

## Revisiting *Creating a New Medina*: Reflections on Fault-lines of Partition Historiography

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### Abstract

*This essay responds to various questions and criticisms that have been articulated regarding my book, *Creating a New Medina*, over the last nearly four years since its publication. It locates the book in the field of Partition studies and clarifies its arguments and contributions to the debates on Partition and Pakistan. It then addresses the most prominent criticisms—be they methodological, historiographic or political—by choosing four reviews by scholars in the field. These reviews have appeared in a variety of venues- an online news portal, a long form narrative journalism magazine, and a literary journal devoted to reviews of books in India, besides a professional scholarly journal in the U.S. In the process of replying to critiques, the essay also indexes a range of extensive and thoughtful comments by scholars in various fields thus pointing to the nature of conversations that have happened in the aftermath of the book. It concludes that arguments on the Partition are by no means over and bound to continue. It consequently calls for a civil debate based on careful historical research that is communicated in clear writing, to keep up the robust conversation on what remains a compelling subject in which not just scholars but the general public at large in the subcontinent along with its far-flung diaspora remain passionately interested and invested.*

### Keywords

partition, Pakistan, new Medina, Muslim Zion, Islamic state.

### Introduction

In the three years since my monograph, *Creating a New Medina*<sup>1</sup> was published, it has undergone several reprints and generated much debate, controversy (and silence in some quarters) after being reviewed in several newspapers and magazines in India and Pakistan. That it continues to reach new audiences, and is being read, interpreted, and appropriated in various

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<sup>1</sup> Venkat Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

ways is evident from the fact that the Twitter account of the *Jamā'at al-Da'wah*, has used the book's cover as its profile photo. Given the questions and criticisms my book has provoked, I felt it would be useful to address them and consequently also explicate its arguments to a wider audience, once the cycle of reviews came to an end.

### Locating *Creating a New Medina* in Partition Studies

*Creating a New Medina* made specific interventions in the field of partition studies. The contours of this field as well as the book's contribution to its debates, therefore, deserve a brief retelling. Scholarship on the Partition over the last thirty years has broadly congealed around twin poles, for which Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Saadat Hasan Manto's eponymous hero, Toba Tek Singh, serve as emblematic figures. Thus, in the first instance, enormous amount of ink has been (and continues to be) spilt on decoding the tactics, strategies, personalities, and motivations of the top political leadership—Jinnah, Gandhi, Nehru, Mountbatten—in the process of trying to find out who really was responsible for precipitating the Partition. In this blame game, an influential strand of thinking has held that the “secular,” cosmopolitan Jinnah never really wanted Pakistan. Rather, as part of his secret strategy that remained unknown to even his closest lieutenants, he was using Pakistan as a “bargaining counter” to secure equal rights and power sharing arrangements for Indian Muslims within an undivided post-British India. According to this argument made by the historian Ayesha Jalal, the Cabinet Mission Plan, which envisaged a weak federal centre wherein Hindus and Muslims would share power equally, was what Jinnah primarily wanted and indeed accepted. However, a vengeful Congress leadership loath to share power with the Muslims and desirous of creating a strong centralised state in India, repudiated these efforts, leaving Jinnah no option but to accept the Partition.<sup>2</sup> Jalal thus overturned conventional wisdom regarding the Partition, shifting the blame from Jinnah to the Congress leadership for this catastrophe, an event which led to the death of an estimated one million people and the forced displacement of another twelve million—the largest recorded movement of population in all of human history.

