

Pakistan: A Historical Journey of Religious Nationalism and Political Transformations

Ali Haider

Student at medical Laboratory Technology, University of Okara

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer (Corresponding Author)

Research Supervisor and Lecturer, University of Okara

Email: akramzaheer86@yahoo.com

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This study has no aim to hurt any ideological or social segment but is purely based on academic purposes.

Abstract

This research article interrogates the intricate relationship between religious nationalism and political transformations in Pakistan, examining the historical journey that has shaped the nation's identity. By exploring key events, ideologies, and political actors, the study seeks to illuminate the multifaceted dynamics that have influenced Pakistan's trajectory as a religiously oriented state. Drawing on a comprehensive analysis of primary and secondary sources, the research investigates the formative years of Pakistan's inception, highlighting the role of religious nationalism in the demand for a separate homeland for Muslims in British India. It traces the influence of prominent figures such as Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the All-India Muslim League in the creation of Pakistan and the subsequent challenges in defining a national identity that accommodates diverse religious communities. The article further explores the impact of religious nationalism on Pakistan's political landscape, focusing on significant turning points in the country's history. It examines the role of Islamization policies pursued by various governments, particularly during the eras of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Zia-ul-Haq, which sought to harness religious identity for political purposes. The research analyzes the implications of these policies on the relationship between the state and religious institutions, as well as their influence on societal norms and values. The study investigates the complexities and tensions arising from the coexistence of religious nationalism with Pakistan's democratic aspirations. It explores how religious political parties have wielded influence and contested power within the political framework, while also addressing the challenges faced by secular and liberal forces. By providing a comprehensive historical analysis, this research article contributes to a deeper understanding of the entwined nature of religious nationalism and political transformations in Pakistan. It sheds light on the evolution of the country's identity, the role of religious ideology in shaping policies, and the ongoing struggle to balance diverse religious narratives within the political realm. This study serves as a valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and anyone interested in comprehending the historical

journey of Pakistan's religious nationalism and its implications for the nation's political landscape.

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Introduction

Pakistan, officially known as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, emerged as the first country in the world based on religious nationalism. The partition of India in 1947 led to the formation of Pakistan, breaking free from British rule after two centuries. Founded on the two-nation theory proposed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan was created by combining the regions of East and West Pakistan, primarily inhabited by Muslims. The country's establishment marked a significant milestone in the history of South Asia.

Pakistan is a democratic parliamentary federal republic with Islam as its state religion, as stated in its constitution. Over the years, the nation has pursued various economic models and has achieved middle-income status in South Asia (Weiner & Banuazizi, 1994, p. 281). Geographically, Pakistan shares borders with India, China, Afghanistan, Iran, and the Arabian Sea, positioning itself as a strategic player in the region. Its importance as a gateway for fuel energy, an economic corridor with China, and a key player in the global war on terrorism has further amplified its significance. However, Pakistan's journey since its inception has been tumultuous. The partition led to massive migration, communal violence, and widespread loss of life. The country faced challenges in consolidating its diverse population and achieving political stability. Successive governments grappled with economic, social, and security issues, shaping the nation's political landscape (Afzal, January 13, 2023, p. online).

This research article provides an overview of Pakistan's political history from its independence in 1947 to the present day. It explores key events such as the formation of Pakistan, the role of its founding leaders, language conflicts, military rule, nuclear aspirations, and the rise and fall of political parties. The article aims to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of the political developments that have shaped Pakistan's trajectory, highlighting the challenges and achievements along the way.

Historical and Political Background of Pakistan

Pakistan gained independence as the first country in the world based on religious nationalism. It emerged as a separate nation in 1947 from the partition of India, ending two hundred years of British rule. Pakistan was created by combining the regions of East and West Pakistan, which were predominantly inhabited by Muslims. The creation of Pakistan was based on the two-nation theory proposed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which asserted that Muslims and Hindus were distinct nations with their own customs, religions, and traditions. Pakistan is a democratic parliamentary federal republic with Islam as its state religion, according to its constitution. It has experimented with various economic models and has become one of the middle-income countries in South Asia. Geographically, Pakistan shares its borders with India to the east, China to the north, and the Arabian Sea to the south. It also has boundaries with Afghanistan and Iran in the western region. Pakistan has gained importance as a gateway for fuel energy, an economic corridor with China, and as a key player in the global war on terrorism. On-going border conflicts between China and India have further highlighted Pakistan's strategic significance in maintaining stability and peace in South Asia (Rana, Summer 2018, p. 02).

