Introduction

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Speaking at a huge gathering in Delhi during the 1940s, Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari, the fiery leader of Majlis-i-Ahrar, a religio-political organization known for its radical anti-colonialism and as an ally of the Indian National Congress, narrated an anecdote. A mother gave 4 *annas* (a quarter of a rupee) to her son, Muhammad Ali, to fetch kerosene from the shop around the corner. The lad went to the shop and asked for 4 *annas* worth of kerosene. The shopkeeper filled the oval shaped clay pot to the brim. 'Won't you give me a *chunga* with this?' asked the boy.[1] The shopkeeper replied, 'The pot is full; where should I put the *chunga*?' The boy upended the pot and pointed towards its opening. The shopkeeper obliged and put the *chunga* there. The boy went home and handed over the pot to his mother. Surprised that there was hardly any oil in the pot, the mother asked, '*Beta* [my son] Muhammad Ali, only this much oil for 4 *annas*?' Muhammad Ali boasted: 'No mother, look there is a *chunga* with it as well.' A wry smile appeared on Bukhari's face as he concluded in front of the massive audience, held spellbound by his oratory: 'This Pakistan triumphantly presented by Muhammad Ali Jinnah as a solution for Muslims who are a quarter of India's population is also like this *chunga*.'[2]

This was Bukhari's rhetorical contribution to the debate on Pakistan. More seriously, he talked about the impracticality of the two wings of the proposed Muslim state being separated by thousands of miles of an 'enemy territory' of

[1] Pronounced *chūnga*: a token gift of little value, such as candy, that shopkeepers used to give to customers.

[2] This anecdote has been passed on to generations of Ahrar workers living in Pakistan. It will be difficult to find documentary evidence for the exact words spoken by Bukhari, the venue of this public gathering, or the date on which the speech was delivered. This is primarily due to the self-censorship imposed by Ahrar members. It was narrated to Ali Usman Qasmi during the course of his ongoing field work focusing on the history of Ahrar.

Hindus. Such a solution, he said, would divide the strength of South Asia's Muslim population, deprive them of their claims to the heartland of Indo-Islamic civilization in North India, and for the first time since the age of Ashoka give ownership of a vast empire to Hindus.[3] Bukhari was not the only leader, nor Ahrar the only religious or political organization, to raise such concerns. The Azad Muslim Conference held in April 1940, just a month after the passage of the famous March resolution demanding separate Muslim states, was a massive gathering of Muslim organizations opposed to the Muslim League's demand for a Pakistan based on its two-nation theory.[4] It was attended by delegates from Jami'at 'Ulama-i-Hind,[5] Majlis-i-Ahrar,[6] the All India Momin Conference,[7] the All India Shia Political Conference,[8] Khuda'i Khidmatgars,[9] the Bengal

[3] Some of these ideas have been referred to in the collection of Bukhari's speeches compiled by Sayyid Muhammad Kafil Bukhari titled, *Pakistan men kia ho ga? Khutbat-i-Amir-i-Shariat Sayyid Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari* (Multan: Bukhari Academy, 2014). The rest – for example, the reference to Ashoka – are anecdotal, for which documented reference is difficult to find.

[4] Shamsul Islam, *Muslims Against Partition: Revisiting the Legacy of Allah Bakhsh and other Patriotic Muslims* (New Delhi: Pharos, 2015), 77. The brief profiles of the political parties and organizations which were part of the Azad Muslim Conference have been compiled from Shamsul Islam's *Muslims Against Partition* and K. K. Aziz's *Public Life in Muslim India, 1850–1947* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1992).

[5] In English, this translates as 'Organization of Indian Muslim Scholars.' It was founded in 1919 at a conference held as part of the Khilafat Movement in support of the Ottoman Empire. It eventually developed as a religio-political organization of 'ulama associated with the Deoband seminary with a pro-Congress political affiliation.

[6] Also known as *Ahrar*, meaning 'the free ones' in Arabic. *Majlis-i-Ahrar* can be translated as 'the party of the free.' Founded in 1929 and comprising anti-colonial nationalists and pro-Congress 'ulama, Majlis-i-Ahrar was largely based in urban Punjab.

