

A MODERN QUANDARY:

The making of Pakistani politics through its interaction with modernity

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“History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized.”

– Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*

Introduction

The advent of the nation-state and the proliferation of print set in motion a spectacular exercise in myth creation and shared meanings.¹ Neither of these crucial elements of nation-building would be possible if not for the resilience and intergenerational transferability of narratives (or collective amnesia where applicable).² In the case of Pakistan – its short history, the meaning of its “freedom,” the conditions that precipitated its constructions – one of the most popular narratives in its national mythology is that of Islam. While Islam is by no means the only narrative tool in Pakistan’s story – nor is it as nefarious or inherently backwards as many Orientalists of the day posited – its role in the zeitgeist of a post-Great War, self-determining world cannot be understated. At a time when multiple nationalisms were awakening, why and how was religion so intrinsic to the movement that was soon to become a push for a Muslim Indian state? The answer to this question, this paper argues, lies in Islamic modernism and its impact on international relations and Subcontinental politics of the time.

Due attention will be paid to the external factors that had an influence on Pakistan’s socio-political and security decisions. This paper will be structured largely chronologically, beginning with the British Raj. More than anything, this paper resolves to treat Pakistan with the

¹ Benedict R. O’G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended ed (London ; New York: Verso, 1991), 46.

² Anderson, 195, 204-206.

nuance that it is owed. Pakistan has been stretched taut by its desire to succeed as a state while in a precarious geopolitical position and – to many of its citizens’ chagrin – subject to demands made of it as a strategically necessary country in the “War on Terror.” Reductionism for palatability is academically irresponsible. The inflation of religion - its “undue and ahistorical privileging in the periodization of Indian history ...” - as the cleavage along which South Asia fractures is an example of reductionism that will be discussed.³ It is therefore necessary to understand why Pakistan is host to so many “paradoxes” (as preeminent South Asia studies scholar Christophe Jaffrelot puts it) so as to understand its policies and politics - and craft policies and politics in response.⁴

What’s in a myth?

Some of the terms discussed in this paper deserve extrapolation or, at least, definitions. Where possible, the introduction of new ideas and concepts will come with simple definitions. Other ideas require longer explanations. Further in this paper, sections will be devoted to understanding Islamic modernity and secularism, favored as such due to their central role in the research questions that guide this paper.

Scholar Gerard Bouchard defines social myths as “promoted by collective actors and [conveying] meanings, values, beliefs (religious or not), and ideals.”⁵ He goes on to assign four attributes to myths, that can be summarized as follows: 1) Hybridity, in that myths function across contradictions e.g. reality and fiction, reason and emotion; 2) Intrinsic duality in that they

³ Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, n.d.), 8.

⁴ Christophe Jaffrelot and Cynthia Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox: Instability and Resilience*, The Ceri Series in Comparative Politics and International Studies (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁵ Gérard Bouchard, ed., *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents*, first edition (New York: Routledge, 2013), 2.

are both intensely contextual and universal; 3) Sacredness, in that an attack on myths elicit emotional, aggressive responses and are as such self-sustaining in their inviolability; and 4) Propulsion, in that myths have an ability to muster towards or against social change, as long as the propelled behavior is in line with the prevailing social myths and institutions built thereby.⁶

Bouchard's understanding of how national myths come to proliferate hinges on seven steps. I will condense these steps into four steps: 1) the "anchor," an event that triggers the constitution of a movement or consciousness (this can be traumatic but also positive – for Pakistan, this could be the fall of the Mughal Empire, the emergence of the British Raj, the fall of the Ottoman Empire, or Partition itself at various stages of national consciousness); 2) an "imprint," which is the emotional stamp of the anchor, which could be trauma itself or the aforementioned awakening (for Pakistan, this could be the collective "wound" of being a colonial subject, a nostalgia for Islam, a desire for reification); 3) the creation of an "ethos," values, principles, beliefs, etc., that constitute what is worth fighting for or worth immortalizing (freedom, broadly, or the *ummah*, a great project such as that of the Khilafat movement); and, finally, 4) the accretion, sacralization and dissemination of a narrative within the collective consciousness.⁷ This last step is a truncation of Bouchard's final four steps in the mythification process.

A narrative, for our purposes, is both a process and a mythos by which a people defines itself and its imagined community. Narratives are also "intrinsic to memory," and collective memories are stylized to fit in with a collective schema that, in turn, shapes what is acceptable in

⁶ Bouchard, 2-3.