This view was immediately contested, most prominently by the historian Anita Inder Singh who reinforced the conventional wisdom about Jinnah's responsibility for the Partition. Singh demonstrated how Jinnah was clear about achieving a sovereign Pakistan and singlehandedly accomplished it by

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<sup>2</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

ratcheting up communal tensions at the base, while at the top he skillfully outmaneuvered a Congress leadership comprised of “tired old men” and a British establishment worn out by the end of World War II.<sup>3</sup> A third, largely Pakistani nationalist view within this paradigm represented by the work of the historian Sikandar Hayat, celebrates Pakistan’s birth and lionises the brilliant and charismatic Quaid-i-Azam for heroically leading his people to freedom and deliverance.<sup>4</sup> A final, largely Indian nationalist view on the Partition’s “high politics,” with its nostalgia for an undivided India, mostly takes recourse to the “Divide and Rule” theory and shows how the bitter departing British with an eye on the post-War world order, delivered a parting kick to their ungrateful subjects by deviously dividing the subcontinent before quitting. Gurinder Chaddha’s recent film, *Viceroy*, based on the work of N. S. Sarila, erstwhile ADC to Lord Mountbatten, reflects this view that has long been a staple for popular consumption in India.<sup>5</sup>

On the other side of the divide are those who see this Great Man history and its obsession with the blame game regarding the causes of the Partition, as a callous, futile exercise. They have on the contrary, focused on Partition’s consequences, highlighting the traumatic experiences of common people caught up in the folds of that catastrophe, especially in the partitioned provinces of Punjab and Bengal. What has followed is an attempt to recover the stories of those who survived through the killing, forced migration, and incalculable suffering, seemingly bewildered like Manto’s eponymous hero, Toba Tek Singh, at what was happening around them as a result of unfathomable decisions taken at the top.<sup>6</sup> These granular accounts are related to another strand of scholarship focusing on politics and popular mobilisation in these partitioned provinces that pointed to Pakistan’s late popularity in these areas besides its uncertain and insufficient comprehension amongst its Muslims.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, the everyman accounts offer an implicit critique of the nation state and nationalism in whose name millions lost their lives or were brutally uprooted. If the earlier historiography drew upon archival records to construct Partition narratives, the new scholarship largely eschewed the

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<sup>3</sup> Anita Inder Singh, *Origins of the Partition of India, 1936–1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Sikandar Hayat, *The Charismatic Leader: Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Creation of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Narinder Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India’s Partition* (Delhi: Harper Collins, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> For example, see Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> For example, see Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849–1947* (Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1988).

documentary record, using instead the memories of Partition survivors to try and reconstruct that bygone era. Accompanying this trend has been an increasing interest in Partition literature and cinema, now deemed more suitable than “Historians’ history” for communicating the pain and violence of the Partition.

Yet, while these twin poles represent different approaches to writing history and focus on different historical subjects, they share a common foundational assumption—that Pakistan was an extraordinarily vague idea that remained a nebulous, undefined slogan, something that the Quaid-i-Azam never clarified or was asked to clarify, and that the millions who followed him and supported the struggle for Pakistan (or opposed it) did so without quite being aware of its meaning or implications. This understanding of Pakistan’s birth has also had important consequences for our understanding of its subsequent history. Thus, the legitimation deficit faced by the Pakistani state since Independence has been widely linked to the seeming popular confusion about Pakistan at the moment of its birth. The political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot, for example, has attributed Pakistan’s postcolonial travails to the fact that it lacks a “positive” national identity and possesses only a “negative” identity in opposition to India.<sup>8</sup> This belief has further led most scholars to ignore the content of Pakistani nationalism and the critical place of Islam or the role of religious scholars in its imagination. Instead, the conventional wisdom is that a “secular,” “liberal” elite epitomised by Jinnah led the struggle for creating Pakistan as a European style liberal democratic, albeit Muslim majority state, free from Hindu and British domination, but *not* as an Islamic state. The current tide of Islamic radicalism in Pakistan, to seal this circle of consensus, has been explained as a betrayal of Jinnah’s secular vision—the result of Islamisation policies pursued by General Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s with full support from his US sponsors as they ruthlessly fought the Cold War against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

