

## India and Pakistan

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Contemporary political developments, in the Indian subcontinent as elsewhere, can only be fully appreciated in their historical context. Whether it is the case of the predominance of the army in Pakistan politics, or the periodical outbreaks of communal rioting in some north Indian towns and cities, understanding requires an assessment of the inheritances from the colonial era. These encompass not only the ideas and institutions the British bequeathed, but the legacies arising from the nationalist struggle and from the 1947 division of the subcontinent. These three legacies form the focus of this article. We will turn first to the colonial inheritance.

### **The colonial impact**

The colonial state introduced educated Indians to western concerns with progress, technological mastery over nature and the ideals of democracy and nationhood. These were made available through the medium of English which, for the elite, enabled communication across regional and religious barriers to a much greater extent than either the Mughal court language of Persian or the hybrid Hindustani had previously done. New institutions included not just an intrusive state

organized around the principles of bureaucratic rationalism, but representative political bodies at local, district, provincial, and national levels. At the heart of socioeconomic transformation was a communications revolution resulting from improved roads, the introduction of railways, and the explosion of print.<sup>1</sup> This impact was qualitatively different from the earlier Mughal construction of canals and the fabled Grand Trunk Road, which helped to unify the subcontinent. Under the British, not only goods and people, but ideas circulated more rapidly than ever before. Western notions of community and nation were so powerful precisely because they were linked with European technological accomplishments.

The early generation of western-educated Indians regarded the British presence as progressive. For this reason, they distanced themselves from the “traditionalist” uprising of 1857, which the British ruthlessly crushed. It was only a later generation of educated Indians who sought to portray the uprising as the first war of Indian national liberation. They had become disillusioned by the British failure to live up to their self-proclaimed virtues of justice and fair play. Illiberalism and racism, in fact, lay barely concealed behind the façade of high moral purpose. It was only

in the wake of Gandhi's rise to power, however, that nationalist struggle was transformed from an elite to a mass undertaking. Non-violent struggle exposed the Raj's authoritarianism to the world's gaze.

The colonial state differed from its Mughal predecessor both in terms of its coercive capacity and the relationship between knowledge and power. "Orientalist empiricism," with its plethora of land settlement reports, caste handbooks, and census reports provided the knowledge to control the colonized. It also bolstered "traditional" institutions and social structures by, for example, codifying customary law. It could be argued that British rule had a "traditionalizing" as well as a modernizing effect by bolstering patriarchy, caste, and tribal identity. It is undoubtedly true that despite colonial stereotypes of a "changeless" India, many of the hierarchies that were in place by 1947 were of modern rather than ancient origin.

Orientalist philological studies provided the basis for ideas of both a Vedic and Dravidian golden age. The later developments of Hindu and Tamil nationalism cannot be fully appreciated without reference to the legacies of such Orientalist scholars as Max Müller and Robert Caldwell. The German-born Müller, who never set foot in the subcontinent, maintained that an "instinctive monotheism" was present in the early hymns of the Rigveda and that modern forms of Hinduism were the result of subsequent "decadent opulence." Such ideas were taken up by Indian writers, who contrasted current degradation with the golden Vedic past and linked a return to its "pristine" Hinduism with the recovery of national glory. The lesser known Reverend Robert Caldwell argued for the antiquity of Tamil and maintained that Aryan colonists had introduced idol worship to South India and had termed the indigenous Tamilian chieftains, soldiers and cultivators as sudras. The demand that the term sudra should be dropped for the Tamil castes was to become a major element of the later non-Brahman movement. It was soon to espouse

a new radicalism with the foundation of the *Suyamariyatai iyakkam*, the self-respect movement.

Considerable scholarly interest has focused on the effects of the introduction of the decennial census.<sup>2</sup> This was the crowning glory of the colonial rational bureaucratic state and of "Orientalist empiricism." The censuses that were conducted throughout India from 1881 onwards can be understood in Saidean terms as the "expropriation" of knowledge in order to sustain colonial control. Their greatest significance was to solidify previously "fuzzy" boundaries between different group identities. Multiple identities and fluid boundaries were replaced by essentialized categories of caste and religious community. The process was graphically illustrated in 1911 when Indian Census Commissioner E. A. Gait rapped the Bombay census superintendent over the knuckles for using the hybrid term "Hindu-Muhammadans" for groups that did not fit easily into any category. The persons concerned, Gait remarked, should have been assigned to "one religion or the other as best he could." Census requirements for clear self-definition were key elements in encouraging religious revivalisms, which attacked what Harjot Oberoi has termed the "enchanted world" of pluralism.<sup>3</sup>

Simultaneously, patronage was disbursed in terms of defined religious categories and demographic strength was for the first time linked with political power following the introduction of representative politics. Good governance was primarily to be secured through the activities of the civil administration. Nevertheless, part of the rationale for British rule was the tutelage of Indians in the democratic arts. Moreover, the recurring financial crises of the 1880s encouraged the establishment of a system of elective local government to secure consent for additional taxation. Local bodies could form new "arenas of conflict" for communal rivalries, especially where socioeconomic change was unsettling old power arrangements. This process could

be seen at work in a number of towns in western UP where elected Hindu majorities on district boards used sanitation regulations to control butchers' shops and slaughterhouses to further their religious interests by protecting cows. Such actions offended the local Muslim religious sensibilities in such places as Moradabad, Chandpur, and Bijnor and revealed the perils they faced as a religious minority.<sup>4</sup>