⁷ Bouchard, 5.

a belief system and exceptional to said belief system and community.⁸ An imagined community itself is “...conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” among and between individuals who may never see each other but know of one another as brethren nonetheless.⁹ And as a tool to understanding narratives, and how they may manifest, Michael Morden’s categorization of the archetypes of narratives is instrumental. Borrowing from Frye’s delineation of literary archetypes, Morden posits that the study of nationalism, while centering narratives and mythmaking, must take into account literary-emotional underpinnings. The four “mythoi” are comedy, romance, tragedy and irony.¹⁰ For our purposes, the story of the movement for Pakistan – in grappling with Islamic modernity, secularism, and ethno-religious nationalism – is an inherently romantic story; hero-ascendance, the “vanquishing” of an enemy, are all “common in postcolonial national narratives.”¹¹ Moreover, the romantic mythos “tells a sharply agonistic and zero-sum story” which is “especially challenging in the context of national diversity.”¹² For Pakistan, the vanquishing of the perceived enemy is an on-going struggle, with hero-ascendance simultaneously realized and aspirational. This concept, that of the Pakistani mythos possessing a romantic archetype, will be revisited.

Islamic modernity

Partha Chatterjee defines anti-colonial nationalism as distinct from nationalism; it creates “...its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle

⁸ Michael Morden, “Anatomy of the National Myth: Archetypes and Narrative in the Study of Nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism* 22, no. 3 (July 1, 2016): 447–64, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12167>, 452.

⁹ Benedict R. O’G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended ed (London ; New York: Verso, 1991), 6-7.

¹⁰ Michael Morden, “Anatomy of the National Myth: Archetypes and Narrative in the Study of Nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism* 22, no. 3 (July 1, 2016): 447–64, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12167>, 456.

¹¹ Morden, 458.

¹² Michael Morden, “Anatomy of the National Myth: Archetypes and Narrative in the Study of Nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism* 22, no. 3 (July 1, 2016): 447–64, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12167>, 459.

with the imperial power.”¹³ It does this by distinguishing social institutions and practices “into two domains – the material and the spiritual” where the former deals with the external, what many would believe to be the domain of Western modern superiority (“the economy ... statecraft, of science and technology”).¹⁴ The latter, then, is inherently the subjugated people’s own; preserved against Western or external encroachment, the spiritual domain “[bears] the ‘essential’ marks of cultural identity” and is subject to the most “powerful, creative, and historically significant project” in nationalism, wherein the aforementioned mythoi of narrative archetypes can flourish.¹⁵ The spiritual arena is host to the most fervent negotiations in narrative-building, where “a ‘modern’ national culture that is nevertheless *not Western*” is fostered.¹⁶

The desire to conceive of modernity within a community’s spiritual domain was the soil where Islamic modernity could be cultivated. If modernity, “haunted both by a search for novelty and by the recollection of precursors,” is an attempt to position humanity after a rejection of what should be in favor of what is, and is, therefore, a consequence of strictly Western Enlightenment ideals, then how should the global Muslim populace – so strictly juxtaposed against Western “civilization” by Orientalists in the (pre-)colonial period – confront modernism?¹⁷

Orientalists have historically positioned Islam as external to Europe(-an civilization) and, as such, European/Latin “Christendom” constitutes modernity in a way that Islam – and

¹³ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 6.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 6; Morden, “Anatomy of the National Myth”, 457.

¹⁶ Emphasis mine.

¹⁷ Michael H. Levenson, *Modernism* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2011), 2; Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 102; M. Naeem Qureshi, *Ottoman Turkey, Atatürk, and Muslim South Asia: Perspectives, Perceptions, and Responses* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 9.

“Islamdom” – has been alien to and which, thus, never became “truly modern.”¹⁸ This exceptionalization of the modern as “material” is what the aforementioned “spiritual” domain has attempted to grapple with. Chatterjee’s evocation of a spiritual domain fits in neatly here; according to Salvatore, rather than being a distant Other, Europe’s Othering of Islam is a product of its constant interaction with the latter over centuries. Where Western “Christendom” espoused universality and “monocivilizationalism,” Islam was a constant actor with “diverging political developments.”¹⁹ The anxiety that perceived Islam and its followers – and, of course, populations outside Latin Christendom - as *unmodern* permeated through into colonial times as well. And when colonial realities necessitated the education of colonized elites in Western countries, a necessary conflict between the material and spiritual erupted that demanded the reappraisal of the spiritual: for Muslims in British India, this culminated in an interaction with Islamic modernity.