[7] The Momin Ansari, or simply Ansari, are a Muslim community located in West and North colonial India, and in the area corresponding to the present-day province of Sindh. The first Momin conference was held in 1928. It represented the interests of economically backward Muslim artisans and weavers in North India, especially in Bihar.

[8] It was established in 1929 by leading Shi'a landlords and lawyers from UP. It was one of the convenors of the Azad Muslim Conference in 1940 with its general secretary, Mirza Zafar Hussain, playing a key role in this regard. The conference failed to have an impact on the election results in UP since many of the prominent leaders of the League – including Muhammad Ali Jinnah himself – were Shi'a and disputed the Conference's claim to represent the interests of Shi'a Muslims.

[9] In English, this translates as 'The servants of God.' Founded by Abdul Ghaffar Khan – popularly known as Badshah/Bacha Khan – who was closely aligned with the Congress,

Krishak Praja Party,[10] Anjuman-i-Watan Baluchistan,[11] the All India Muslim Majlis,[12] and Jam'iat Ahl-i Hadis.[13]

Yet the demand for Pakistan put forward by the Muslim League was immensely popular and eventually successful. One measure of the Muslim League's popularity is the 1945-6 election result. The League won 453 of 524 Muslims seats in the central and provincial legislature. It secured about 75 percent of the total Muslim vote in India while, in the elections held in 1937, it had secured less than 5 percent. In Punjab, it defeated and unseated fifty-seven Unionists from Muslim rural constituencies, the Congress from nine rural constituencies and the Ahrar from five urban seats. The Unionists defeated the League in only eleven rural constituencies. The League polled 65.10 percent of the votes polled in the Muslim constituencies of Punjab, with a final tally of seventy-nine out of eighty-eight seats. It did even better in Bengal, where it secured 83.6 percent of the Muslim vote and 116 of the 122 seats reserved for Muslims. Even in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), the only Muslim majority province where the League lost, it won seventeen out of thirty-eight seats. The League's performance was even more spectacular in the minority provinces, which were not even a part of the proposed state of Pakistan. It won fifty-four out of sixty-six seats in the United Provinces and forty out of thirty-four in Bihar, more than 90 percent of Muslim seats in Assam and the Central Provinces and Berar, and all the Muslim seats in Bombay, Madras and Orissa.[14]

Khuda'i Khidmatgar was a political movement aimed at liberating India and with a social agenda of reforming Pashtun society. It was hugely popular in the North West Frontier Province and accounted for Congress' victory in the only Muslim majority province during the elections of 1945-6.

[10] In English, this translates as 'Agriculturalist Tenant Party.' Established in 1936 as a breakaway faction of Nikhil Banga Praja Samiti, the party was led by A. K. Fazlul Haq who championed the cause of the Muslim peasants of rural Bengal.

[11] In English, this translates as 'Baluchistan Homeland Society.' It was led by Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai who was popularly known as 'Baluchi Gandhi.'

[12] Majlis is a term that in Urdu literally means 'assembly' or 'party'. Though the All India Muslim Majlis sent a representative to take part in the Azad Muslim Conference in 1940, it was established as an umbrella organization for various nationalist Muslim groups only in May 1944 under the presidentship of Abdul Majid Khwaja.

[13] 'Council of the People of the Prophetic Tradition.' A part of Ahl-i Hadith sided with the Congress while others supported the Muslim League.

[14] For details, see: M. Rafique Afzal, *A History of the All-India Muslim League, 1906-1947* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 598-9; Anita Inder Singh, 'The Success of the Muslim League: June 1945 to March 1946,' in *Partition of India: Why 1947?*, ed.

The success of the Muslim League, measured in terms of its ability to achieve its political agenda, has been extensively studied.[15] What is generally lacking from such studies, however, is the consideration of how its critics and opponents failed to offer successful alternatives to the Muslim League and its idea of Pakistan. The failure of viable alternative approaches to Muslim representation is rendered all the more significant if the League's proposal was so self-evidently flawed and inherently contradictory, as its critics claimed.