In *Creating a New Medina*, I challenged the consensus that Pakistan was a vague idea with no real content, which emerged accidentally in the context of a sharp disjuncture between the inchoate aspirations of Indian Muslim masses and the secret politics of their ambivalent, “secular,” pragmatic elites. Moving away from the poles of Jinnah and Toba Tek Singh, I attempted to chart a new direction by investigating how the idea of Pakistan was articulated and debated in the public sphere and how popular enthusiasm for its achievement was generated in the last decade of British rule in India. I focused on the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (now Uttar Pradesh), the crucible where the idea of Pakistan was forged and where it found its earliest and most

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<sup>8</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation* (New York: Zed Books, 2002).

sustained support, before it gained traction in the Muslim majority provinces where Pakistan was ultimately realised. I argued that far from being a vague idea that accidentally emerged as a nation state in 1947, Pakistan was popularly imagined through the 1940s as a sovereign Islamic State: a new Medina, as some called it. In this regard, it was envisaged as the harbinger of Islam's renewal and rise in the twentieth century, the new leader and protector of not just the Indian but the global community of Muslims (*ummah*), and thus a worthy successor to the defunct Ottoman Caliphate that had dropped the baton of leadership of the Islamic world at the end of World War I.

My book specifically foregrounded the critical role played by '*ulamā*' from the influential Deoband school in articulating this imagined national community with an awareness of Pakistan's global historical significance. It demonstrated how they collaborated and combined with the so-called "secular" leadership of the Muslim League to forge a new political vocabulary by fusing ideas of Islamic nationhood and modern state to fashion popular arguments for creating Pakistan. Moreover, their common drive was based on a consensus that an *Islamic* Pakistan under God's law would *gradually* emerge after independence through a process of deliberation and negotiation. I suggested, therefore, that it is partly the lack of the resolution of this problem that explains the cohabitation, collaboration and ongoing struggles between Islamic groups and the political establishment over the definition of Pakistan's identity. The same tension has affected its evolving domestic and foreign policy imperatives, *and not just its obsession with India*.

My book further showed how these heady ideas about Pakistan were vigorously attacked by opponents, especially the Deobandi '*ulamā*' belonging to the *Jam'īyyat-i 'Ulamā'-i Hind* (JUH) as well as their allies in the Congress party. They dismissed the possibility of an Islamic state materialising in Pakistan, ridiculed Jinnah's ability to lead Indian Muslims into that glorious Islamic utopia, besides questioning Pakistan's ability to survive as a sovereign independent state given its economic unviability, vulnerable military defenses, political instability, and the social tensions that it would exacerbate across the subcontinent. They instead upheld the ideal of *muttahiḍah qaumiyat* or composite nationalism of all Indians, stoutly opposed the Partition, and contested Muslim League's ideas in the towns, bazaars, and *qasbahs* of north India, through public meetings, political conferences, and the columns of the Urdu press.

Far from being silenced by the imposing presence of the "sole spokesman" of the Muslim community, a variety of voices animated raucous public debates on Pakistan that lit up and suffused the public sphere in the subcontinent almost immediately after the Lahore Resolution, as popular

mobilisation for or against Pakistan gained momentum. This is not surprising, for in an “argumentative society” like India, despite low literacy rates there has generally been a high level of political awareness, a diversity of passionately held and fiercely contested opinions, besides keen popular participation in politics and political debates, in which issues are discussed, debated, thrashed out, and fought over in the public sphere. These continuous and extensive public debates fed popular conceptions of Pakistan as well the accompanying hopes, apprehensions and questions. Thus, contrary to the dominant presumptions in Partition historiography, Pakistan was not “insufficiently imagined” in the process of its creation.