British ideas of monolithically constituted religious communities were institutionalized in the granting of separate electorates for Muslims in 1909 and, later, following the 1932 Communal Award for Sikhs. The historical debate still rages whether this was part of a Machiavellian divide and rule policy or merely reflected a colonial balancing act. While the creation of Muslim separate electorates did not make Pakistan inevitable, it encouraged the premise lying behind communalism that people following a particular religion naturally shared common interests from which others were excluded. Those seeking power took their cue and mobilized politically around the symbols of religion, which had received state recognition as important community markers. For many scholars, communalism which culminated in the 1947 Partition is seen as an important legacy of colonial rule.<sup>5</sup>

Less contentious is the claim that important institutional inheritances from the Raj smoothed the path of nation building in India and Pakistan. Both the Indian and the Pakistan Administrative Services inherited the traditions of the so-called "steel frame" of the Raj, the Indian Civil Service. Until the two countries introduced their first post-Independence constitutions, they were governed under the terms of the 1935 Government of India Act. India's 1950 constitution retained the federal structure of government it had established.

## The differential impact of imperial rule

A number of writers have found India and Pakistan's contrasting democratic experiences striking, given the assumption that they acquired almost identical intellectual and administrative inheritances from the colonial state.<sup>6</sup> The colonial impacts we have been considering in the preceding paragraphs were not, however, spread evenly. The differential effects of colonial rule with respect to both socioeconomic transformation and administrative systems were to exert a profound influence. The politics of Muslim separatism in colonial north India and of the anti-Brahman movement in the south, for example, were influenced by the domination of Hindu upper caste males over the new educational opportunities. Those regions and communities which lagged behind in the processes of socioeconomic change in late nineteenth-century India have struggled to catch up since Independence. West Bengal was at one stage a leading commercial region, but its relative post-Independence decline dates back to the decision to move the imperial capital from Calcutta to New Delhi in 1911. It is possible to argue that contemporary Pakistan's "overdeveloped" administrative and military institutions in comparison with India's stronger political institutionalization are rooted, at least in part, in differences in the colonial impact. Khalid bin Sayeed first summed up the greater British emphasis on the requirements of law and order rather than those of popular representation in the future Pakistan areas in terms of the concept of "viceregalism."<sup>7</sup> I have expanded this argument to conceptualize the inheritance of a British security state in northwest India in which political participation was far less developed than in other areas of the sub-continent.<sup>8</sup> The colonial priority in this region was to maintain law and order; the encouragement of political representation was a secondary consideration. Hence elected bodies came into being later, if at all in the case of Balochistan.

With the notable exception of Bengal, the future Pakistan areas lay in the security state region. They had been acquired for strategic rather than commercial reasons in the face of a threat of Russian expansion from Central Asia and Afghanistan and were accordingly administered along “viceregal” lines.<sup>9</sup> Adjoining both British Balochistan and the North-West Frontier Province was a buffer zone of tribal states and tribal areas. The former were under the exclusive jurisdiction of their hereditary rulers and were among the most backward areas of the subcontinent at the time of Independence. The latter were overseen by a British political agent. Control was maintained by tribal levies with the carrot of cash subsidies and the stick of punitive expeditions and collective fines. Customary law enforced through tribal *jirgas* was the order of the day. A similar system of administrative authoritarianism and the co-opting of traditional elites was followed in the directly administered provinces of Balochistan and the North-West Frontier Province. The latter was eventually to achieve responsible government, after widespread unrest in 1930–32, but Balochistan remained tied to the apron strings of its commissioner down to Independence. Within the Frontier, deputy commissioners wielded immense authority under the terms of the Frontier Crimes Regulation. They could refer civil and criminal cases to *jirgas*, which they had appointed, and they were also empowered to impose collective punishments. The loyalty of the large Khan clan was secured through a mix of “political pensions,” honorific titles, and cash and land grants.

Punjab landowners were the recipients of similar rewards. The region’s strategic significance increased when it became the main recruiting area of the Indian Army from the 1880s.<sup>10</sup> The decision to shift recruiting operations to Punjab was based on a variety of strategic, political and financial implications. It was rationalized in the martial castes ideology. The belief that the Muslim Rajputs, Sikh Jats and Hindu Dogras of Punjab were naturally suited

for military service was based on “empirical” ethnographic research. Recruiting officers produced detailed caste handbooks that provided genealogies and histories of the martial castes, all set within a fashionable late nineteenth-century Social Darwinist framework. While the post-Independence Indian Army has widened its recruiting base, the bulk of the Pakistan Army recruits are drawn from a narrow range of communities and districts within Punjab. This has exerted a profound impact on political developments in terms both of sections of Punjabi society’s identification with the military and in the encouragement it has given to the idea held by non-recruited communities that there has been a “Punjabization” of Pakistan.<sup>11</sup>

The simultaneous development of the vast canal colony areas in late nineteenth-century Punjab dramatically increased the resources with which the colonial state could patronize its rural allies.<sup>12</sup> In Punjab, and also in the Frontier, the colonial state abandoned economic laissez-faire principles to curb the predatory activities of moneylenders, which threatened the growing prosperity of its local allies. Moreover, whenever the principle of election was conceded, the British safeguarded the position of their rural allies by linking the right to vote with property qualifications and introducing special landholders’ constituencies. Significantly, ex-servicemen were disproportionately represented both as landowners in the rich canal colony areas and as voters. The entrenchment of elites considered loyal to the Raj continues to influence contemporary Pakistan politics. This undermined the development of a strong political party system. It also reinforced a culture of political clientelism and placed insuperable barriers in the way of future socioeconomic reform by establishing the basis for a dominant landlord political interest. This was to form a marked contrast with the inheritance of those areas which went to India at the time of the 1947 Partition. In those areas, it was rich peasants rather than feudal landowners who dominated rural politics.