The popularity and success of the *idea of Pakistan*, and the failure of its alternatives, remain inadequately explored for several reasons. Barely seven years after a resolution was adopted by the All India Muslim League, in its annual session in March 1940 in Lahore, demanding the establishment of sovereign states in the Muslim majority areas of the Northwest and Northeast regions of the subcontinent, and following a hectic flurry of negotiations and elections, the Indian National Congress reluctantly agreed to the partition of India. This was in direct challenge to Congress's claims to represent all communities living in India. In the Congress's version of Indian nationalism, especially its populist, nationalist phase from the 1920s onwards and the influence of socialist rhetoric largely attributed to Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership, divisions along religious lines were represented as an outcome of the British imperial policy of divide and rule. The Congress boasted that it had millions of Muslim members, with some of the leading 'ulama,[16] such as Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958)[17] and Husain

Kaushik Roy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 216; Ian Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement: The Growth of the Muslim League in North-West and North-East India 1937–47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 20.

[15] For a comprehensive review of literature produced on various aspects of Muslim nationalism in India and the demand for Pakistan, see Moin-ud-Din Aqeel, *Junubi Asia ki Tarikh Navisi: Nu'iyyat, Riwayat aur Ma'yar* (Lahore: Nashariyat, 2015), 167-91. It refers to the works of Pakistani historians, autobiographical accounts by leading Muslim League figures, compiled documents relevant to the history of the League and British policy in India, and recent academic works.

[16] The term 'ulama refers to Muslim scholars usually having received training in a madrasa.

[17] This volume focuses on those ideologues and political leaders who significantly contributed to the shaping of public discourse on Pakistan during the 1940s *and* whose role has not been adequately scrutinized in scholarship. This is why Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, though very important in high politics and religious debates, has not been included, as his contributions have been extensively discussed in several monographs and edited volumes. Examples of such works include Ian Douglas's *Abul Kalam Azad: An Intellectual and Religious Biography* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988) and Mushirul Hasan, ed. *Islam and Indian Nationalism: Reflections on Abul Kalam Azad* (New Delhi: Manohar Books, 1992).

Ahmed Madani (1879-1957), enjoying central leadership roles in the party. In addition, not only 'Marxist Muslims' such as K. M. Ashraf (1903-1962), but also staunch secular-nationalists, such as Saifuddin Kitchlew (1888-1963) and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai (1894-1954), were enthusiastic supporters of the Congress.

The proposal for the creation of Pakistan was anathema to the Congress leadership and others who agreed with its vision of Indian nationalism. For some Marxists, the call for Pakistan indicated a state of false consciousness and a misreading of the class question; in this view, Muslim and Hindu peasants should have been forming a united front against Muslim and Hindu landlords and capitalists. For nationalist-secularists, the demand for Pakistan, based on the idea of Muslim exclusivity, amounted to a denial of India's rich civilizational, inclusive past to which Muslims had been generous contributors for over a millennium. Religious groups and 'ulama supporting the Congress, such as Madani, found the idea of composite nationalism amenable to Islam; Madani invoked the example of the Covenant of Medina dating back to the days of Prophet Muhammad when Muslims, Jews and Pagans agreed to live under the terms of an agreement as one *ummah*, or community. Several other religious groups and 'ulama not aligned with the Congress but opposed to the idea of Pakistan alluded to the impracticality of an independent state and its potential disastrous consequences for Muslims and Islam in India.