### Setting the Record Straight

*Creating a New Medina* opened to several positive reviews but also received its share of critical comments. These must be addressed to further elucidate the book’s arguments besides other positions and arguments in the field. Faisal Devji’s review in *The Wire* that levels the first set of criticisms, provides us with an opportunity to clarify matters despite (and perhaps because of) its wildly inaccurate and misleading reading of the book.<sup>9</sup> Devji opens his review by dismissing my book as having “a frankly partisan character” and belonging to the camp of “Congress history” since it “invariably” describes Muslim Leaguers as speaking “piously” or “smugly” whereas Congress leaders do so “sagely.” This is not true. The adverb “sagely” appears twice in the book, but *not* to characterise the utterances of Congress leaders. In the first instance, I use it to describe the wisdom of the distinguished jurist and Liberal Party leader, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, in the context of a raging controversy over Urdu/Hindi/Hindustani after Congress governments assumed office in various provinces in 1937. Thus, on p. 80, I write, “As Sapru sagely observed, Telugu, Bengali and other languages in India were as much national languages as Urdu, Hindi or Hindustani.” The second instance is on p. 124, when I quote from Ambedkar’s *Thoughts on Pakistan*. I write, “As Ambedkar sagely observed, ‘I have no doubt that the only proper attitude to Pakistan is to study it in all its aspects, to understand its implications and to form an intelligent judgment about it.’” Devji’s claim that I deploy “sagely” to embellish utterances of Congress leaders, when to the contrary, I use it to describe remarks made by two sharp critics of the Congress, is either a deliberate misrepresentation or the invention of a fervid imagination.

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<sup>9</sup> Faisal Devji, “Young Fogeys: The Anachronism of New Scholarship on Pakistan,” *The Wire*, October 4, 2015, <https://thewire.in/12265/young-fogeys-the-anachronism-of-new-scholarship-on-pakistan/>.

Similarly, the adverb “piously” appears twice in my book. On p. 29, I write, “Mian Sahib’s [Fazl-i-Husain] ‘provincial thesis’ was amplified by his friend, the Aga Khan, who after a lifetime spent in pursuing Muslim communal concerns, solemnly warned Muslims against the formation of parties on a communal basis, piously observing that political groups needed to be formed with the sole objective of raising the economic condition of the masses.” The second occasion is on p. 36, “Another UP landlord, Sir Mohammed Yamin Khan, piously noted that an election campaign by a combined party of Hindus and Muslims would create good feelings and arouse patriotism instead of communalism.” Devji seems to have deliberately missed my ironical use of “piously” to describe the utterances of these two politicians issuing warnings against “communalism” to suit their immediate political interests, after thriving in communal politics for their entire political careers. On a minor note, as is well known, neither of these knights was a Muslim Leaguer and both belonged to parties that opposed the League. Finally, I used the term “smugly” in the context of the top-ranking Muslim League leader, Khaliqzaman, deploying the vile “hostage population” theory to defend Pakistan’s viability. Quoting from the report that the UP Governor, Sir Maurice Hallett sent to the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, I write on p. 220, “The presence of two independent Muslim States in the West and the East, he [Khaliqzaman] smugly declared, would have a ‘steadying influence’ on the rest of India. The Muslim minorities would consequently be much better treated in the Hindu provinces than at present, as would Hindu minorities in Muslim states.” The use of “smugly” in this instance is apposite, as any careful reader of the text can see, but Devji erases all sense of context to misrepresent and attribute a partisan slant to my argument.

### **Framing the Book**

This manner of playing fast and loose becomes further evident from the way Devji frames my book. He declares that it is obsessively concerned with Ayesha Jalal’s *Sole Spokesman*, while “rehearsing as it does debates going back much further than Ayesha Jalal’s book, to the 1930s, as if to fight their battles all over again.” He then accuses me of not even getting her basic argument right, before dismissing the utility of even engaging with Jalal’s work, since it no longer “commands the field.” He instead cites the work of Christophe Jaffrelot and Farzana Shaikh as “proof” of newer scholarship having displaced Jalal’s work.