This reconciliation of Islam with “the western secularist challenge” was steeped in the context of respective political realities. According to M. Naeem Qureshi, Islamic modernism developed along two approaches: religious and political. The religious prong “tended to revive the glorious spirit of pristine Islamic while the apologetic expression reaffirmed the faith by castigating various aspects of the western society and its criticism of Islam.”²⁰ Meanwhile, the political prong focused on pan-Islamism, the ubiquity of the *ummah* (put simply, the inherent community shared by all Muslims, regardless of race, caste, class, gender, etc.) and reconciled “liberal democratic elements in the Islamic model” as being inherent in the Islamic *falsafa*.²¹ It

¹⁸ Martin van Bruinessen, Muhammad Khalid Masud, and Armando Salvatore, *Islam and Modernity Key Issues and Debates* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10391780>, 13-14.

¹⁹ Bruinessen, Masud, and Salvatore, 14.

²⁰ Qureshi, *Ottoman Turkey, Atatürk, and Muslim South Asia*, 54.

²¹ Qureshi, *Ottoman Turkey, Atatürk, and Muslim South Asia*, 54.

“helped to reinforce, among Muslims under colonial rule, a certain consciousness which had disappeared under the impact of imperialism ...” and allowed for the flourishing of the spiritual domain therein.²² While this consciousness is integral to anticolonial nationalism, it also rings close to what Chatterjee describes as an attempt to construct a classical past both in response to and through the appropriation of uniquely Western imagery (e.g. flags, civilizations).²³ This will be discussed in a later section.

Islamic modernism was characterized by four major waves. The first wave was in response to the perceived decline of Muslim rule in the eighteenth century, with calls for the reform of Islamic institutions and Islamic law in general and “[calls] for a purification of the faith in order to effectively survive the colonial impact.”²⁴ The second wave, a response to colonial rule on the Muslim world – and particularly British encroachment on popular Indian narratives – saw the rise of the Aligarh School and the Khilafat movement.²⁵ The third wave of Islamic modernism brought with it the sting of inferiority as the zeal of Christian missionary movements subjugated indigenous and local religious populations. Finally, the fourth wave saw the aftermath of Muslim youth being educated abroad in the West; this cohort of young Muslims equated modernization with westernization prompting apologist expressions (as referenced by Qureshi) by Islamic modernists.²⁶

The Orient and the Occident

²² Qureshi, 54.

²³ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 102.

²⁴ Bruinessen, Masud, and Salvatore, *Islam and Modernity Key Issues and Debates*, 240; Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 66.

²⁵ Bruinessen, Masud, and Salvatore, *Islam and Modernity Key Issues and Debates*, 240.

²⁶ Bruinessen, Masud, and Salvatore, *Islam and Modernity Key Issues and Debates*, 241.

The influence of Orientalist scholars on restructuring ethno-religious relations between communities in British India has had consequences reaching through until today. Even immediately after the imposition of colonial rule, contemporary historians, politicians and other members of the intelligentsia touted the “civilizing” effect the British Raj had on India.²⁷ What accounts for the seemingly widespread amnesia and the acceptance of British superiority over the British Raj?

The British “Assumption that Indians had lost their right to self-rule through their own weakness ... [through] a succession of ‘foreign’ rulers” played a large role in creating cleavages in the erstwhile reasonably coexistent Subcontinent.²⁸ As noted before, Indian Muslims and Hindus began considering one another as outsiders using imagery and concepts construed from British rule. Even more concretely, the British fomented and instrumentalized religious differences upon realizing that “...the character of British rule was more becoming of an imperial power.”²⁹ The project of assigning any Muslim encroachment into India to a separate “civilization” was undertaken, with Governor General Ellenborough symbolically acquiring the Gates of Somnath, a relic of “a famous Hindu temple in Gujarat ... which had been plundered and desecrated six hundred years earlier by Muslims ...” and parading the Gates, with great fanfare, back through India with the intention of a new temple to be built in Gujarat.³⁰

An institutionalization of a new hierarchy appeared, with Indians being required to remove footwear upon entering British premises, though the same courtesy was by and large

²⁷ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 49.