After 1947, Muslim groups operating in India, such as Jami'at 'Ulama-i-Hind, took pride in the anti-Pakistan rhetoric of the freedom movement to project themselves as the champions of composite Indian nationalism and claim leadership of Indian Muslims for political representation. In Pakistan, religio-political organizations like Ahrar had to live with the harsh reality of a new state whose creation they had vehemently opposed and whose founder *Quaid-i-Azam* (the greatest leader) Muhammad Ali Jinnah had been labelled as *Kafir-i-Azam* (the greatest infidel) by them. The authorities in the new state naturally watched them with suspicion, forcing Ahrar to make extraordinary efforts to convince the authorities of their loyalty to Pakistan.[18] In December 1949, the session of the Muslim League's working committee held in Karachi finally removed the name of Majlis-i-Ahrar from the list of those organizations with

[18] In numerous speeches and statements made by Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari after August 1947, he expressed unflinching commitment and loyalty to Pakistan. He described his previous statements against Pakistan and Jinnah as a political dispute and difference of opinion carried out with utmost sincerity. Sayyid Muhammad Kafil Bukhari, ed. *Pakistan men kia hoga?*, 83.

whom the League and its members were previously banned from cooperating. But the names of nineteen other organizations remained on that list.[19] Thus, the opponents of the Pakistan movement in both India and Pakistan chose to emphasize only those aspects of their political stance from their recent past that were compatible with the ideological orientations of the newly established nation-states. While Jami'at 'Ulama-i-Hind projected itself as unreservedly aligned to the idea of Indian nationalism, a closer reading of its politics and rhetoric during the 1940s reveals its peculiar version of the Muslim *qaum*[20] as the justification for its opposition to the Muslim League and its demand for Pakistan. For Ahrar and other parties opposed to the Muslim League, the creation of Pakistan was a *fait accompli* and little intellectual probing of past disagreements was considered prudent.

Rather than dismissing the idea of Pakistan as lacking genuine political or economic concerns, or as a result of a British conspiracy resulting from the policy of divide and rule, the present volume offers an alternative lens to examine the success and popularity of the idea of Pakistan, by understanding the failure and, in many cases, intellectual poverty of its critics. These accounts are offered without privileging the stance of the Muslim League or deligitimizing the critique offered by its opponents. The creation of Pakistan was not a 'one-off' event which settled the 'Muslim Question' once and for all. Contestations about Muslim identity in Pakistan or in India, involving decisions about the pecking order of religion, nation and ethnic-based identities, are perennially relevant for the Muslims of South Asia and beyond. Therefore, it is important to take stock of multiple narratives about Muslim identity formation in the context of debates about Partition, historicize those narratives and read them into the larger political milieu of the period in which they were being shaped and debated. Focusing on the critiques of the Muslim League, its concept of the Muslim *qaum* and the political settlement demanded on its behalf, will open up new ways in which ideas about Muslim political subjectivities can be conceived at interstitial levels.

As the title of the volume suggests, the focus here is on the Muslim critics of the Muslim League and *its idea* of Pakistan which was centred on a particular

[19] Ali Usman Qasmi, *The Ahmadis and the Politics of Religious Exclusion in Pakistan* (London: Anthem Press, 2014), 58.

[20] *Qaum* is a term that this chapter discusses in greater depth below. Nevertheless, it is useful at this juncture to mention that the term *qaum* in its various usages can refer to a shared identity held by a community, a nation, a tribe or a religious sect.

reading of the history of a Muslim *qaum*. A proper understanding of this theme requires elucidating the evolution of Muslim identity politics from a community in the nineteenth century to a minority nationality and eventually a nation in the Western sense of exclusivity during the twentieth century. It should, however, be kept in mind that this evolutionary schema of Muslim nation formation is not meant as a telos for seamless transitions to different expressions of subjectivity. Also, shifting notions of community and *qaum* does not imply a change in political ends only but the content of political vocabulary as well. At any given moment, the term did not preclude the possibility of its usage in a different sense and also carried the potential of further unfolding in its meanings. There was always a possibility of going back to an earlier meaning. The best example of this would be the use of the term Muslim *qaum* in present-day India where it denotes the community and not necessarily Muslim nationality (even though minority rights remain central to Muslim politics in India) and rarely in the sense of a singular Muslim nation.