The shadow side of British paternalism was the violent repression of any perceived challenge to the status quo. Provincial administrations of the future West Pakistan areas all had blood on their hands and a tradition of calling on the army to aid civil power. The most infamous incident was, of course, the firing on an unarmed crowd in the walled area of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar on 13 April, 1919.

In sum, in much of what was to become Pakistan, a tradition of bureaucratic authoritarianism, along with the upholding of traditional elites, was deeply rooted by the time of the British departure. In Punjab, the future heartland of Pakistan, a special relationship between the peasantry and the army had been established which, as Clive Dewey has forcefully argued, holds the key to understanding military dominance in independent Pakistan.<sup>13</sup> The tradition of ruthless repression of unrest had also been established. Significantly, such leading Pakistani administrative and political figures of the 1950s as Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, Ghulam Muhammad, and Iskander Mirza had spent the formative parts of their careers in this atmosphere.<sup>14</sup> The differential inheritances in the future Indian and Pakistan areas of the subcontinent thus explain in part the variations in political experience of the two successors to the Raj.

### **The legacy of nationalist struggle**

India's democratic "exceptionalism" among former European colonies has been linked by some writers to legacies from the nationalist struggle.<sup>15</sup> These included a highly institutionalized political party in the Indian National Congress, which reached down into the villages. The narrow support base of the nineteenth century had been transformed by Gandhi's leadership. At the same time, his genius in fundraising had allowed the establishment of a cadre of paid political workers.

The adherence of Congress to both the electoral politics of legislative council entry, on the one hand, and mass agitation, on the other hand, had ensured that it was not merely an oppositional force, but had produced leaders schooled in the arts of government. Finally, the post-independence ability to oversee nation building was enhanced by the legitimacy of its leaders who had been prepared to spend years in prison as part of their sacrifice for the greater cause of freedom.

Gandhi lay at the heart of both the institutional transformation of Congress at the 1920 Nagpur Session and of the widening of its popular appeal.<sup>16</sup> He was a charismatic figure who embodied the unique philosophy of non-violence that he brought to the struggle. Non-violence was remarkably successful as a strategy against a ruling power that prided itself on the moral authority to govern. It also allayed the fears of the propertied classes that independence would go hand in hand with social revolution. Significantly, the upper caste business and industrial classes under Gandhi's moral sway bankrolled Congress. Between 1921 and 1923, Congress collected over Rs 13 million. This huge war chest funded Gandhi's "constructive program" of *khadi* (the production and wearing of homespun cloth) and the removal of Untouchability as well as Congress political campaigns under his leadership. It made possible the new phenomenon of the full-time Congressite political worker. By the eve of the Second World War, the Congress possessed a membership of over four and a half million. No anti-colonial nationalist movement elsewhere was ever to attain this level of support. Gandhi introduced new groups and regions into the nationalist struggle. D. A. Low has seen the alliance between the rich peasants, the educated classes and the commercial classes as being of crucial importance.<sup>17</sup> Gandhi also appealed for female support as he believed that women naturally possessed the ability to suffer and the moral strength required in non-violent struggle.<sup>18</sup>

Women were especially drawn to the idealism of the nationalist struggle, whether this was expressed in terms of Gandhian philosophy, or in the socialism of Nehru and the Congress left wing. Thousands of Congress activists had demonstrated their commitment to a free India by submitting to the blows of the police and to extended periods of imprisonment. As Gopal Krishna has remarked:

The significant difference between the pre-1920 and the post-1920 Congress leadership lay in the fact that before 1920 it was social position which automatically conferred a leading position in the movement; after 1920 it was the renunciation of social position and the demonstration of willingness to accept that sacrifice was demanded of those who aspired to lead.<sup>19</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru, independent India's first prime minister, spent several periods of imprisonment in the early 1920s and 1930s. His longest incarceration following the Quit India Resolution of 1942 lasted for three years. During this period he wrote his most important work, *The Discovery of India*. Nehru's imprisonment, as well as that of countless lower rank Congressmen, created a high public service ethos when India attained freedom in August 1947. It also ensured that the prestige of the Congress surpassed that of all other parties. This, in part, explains its electoral successes throughout the 1950s.

Congress had combined agitation with the working of the legislatures in the provinces which the British had introduced from the time of the 1919 Government of India Act. This approach to politics has been dubbed a "struggle-truce-struggle" strategy. It enabled Congress to wear down the Raj's stock of moral and political capital while at the same time providing Indian politicians with the opportunity to acquire experience of government. This was one factor in the greater success of Congress, compared with many of

its counterparts in Asia and Africa, in making the postcolonial switch from an oppositional force to a party of government. Council entry was, however, not without its drawbacks, as it opened the way for factional rivalries between the so-called ministerial and organizational wings of the party. Indeed, the decision of the High Command to ask for the resignation of the provincial ministries in the wake of Viceroy Lord Linlithgow's unilateral declaration in 1939 that India was at war, proclaimed without consulting Indian opinion, can be understood as a useful release from these growing tensions.

