
Pakistan and the Lahore Ahmadiyya webpage: www.ahmadiyya.org/pakistan/intro.htm

Brief background to the founding of Pakistan

With comments on the role of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement

Talk given on the 60th anniversary of the founding of Pakistan

At the U.K. Lahore Ahmadiyya Centre, 1st July 2007

by Dr Zahid Aziz

(*Note: In compiling this article based on my talk, I have studied various sources and tried to confirm all the facts that I have extracted from them. However, in attempting to summarize the complex events and factors leading to the creation of Pakistan, it is inevitable that many important details must be omitted and a rather simplified picture presented.*)

The “Pakistan Movement”, the campaign for an independent Muslim homeland to be created consisting of the Muslim-majority provinces and states of British India, was led by a party known as the All-India Muslim League. Although it was founded in 1906 (at Dhaka, now Bangladesh), its campaign for Pakistan did not come into being until the 1930s. Its object was to present the *separate* case of Muslim interests to the British government. The idea of Pakistan did not exist and even the idea of independence of India from British rule had not materialized. The Indian National Congress had been founded earlier in 1885 to represent all Indians in obtaining a greater share in government for Indians. To seek independence of India did not become its objective till the 1920s.

At the inaugural meeting of the Muslim League at Dhaka on 30th December 1906, the following resolution of its objectives was unanimously passed:

“ Resolved that this meeting, composed of Musalmans from all parts of India, assembled at Dacca, decide that a Political Association be formed, styled All-India Muslim League, for the furtherance of the following objects:

(a) To promote, among the Musalmans of India, feelings of loyalty to the British Government, and to remove any misconception that may arise as to the intention of Government with regard to any of its measures.

(b) To protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Musalmans of India, and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government.

(c) To prevent the rise, among the Musalmans of India, of any feeling of hostility towards other communities, without prejudice to the aforementioned objects of the League. ”¹

We have quoted the above to give a glimpse of the atmosphere of the time. All organizations and movements in India, especially those which could be suspected of anti-government activity, needed to declare their loyalty to the British rule of India in order to operate within the law. We see above that such a declaration of loyalty is made the first object of the Muslim League, even before mentioning the advancement of the rights and interests of the Muslims of India. The Ahmadiyya Movement and its Founder Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad made similar pronouncements of loyalty. Much later on, and till today, his statements are seized upon by anti-Ahmadiyya groups to allege that he was an “agent” of the British government with the mission of dissuading Muslims from rising up to fight a *jihad* for independence. Yet not only did the Muslim League make the same statements at that time, but later on after the creation of Pakistan its supporters proudly claimed that they had brought the country into existence by peaceful means without firing one shot in a battle.

Separate Muslim demands

There was, as stated above, no concept of a separate Muslim country at that time and the man who later became the founder of Pakistan, Mr Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was in fact one of the leaders of the Congress and a supporter of a united Hindu-Muslim approach. However, as the prospect of independence for India began to seem more realistic in the 1920s, Muslims became increasingly concerned that the attitude of the Congress leaders such as Mr Nehru, and even Mahatma Gandhi, would mean that in a united, independent India their culture, language, rights and identity would be submerged as a minority. Muslims began to demand a separate electorate for the Muslim population in any elections leading to home rule or independence for India, which would have one-third of the seats reserved for it in any assembly. Also the Muslim League began to demand separate representation for Muslims in talks on independence with the British government and would not recognise the claim of Congress to represent all Indians in such talks.

Idea of a ‘Pakistan’

It was in 1930 that the concept emerged which eventually developed into the movement for the creation of Pakistan. At the annual meeting of the Muslim League, Dr Sir Muhammad Iqbal, renowned philosopher, poet and a national leader of Indian Muslims, proposed that the Muslim majority provinces of India could eventually be formed into a state *within* an All-India Federation,

¹ See *Foundations of Pakistan — All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906–1947*, edited by Sharifuddin Pirzada, published by National Publishing House, Pakistan, vol. I, 1969, p. 6.

which itself may or may not be independent of British rule. In later history this has been represented as a “demand” for a separate Muslim country. However, Iqbal denied making such a demand when accused of it at the time.

In this connection we may reproduce a letter that Iqbal wrote to *The Times* newspaper of London when he was in London in 1931. It is as follows:²

“ Sir,— Writing in your issue of October 3 last, Dr. E. Thompson has torn the following passage from its context in my presidential address to the All-India Moslem League of last December, in order to serve as evidence of “Pan-Islamic plotting”:

I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind, and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Moslem State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Moslems, at least of North-West India.

May I tell Dr. Thompson that in this passage I do not put forward a “demand” for a Moslem state outside the British Empire, but only a guess at the possible outcome in the dim future of the mighty forces now shaping the destiny of the Indian sub-continent. No Indian Moslem with any pretence to sanity contemplates a Moslem state or series of states in North-West India outside the British commonwealth of Nations as a plan of practical politics.