²⁸ Bernard Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, Canto (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr, 2010), 166.

²⁹ Cohn, 175.

³⁰ Cohn, 175.

rejected in Indian religious spaces – Muslim, Hindu and beyond.³¹ Preferential treatment further instigated social engineering, with Bose and Jalal stating that “It is probable that Indian social practice was more hierarchically defined in the first half of the nineteenth century in response to colonial initiatives” than previously existed.³² Religious groups reckoned with “colonial impacts” in different ways; in addition to waves in Islamic modernist circles, a reformist strain in Hinduism also emerged. Intra-Hindu debates after the British prohibition on the practice of *sati* were emblematic of this.³³

The proliferation of Western style institutes of education, and a “renaissance” in literary, academic and socio-religious scholarship, was a major vehicle of change in the consciousness and reckoning. Jaffrelot isolates three prevalent attitudes in the early 19th century among Hindu elites of which the first and third, revivalism/traditionalism and reformism, caught on amongst the Muslim population.³⁴ Regardless, the Indian literati and intelligentsia that would crop up because of this would come to play a significant role in the political trajectory of the Indian Subcontinent. While “for educated Indians [Western-style education] was seen as part of a process of self-strengthening and became almost proto-nationalist in character,” for the British, it was a means to create a class of interpreters, British in all but “blood and colour” – a feudal aristocracy to be cultivated and then used.³⁵ Fittingly, the *lingua franca* of the Indian aristocracy was changed from Persian to English, though Urdu would emerge as the primary literary language until the 20th century.³⁶ The writers and intellects among the feudal aristocracy, in their

³¹ Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” 176.

³² Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 65.

³³ Bose and Jalal, 67.

³⁴ Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*, 27.

³⁵ Bose and Jalal, 68; Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” 206.

³⁶ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 68; Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*, 33.

writing and contemporary historiographies, began carving out the trajectory of a uniquely Indian civilization – what Chatterjee refers to as the “classicization of tradition.”³⁷ While this did awaken a nationalist consciousness among middle- and upper-class communities, it also created revisionist fractures between populations, as well as contributing to the aforementioned amnesia. The periodization of history along *jatis* (essentially dynasties) by Hindu nationalists and majoritarians mimicked “British periodization of Indian history” and the identification of a *Hindu* or Vedic tradition “[accommodated] Islam only as a foreign element.”³⁸ Many factions would go as far as to equate India’s decline with the ascent of Muslim rule in India – and with it, “despotism, misrule, and anarchy” worth justifying “colonial intervention.”³⁹ It is worth noting that “Hindu,” itself, is a term only recently internalized and reappropriated by the adherents of that faith by “others.”⁴⁰ This patchwork of rapidly changing social circumstances presented the British with the “sociological keys” to assert dominance over the British Raj – and the classicization of tradition, by both the British and factions within India, would ensure that the “past [became] codified” in a manner consistent with the 19th century “...notion that ‘authority once achieved must have a secure and usable past’.”⁴¹

Hegemonic Shifts Within and Without

Between the internal fragmentation between Hindus and Muslims and the emergence of a literati in Muslim-majority Indian states, Muslims in India began to form a collective consciousness of their own. This is where the latter half of the second wave of Islamic modernity

³⁷ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 73.

³⁸ Chatterjee, 74; Gérard Bouchard, ed., “Myths of the Indian Nation,” in *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents*, first edition (New York: Routledge, 2013), 259–76, 261.

³⁹ Partha Chatterjee, *Empire and Nation: Selected Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 83.

⁴⁰ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 2; Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 74.

⁴¹ Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” 167.

began to solidify. With the perceived sense of decline among the world's Muslim population still smarting, the Ottoman Empire's rapid loss of power and prestige came as an alarm to many who felt a greater, historical kinship with the pan-Islamist project – thus, the Khilafat Movement emerged, with its immense influence on what would become Pakistan.⁴² Pro-Ottoman activity in British India occurred on four major fronts. First, the Indian Muslim literati would galvanize print media (a nod to Anderson's belief that print capitalism helped instigate nationalism(s)) and journalism to further the Ottoman cause and disseminate sympathy among common folk.⁴³ The clergy "gave some sort of a religious sanction" to donate to and work for the interests of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁴ Poets, particularly the venerated poet-philosopher Allama Iqbal, would compose poetry ("...a vehicle of mass mobilization..."), the recitation – and sale per page – of which would rake in charity for the Ottoman cause.⁴⁵ Finally, the main propagators of Khilafat Movement would physically sail to Europe to lobby governments and organizations to support the Ottomans. Tied in with many of these efforts were attempts to pander to British colonial power with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the main founding father of Pakistan, even referring to Britain as "the greatest Mahometan power in the world," taking part therein.⁴⁶ Even Mahatma Gandhi, professing his support for pan-Islamism, lent his support to the Khilafat Movement.⁴⁷

