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Introduction

In August 1947, the British transferred power in India to two separate Dominions. When they established dominion over India, the political map of the subcontinent did not reflect the religious affiliations of its peoples. But by the time of the British withdrawal, rivalries between Hindus and Muslims had come to dominate Indian politics. When the British Raj was dismantled, the frontiers of the new states were drawn mainly along the lines of religion. In the making of Pakistan[1] religion appears to have been the determinant of nationality. The Raj came to its end amidst convulsions in which not only Hindus and Muslims, but also Sikhs and Muslims slaughtered one another, a holocaust unprecedented even in the blood-stained annals of India's past. Within less than a year refugees in their millions had moved both ways between the two wings of Pakistan and India, the largest transfer of populations in recorded history.[2]

There have been various theories to explain these cataclysmic events. The most common argument is that the Indian Muslims were always a separate and identifiable community. India, this theory argues, always contained the seeds of two nations; the Muslims were never wholly assimilated into their Indian environment and had their own distinctive traditions.[3] Another theory has emphasised the role of imperialism in dividing two communities which history and tradition had joined. The concept of Pakistan, according to this view, arose from the efforts of the British to divide and rule their Indian empire (and eventually to divide and quit).[4] Unfortunately these theories raise more questions than they answer.

[1] Pakistan at that time consisted of western Punjab, Sind, the North West Frontier Province, Baluchistan and eastern Bengal.

[2] The total movements of peoples after partition has been estimated to be around seventeen million, but just how many died in the riots that accompanied partition will never be exactly known. (See O. H. K. Spate, *India and Pakistan: A General and Regional Geography* (London, 1954), p. 119.)

[3] A well-known exposition of this view is in I. H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610–1947): A Brief Historical Analysis* (The Hague, 1962).

[4] There have been other theories as well which stress the economic gulf between Hindus and Muslims, the 'backwardness' of most Muslims, their failure to adapt to British rule,

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At the time of partition some ninety-five million Muslims lived in the subcontinent, about one person in four. Of these, about eighty million were in British India, the remainder in the Princely States. In British India, most Muslims lived in the two provinces of Bengal and the Punjab. In these provinces, they had a bare majority over other communities.[5] In the marcher regions of the north-west, Sind, the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, there were much smaller Muslim populations, but they had larger, and sometimes overwhelming majorities over other communities.[6] Elsewhere in British India, Muslims were relatively small minorities, the most numerous and important being in the United Provinces.[7] Of this Muslim population, some sixty million in 1947 became citizens of Pakistan, the largest Muslim state in the world at that time, but a state cut in two by a thousand miles of Indian territory. Another thirty-five million were left inside India, remarkably, the largest number of Muslims in a non-Muslim state.

Yet the most striking fact about Pakistan is how it failed to satisfy the interests of the very Muslims who are supposed to have demanded its creation. The main centres of Muslim population, the Punjab and Bengal, ended up by being sliced in two. In both these provinces, which enjoyed an increasing measure of autonomy in the twentieth century, Muslims had come more and more to dominate the ministries. The partition of the Punjab and Bengal deprived Muslims of the benefits of undivided provinces. Muslim Punjab lost its fertile eastern districts in Ambala, Ludhiana and Jullundur; it also lost the advantages that its Muslim majority had gained from the working relations between Punjab's three main communities, the hallmark of the Unionist government which had run the Punjab since the nineteen-twenties. Muslim Bengal lost Calcutta, its capital city and economic 'heart', as well as the hinterlands of west Bengal, breaking the identity of a province proud of

and point to the religious barriers which prevent Muslims everywhere from adapting successfully to secular Western rule. Most Muslims may have been 'backward' in Bengal where economic cleavages certainly embittered disputes between the two religions; but some Muslims were 'advanced' in much of north India. Some Muslims may have failed to adapt to secular rule; others triumphantly succeeded in doing so.

[5] About thirty-three million Muslims lived in Bengal (where they were 55 per cent of the population), and sixteen million lived in the Punjab (where they were 57 per cent of the population). (*Census of India*, 1941, Command Paper No. 6479, Table VI, II.)

[6] In Sind, there were over three million Muslims, about three-quarters of the population; in the N.W.F.P. less than three-quarters of a million, or about 92 per cent of the population; and in Baluchistan, less than half a million Muslims were about 88 per cent of the population. (Ibid.)

[7] In the U.P., there were more than eight million Muslims (14.5 per cent of the population). (Ibid.)