Although I would oppose the creation of another cockpit of communal strife in the Central Punjab, as suggested by some enthusiasts, I am all for a redistribution of India into provinces with effective majorities of one community or another on lines advocated both by the Nehru and the Simon Reports. Indeed, my suggestion regarding Moslem provinces merely carries forward this idea. A series of contented and well-organized Moslem provinces on the North-West Frontier of India would be the bulwark of India and of the British Empire against the hungry generations of the Asiatic highlands.

Yours faithfully,

Muhammed Iqbal

St. James’s court, S.W.1, Oct. 10. ”

² *The Times*, 12 October 1931, p. 8. The text of this letter is also reproduced in the book *Letters and Writings of Iqbal*, published by the Iqbal Academy, Pakistan, from Lahore in 1967, and reprinted in 1981 (pages 119–120).

As Iqbal plainly writes here “I do not put forward a “demand” for a Moslem state outside the British Empire”. Yet it is generally believed in Pakistan, and taught in history there, that Iqbal presented the demand for Pakistan in this speech.

Name ‘Pakistan’

It is well known that, shortly after Iqbal’s speech, Chaudhry Rahmat Ali, an Indian Muslim student at Cambridge, published a pamphlet *Now or Never*, in 1933, putting forward the case for a separate, independent Muslim nation in India, and for the first time proposing its name as *Pakistan*. Going further than Iqbal, it is written in this pamphlet:

“This demand is basically different from the suggestion put forward by Doctor Mohammed Iqbal in his Presidential address to the All-India Muslim League in 1930. While he proposed the amalgamation of the provinces into a single state forming a unit of the All-India Federation, we propose that these Provinces should have a separate Federation of their own.”

What is much less well known is that the idea of publishing this pamphlet, the case presented in it, and the proposed name ‘Pakistan’, arose out of discussions held at the mission house of the Woking Mosque in the summer of 1932 involving a number of Indian Muslim students studying at Oxford and Cambridge universities. An account of those meetings written by Khwaja Salah-ud-Din, son of Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, who was present at these gatherings, was published in *The Light*, Lahore, in its issue dated 16 January 1966.³ (It may be read at: www.ahmadiyya.org/pakistan/name.htm)

This pamphlet argued that Muslims in India constituted a distinct and separate nation, with its own identity, and different in every walk of life from the majority Hindus. This was the basis for the case for Pakistan later taken up by Mr Jinnah.

Founding of Pakistan

It was as a result of the circulation of this pamphlet that the campaign arose for the creation of a country called Pakistan, to consist of the Muslim-majority provinces which existed on the western, north-western and eastern sides of British India. Being convinced of this case, Mr Jinnah took up the leadership of the Muslim League to promote this cause. In March 1940, at its meeting in Lahore, the Muslim League passed what became known as the ‘Pakistan Resolution’. This was its firm, official commitment to seek the creation of Pakistan.

³ This account was reprinted in *The Light & Islamic Review*, Ohio, U.S.A., July–August 1997, pages 5–8, and in *The Light, U.K. Edition*, July 2007, pages 6–8.

There is no scope in this article to discuss in more detail the events of the subsequent seven to eight years. Suffice it to say that after many turns and twists and setbacks, the unbending determination and steadfastness shown by Mr Jinnah, and the passion, commitment and unity of his followers, in face of the most difficult odds, led to the birth of Pakistan on 14th August 1947.

Lahore Ahmadiyya contribution

What relationship does the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement have to these events? Our Movement's sole external objective has always been the presentation of true knowledge about Islam to the world in order to bring about moral and spiritual enlightenment and reform of people. It has never taken part in political activity in pursuit of office, power or influence. But it has supported Muslim national causes that are above politics and are in the interests of the Muslims as a whole. Whatever stance the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement would adopt in the Pakistan campaign was important because the Lahore Ahmadiyya leaders were also regarded as leaders and spokesmen of *Muslims* due to their work of the propagation of Islam. This was a time when Maulana Muhammad Ali's English translation of the Quran was *the Muslim* English translation of the Quran. The Working Muslim Mission and the Berlin Mission were *the* Muslim missions in the West. The Lahore Ahmadiyya leaders, notably Maulana Muhammad Ali, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, and Dr Mirza Yaqub Baig were friends of, and respected by, the prominent national Muslim leaders such as Jinnah, Iqbal and Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar.

Our Movement wholeheartedly and passionately supported the campaign for the creation of Pakistan. It believed that such a country would give Muslims the opportunity to present a model of the true teachings of Islam relating to society, economics and state organisation. Also there would now exist a state supporting with its resources the kind of missionary efforts for the propagation of Islam being carried on by the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. During the struggle for Pakistan, which also involved convincing Muslims themselves to support the Muslim League, the Lahore Ahmadis threw their full weight behind this cause.