The visions of Nehru and Gandhi for an independent India were markedly different. The possibility of conflict was terminated by Gandhi's assassination on 30 January, 1948. His anarchist vision of a decentralized polity and economy based on the village was reduced to the margins of the nationalist enterprise, although the Mahatma was mythologized as the founder of the nation. Nehru based his nation-building enterprise on the vision first articulated during the independence movement. It sought to clothe the country in the "garb of modernity." At the heart of the Nehruvian vision was commitment to democracy, secularism, statism, and socialism. In the international arena, he espoused a commitment to non-alignment. By the 1980s all these foundational ideas had been challenged by the rise of militant Hinduism, which articulated concerns about Islamization in Iran and Pakistan, increasing Indian Muslim linkages with the oil-rich Gulf region, and resentment about the alleged "pampering" of the Muslim minority. But the clear vision of the early post-independence period was undoubtedly a factor in ensuring stability. Unlike many other nationalist movements, power had been seized from the departing rulers not for its own sake, but to bring about a major transformation. Despite their conflicting ideas, Gandhi and Nehru shared the belief that independence should mean a major break with the colonial past and that India's freedom

could act as a source of inspiration well beyond its national borders.

While the seeds for India's democratic success were sown during the nationalist struggle, there were also warning signs for the future. Hindu nationalist sentiments had always been coeval with the territorial nationalism of Congress. Many within the organization's broad tent profoundly differed from Nehru's secularist approach. Congress also contained hegemonic tendencies that made it difficult for the minorities to be accepted on anything other than the majority's terms. The partition-related upheavals were to increase hostility to the Muslim "other" well beyond the narrow bounds of such communal organizations as the Hindu Mahasabha.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, for Gandhi, at least, partition represented a defeat for all that he believed in, causing him to dub freedom a "bitter loaf."

### **The legacy of the Pakistan movement**

The movement for Pakistan, like that for Indian independence, was to provide an important political inheritance. It was not, however, to exert as favourable an impact for future democratic consolidation and nation building. The Muslim League was not as firmly institutionalized as Congress. Neither did its leaders possess a similar experience of government. In the key areas that were to form Pakistan, the Muslim League was a relative latecomer. Apart from Bengal, the party had failed dismally in the Muslim majority provinces in the 1937 provincial elections. In order to achieve a breakthrough in the 1946 polls, it had been forced to compromise with traditionalist systems of clientelist politics. Within its ranks there was much greater opportunism and lack of a public service ideal than was evident in Congress. The party was thus less well equipped on a number of counts to perform the tasks of political development. This was a crucial weakness in the light of the

"democratic deficit" that had accrued as a result of viceregal traditions inherited in the areas that were to form Pakistan.

It was only in Bengal that the Muslim League possessed a mass base of support and an organization of full-time workers similar to that of Congress. This was the result of the efforts of its dynamic secretary, Abul Hashim. Full-time workers were trained and accommodated in party houses. By the eve of the 1946 elections the Bengal Muslim League had one million members. Over a decade and a half later, Ayub Khan, Pakistan's first military ruler, was to turn to Abul Hashim's organizing genius to establish the Convention Muslim League in East Pakistan. The efforts of the 1940s could not, however, be reproduced in a much more politically hostile environment, with an increasingly frail Abul Hashim deputing the work to Shamsul Huda. There was some organizational development in other "Pakistan areas" after 1944, but in many districts, League branches existed only on paper. In Punjab, the cornerstone of Pakistan, its membership stood at just 150,000. Factional infighting in the Frontier League prompted an enquiry by the All-India Committee of Action in June 1944 which admitted that "there was no organization worth the name" in the province. The Sindh Muslim League had just 48,500 members. Its annual report for 1943-44 acknowledged that: "We should require years to create political consciousness among [the] Muslim masses in the province, where on account of long distances, scattered villages, illiteracy and local influence it is rather difficult to easily approach the people."<sup>21</sup>

The pyramid of branches stretching from the localities to the All-India level, which was the hallmark of Congress, was thus noticeably absent throughout most of the future Pakistan areas. The Muslim League was thus far less able to form a democratic pillar of the post-colonial state than its Congress counterpart.

In 1946 the Muslim League achieved the victories it required to lend credibility to the Pakistan demand, despite this organizational

weakness. It had to compromise to do so. This involved accepting opportunistic converts from rival parties such as the Punjab Unionists. It also had to mobilize support through existing power structures such as *biradari* (kinship groups) and sufi networks. Loyal party officials were bypassed for election tickets in favor of elite power holders. In Sindh, the Muslim League had to adapt itself to the power of the large landowners (*waderos*) who dominated the lives of their labourers (*haris*). Votes could not be obtained in Sindh's interior without the support of the *waderos*, but they were primarily concerned with their own factional rivalries, rather than mobilizing support for the Pakistan ideal. The Muslim League's approach to electioneering in future Pakistan areas was to be crucial in legitimizing its demand, but stored up problems for the future. It endorsed clientelist politics with its accompanying opportunism, factionalism, and corruption.