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its common culture, language and distinctive traditions. Stripped of Calcutta and western Bengal, eastern Bengal was reduced to the status of an over-populated rural slum, capable neither of being defended from external attack nor of being developed as an equal partner inside a Muslim state.[8] As for Muslim minorities in other provinces of British India, they were left high and dry inside a country over which their more numerous co-religionists to the east and west had no influence. In the U.P., Muslim notables had successfully deployed the arguments and facts of large Muslim populations elsewhere in India to their local advantage.[9] At a stroke, partition stripped them of their convenient cohorts and dropped the shield that the Muslim-majority provinces might have raised in their defence inside undivided India. Thus it would seem that the main beneficiaries of the creation of Pakistan were the Muslim regions of the north-west, with their small but predominantly Muslim populations. But the Muslims of Sind, the N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan had one thing in common: a fierce attachment to their particularist traditions, and a deep antipathy to any central control. The creation of Pakistan bundled them willy-nilly into a state dominated by their more numerous co-religionists from western Punjab and placed them under the tight central control which Pakistan had to impose if it was to survive. The enthusiasm of these patriots of 'Pakhtunistan', Sind and Baluchistan for this union can be gauged by their efforts since independence to throw off the yoke of the Punjab.[10] This raises the

[8] Bengali resentment of West Pakistani domination was dramatically highlighted in the civil war of 1971 which led to the creation of Bangladesh.

[9] Since the later nineteenth century, members of the Urdu-speaking elite of north India, the traditional centre of Muslim power, were the most energetic claimants for the role of spokesman of all Indian Muslims. Anxious to preserve their standing in their own province, they were keen to shake off the taint of disloyalty which after 1857 had embarrassed their relations with the Raj. This was the strategy of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his Aligarh school; it inspired the 'Muslim breakaway' from the Indian National Congress which he orchestrated in 1886; and it was his political heirs who led the deputation of Muslims in 1906 which demanded a share of representation for Muslims not in accordance with their numbers but in line with their 'political importance'. (See Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 154–7.) The founding of the All-India Muslim League followed soon after. On 30 December 1906 at Dacca, the Mohammedan Educational Conference converted itself into the All-India Muslim League. (See S. S. Pirzada (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906–1947*, vol. I (Karachi, 1969), pp. 1–15.)

[10] At the time of partition, the N.W.F.P. had a Congress ministry, led by the brother of the renowned Frontier Gandhi, Abdul Ghaffar Khan; the Pathans had scant reason to fear Hindu domination in a region where hardly a Hindu could be seen above the ground. In Sind, there were communities other than Muslims, but they were mainly urban-based and not a real threat to the sway of Muslim notables who ran Sind as their domain. As for Baluchistan, the tribal *sardars* had no reason to fear the British, let alone the Hindus.

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question: how did a Pakistan come about which fitted the interests of most Muslims so poorly?

This is the central problem to which the book will address itself. It will do so by concentrating upon the politics of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the All-India Muslim League which he led, and the demand for 'Pakistan' with which he is associated, during the last decade of British rule. It was not until 1934 that the A.I.M.L., moribund for much of the nineteen-twenties, was revived under Jinnah's leadership. Until 1937, the League continued to ground itself on the old charter of Muslim rights – separate representation, first granted to Muslims in 1909 and confirmed in the Government of India Act of 1935 – but, in contrast with the Muslim politicians of the Punjab and Bengal, it had been ready to make common cause with the Indian National Congress in attacking the constitutional arrangements of 1935 which gave Indians something in the provinces but little at the centre. Only after the elections of 1937, when its overtures to the Congress had been rebuffed did the League adopt a new line. In 1940, a mere seven and a half years before partition, it formally demanded independent Muslim states, repudiating the minority status which separate representation necessarily entailed, and instead asserted that Muslims were a nation. This was Jinnah and the League's bid to register their claim to speak for all Indian Muslims, not only Muslims in the minority provinces where they had achieved their only success in the 1937 elections, but also Muslims in the majority provinces where they had been unequivocally rejected. This work will trace how this claim came to be accepted by the British, was conceded to a greater or lesser degree by many Muslims in minority and majority provinces alike, and was not effectively contradicted by the Congress, even though it continued to deny it until the very end. The claim was built upon the demand for 'Pakistan'. But from first to last, Jinnah avoided giving the demand a precise definition, leaving the League's followers to make of it what they wished. A host of conflicting shapes and forms, most of them vague, were given to what remained little more than a catch-all, an undefined slogan. So it is important to identify the aims of Jinnah's political strategy, the reasons why he was so reluctant to bring them into the open, and the extent to which he succeeded, or failed, in realising them.