The later sections of the Introduction trace the evolutionary genealogy of the idea of Muslim nation during the colonial period and the various stages of it. By the time the Muslim League demanded a separate Muslim state for the Muslims of South Asia, the majority of those who had opposed this claim, covered extensively in this volume, were mainly concerned with Pakistan as the end product of Muslim politics. These voices were concerned at this stage to debate the definition of Muslim nation used by the League, rather than to disavow the concept of Muslim *qaum* as such. The aim of this volume is not only to retrieve the polyvalence of voices claiming authority over Muslim political subjectivity in British India, but also to contest the particular reading of the Muslim *qaum* articulated by the Muslim League in the 1940s and popularized by Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

This volume, therefore, attempts to look beyond the machinations at the level of high politics, where negotiations between Jinnah and Gandhi determined the fate of millions, to how the movement of Pakistan inspired a contentious, influential conversation on the definition of the Muslim *qaum* and various political solutions petitioned on its behalf. For this purpose, the longer history of the transition from a sense of Muslim community, to the concept of a minority nationality, to the emergence of a *qaum* or nation – the nature of which was hotly contested – needs closer scrutiny. Understanding this transformation requires the parsing of the various registers of political vocabulary, and the lack of precision in this vocabulary, which allowed for comparisons between community and *qaum* within the framework of Indian nationalism as it developed during the twentieth century.

This volume adds to the canon of works on the history of the Muslim League, Jinnah's politics and the creation of Pakistan, by focusing on the voices of dissent coming from political leaders, religious organizations, 'ulama and activists who offered, with varying degrees of success, alternative visions and critiques of the idea of Pakistan. As Ayesha Jalal persuasively argues, the idea of the Indian nation was itself in the process of becoming and subject to various contestations. Muslim separatism should not necessarily be understood as only or even primarily a demand for a separate state but 'something more akin to exclusion on the part of that variant of the Indian nationalist discourse which rose to a position of dominance.'[21] It is important to differentiate between the politics of the Muslim League, Muslim separatism or the demand for Pakistan, and the idea of Pakistan. Separatism was an end point emerging as a result of various political and social processes, but what undergirded it or other forms of politics from 1940 onwards was the understanding that Muslims were not simply a minority or one of the nationalities, but a *qaum* which was religiously defined, historically constituted and culturally distinct. Questions centred on divergent definitions of the Muslim *qaum* rather than, with a few exceptions, a denial of its central importance.

This particular focus on the debate around the definition of the Muslim *qaum* in this volume sets it apart from the important works of Mushirul Hasan on Congress leaders.[22] The personalities covered in Hasan's works mainly fall in the liberal-nationalist, pro-Congress camp, which supported the idea of composite nationalism, whereby Muslims were considered one of the contributing units of the Indian nation without a distinct national basis of their own. Their critique of Pakistan was thus markedly different from the approach of those covered in this volume. Hasan himself has called for the need to engage with the full spectrum of political actors contributing to the public sphere and their contestation of various political issues of critical import. His claim, however, that groups such as Ahrar, Khaksar, Khuda'i Khidmatgar, Momin Conference, All India Shia Political Conference and Jam'iat 'Ulama-i-Hind demonstrated 'a strong secular and nationalist tradition' is challenged by the essays in this

[21] Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (London: Routledge, 2000), xiv.

[22] Examples of such works include *A Nationalist Conscience: M. A. Ansari, the Congress and the Raj* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1987) and *From Pluralism to Separatism: Qasbas in Colonial Awadh* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007).

volume.[23] Distinctive from other 'nationalist Muslims' in the Congress whose lives have been documented by Hasan, many of the groups mentioned above, some of which were affiliated closely with the Congress, continued to remain invested in the concept of the Muslim *qaum* even while opposing the League. For example, although the Momin Conference used Marxist idioms to encourage marginalized Muslim artisans to overthrow the capitalist Muslim League leadership, its political language drew upon Islamic metaphors and tropes.[24] Hasan's work tends to emphasize Muslims who were loyal citizens of India and firm believers in its secular ideology and singular national identity; this research may be a reaction to a contracting liberal space in an increasingly saffronized India deeply suspicious and intolerant of non-Hindu minorities. A similar trend can be seen in Shamsul Islam's recent biography of a 'patriotic Muslim,' Allah Bakhsh Soomro, who opposed the creation of Pakistan.[25] This volume, in contrast, offers a nuanced picture of the multi-layered and cross-sectional conversations about and opposition to the Muslim League, Jinnah and the demand for Pakistan. These conversations, focusing on defining the Muslim *qaum*, Indian nation and minority rights, show that organizations and individuals had divergent reasons, many of which could not be described as secular, for opposing the Muslim League and Jinnah's approach to the idea of Pakistan.