Of equal concern was the inexperience of the provincial Muslim League leaderships. The League never formed a government in Punjab before Independence. Its politics were dominated by the cross-communal Unionist Party, whose power relied on a combination of the personal influence of the rural elites and legislative enactments to prevent expropriation by the moneylenders. When the Coalition Unionist Government finally resigned in March 1947, Punjab remained under governor's rule until the end of the Raj. While the Muslim Leaguers in Punjab entered the post-Independence era with little experience of office, their counterparts in Sindh were already well versed in using power to feather their own nests through the manipulation of wartime contracts and the control of rationed and requisitioned goods.<sup>22</sup> In the Frontier, it was only after the imprisonment of many Congress representatives that it was able to form its first government in May 1943. What ensued was an undignified scramble for power and profit marked by bitter rivalries between the ministerial and organizational wings of the

party, rather than schooling in the arts of government. Factionalism, corruption, and violence formed part of the League's everyday experience. Together, inexperience, institutional weakness, and the low level of political culture inherited from the freedom struggle militated against Pakistan's future democratic consolidation.

The legacy of the freedom movement was ironically most problematic in Bengal where the Muslim League had put down the most roots. There was incipient conflict between the Urdu- and Bengali-speaking elites even at the height of the freedom struggle. The former remained loyal to Jinnah's conception of an East Pakistan zone within a single Pakistan state. They also subscribed to the belief, expressed as early as July 1933 by the All-Bengal Urdu association, that "Bengali is a Hinduized and Sanskritized language" and that, "in the interests of the Muslims themselves it is necessary that they should try to have one language which cannot be but Urdu."<sup>23</sup> This was, of course, in keeping with the Muslim League's official two nation theory, an ideology that viewed the community as monolithic and set apart from the Hindus. These views were challenged by Bengali-speaking Muslim Leaguers. In his May 1944 Presidential address, the Muslim League journalist-cum-politician Abul Mansur Ahmed maintained that Bengali Muslims were not only different from Hindus but from Muslims of other provinces. He declared this position as follows:

Religion and culture are not the same thing; religion transgresses [sic] the geographical boundary but *tamaddum* (culture) cannot go beyond the geographical boundary . . . here only lies the differences between *Purba* (Eastern) Pakistan and Pakistan. For this reason the people of *Purba* Pakistan are a different nation from the people of the other provinces of India and from the "religious brothers" of Pakistan.<sup>24</sup>

It was, however, the Urdu-speaking Bengalis who wielded influence in the All-India



Muslim League. Jinnah never nominated Abul Hashim to its working committee. He preferred to deal with such trusted lieutenants as Hasan and Ahmed Ispahani,<sup>25</sup> who knew little of Bengal outside Calcutta, or with the conservative Nawab of Dhaka whose newspapers dubbed Hashim and his supporters as communists. They indeed fought for liberation “from all forms of oppression.” Moreover, their vision was for a sovereign East Pakistan state. Indeed, Hashim prophetically warned that a united Pakistan would result in the imposition both of Urdu and an alien bureaucracy and reduce East Bengal to a stagnant backwater.<sup>26</sup> Both the language issue and the marginalization of Bengali political influence were subsequently to dominate East–West Pakistan relations and contribute to the Bangladesh breakaway of 1971.

The clash between regional and Pakistani identities was most pronounced in Bengal, but it was present also in Sindh and the Frontier. In both provinces the Muslim League’s popular base of support rested on local allegiances that were difficult to harmonize with Jinnah’s All-India understanding of the Pakistan demand. In these circumstances, it was hardly surprising that provincialism, as it was termed, became a barrier to nation building almost immediately after Independence.

Finally, the freedom struggle had gained it popular support by being deliberately vague about the nature of a future Pakistan state. Nevertheless, many of the leading Deobandi *‘ulama* (Islamic scholars) had opposed the “secularist” Muslim League leadership. Syed Abul A’la Maudoodi, who founded the Islamist Jamaat-i-Islami in August 1941, opposed the Pakistan campaign because it was based on the notion of nationalism, which, in turn, was opposed to the solidarity of the worldwide Muslim community, the *umma*. Maudoodi migrated from India at the time of Partition and thereafter worked assiduously to bring Pakistan’s laws into conformity with Islam. But this goal of Islamization conflicted with Jinnah’s famous speech on the eve of

Independence when he presented a vision of Pakistan to the Constituent Assembly on 11 August that envisioned the goal of a plural secular state. The debate about the role of Islam in Pakistan has raged ever since. It is rooted in the fact that the freedom struggle itself was variously conceived as a movement of Islam and a movement of Muslims.

## The legacy of partition

Partition divided the Muslim majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal and was accompanied by mass migrations and killings. The number of casualties has been estimated at anything from around 200,000, as put forward by the colonial official Penderel Moon, to the MQM’s grossly inflated figure of two million. Upwards of 100,000 women were kidnapped on both sides of the border. The epicenter of the social dislocation was in Punjab, but much of north India was affected. After uncontrollable spontaneous flight, the two dominion governments oversaw a virtually total exchange of populations in Punjab. This involved the greatest refugee migration of the twentieth century. Some seven million people migrated to Pakistan. Around five and a half million Hindus and Sikhs crossed the new international boundary in the opposite direction. In Bengal, despite government efforts to assure minority populations, waves of migration continued throughout the opening decades of Independence whenever there were outbreaks of violence or rumors of communal conflict.