The partition of India in 1947 led to a massive migration of over ten million people across the newly drawn borders, resulting in communal violence and widespread loss of life. This period is described as a “retributive genocide” between religious groups, with estimates of the death toll ranging from 200,000 to 2,000,000 people (WPF, August 7, 2015). After the partition, Liaquat Ali Khan was appointed as Pakistan’s first prime minister, with Muhammad Ali Jinnah serving as the first governor-general and speaker of the State Parliament. Following Jinnah’s death, Pakistan began the process of transforming into an ideological Islamic state, and the Objectives Resolution was introduced in the Constituent Assembly in 1949 (Paracha, July 31, 2017).

Tensions arose in East Pakistan in 1952 when the East Pakistani police opened fire on students protesting for the recognition of Bengali as an equal language alongside Urdu. In 1954, the One Unit Program was implemented, dividing Pakistan along the lines of the German geopolitical model (Talbot, 1998, p. 86). The program revealed ideological differences between West and East Pakistan and fueled Baloch separatism in East Pakistan. Martial law was imposed in 1958, and Pakistan entered a period of military rule under General Ayub Khan. Ayub Khan introduced the “Basic Democracy” system and became the second president of Pakistan through a national referendum in 1960. The 1971 war and the separation of East Pakistan had a demoralizing effect on the nation. Bhutto came to power and initiated left-wing democracy, economic nationalization, and covert atomic bomb projects. However, his government faced controversy, and Bhutto was executed in 1979. The period from 1977 to 1988 was characterized by military rule under General Zia-ul-Haq, during which state-sponsored religious conservatism rose to prominence (Siam-Heng, 2010, p. 202).

Democracy returned to Pakistan in 1988, with Benazir Bhutto becoming the first female prime minister in Pakistan’s history. The 1990s saw a series of political changes, with governments alternating between the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (PML). Tensions with India persisted, and Pakistan conducted its nuclear tests in 1998. In 1999, a bloodless coup led by General Pervez Musharraf ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and brought military rule back to Pakistan.

Religious Nationalism and Political Transformations in Pakistan

Religious nationalism has played a significant role in shaping the political landscape of Pakistan since its inception as an independent nation in 1947. The country was founded on the principles of religious nationalism, with Islam as its state religion and a vision to provide a separate homeland for Muslims in South Asia. The two-nation theory, proposed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, asserted that Muslims and Hindus were distinct nations with their own customs, religions, and traditions. The partition of India and the creation of Pakistan resulted in widespread communal violence and the loss of millions of lives.

After gaining independence, Pakistan went through several political transformations that were deeply influenced by religious nationalism. In the early years, the country struggled with issues of identity and language. The tensions between East and West Pakistan, with the former advocating for the recognition of Bengali as an equal language alongside Urdu, led to a violent crackdown by the West Pakistani government. The imposition of martial law in 1958 by General Ayub Khan marked a shift towards military rule and the suppression of political dissent (Maniruzzaman, Jan., 1971, p. online).

During Ayub Khan's rule, Pakistan witnessed the rise of religious conservatism and the establishment of an Islamic state. Sharia law was enforced, and efforts were made to Islamize the country's institutions and legal system. The period from 1977 to 1988, under the military rule of General Zia-ul-Haq, further solidified the influence of religious nationalism. Zia-ul-Haq sought to establish an Islamic state based on strict interpretations of Islamic law. Educational textbooks and libraries were revised to remove content deemed un-Islamic, and various Islamic reforms were implemented (Ziring, Aug., 1988 , p. 798).