Jinnah sought to be recognised as the sole spokesman of Indian Muslims on the all-India stage. Throughout his long political career, he saw his role to be at the all-India level. From the late nineteen-thirties his main concern was the arrangements by which power at the centre was to be shared once the British quit India. But if Jinnah and the League were to play their part at the centre, they needed a mandate from Muslims in

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the provinces. Given the imprecision of the demand for 'Pakistan' it is necessary to establish how and to what extent Jinnah was able to win that mandate, and the measure of discipline the League's High Command was able to impose on provincial Muslim interests. This will require an assessment of the balance of power between the High Command and the provincial arms, and an investigation into the nature of the League's organisation (or lack of it), both at the centre and in the Muslim provinces. Although this is not a study of provincial politics, it will look at the particularist concerns of the Muslim provinces and the disjunction between the interests of Muslims in provinces where they were in a majority and provinces where they were in a minority. This is principally a work on politics at the all-India level, but it does not ignore the uses made by Jinnah and the League of religion or the importance of communal consciousness at the social base. Jinnah's appeal to religion was always ambiguous; certainly it was not characteristic of his political style before 1937, and evidence suggests that his use of the communal factor was a political tactic, not an ideological commitment. A detailed analysis of the complex social and economic ingredients of 'communal' passions which erupted so violently in the last days of the Raj is beyond the scope of this work. It will, however, consider whether Jinnah was able to deploy the communal card to his advantage and how far it constrained or helped him in achieving his political aims.

A work on Jinnah, the League and the demand for Pakistan must take account of the other two sides in the Indian political triangle, the Indian National Congress and the British. At every stage of the story, particularly in its final outcome, the Congress had a critically important role to play. The Congress, whether its manoeuvrings at the centre or its politics in the provinces, will be seen primarily from Jinnah's angle of vision, and implicitly as a gauge against which the League's political organisation can be compared. British policies and initiatives were a vital factor in Indian political calculations and responses, and will also be viewed from the perspective of Jinnah and the League. This is an appropriate moment for a study of this sort. Most of the critical sources have become available – the monumental *Transfer of Power* documents from the British end, and the Muslim League papers and the private correspondence of Jinnah himself.

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1

Jinnah between the wars

Section 1

Mohammad Ali Jinnah began his political career firmly inside the tradition of moderate nationalist politics. A Muslim lawyer based in Bombay where the Indian National Congress had been founded in 1885, Jinnah was one of the foremost proponents of a share of power for Indians at the all-India centre. Anxious to forge a common nationalist front against the British, Jinnah joined the Congress and regularly attended its annual gatherings. Interestingly enough, Jinnah never showed much enthusiasm for the principle of separate electorates which were granted to Muslims by Morley and Minto in 1909.[1] It was not until 1913, some seven years after its foundation, that Jinnah formally enrolled as a member of the A.I.M.L.[2] In 1916 it was Jinnah who persuaded the League and the Congress to agree upon a common scheme of reforms. At the League's Lucknow session (over which he presided), Jinnah confessed that he had always been 'a staunch Congressman' and had 'no love for sectarian cries'. He considered the 'reproach of "separatism" sometimes levelled at Mussalmans' as 'singularly inept and wide of the mark'. In Jinnah's opinion, the League, 'this great communal organisation [was] rapidly growing into a powerful factor for the birth of United India'.[3]

Between 1917 and 1920 many of the developments in Indian politics went against Jinnah's grain – the provincial bias of the Montagu–

[1] At the annual Congress session in 1910 Jinnah moved the resolution deploring the extension of that principle to local boards, even though he himself had been the beneficiary, albeit indirectly, of separate representation. He had been elected to the central legislative council as the Muslim member from Bombay. (Matlubul Hasan Saiyid, *Mohammad Ali Jinnah: A Political Study*, 3rd edn. (Lahore, 1962).

[2] He made his two sponsors, Mohammad Ali and Wazir Hasan, solemnly assure him that 'loyalty to the Muslim League and Muslim interest would in no way and at no time imply even a shadow of disloyalty to the National cause to which his life was dedicated'. (Ibid., p. 54.)

[3] Jinnah's address to the A.I.M.L., Lucknow, December 1916, in M. Rafique Afzal (ed.), *Speeches and Statements of the Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, 1911–34 and 1947–48* (Lahore, 1966), pp. 56–62.