Social dislocation on this scale inevitably influenced political developments within India and Pakistan as well as affecting deeply their relations. The fledgling states had to devote huge resources to refugee resettlement. In the case of Pakistan, which was disproportionately affected and had inherited weaker political institutions, it has been argued that the refugee problem was an important factor in the strengthening of the bureaucracy and the army to the detriment

of political parties.<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Waseem has further maintained that the undercutting of parliament resulted from the refugees' loss of their political base. "Recourse to elections," he states, "was considered suicidal by the migrant-led government at Karachi because there was no way it could win elections and return to power in the center. Elections were considered dysfunctional for the political system of Pakistan in the immediate post-independence period."<sup>28</sup>

Political tensions were generated in both dominions by the huge refugee influx. Nehru's insistence that the large numbers of Muslims left behind after the creation of Pakistan were not a "fifth column" but equal citizens led to a clash with Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel. The latter was regarded as the strongman of Congress. He had always leaned towards Hindu nationalist sentiment. According to US reports, relations between the two men became so embittered that the impression prevailed that Patel was "determined to get Nehru out of government." According to Matthai, the Minister of Transport who was the Americans' New Delhi informant, Gandhi came to Nehru's rescue, making it clear that if Patel took any steps against Nehru, he "would be finished with him for life."<sup>29</sup> Such an admonishment could not be taken lightly by Patel, who had been the Mahatma's associate since the 1920s. Nevertheless, accounts of Muslim atrocities in Pakistan raised the communal temperature in India.<sup>30</sup> The state's secular policy would certainly have been in greater peril had it not been for the salutary lessons drawn in the aftermath of Gandhi's assassination by a Hindu fanatic. Refugees from Pakistan in such cities as Delhi have continued to provide support for Hindu nationalist parties and causes.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the politics of Pakistan Punjab cities like Lahore, Sialkot, Multan, and Gujranwala, of whose population around half were enumerated as migrants at the time of the 1951 Census, cannot be understood without reference to the refugee dimension.

The issue of refugee resettlement increased tensions between the center and the provinces in Pakistan. They became most marked in Sindh where Prime Minister Muhammad Ayub Khuhro strongly opposed the demand that it should accept those refugees who could not be absorbed in West Punjab. By December 1947 Sindh had resettled only 244,000 displaced persons, while West Punjab had accepted over four million.<sup>32</sup> Raja Ghazanfar Ali, Pakistani minister for refugees and rehabilitation, severely upbraided Khuhro at a subcommittee of the Pakistan Muslim League Council held on 23 February, 1948. He dismissed the Sindh Prime Minister's defense that the local populace was suffering from the refugee burden as raising the "virus of provincialism."<sup>33</sup> Khuhro's stance was a contributory factor in his dismissal.<sup>34</sup> This not only strengthened Sindhi sentiment against the center, but also encouraged the precedent of executive action against elected representatives, which boded ill for the future.

Refugee resettlement not only created political tensions, but also provided an opportunity for the new Indian and Pakistan states to assert their authority. They were able to prove their paternalistic credentials by establishing a range of relief measures. The tentacles of refugee rehabilitation spread far into the economy with support for small businesses, custodianship of evacuee property, and a range of grants and loans and training schemes. Both states built satellite towns and colonies to help accommodate refugees.<sup>35</sup> State provision differentiated among classes of refugees, with the result that its overall impact was to re-establish community and gendered hierarchies.<sup>36</sup>

The state could never meet all refugee demands. The Hindu nationalist discourse seized on this. Failure to protect the symbolic body of Mother India, which had been vivisected, was linked with the reality of the violation of countless Hindu and Sikh women. Such Hindu nationalist writers as Chaman Lal called for a "strong and virile state backed up by a powerful army" to

respond to the aggressor Pakistan state.<sup>37</sup> Stereotypes of the Muslim “other” as a sexually rapacious and violent aggressor have been drawn from the stories, memories, and distorted history of Partition and have been repeated at times of communal conflict. There is also evidence in the Partition-related violence of the prototype of what Paul Brass has termed the “institutionalized riot system.”<sup>38</sup> Just as in large-scale post-Independence Hindu–Muslim violence, the 1947 killings display evidence of organized political intent and were made possible by the acquiescence of officials and police authorities.

Gyanendra Pandey has revealed how communities in both India and Pakistan have built identities around mythologized accounts of the partition.<sup>39</sup> Common to these accounts by both Brass and Pandey is blame displacement for the violence, the emphasis on stereotypical traits of courage and valor and a retelling of stories of “victimhood.” Self-identity is strengthened by the demonization of the “other.” These community narratives, along with the long-lasting personal scars and material and psychological losses have meant that Partition, rather than being a past event, continues to be a living reality and reference point at both societal and state levels.

Despite the ambiguities for Pakistan of the division of the Muslim population of the subcontinent, the state has used the event for nation-building purposes by emphasizing the sacrifices it entailed. Official histories have also linked its attendant violence with stereotypes of Hindu “treachery” and the desire to destroy Muslim culture. These are expressed most clearly in school textbooks sanctioned by the state, which distort the events leading up to Partition and the upheavals themselves. Such distortions find their counterparts in India where BJP-led governments have influenced textbook production.