However, Pakistan also experienced periods of democratic governance. Benazir Bhutto, the first female prime minister in Pakistan and the first female head of government in a Muslim-majority country, came to power in 1988. Her government focused on socialist policies, economic nationalization, and the modernization of the country's nuclear program. Bhutto's rule was marred by allegations of corruption and controversies surrounding the death of her brother, Murtaza Bhutto. The political landscape of Pakistan continued to evolve with the rise of right-wing conservative forces led by Nawaz Sharif. His government oversaw Pakistan's entry into the nuclear club, making it the first Muslim-majority country to possess nuclear weapons. However, Sharif's tenure was also marked by political instability, and he was eventually overthrown in a bloodless coup by General Pervez Musharraf in 1999. Under Musharraf's rule, Pakistan experienced liberal reforms and a focus on economic liberalization and media freedom. However, the country also faced significant challenges, including tensions with India over the Kashmir issue and the rise of extremist groups within the country (Musharraf, 2006, p. 40).

Religious nationalism has remained a powerful force in shaping Pakistani politics. It has influenced the country's foreign policy, particularly in relation to its relationships with neighboring countries and its stance on global issues such as terrorism. The interplay between religion and politics continues to shape the socio-political landscape of Pakistan, with religious parties and movements exerting influence and advocating for the implementation of Islamic law (Chengppa, March 2001, p. online). The religious nationalism has been a defining aspect of Pakistan's political transformations since its inception. The country's foundation on the principles of religious identity has shaped its governance, foreign policy, and social dynamics. While Pakistan has experienced periods of democratic governance, military rule, and liberal reforms, religious nationalism has remained a potent force, impacting the country's political trajectory and its position in the global arena. Understanding the interplay between religion and politics is crucial to comprehending the complexities of Pakistan's political landscape and its future trajectory (Chengppa, March 2001).

Political Transformations and the Shifting Role of Religion

Pakistan was born out of the partition of India, combining the regions of East and West Pakistan, which were predominantly inhabited by Muslims. This formation was based on the two-nation theory proposed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which posited that Muslims and Hindus were distinct nations with their own customs, religions, and traditions. Pakistan is a democratic parliamentary federal republic with Islam as its state religion, according to its Constitution. Over the years, it has adopted various economic models and has become one of the middle-income countries in South Asia.

Geographically, Pakistan shares borders with India to the east, China to the north (Sino-Pak Border), and the Arabian Sea to the south. The country also has boundaries with Afghanistan (Durand Line) and Iran

(Gold Smith Line) in the western region. In recent times, Pakistan's strategic importance has grown as a gateway for fuel energy, an economic corridor with China, and a key player in the global war on terrorism. Ongoing border conflicts between China and India have further highlighted its significance as a neighboring country, and its role in maintaining stability and peace in South Asia.

The independence of Pakistan on August 14, 1947, marked a period of immense transformation. However, the partition resulted in massive migration, communal violence, and widespread loss of life. Scholars have described this period as a "retributive genocide" between religious groups, leading to an estimated death toll ranging from 200,000 to 2,000,000 people. The scars of this tragic event still affect the region today (Doshi & Mehdi, August 14, 2017). After independence, Pakistan's founding fathers appointed Liaquat Ali Khan as the country's first prime minister, with Muhammad Ali Jinnah serving as the first governor-general and speaker of the State Parliament. Following Jinnah's death in 1948, the process of transforming Pakistan into an ideological Islamic state began, culminating in the introduction of the Objectives Resolution in 1949 by Liaquat Ali Khan. Tensions between East and West Pakistan arose, and in 1952, violence erupted in East Pakistan when the government did not recognize Bengali as an equal language alongside Urdu (Kareem, Mehboob, & Hashim, October 24, 2015).

Political turmoil continued in the 1950s with the implementation of the One Unit Program, which divided Pakistan along the lines of the German geopolitical model. The 1954 elections revealed ideological differences between the regions that fueled separatism in East Pakistan (Nair, 1990, p. 165). In 1958, President Iskandar Mirza imposed martial law and appointed General Ayub Khan as the new leader, introducing the "Basic Democracy" system. Ayub Khan's rule led to economic development and modernization, but it also faced opposition from various political groups. In 1969, Ayub Khan resigned amid protests, leading to the rise of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at its helm. Bhutto's period in power from 1971 to 1977 witnessed left-wing democracy, economic nationalization, and a focus on science and culture. He also spearheaded Pakistan's covert nuclear bomb projects in response to India's nuclear program. In 1977, Bhutto faced opposition, and protests led to a coup by General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, who imposed martial law. Zia-ul-Haq sought to establish an Islamic state and enforced Sharia law, leading to a rise in state-sponsored religious conservatism (Sinha, 2014, p. 142). His regime lasted until his death in a mysterious plane crash in 1988.