Devji’s remarks display a lack of basic familiarity with Partition scholarship. To begin with, my book covers the same time period as Jalal’s *Sole Spokesman*, starting with the 1935 Government of India Act and ending in

1947. One wonders whether Devji has actually read either of our books—other than cursorily. His comment on Jaffrelot and Shaikh is again misleading. Partition historiography is not Jaffrelot’s primary research concern. Even his recent synthetic work, *The Pakistan Paradox*, after a perfunctory first chapter that surveys existing scholarship on Pakistan’s origins, focuses on its career as an independent state after 1947.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, Shaikh’s work (that Devji commends) underlines the critical role of Islamic norms, values, and ideals in shaping Muslim politics that eventually led to the creation of Pakistan.<sup>11</sup> As Pratap Bhanu Mehta has noted, this feature brought it close to my book in spirit.<sup>12</sup>

The cavalier dismissal of Jalal’s work is bizarre, given its enormous influence in the field. Devji’s proclamation that I have misunderstood her “bargaining counter” thesis is ridiculous to say the least. More importantly, his assertion that *Creating a New Medina* is solely concerned with Jalal’s work is disingenuous, given the scope of its arguments. The charge would have carried merit had I jostled with Jalal’s interpretation of how the high level negotiations between the British, the Congress party leadership, and Jinnah unfolded at the twilight of the Raj. But my book steers clear of such “high politics.” The *Transfer of Power* volumes—the basis of Jalal’s and other scholarship of that genre—do not find a single mention in my book nor does Jinnah loom large in it as a “sole spokesman,” reduced as he is to one among a welter of voices on Pakistan.

### Partition’s “High Politics” and the Bargaining Counter Theory

My book *does*, however, challenge Jalal’s thesis, and more precisely, its fundamental and interlocking assumptions that became axiomatic, influencing subsequent waves of Partition scholarship. It simultaneously attempts to extend the boundaries of the field and opens up new ways of thinking about Partition and Pakistan. An excursus into this domain would be useful, since Devji, while claiming to disagree with Jalal’s thesis, nonetheless deploys it—in his assertion that Jinnah’s acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan “does enough harm to Dhulipala’s thesis.” First, my book challenges the assumption that Pakistan remained a vague idea or an undefined slogan in popular consciousness by demonstrating the verve, depth, and sophistication of public

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<sup>10</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Pakistan Paradox: Instability and Resilience* (Delhi: Random House India, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Pratap Bhanu Mehta, “The Promised Land,” *The Indian Express*, January 31, 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/books/book-review-the-promised-land/>.



debates over its meaning and implications. It dwells at length on how Ambedkar inaugurated these debates with his seminal *Thoughts on Pakistan*, a treatise on which there has been an intriguing silence in partition scholarship.<sup>13</sup> It shows how this work, in turn spurred the ML's publication of popular literature on Pakistan, produced out of Jinnah's residence in Bombay under the auspices of the Home Study Circle.<sup>14</sup> These publications elaborated upon issues of Pakistan's sovereignty, territoriality, economy, foreign policy, pan-Islam etc. and were translated into Urdu to educate the party's base. They repudiated Ambedkar's suggestion that Pakistan might not be economically viable, politically stable, militarily defensible or socially cohesive. These themes were widely disseminated and became subjects of passionate debate that reverberated through north India during the 1940s.

Second, my book contradicts the allied assumption that the so-called lack of clarity regarding Pakistan was purposefully fostered by Jinnah since he allegedly never wanted to bring it into existence. I demonstrate in copious detail how Jinnah explained Pakistan as an independent state enjoying all the attributes of sovereignty to mammoth public meetings all over India, and through his interviews and statements in press that became the staple of everyday news.<sup>15</sup> This sustained propaganda served to inform, educate, and mobilise ML supporters (and opponents) in India, while also garnering international attention—given the concern about India in the context of World War II. This state was also described as “Islamic” by Jinnah on various occasions while his lieutenants such as Liaquat Ali Khan, the Raja of Mahmudabad, Khaliquzzaman, and locality-level ML functionaries dinned this message into the party's base. The message was fortified by a section of the Deobandi *'ulamā'* which began to develop a close relationship with the ML by the time of the 1937 by-elections to Muslim seats in the UP legislature. Popular enthusiasm was brought to a crescendo during the 1946 elections, which became a “referendum” on Pakistan.