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Chelmsford reforms and the Government of India Act of 1919, and Gandhi's capture of the Congress in 1920 with the help of pro-Khilafat Muslims. By declaring his support for the Khilafat, Gandhi secured the allegiance of an impressive array of Muslim *ulema* and political activists for his policy of non-violent non-cooperation.[4] This fusion of religion and politics had left Jinnah cold in the wings. He denounced Gandhi for causing schism and split 'not only amongst Hindus and Muslims but between Hindus and Hindus and Muslims and Muslims and even between fathers and sons . . . [indeed] in almost every institution' that the Mahatma had anything to do with. Gandhi's programme would lead to 'complete disorganisation and chaos'.[5] At the Congress's Nagpur session in December 1920 when Gandhi's non-cooperation programme was ratified, Jinnah alone had the courage of his convictions and spoke openly against non-cooperation. Speaking for the 'intellectual and reasonable section' of public opinion, Jinnah derided the false and dangerous religious frenzy which had confused Indian politics, and the zealots, both Hindu and Muslim, who were harming the national cause.[6] Jinnah now resigned as a member of the Congress. This was a parting of the ways between Jinnah and the Congress under Gandhi, a parting which he always hoped would be temporary not permanent. But as revealing as his contempt and worries about Gandhi's methods was his total antipathy to the religious militancy of those Muslims who had joined Gandhi in pushing the moderate nationalists out.

All this indicates a great deal about Jinnah's political priorities, which were to remain constant throughout his career. A nationalist who preferred constitutional methods, Jinnah's moderation in politics was tactical, not strategic; he recognised the need to keep inarticulate, but potentially disruptive communal passions at bay. There was nothing mendicant about his approach. Proud, with an assurance painfully constructed in difficult circumstances, he was never prepared to compromise over principles and had little liking for India's white masters with whom he never felt wholly at ease. A pragmatic politician, he realistically gauged how much the British were ready to concede at this juncture and reluctantly accepted separate electorates as a fact of political life for the time being, but not necessarily for all time. He did not approve of the

[4] See Richard Gordon, 'Non-cooperation and council entry, 1919 to 1920', in John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal (eds.), *Locality, Province and Nation, Essays on Indian Politics 1870–1940* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 128–41; and Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims (1860–1923)* (Cambridge, 1974), chapter 8.

[5] See Saiyid, *Mohammad Ali Jinnah: A Political Study*, p. 130.

[6] Ibid., pp. 134–6.

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principle; he was against its extension, but he recognised that Muslim politicians were not yet ready to give it up. Jinnah, the 'ambassador of Hindu–Muslim unity', had worked hard to get the Congress and the League to co-operate and deplored the opportunistic alliance between the Mahatma and the Khilafat Muslims. In Jinnah's eyes, that coalition, remarkable even in a country used to the oddest combinations, threatened the stability of the existing political structures and orderly progress along moderate and nationalist lines. The alarming rise in communal tensions in the remaining three years of the Khilafat agitation is a commentary on the soundness of Jinnah's assessment. After 1919, the Khilafat movement overwhelmed the League,[7] and despite the fanfare of Hindu–Muslim unity eventually broke the fragile constitutional understanding between Congress and League which Jinnah had so painstakingly helped to construct. In his later years, Jinnah time and again tried unsuccessfully to snatch back the unity which for a brief moment after 1916 had seemed to promise so much for the nationalist cause.

During most of the nineteen-twenties Jinnah spent his life in relative political isolation. The 1919 reforms were not intended to be a first step towards the grant of responsible government at the centre. They merely tacked on some political concessions to divert Indian attention to the provincial arenas. The principle of diarchy aimed to limit the Indian say in provincial self-government to the less important subjects, and the new franchise was tilted to favour the Raj's friends, not its critics. By design, the way to diarchic heights in the province under the new rules lay less through separate Muslim constituencies and specifically Muslim parties, than through alliances which cut across community. Separate representation by itself was not enough if Muslim politicians were to do well, whether in the U.P. where they were in a minority, or in the Punjab and Bengal where they had majorities.[8] The reforms had provincialised Indian politics and had driven a wedge between the interests of provin-

[7] For an account see Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement, Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York, 1982).

[8] The reforms ensured that no single community would dominate the ministries; the balance of power was kept firmly in the government's hands. Throughout the nineteen-twenties, cross-communal alliances of landed interests formed the ministries in the U.P. and the Punjab. In Bengal, the situation was different; by the late nineteen-twenties Muslims depending on government support and the European members dominated the ministries. For the actual working of the 1919 reforms in these provinces see Ayesha Jalal and Anil Seal, 'Alternative to partition: Muslim politics between the wars', *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 3 (1981) 417–29; David Page, *Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920–1932* (Oxford, 1982) and J. H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal* (Berkeley, 1968), pp. 278–81 and 284–8.