Challenges and Consequences of Religious Nationalism

Religious nationalism, particularly in the context of Pakistan, has posed numerous challenges and consequences throughout its history. Pakistan's inception as an Islamic state based on religious nationalism in 1947 led to the violent partition of India, resulting in widespread loss of life and communal violence. The country's subsequent journey has seen a mix of democratic and military rule, with various leaders attempting to shape Pakistan's identity as an Islamic nation. The consequences of religious nationalism in Pakistan have included social and political divisions, violence, and an impact on foreign relations.

The creation of Pakistan was rooted in the belief that Muslims and Hindus were distinct nations, with their own customs, religions, and traditions. While this idea provided the foundation for the establishment of Pakistan as an independent state, it also laid the groundwork for religious divisions and conflicts. The

partition of India in 1947 led to mass migrations and communal violence, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. This violence not only affected the immediate aftermath of partition but also had long-term consequences, including strained relations between India and Pakistan. Religious nationalism in Pakistan has also shaped the country's political landscape. The Objectives Resolution, introduced in 1949, declared Islam as the state religion and set the course for Pakistan's transformation into an ideological Islamic state. Since the many years, different leaders have attempted to assert their vision of religious nationalism, which has often resulted in social and political divisions. Tensions between the country's various religious and ethnic groups have been a recurring challenge, with the rights and freedoms of minority communities sometimes being compromised (Malik, September 2002).

The influence of religious nationalism in Pakistan has also had implications for the country's foreign relations. Pakistan's identity as an Islamic state has led to complex dynamics with neighboring countries, particularly India. On-going conflicts and territorial disputes, such as the Kashmir issue, have been fueled by religious nationalism on both sides, hindering efforts for peaceful resolution. As well, Pakistan's support for religious causes and groups, both domestically and internationally, has sometimes strained its relations with other countries and affected its standing in the international community (MFA, Juen 28, 2019).

Besides, religious nationalism has had consequences for social and cultural life within Pakistan. The promotion of Islam as the state religion has led to the implementation of Sharia law and the introduction of religious practices and norms into various aspects of society. This has resulted in debates and conflicts over issues such as the role of women, religious freedom, and the interpretation of Islamic principles. The imposition of religious norms has at times limited personal freedoms and stifled social progress. In recent decades, Pakistan has also faced the challenge of extremism and terrorism, which can be partly attributed to the influence of religious nationalism. The country has experienced acts of violence carried out by extremist groups claiming to defend Islam and the interests of the nation. These acts have not only caused loss of life and widespread fear but have also damaged Pakistan's reputation and hindered its economic and social development (Kahn, March 2013).

Addressing the challenges and consequences of religious nationalism in Pakistan requires a comprehensive approach. It involves promoting religious tolerance and respect for diversity, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, and fostering an inclusive national identity that transcends religious boundaries. It also requires addressing the root causes of extremism, such as socioeconomic disparities and lack of education, to create an environment where radical ideologies find fewer recruits. Moreover, building strong and mutually beneficial relationships with neighboring countries and the international community can contribute to regional stability and cooperation. Religious nationalism in Pakistan has presented significant challenges and had far-reaching consequences throughout the country's history. While it has shaped Pakistan's identity as an Islamic state, it has also led to social and political divisions, violence, and strained foreign relations. These challenges of religious nationalism require a multifaceted approach that promotes inclusivity, tolerance, and socioeconomic development (Shafqat, July 14, 2009).