These flawed postulates—about Pakistan being a vague idea, and deliberately kept so by Jinnah—have propped up the *third* widely accepted truism in Partition studies—that Jinnah was using Pakistan as a “bargaining counter” to secure *parity* for Indian Muslims vis-a-vis the preponderant Hindus in an *undivided* post-colonial India. His acceptance of the Cabinet Mission

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<sup>13</sup> See Bhimrao R. Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Pakistan* (Bombay: Thacker and Company, 1941).

<sup>14</sup> See M. R. T. [Mohammad Sharif Toosy], *Pakistan and Muslim India* (Bombay: Home Study Circle, 1942).

<sup>15</sup> See Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*, chap. 3. Also see Dhulipala, “Partition and the Idea of Pakistan: The Road to New Medina,” *Open Magazine*, December 16, 2016, <http://www.openthemagazine.com/author/venkat-dhulipala>.

Plan is held up as the ultimate proof that Jinnah did not want Pakistan. Even though my work is not directly concerned with “high politics,” it would be useful to address this line of thinking, as a means of moving the debate to newer areas.

To begin with, the “parity” argument is shaky. As the constitutional lawyer and scholar Anil Nauriya has shown in a thoughtful essay, on crucial occasions Jinnah firmly rejected the “parity” principle and insisted on a separate sovereign Pakistan.<sup>16</sup> As regards the “bargaining counter” theory, it rests on the premise that this was Jinnah’s secret strategy, now uncovered by the historian, which was unknown to even his closest lieutenants. A major problem with this assumption about the “inwardness” of Jinnah’s strategy is that it is inherently un-falsifiable and not predicated on any direct evidence that Jinnah was actually thinking along such lines.<sup>17</sup> To the contrary, his public pronouncements on Pakistan sharply clash with basic elements of this supposed inward strategy. Moreover, as R. J. Moore, Anita Inder Singh, Sikandar Hayat, and Anil Nauriya have argued, Jinnah’s acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan is hardly clinching proof that he did not want Pakistan. Rather, his decision to “accept” the Plan, while hemming it in with various qualifications, needs to be understood more in terms of its immediate political context, and as one more tactic on the path to achieving Pakistan, which remained the ML’s “unalterable objective.” As Nauriya has again pointed out in a recent essay, the claim that Jinnah and the League effectively gave up the Pakistan demand by accepting the Plan, is highly dubious.<sup>18</sup>

There are other problems with this formulation which my book brings up. First, Jinnah himself strenuously denied the “bargaining counter” theory on several occasions. Thus, while addressing a special session of the Punjab Muslim Students Federation in March 1941, he declared that “the vital contest in which the Muslims were engaged was not only for material gain but for the very soul of the Muslim nation. It was a matter of life and death for the Muslims and *not a counter for bargaining*.”<sup>19</sup> Even as late as 1945, he proclaimed at a public meeting that “opposition to Pakistan might be due to false notions or sentiments or because it was a new idea. Some said it was a

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<sup>16</sup> Anil Nauriya, “Some Portrayals of Jinnah: A Critique,” in *Minority Identities and the Nation-State*, ed. D. L. Sheth and Gurpreet Mahajan (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 73–112; the essay can be accessed on <http://sacw.net/article13396.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Srinath Raghavan, “The Puzzle that is Pakistan,” *Seminar*, January 2015, [http://www.india-seminar.com/2015/665/665\\_srinath\\_raghavan.htm](http://www.india-seminar.com/2015/665/665_srinath_raghavan.htm).