Like the breadth of its intellectual concerns, the geographical coverage of the volume is wide, including both Muslim majority and minority areas, spanning the NWFP, Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, East Bengal and North India. The individual leaders covered in this volume are Deobandis, Sufis and Shi'a 'ulama. Among the secularists, this volume covers communist activists and Indian nationalists. In this way, the volume offers a representative account of the critics of the Muslim League and their conceptions of Muslim community in South Asia as well as the proponents of the League and Jinnah.[26] An exploration of

[23] Mushirul Hasan, 'Introduction,' in *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization*, ed. Mushirul Hasan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 33.

[24] Papiya Ghosh's study shows the rhetorical strategies employed by the Momin Conference which talks about the migration, or *hijrat*, of Muslims in the event of Pakistan being created, leaving behind their homes, holy places and *kabaristan* (graveyards) to the *kafirs* (infidels). See: Papiya Ghosh, *Community and Nation: Essays on Identity and Politics in Eastern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 144-5.

[25] Shamsul Islam, *Muslims Against Partition: Revisiting the Legacy of Allah Bakhsh and other Patriotic Muslims* (New Delhi: Pharos Media & Publishing, 2015).

[26] This volume does not claim to discuss all the major Muslim leaders and political organizations opposed to the Muslim League. Instead, this volume establishes a critical approach, using a range of relevant examples, in order to point out a productive

debates regarding the concept of the Muslim *qaum*, Indian nationalism and minority rights while taking into consideration regional interests, *biradari* or clan-based politics and questions of class and gender informing these debates, enable a richer understanding of how central the contested concept of the *qaum* and the public sphere that carried public discourse in the first half of the twentieth century was to the success of the Muslim League.

The Muslim *qaum* in the nineteenth century: from community to national minority

The different ways that the terms 'nation,' 'state' and 'homeland' were adopted, translated into vernacular languages and adapted in accordance with regional, linguistic and religious imperatives from the nineteenth century onward reveal the distinctiveness of this debate in South Asia.[27] The process of ascribing new meanings to existing vocabulary, such as *Heimat* or country, was in consonance with practices in Western Europe as well.[28] In the larger Muslim world, however, the trajectory was slightly different as much of the existing vocabulary and its various meanings were derived from religious sources and embedded within a long history of disputations about it. The Urdu term *millat*, derived from the Qur'an, had been used in the late Ottoman Empire to refer to a religious community governed by its own set of laws. *Millat*, in its various usages, could denote a community of any religion. But the term that was more popular in the Arab world as a conceptual alternative to nationalism was *qaumiyya*.[29] By

direction for future research. Personalities that may form the focus for future studies in this area include G. M. Syed, Khwaja Hasan Nizami and Hasrat Mohani, and political organizations like Majlis-i-Ahrar and All India Momin Conference among many others.

[27] Sylvia G. Haim, 'Islam and the Theory of Arab Nationalism,' *Die Welt des Islams* 4:2/3 (1955): 138.

[28] A good example of such processes of writing the local into the nation can be found in Alon Confino's *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Wurttemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[29] Writing in the 1930s, Sami Shawkat, a pan-Arab nationalist, observed: 'We have to be firm in our belief that our age is the age of nationalities (*al-qaumiyyat*), not the age of religions … We hold sacred all the divinely inspired religions; this is our motto; we shall not allow anyone to lay sacrilegious hands on them. But of the worldly creeds, we will only adopt the national creed (*al-mabda al-qaumi*), without which nations cannot be formed, nor the foundations of states laid.' Haim, 'Islam and the Theory of Arab Nationalism,' 139.