However, despite the far-reaching support for the Khilafat Movement, it was never truly in Britain's interest to keep the Ottoman Empire going for longer than it needed to past keeping its enemies – Russia or Germany, as the case may have been – from their expansionist

⁴² Qureshi, *Ottoman Turkey, Atatürk, and Muslim South Asia*, 26-28.

⁴³ Qureshi, 29.

⁴⁴ Qureshi, 30.

⁴⁵ Qureshi, 31, 162.

⁴⁶ Qureshi, 32.

⁴⁷ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 114; Qureshi, *Ottoman Turkey, Atatürk, and Muslim South Asia*, 67.

ambitions.⁴⁸ When, ultimately, the Khilafat Movement failed and the rise of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was all but assured, rather than feel entirely dejected, Allama Iqbal was able to almost singlehandedly turn the general opinion of the Indian Muslim intelligentsia in favor of him, and most importantly, inspired Muhammad Ali Jinnah in “[finding] a good precedent to follow in [Atatürk’s] achievements...”⁴⁹ This bargaining act – from seeing Atatürk as a threat to pan-Islamism or even traditionalism, to finding in him inspiration for seeing Islam as a civil society, therefore reform – was truly Islamic modernism in action.⁵⁰

Where Allama Iqbal, considered a venerated figure in the movement for Pakistan, threw his poetry behind the Khilafat Movement, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan – another venerated figure in Pakistan – worked staunchly in support of the reformist camp in Islamic modernism. While Sir Syed Ahmad Khan died before the turn of the 20th century, his legacy can still be felt in shows of Pakistani patriotism today. The founder of the Aligarh College, Syed Ahmed Khan espoused the need to reconcile Islam with western notions of modernism, especially as regarded science.⁵¹ Though “the Western diagnosis of the inherent deficiencies of Islamic cultural traditions was already gaining currency” by the time Syed Ahmad Khan’s discourse on Islamic reformism began, his work nonetheless proved influential or at least infamous amongst landed Muslim circles in British India, and indeed, among Muslims across the region and beyond. Most crucially, Aligarh College-trained students went on to enter politics, founding the Muslim

⁴⁸ Qureshi, *Ottoman Turkey, Atatürk, and Muslim South Asia*, 58.

⁴⁹ Qureshi, 144.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Bruinessen, Masud, and Salvatore, *Islam and Modernity Key Issues and Debates*, 257.

League that would be instrumental in calling for increased representation for Indian Muslims and, ultimately, a separate Muslim country.⁵²

While many in the revivification camp and reformist camp alike reviled Syed Ahmad Khan's insistence on the reconciliation of Islamic theology to European modes of enlightenment, it was perhaps his perceived pandering to the British that divided Indian Muslims the most.⁵³ Syed Ahmad Khan worked hard to keep Indian Muslims (in particular, in should be noted, the landed Muslim gentry) in the good graces of the British – or at least on par with the far more populous Hindu populace of North India through the establishment of a separate electorate for India's Muslims.⁵⁴ However, this communalization of Muslim identity was not meant to carry with it a separatist tinge; as Jaffrelot notes, Syed Ahmad Khan saw Muslims and Hindus "...as communities destined to work together to build the Indian nation."⁵⁵ In this sense, his reformist sympathies – much like the Khilafat Movement – while desirous of greater import and representation for Muslims did not isolate or other Hindu communities at least intentionally. Unfortunately, the Aligarh School's nostalgia for Mughal rule – noting the earlier mentioned classicization of tradition and rhetoric of *jati* espoused and instigated by and through colonial lenses – only cemented the ethno-religious territorialization of India.

It would be irresponsible not to caution against ascribing sole responsibility of Muslim nationalism to Islamic modernist interactions. As Bose and Jalal state, "The variety of the Muslim elite's responses to British colonialism and Western modernity cannot be captured

⁵² Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*, 632; Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea*, First Harvard University Press edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 62.