<sup>18</sup> Anil Nauriya, “Sectarian Politics and the Partition of India: The Targeting of Nehru and the Congress,” *The Hindu*, September 27, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> *The Leader*, March 3, 1941. Emphasis in this and all subsequent quotations is mine unless otherwise expressed.

hoax and worse still a bargaining counter because Mr. Jinnah was an astute politician. *It was neither a hoax nor a slogan for bargaining.*<sup>20</sup> Such of Jinnah's utterances are usually passed over in silence by the supporters of this theory, or in a display of circular reasoning, explained away as a part of his bargaining strategy. An astute contemporary observer like Ambedkar had no hesitation in summarily dismissing the "bargaining counter" theory as "wishful thinking."<sup>21</sup>

Second, a "moth-eaten" Pakistan was not something forced on the ML leadership by events in 1947 for they seemed quite happy to accept it as early as 1942. This comes out clearly in one of the ML's core propaganda tracts, *Pakistan and Muslim India*, authored by the Punjabi journalist Mohammad S. Toosy. Endorsed by Jinnah in a foreword, it was published by his aforementioned Home Study Circle and translated into Urdu as *Pākistān aur Musalmān* for the benefit of the ML's base. Toosy acknowledged divisions among Indian Muslims regarding the "territorial adjustments" mentioned in the Lahore Resolution. While one section wanted to preserve the existing territorial boundaries of Punjab and Bengal in order to safeguard its economic interests, the other section, "by far the most influential one," desired the separation of Hindu majority Ambala division from the Punjab besides the Hindu majority districts of west Bengal to make Pakistan's territory more compact. This section saw the rearrangement of provincial boundaries as the only way for gaining effective Muslim majorities in Pakistan and minimising the problem of communal conflicts in its domains. Toosy emphatically noted that the "ML more truly represented the interests of this section."<sup>22</sup> Strikingly, Matlubul Hasan, Jinnah's secretary, writing on Jinnah's behalf, lavished praise on Toosy, assuring him that "you are doing a much greater service to the community, by placing before them *the correct interpretation* of the viewpoint of the All India Muslim League, than you could in any[other] way."<sup>23</sup>

That the ML was not averse to partitioning Punjab and Bengal becomes further evident from Liaquat Ali Khan's conversation with the American diplomat Lampton Berry in Delhi—an issue I raised in my book but on which there has been a studied silence thus far. Liaquat told Berry that the ML would be happy with a plebiscite on Pakistan that would be confined to eastern Bengal where the Muslims had a definite majority, and explicitly gave up the

<sup>20</sup> Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad, comp. and ed., *Some Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, 2 vols. (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1952), 2:354.

<sup>21</sup> Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Pakistan*, 191.

<sup>22</sup> M. R. T., *Pakistan and Muslim India*, 55.

<sup>23</sup> M. H. Saiyid to Mohammad Sharif Toosy, January 8, 1941, in *Jinnah Papers*, ed. Z. H. Zaidi (Islamabad: Quaid-i-Azam Papers Wing, Ministry of Culture, Government of Pakistan, 2008), 16:192.

Muslim claim to Calcutta. He further maintained that “plebiscite in the Punjab would be held only in that zone where the Muslims are in a preponderating majority and that, that area of Punjab roughly east of the Sutlej river be excluded from the plebiscite.” Liaquat agreed that C. Rajagopalachari could act as a mediator between the Congress and the ML and that “some headway might be made” if he were to see Jinnah and “*let Jinnah explain the League’s position as outlined above.*”<sup>24</sup> These proposals were to be the basis for Gandhi-Jinnah negotiations to resolve India’s communal deadlock. Rajagopalachari himself explicitly stated that he “had ascertained that the Moslem claim was limited to contiguous districts wherein the population was predominantly Moslem and is not to be taken as coterminous with the present boundaries of Punjab and Bengal.”<sup>25</sup> Chaudhry Khaliqzaman articulated this very view in his own memoir, but historians committed to burnishing Jinnah’s infallible image have thus far ignored Khaliqzaman’s testimony as the selective memory of a wily politician keen to embellish his own legacy while denigrating that of his own leader.<sup>26</sup>