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cial politicians, who could see advantages in working the new system, and the interests of all-India politicians who wanted to push for advance at the centre. Indeed there was no all-India party which could speak for Muslims at the all-India level. The British strategy of depriving the all-India stage of political relevance had largely succeeded. The Muslim League was moribund, spurned by all the provincial bases of Muslim power, and the Congress itself was split down the middle with its Khilafat allies in disarray.

In November 1927, the appointment of the Simon Commission opened the prospect of new constitutional reforms. Provincial politicians had to look to the all-India stage if they were to influence the shape of these reforms. Jinnah was ready to use the opening to try again to forge a common front between the League and the Congress. He faced two main difficulties: persuading the divided factions of the Congress to join him and bringing in the Muslim provinces behind his strategy. The Congress was committed to a strong unitary centre, while the Muslim provinces wanted a weak federal structure in which the provinces and not the centre would be the real bearers of power. Jinnah's own view of the future shape of the centre was closer to that of the Congress. But he had to find a way of reconciling the conflicting demands of the Muslim provinces and the Congress. There remained the old problem of separate electorates. Jinnah was ready to give up separate representation in return for other concessions – the creation of a Muslim province in Sind, a higher status for the N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan, representation for the Punjabi and Bengali Muslims in line with their populations and a guaranteed third of the seats in the central legislature for Muslims. But by May 1928 Jinnah had failed to convince both the Congress and the Muslim provinces. The Nehru report of August 1928, which made no concessions at all, was rejected by all shades of Muslim opinion.[9]

By the late nineteen-twenties the demands of the Muslim provinces, the Punjab in particular, had swamped Jinnah's centralist strategy. Jinnah, the nationalist concerned with securing a share of power for Muslims at a strong centre, had to recognise the forces of provincialism and appear to come out in favour of a weak federal structure. But this was a tactical concession, not a modification of his ultimate objective. A confirmed centralist, Jinnah was merely seeking a way of uniting the Muslims behind a common line and then negotiating a joint front with the Congress against the British. His famous 'fourteen points' were simply a reiteration of the demands raised at the Punjabi-dominated All-

[9] See Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1916–1928* (New Delhi, 1979), chapter 8.

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India Muslim Conference in December 1928.[10] Yet Jinnah's real intentions are revealed by his willingness to bargain on the question of separate electorates provided the other Muslim demands were accepted by the Congress. Unfortunately for Jinnah, the Congress dismissed his formula for a Hindu–Muslim settlement. Motilal Nehru considered the 'fourteen points' to be 'preposterous' and thought Congress could safely 'ignore Mr Jinnah'.[11] This may have been a short-sighted conclusion, but for the time being it did toss Jinnah into the wilderness. For the next few years Jinnah was in self-imposed exile in London.

The constitutional negotiations of the early nineteen-thirties called for some Muslim voice. This Fazl-i-Husain, the leader of the Punjab Unionist 'party', a cross-communal alliance of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh agriculturist interests, stepped forward to provide. He backed his claim to speak for Indian Muslims by organising the All-India Muslim Conference. Fazl-i-Husain's conditions for Muslim co-operation at the Round Table Conferences in London were unequivocal. He wanted separate electorates to be retained, clear majorities for Punjabi and Bengali Muslims, the separation of Sind from Bombay, provincial status for the N.W.F.P. and full autonomy for all the provinces. Until these were conceded, Fazl-i-Husain was against any advance towards a responsible centre.[12]

Jinnah was a potential, if ineffectual, threat to the Muslim Conference position at the First Round Table Conference. He became a member of the sub-committee appointed to discuss the component elements of an all-India federation and the future relationship between the centre and the provinces. Jinnah opposed the notion of a weak federation, but only indirectly. He was against bringing the Indian Princely States into the all-India federation on a basis different from that of the British Indian provinces. He wanted the federation 'to be a real one', not 'watered down or weakened' so that in fact there was 'no Federation at all'.[13] This is why he wanted to postpone all discussion on the relationship between the centre and the provinces. Instead he preferred the old nationalist line of advance at the centre before the settlement of the communal question.

By the time the First Round Table Conference collapsed, it was Fazl-i-Husain's views which had largely prevailed. The Muslim delegates had

[10] See K. K. Aziz, *The All-India Muslim Conference, 1928–35, a Documentary Record* (Karachi, 1972), pp. 44–7 and Afzal (ed.), *Speeches and Statements of the Quaid-i-Azam*, pp. 302–5.

[11] Cited in Page, *Prelude to Partition*, p. 200, fn. 6.

[12] See Jalal and Seal, *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 3 (1981), 434–5.

[13] See Jinnah's address to the federal structure sub-committee, 1 December 1930, in Afzal (ed.), *Speeches and Statements of the Quaid-i-Azam*, p. 320.

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