic Resurgence in Pakistan," *Asian Survey*, Vol 19(6), 1979, p. 549.