The Urdu-speaking refugee community in Karachi and the East Bengal *bhadralok* refugees now settled in Calcutta have experienced the greatest problems of adjustment

that are common to all those displaced in 1947. Both communities weigh their perceived post-independence marginalization against their sacrifices and losses. The political geography of both the metropolises is inexplicable without reference to the refugee influence. In Karachi, this has resulted in the dominance of the ethno-nationalist MQM, which appealed directly to the *mohajirs*.<sup>40</sup> In Calcutta, the educated refugees who were reduced to illegal occupations of land formed the main base of support for the Communist Party.<sup>41</sup>

The responses of the Indian and Pakistan governments both to autonomy demands and to each other were profoundly influenced by Partition. It has given birth to what has been termed the “fearful South Asian state” by some scholars,<sup>42</sup> expressive of the determination to prevent future divisions. Demands for greater autonomy by subnational groups are thus viewed with suspicion. This is especially the case in India if these are associated with religious interests. The Khalistan movement of the 1980s is sometimes referred to as part of the unfinished business of Partition because of the Sikh failure to acquire a Sikhistan in 1947. The way the Indian government responded to the Akali Dal movement in the 1980s also requires reference to the Partition era, as no less does the Pakistan authorities’ response to the insurgency in urban Sindh a decade later.<sup>43</sup> Neither state has displayed mercy towards what they have deemed to be secessionist movements, even when repression has been counterproductive in radicalizing domestic opposition and arousing international condemnation of human rights abuses.

For some writers, the long-running Kashmir dispute is the single most important legacy of Partition in that it not only has had a major impact on relations between India and Pakistan, but has distorted the latter’s domestic political development. It is well established that the conflict over the territory has adversely affected the economic and human development of the subcontinent

because the two rivals have traded less with each other and have spent great resources on weapons. Another consequence has been the introduction of great power rivalries in the region. Kashmir was not the only factor in souring the Indo-Pakistan relationship at the time of independence. Distrust mounted over the division of assets, water management and water sharing between the two dominions. The Partition-related massacres and mass migrations also embittered relations. Nevertheless, events in Kashmir in 1947–49 provided a defining moment both in Indo-Pakistan relations and for Pakistan's domestic priorities.

Any lingering hopes for continued economic or military interdependence of the two dominions were snuffed out in Jammu's killing fields from where a flood of Muslim refugees migrated to such bordering Pakistani cities as Sialkot where they formed an important anti-India lobby. Although the military conflict was confined to Kashmir, it highlighted the strategic dangers for Pakistan. The priority of building up the armed forces led to the establishment of a "political economy of defense." The years 1947 to 1950 saw up to 70 percent of the national budget allocated for defense. Funds were diverted from nation-building activities at the same time that the state's administrative machinery was expanded to ensure the center's control over the finances of the provinces. The long-term repercussions were a strengthening of the non-elected institutions of the state—the bureaucracy and the army—at the expense of political accountability. This process contributed not only to the failure to consolidate democracy, but to the alienation of the eastern wing of the country. Bengali politicians' priorities were of a different order and did not involve sacrificing democratic politics on the altar of the Kashmiri Muslim cause. The army increasingly acquired an almost insatiable appetite for new technology, which became ever more expensive. By 1958 an American intelligence report attested that the "Pakistani army had developed as a pressure

group" and would continue to have priority over economic development for appropriations," irrespective of the Indian factor.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

Post-Independence India and Pakistan have experienced rapid socioeconomic change and other significant developments in both their regional and international political environment. These have introduced important discontinuities seen in postcolonial ethnization and regionalization of politics; the growing middle-class influence in Indian politics; the establishment of large overseas communities with a range of transnational linkages with the homeland; and the growing strategic asymmetry in the subcontinent. South Asia's political environment is thus very different from what it was six decades ago.

Nevertheless, the foregoing analysis has revealed that unresolved conflicts, competing sources of identity and political cultures inherited from the Raj, and the nationalist struggle still resonate. Moreover, the crisis period of 1947–48 continues to influence Indo-Pakistan relations and has undoubtedly affected strongly the response of both states to ethno-nationalist movements. In the case of Pakistan, crisis management at its birth shaped the state's future political trajectory. Contemporary South Asia is not fully explicable without reference to this past.

## Notes

- 1 The number of miles of railway track increased from 34 in 1854 to 8,500 in 1880. By the beginning of the twentieth century there were nearly 1,400 newspapers with a total all-India subscription of two million. Effective readership was much greater, as newspapers were read aloud and passed from hand to hand.
- 2 See Ian Talbot, *India and Pakistan: Inventing the Nation* (London: Arnold, 2000), pp. 12–16.