Contemporary Perspectives and Future Directions

Pakistan is a democratic parliamentary federal republic with Islam as its state religion, according to the Constitution of Pakistan. Over the years, Pakistan has adopted various economic models and has become one of the middle-income countries in South Asia. Geographically, Pakistan shares its borders with India to the east, China to the north (Sino-Pak Border), and the Arabian Sea to the south. The country also has boundaries with Afghanistan and Iran in the western region. In recent times, Pakistan has gained importance as a gateway for fuel energy, an economic corridor with China, and as a key player in the global war on terrorism. On-going border conflicts between China and India have further highlighted the strategic significance of Pakistan as a neighboring country and its role in maintaining stability and peace in South Asia.

The early years of Pakistan's independence were marred by violence and loss of life during the partition. The mass migration of people across the newly drawn borders led to communal violence between religious groups, resulting in a significant death toll. The scars of this period still resonate in the collective memory of the nation. In future, Pakistan may through various political and social changes. The country experienced military coups, the rise of different political parties, and the emergence of religious conservatism. Leaders like Liaquat Ali Khan, Ayub Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Benazir Bhutto played significant roles in shaping Pakistan's political scene.

The country also faced external challenges, including wars with India over the disputed territory of Kashmir. The conflicts with India have had a profound impact on Pakistan's political, social, and economic development. The country has also dealt with internal issues such as ethnic tensions, regional disparities, and the rise of extremist ideologies. Pakistan has made significant strides in various fields, including science and technology, nuclear power, and space exploration. The country launched its space program in 1961 and has continued to make progress in these areas. However, it has also faced criticism and sanctions from the international community for its nuclear weapons program (Qasim, 2017, pp. 39-40).

Pakistan has made progress but still faces challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and an unequal distribution of wealth. The government has implemented various policies to promote economic growth and development, including infrastructure projects and attracting foreign investment. Now days, Pakistan has faced security challenges, including terrorism and militancy. The country has been actively involved in the global war on terrorism and has made efforts to combat extremist ideologies and root out terrorist organizations operating within its borders. Pakistan also faces both opportunities and challenges. The country has the potential to become an economic powerhouse, given its strategic location and abundant resources. However, it also needs to address issues such as corruption, political instability, and social inequality. Pakistan's journey as an independent nation has been marked by significant achievements, challenges, and transformations. The country has made progress in various fields but still faces numerous issues that need to be addressed. The perspectives and directions for the future of Pakistan will depend on the ability of its leaders and citizens to tackle these challenges and work towards a more prosperous, stable, and inclusive society.

Conclusion

Pakistan's has been deeply intertwined with religious nationalism and political transformations. From its inception as a separate homeland for Muslims in British India to its present-day status as an independent nation, Pakistan has experienced a complex interplay between religion and politics, shaping its identity and trajectory. The vision of Pakistan's founding father, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was to establish a state where Muslims could freely practice their religion and have political representation. This vision laid the foundation for the country's religious nationalism, which has played a significant role in shaping its identity and political landscape. Pakistan has witnessed various political transformations, including periods of military rule, democratic transitions, and struggles for power among different factions. These transformations have often been marked by a tension between secular and religious forces, with religious nationalism frequently influencing political dynamics. The rise of religious parties and movements in Pakistan has further contributed to the complex relationship between religion and politics. These movements have championed causes related to Islam and sought to assert their influence in the country's political sphere. The impact of religious nationalism on policies, governance, and societal dynamics has been significant, leading to debates and challenges surrounding issues such as blasphemy laws, religious freedom, and the rights of religious minorities. Despite the enduring presence of religious nationalism, Pakistan has also witnessed the emergence of a diverse and vibrant civil society, progressive voices, and a commitment to pluralism. These countervailing forces have sought to shape a more inclusive and tolerant Pakistan, challenging the dominance of religious narratives and fostering a more balanced discourse. As Pakistan moves forward, it faces on-going challenges and opportunities. Striking the right balance between religion and politics will continue to be a delicate task. Development in an inclusive national identity that respects diversity, safeguards fundamental rights, and promotes social cohesion will be crucial for Pakistan's progress and stability. Pakistan's historical journey of religious nationalism and political transformations underscores the complex nature of its identity and the need for continuous dialogue, introspection, and adaptation. By embracing the principles of democracy, pluralism, and equality, Pakistan can foster a more harmonious and prosperous future for its people.

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