⁵³ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*; Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*.

⁵⁴ Christophe Jaffrelot, "Secularization without Secularism in Pakistan," 2012, 8.

⁵⁵ Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*, 48.

within the facile distinctions between ‘liberals’ and ‘traditionalists’ or ‘modernists’ or ‘anti-modernists.’”⁵⁶ However, the actions and endeavors undertaken in response to changing local and geopolitics have had tangible, traceable impacts on the then-conceptualization of what the promotion of rights for Muslims would look like, and how Pakistan’s politics look today. Modernity and responses thereto can only account for context, not causality, but the context is well worth understanding.

Realizing independence

Ultimately, both Allama Iqbal and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (as representatives of Islamic modernists) spoke to Partha Chatterjee’s invocation and understanding of Gramsci’s “passive revolution” as “...a process involving a political-ideological program by which the largest possible nationalist alliance is built up against the colonial power ... [with] the aim [of forming] a politically independent nation-state.”⁵⁷ While neither Allama Iqbal nor Sir Syed Ahmad Khan wanted or called for a separate Muslim country – only an enfranchised Muslim polity – their ideas and the proliferation thereof precipitated the passive revolution that resulted in the establishment of a Muslim state carved from India. On the one hand, the Aligarh College paved the way for the Muslim League. On the other, Allama Iqbal’s direct influence on Jinnah can be traced back to his assimilation of post-Kemalist politicization of Islam as a civil society into an existing schema. Muslim nationalism, the result of the collective consciousness initiated by a Muslim confrontation with modernity, was seen by Allama Iqbal as a path to individual autonomy – and, as such, self-determination. This self-determination, originally, was meant to be a reprieve from Arab imperialism and instrumentalization of Islam keeping with “the spirit of

⁵⁶ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 94.

⁵⁷ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 212.

modern times.”⁵⁸ Ultimately, given the deep fractures that the classicization of tradition and the subsequent territorialization of communities that occurred – and what Jaffrelot terms an “obsession” with political parity on the part of both Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Ali Jinnah - the call for a separate polity turned into a call for a separate homeland.⁵⁹

It is worth remembering that the concept of an elevated Muslim polity in India was popular primarily among the landed, often Western-educated gentry – but an additional dimension is that the major leaders of the movement were all from states with “a sizeable but vastly outnumbered [Muslim] minority.”⁶⁰ The Muslim League was never entirely popular among most Muslim-majority states, significantly, “Bengal and the Punjab, the two large and populous provinces which were partitioned between India and Pakistan.”⁶¹ This is significant: the splitting of both provinces saw immense violence and carnage during the Partition, while the Pakistani portion of Bengal – East Pakistan – would secede and declare independence as Bangladesh not thirty years after Pakistan’s creation.⁶² It wasn’t until the eleventh hour – “...only during the last few years, indeed in some cases the last few months” that *most* Muslim majority states begin to sympathize with the mission of a separate state for the Muslims of India – and not nearly enough time passed between the acceptance of such a concept and the partitioning of the Subcontinent to allow for an easy transition, let alone one that would see the emergence of a concrete, fully-formed Pakistani nationalism.⁶³ Indeed, in the pursuit of cobbling together *not*

⁵⁸ Qureshi, *Ottoman Turkey, Atatürk, and Muslim South Asia*.

⁵⁹ Jaffrelot, “Secularization without Secularism in Pakistan,” 67.

⁶⁰ Sumantra Bose, “Decolonization and State Building in South Asia,” *Journal of International Affairs; New York* 58, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 95–114, 98.

⁶¹ Bose, 98; Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*, 70.

⁶² William Dalrymple, “The Mutual Genocide of Indian Partition,” *The New Yorker*, June 22, 2015, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple>; Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 159.

⁶³ Bose, “Decolonization and State Building in South Asia,” 98.

even nationalism but, simply, support for the Muslim League, many politicians – including Jinnah – instrumentalized Islam, religious imagery, and even mosques (despite their own lack of piety and religiosity) to rally support.⁶⁴ When after August 14th the hastily put-together Pakistan was finally able to call itself a separate state, it was noncontiguous, unrepresentative, lacked resources, lacked a united nationhood and, most importantly, was utterly traumatized.