For some details of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement's support for Pakistan, please visit this link: www.ahmadiyya.org/pakistan/support.htm

A strong reason why the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement believed that Pakistan would be such a model country was that the leading lights of the Pakistan Movement were influenced to a great extent by the view of Islam presented by the Lahore Ahmadiyya. We further explain this as below.

As the Pakistan Movement, led by the Muslim League, claimed that Muslims of India constituted *a nation with an identity* so that they can form *a state based on their values*, therefore they had to make clear: (1) Who is a

Muslim, and (2) What are the religious values according to which they will organise their state institutions and society? On the first point, they could hardly claim that Muslims constitute a nation and yet fail to show how to identify a member of that nation! The Pakistan Movement held to the widest definition of a Muslim as a person who belongs to the Muslim community culturally and in his life-style, and identifies himself as a member of this community, without needing to pass some doctrinal or religious test. Regarding the second point, the Pakistan Movement looked to their proposed country as one which would be inspired by the *spirit* of Islam — by its principles of equality, brotherhood, democracy, accountability of rulers, and social justice. It believed in a liberal, progressive and tolerant picture of Islam.

Orthodox Muslim religious leadership

Thus the Pakistan Movement held a *very different* view of Islam from the established Muslim religious leadership or what later became known as ‘fundamentalists’. It rejected their sectarianism and their narrow-minded concepts of an intolerant Islamic state with Islamic laws based on centuries-old interpretations. Many Pakistan Movement leaders wanted new interpretations of Islamic laws to be drawn up, based on the principles of the Quran and example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and taking into account modern world conditions and problems. That was the work of reform that the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement was doing.

In fact, the orthodox Muslim religious leadership was bitterly opposed to the Pakistan Movement before the creation of Pakistan. They called its leaders as *kafir*, and sneered at it for considering those as Muslims who were merely ‘born Muslims’ (*nasli* Muslims) and not differentiating them from ‘real Muslims’ (*asli* Muslims). It is a great irony of history that, from the 1970s onwards, these very groups became highly influential in Pakistan so much so that some governments of the country had to bow to their demands while others were directly under their control. Those who opposed the creation of Pakistan became its caretakers, claiming that Pakistan was founded to be an Islamic state of the kind they wish to see.

Contrast between founders and fundamentalists

A book entitled *Islamic Pakistan: Illusions and Reality* by A.S. Ghazali (1999) draws a contrast between the outlook of the founders of Pakistan and the religious establishment which opposed them.⁴ We quote from it below. Of Mr Jinnah he writes:

“ He wanted to see Pakistan as an embodiment of dynamic and forward-looking Islam. Jinnah believed that Islam fosters, upholds and

⁴ Available at the website: www.ghazali.net/book1/

extols values such as freedom, equality, solidarity and social justice which may also be termed secular or humanistic; these, he repeatedly emphasized, constitute the bases of Pakistan's polity.

It is important to note that Jinnah and his closest lieutenants were determined to build Pakistan into a constitutional democracy. To them there was no contradiction between the Islamic state and a polity governed according to modern democratic principles. According to this body of opinion, fairness, justice, compassion and honesty are all tenets of Islam: therefore, Islam made it simpler, not more difficult, to build democratic structures. With this in mind Pakistan's Muslim League leaders sought to fit Islam into their contemporary constitutional design, not the reverse. ...

Jinnah's speeches abound with references to the Islamic principles of social justice and fairplay, but he made it clear, on more than one occasion, that he was against theocracy. He had consistently opposed theocratic ideas and influences and never minced his words about his commitment to a secular state. ...” (Chapter 1)

“ Muslim religious organisations of the sub-continent were politically very active during the struggle for Pakistan but all of them opposed tooth and nail the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims.

The most noteworthy feature of the struggle for Pakistan is that its leadership came almost entirely from the Western-educated Muslim professionals. The Ulema remained, by and large, hostile to the idea of a Muslim national state.

The Muslim political leadership believed that the Ulema were not capable of giving a correct lead in politics to the Muslims because of their exclusively traditional education and complete ignorance of the complexities of modern life. ...

It was really unfortunate that the Ulema understood Islam primarily in a legal form. Their medieval conception of the Shariah remained unchanged, orthodox and traditional in toto and they accepted it as finished goods manufactured centuries ago. ” (Chapter 2)

We may quote below three statements from Mr Jinnah, made in important speeches around the time of independence. These extracts can also be read in the chapters of the book referred to above:

“In any case, Pakistan is not going to be a theocratic state to be ruled by priests with a divine mission.”

“Make no mistake: Pakistan is not a theocracy or anything like it. Islam demands from us the tolerance of other creeds and we welcome in closest association with us all those who, of whatever creed, are themselves willing to play their part as true and loyal citizens of Pakistan.”

“You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed. That has nothing to do with the business of the State.”