- 3 The revivalist activities of the Singh Sabha movement were undoubtedly spurred on not just by the attempts of the rival Arya Samaj to reconvert Sikhs to Hinduism, but by the fact that, until the 1901 Census, only the orthodox Khalsa Sikhs were enumerated as Sikhs. See, Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Chicago: University Press, 1994).
- 4 See Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860–1923* (Cambridge: University Press, 1975), p. 82.
- 5 See Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).
- 6 See Asma Barlas, *Democracy, Nationalism and Communalism: The Colonial Legacy in South Asia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).
- 7 K. B. Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase, 1857–1948* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).
- 8 See Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (London: Hurst, 1998).
- 9 The East India Company assumed the *diwani* or revenue collectorship in Bengal as early as 1765. The areas that formed British Balochistan were acquired for strategic reasons from 1876 onwards. Sindh had been seized from its Baloch Talpur rulers in 1843. Six years later the British annexed the whole of Punjab and the Frontier region, which had been part of the Sikh kingdom.
- 10 Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849–1947* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1988) and *Khizr Tiwana, the Punjab Unionist Party and the Partition of India* (London: Curzon, 1996).
- 11 See Yunas Samad, "Pakistan or Punjabistan: Crisis of National Identity," in Gurharpal Singh and Ian Talbot (eds), *Punjabi Identity: Continuity and Change* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995), pp. 61–87.
- 12 Imran Ali, *The Punjab under Imperialism, 1885–1947* (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 1988).
- 13 Clive Dewey, "The Rural Roots of Pakistani Militarism," in D. A. Low (ed.), *The Political Inheritance of Pakistan* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 255–84.
- 14 See Allen McGrath, *The Destruction of Pakistan's Democracy* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 15 See Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins Of An Asian Democracy*, 2nd edn (Oxford: University Press, 1995).
- 16 See Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics, 1915–1922* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972).
- 17 D. A. Low, "The Forgotten Bania: Merchant Communities and the Indian National Congress," in D. A. Low (ed.), *Eclipse of Empire* (Cambridge: University Press, 1991), pp. 101–19.
- 18 Contemporary Indian feminists decry this as perpetuating sexual stereotypes. They point out that female participation was linked with the traditional role models such as Sita and with women's sense of devotion and duty, which was extended from the family to the nation; Madhu Kishwar, "Gandhi on Women," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 20, No. 40 (5 October, 1985), pp. 1, 691–702.
- 19 Gopal Krishna, "The Development of the Indian National Congress as a Mass Organisation, 1918–1923," in Thomas E. Metcalf (ed.), *Modern India: An Interpretive Anthology* (London: Collier, 1971), p. 267.
- 20 The Hindu Mahasabha was founded in 1915 to safeguard Hindu interests, which its leaders claimed were being sacrificed by Congress. Its main concern was resistance to the Muslim "other" rather than colonial rule. It sought to overcome weaknesses arising from the disunity of the caste system and from an alleged lack of physical strength.
- 21 *Annual Report of the Sindh Provincial Muslim League for 1943–4*, Shamsul Hasan Collection 1:24 (Karachi).
- 22 S. F. Kucchi, member of the Working Committee Sindh Provincial Muslim League to G. M. Syed, Shamsul Hasan Collection, Sindh 11:37.
- 23 Harun-or-Rashid, *The Foreshadowing of Bangladesh: Bengal Muslim League and Muslim League Politics, 1936–1947* (Dhaka: Research Society of Bangladesh, 1987), p. 45.
- 24 Harun-or-Rashid, p. 181.
- 25 The Ispahani family originated in Persia. It moved to Calcutta from its original trading centers in Madras and Bombay at the beginning of the twentieth century.
- 26 Yunas Samad, *A Nation in Turmoil: Nationalism and Ethnicity in Pakistan, 1937–58* (New Delhi: Sage, 1995), p. 106.

- 27 See Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge: University Press, 1990).
- 28 Muhammad Waseem, *The 1993 Elections in Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1994), p. 163.
- 29 Ian Talbot, *India and Pakistan: Inventing the Nation* (London: Arnold, 2000), p. 164.
- 30 Mushirul Hasan has chronicled the economic, political and emotional depression of the Indian Muslim community left leaderless and traumatized by Partition. Even in the Nehruvian era, the Muslims' relations with the Hindu majority were marked by a sense of insecurity and desire to disprove any charges that they represented a fifth column. See Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims since Independence* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- 31 See Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Hindu Nationalist Movement in Delhi: From 'Locals' to Refugees and Towards Peripheral Groups?," in Veronique Dupont, Emma Tarlo and Denis Vidal (eds), *Delhi: Urban Spaces and Human Destinies* (Delhi: Manohar, 2000), pp. 181–203.
- 32 *Dawn* (Karachi), 12 December, 1947.
- 33 *Statesman* (Calcutta), 25 February, 1948.
- 34 For further details, see Sarah Ansari, *Life After Partition: Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh 1947–1962* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 35 See Ian Talbot, *Divided Cities: Partition and its Aftermath in Lahore and Amritsar 1947–1957* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- 36 See Ravinder Kaur, *Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- 37 Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices From the Partition of India* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1998), pp. 183–84.
- 38 Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2003).
- 39 Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge: University Press, 2001).
- 40 See I. H. Malik, "Ethno-Nationalism in Pakistan: A Commentary on Muhajir Qaumi Mahaz (MQM) in Sindh," *South Asia* Vol. 18, No. 2 (1995), 49–72.
- 41 Prafulla Chakrabarty, *The Marginal Men: The Refugees and the Left Political Syndrome in West Bengal* (Kalyani: Lumiere Books, 1990).
- 42 S. Mahmud Ali, *The Fearful State: Power, People and Internal Wars in South Asia* (London: Zed 1993).
- 43 See Gurharpal Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case-Study of Punjab* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).
- 44 Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule*, p. 238.