Competing Tensions, Competing Realities

It should not come as a surprise that Pakistan faced many challenges upon its creation. Jinnah himself attempted to make clear that Pakistan, despite its Muslim constituency, was not meant to be an *Islamic* country; however, his death so soon after the creation of “a moth-eaten and truncated” Pakistan, and his right-hand man’s untimely assassination thereafter set Pakistan on a precarious path from the get-go.⁶⁵ Jinnah’s last-minute assurances aside, however, Islam was the common denominator that united these new Pakistanis. Jaffrelot identifies three tensions that have weighed Pakistan down from its inception. The first tension “can be summarized by the equation ‘Pakistan = Islam + Urdu.’”⁶⁶ Urdu’s central role in uniting the Indian Muslim intelligentsia and its heightened status as the language of poet-philosophers instrumental in spreading a collective consciousness essentially equated Urdu to Pakistan’s brand of Islam. Where Hindu nationalists touted *Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan* as their slogan, *Muslim, Urdu, Pakistan* was easily applicable in Pakistan.⁶⁷ The weaponization of Urdu from the beginning set the stage for “bitter resentment” amongst the non-Urdu speaking peoples of West and East

⁶⁴ Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*.

⁶⁵ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Digital Repr, Cambridge South Asian Studies 31 (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 260; Bose, “Decolonization and State Building in South Asia,” 98.

⁶⁶ Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*, 10.

⁶⁷ R. S. Rajan, “The Politics of Hindu ‘Tolerance,’” *Boundary 2* 38, no. 3 (January 1, 2011): 67–86, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01903659-1430827>, 80.

Pakistan. This is despite the fact that by 1951, only 7.3% of the population of Pakistan spoke Urdu as a native tongue.⁶⁸

The second tension lies in Pakistan's civil-military relations, and the latter's tendency to co-opt the former – *and* the former's tendency to be autocratic.⁶⁹ Due in part to the ascription of the sacrosanct to Pakistan as a concept (a name that literally translates to land of the pure, with purity an aspiration espoused by Islam), the Pakistani army has acquired an elevated status in Pakistan, seen not only as a defense against India, but as a check on the autocratic tendencies of civilian rulers. This, of course, is a vicious cycle. Dissecting the civil-military relations of Pakistan is an endeavor better left to an entirely different research paper. Suffice it to say that particularly in recent years where the army has taken on an additional role as a defense against terrorist insurgency and has leaned on a symbolically Islamic name for its anti-terror operation (*Zarb-e-Azb*, the name of the Prophet Muhammad's sword in the Battle of Uhud), it is not a longshot to suggest that the army might be seen as waging *jihad* on behalf of the Pakistani people.⁷⁰ Certainly, the perception that the army is the only functioning institution in Pakistan – and one that has the people's interests at heart – fans the flames of this tension.⁷¹

The third and final tension is an intuitive one: Islam is seen as a “supraculture” that ties Pakistan together.⁷² This alone is not a good basis for any country, let alone one with a patchwork classicized history retroactively assigned through the Khilafat Movement and Aligarh College's interaction with Islamic modernity, colonial narratives, and subsequent collective

⁶⁸ Alyssa Ayres, “Language, the Nation, and Symbolic Capital: The Case of Punjab,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 03 (August 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911808001204>, 922.

⁶⁹ Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*, 11.

⁷⁰ Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*, 603.

⁷¹ Zulfiqar Ali, “Contradiction of Concordance Theory Failure to Understand Military Intervention in Pakistan,” *Armed Forces & Society* 40, no. 3 (July 1, 2014): 544–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X12467775>, 549.

⁷² Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*, 11.

consciousness. However, the “constructivist nature of modern Islamic identities” precludes the imposition of Islam as a one-size-fits-all socio-political overlay, let alone a driver of ethno-religious seamlessness.⁷³ I posit that these tensions would not be as deep-seated if not for the Islamic modernist waves that saw the continuous interaction of the ultimately influential – in polity, if not in spirit or abiding unity – Indian Muslim elite with the changing and globalizing world.

As a recipient of American aid in the fight against terror, Pakistan must maintain (or at least cultivate) its reputation as a good ally despite a generally poor view of American encroachment onto Pakistani affairs. The beginning of this relationship, however, was steeped in the United States’ encouragement of Zia ul-Haq, not only a military dictator, but an Islamist with a strong preference for the Saudi Arabian brand of Islam.⁷⁴ His administration saw the institutionalization of the subjugation of women, the further cementation of the second-class citizen status of religious minorities, as well as the proliferation of *madaris* that have fomented extremist Islamist sentiments, supported by both Saudi Arabia *and* Iran for Sunnis and Shi’i respectively.⁷⁵ This only further deepens the divide between both populations in Pakistan, further chipping away at the existing tension of Islam as a supraculture over Pakistan.

Conclusion: between mythoi and modernity

It is a testament to the strength of narratives – particularly those born of trauma and amnesia – that Pakistan’s assumed mantle of the romantic mythos supersedes the urgency of creating a truly pluralistic nationalism more consistent with its demographic reality.⁷⁶ Certainly,

⁷³ Bruinessen, Masud, and Salvatore, *Islam and Modernity Key Issues and Debates*, 262.

⁷⁴ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 198.

⁷⁵ Jaffrelot and Schoch, *The Pakistan Paradox*, 471-472.

⁷⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 201.

the fact that only six censuses have been conducted in Pakistan's nearly 71-year history is worrisome and is a source of anxiety for Pakistan's underrepresented peoples, Muslims and non-Muslims.⁷⁷ The importance of the most recent census in 2017 did not go unnoticed by insurgent and extremist forces in Pakistan, given that census enumerators were often targets of violence.⁷⁸

Pakistan's hero-ascendance faces its second - and third! - battles. Both the "spectre of the vanquished colonial master" and the subsequent "[villains] who [have] directly impinged upon the freedom of the nation" – namely India and insurgents – play foils to Pakistan.⁷⁹ Less obviously, the internal struggle Pakistan faced and is facing – Bangladesh, the Baloch secessionist movement, strife in the FATA region, etc. – indicates a "Romantic majoritarian nationalism [that] can promote conflict-supporting and exclusionary behavior" with the army as the vehicle for this particular leg of the myth.⁸⁰ Perhaps there was a romantic tinge to Islamic modernism from the get-go. Certainly, in the Khilafat Movement's view, the need to preserve the Ottoman Empire as the hero of modern Islam could fit this box. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's insistence that Islamic theology could be reformed to fit modernization and western values of science and enlightenment had an aspirational quality that straddles the comic and the romantic mythoi (with the former's traces of "...the emergence of a new, progressive and inclusive society founded on reason and youthful energy" even appearing in the Aligarh School's ambition for parity between Hindus and Muslims).⁸¹ Most vividly, however, Allama Iqbal's poetry was a device in the propagation of a romantic mythos around the Muslims of India. After his

⁷⁷ AFP, "Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Ahmadi or 'Other': The Census, a Source of Fear and Hope for Minorities," DAWN.COM, May 22, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1334630>.

⁷⁸ Daniyal Hassan, "Deadly Blast Near Lahore Targets Pakistan Census Workers," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2017, sec. Asia Pacific, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/05/world/asia/pakistan-census-attack.html>.

⁷⁹ Morden, "Anatomy of the National Myth," 459.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Morden, "Anatomy of the National Myth," 457.

encouragement of the Khilafat Movement, his sharp pivot towards the exaltation of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is not only relevant as Morden himself singles out Atatürk as an ascendant-hero in Turkey's romantic narrative, but also because Jinnah himself admired and hailed Atatürk as "the foremost leader of the Islamic world."⁸² While certainly, Jinnah did not wish to "[replicate] the Turkish model for his new state..." it would be an interesting trajectory to explore the former's influence on him based on their ostensible similarities.

Islamic modernity – and generally, British India's tumult with modernity – and narratives alone cannot provide the full picture of how Pakistan came to be the way it is. However, the vehicles of Islamic modernity, and their generation of a narrative of classicization around the Muslim populace of India, may have contributed to the "overdetermination" of what Pakistan could and should be in those nascent days of self-determination. However, it behooves a scholar of South Asia to not, in kind, overdetermine the factors that led to Pakistan's precarious nationalism: South Asia, with all its richness of history and diversity, naturally resists monoliths. With multiple anchors, imprints, ethos and collective consciousnesses, depending on who you ask, Pakistan is a unique study in nationalism and nation-building. The legacy of colonial Islamic modernity is just one enlightening route in understanding South Asian nationalisms.

⁸² Qureshi, *Ottoman Turkey, Atatürk, and Muslim South Asia*, 262.

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