### **Jinnah and the Minority Provinces Muslims**

At the heart of the view that Pakistan was never Jinnah’s real goal but only a bargaining counter, is the fundamental assumption that as the Quaid-i-Azam of all the Indian Muslims, he would never have considered abandoning Muslims from UP, Bihar, CP, Bombay, or Madras, to the tender mercies of Hindu India. After all, these were his earliest, most passionate supporters. However, this view deliberately ignores Jinnah’s public position on this matter. For him, Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces of Punjab, Sind, NWFP, Baluchistan, and Bengal, were a nation with rights to self-determination and statehood since they constituted a numerical majority in a contiguous piece of territory. On the other hand, the Sikhs though distinct enough to be a nation, did not fulfil either of these criteria and hence were a sub-national group with no option but to seek minority safeguards in Pakistan. Jinnah specifically compared the position of the Sikhs to that of the UP Muslims. He argued that the UP Muslims though constituting 14% of the province’s population could not be granted a separate state because, “Muslims in the United Provinces are not a national group; they are scattered. Therefore, in constitutional language, they are characterized as a sub-national

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<sup>24</sup> 845.00/1574, Telegram from New Delhi to the Secretary of State, Washington DC, September 9, 1942 (Interview between Berry and Liaquat Ali Khan), Box 5072, US State Department Papers, NARA, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>25</sup> *New York Times*, February 7, 1942.

<sup>26</sup> See Chaudhry Khaliqzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan* (Lahore: Longmans, 1961).

group who cannot expect anything more than what is due from any civilized government to a minority. I hope I have made the position clear.”<sup>27</sup> He hammered this point home in the aftermath of Pakistan’s creation. When confronted with the terrible situation facing the UP Muslims, Jinnah reportedly stated that “they [the UP Muslims] were fully alive to the consequences they would have to face in Hindustan as minorities but not at the cost of their self-respect and honor.”<sup>28</sup> Jinnah had gone further in a public speech in Kanpur in March 1941 declaring that in order to liberate 7 crore Muslims of the majority provinces he was “willing to perform the last ceremony of martyrdom if necessary and let 2 crores of Muslims [of the minority provinces] be smashed.”<sup>29</sup> Jinnah further declared that Pakistan’s creation would entail a reciprocal *treaty* with Hindu India to safeguard rights and interests of minorities in both states. He then articulated two ideas that became popular ML planks. First, if “Muslim minorities in India were ill-treated, Pakistan would not “remain a passive spectator.”<sup>30</sup> As he elaborated, “if Britain in Gladstone’s time could intervene in Armenia in the name of protection of minorities, why should it not be right for us to do so in the case of *our* minorities in Hindustan—if they are oppressed?”<sup>31</sup> Pakistan would, therefore, go to war with Hindu India for the sake of its Muslim minority. Jinnah and his colleagues also drew startling parallels with the situation of Sudeten Germans under Czechoslovakia and admiringly referred to Hitler’s actions to liberate them. A second solution came in the form of the “hostage population” theory according to which, if Muslim minorities in Hindu India were oppressed, retributive violence would be inflicted upon Hindu and Sikh minorities in Pakistan. This balance of terror (often articulated by leading lights of the League and local functionaries in UP) would guarantee the security of minorities on both sides. That Jinnah himself held such views is substantiated by the medievalist historian Maqbūl Aḥmad in his memoir. When Jinnah visited his college during a tour of Bihar, the young Maqbūl Aḥmad asked him as to what would happen to Muslims left behind in India. How would Pakistan react if the Hindus treated them badly? Jinnah replied, “We will take revenge from the Hindus in Pakistan.”<sup>32</sup> Maqbūl Aḥmad was discouraged from posing any further questions. Jinnah’s anointed heir, Liaquat

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<sup>27</sup> Ahmad, *Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, 1:492.

<sup>28</sup> *The Pioneer*, October 24, 1947.

<sup>29</sup> Ahmad, *Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, 1:271.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:286.

<sup>32</sup> Maqbūl Aḥmad, *Barg-i gul: Khūd navisht savānīh, safarnāmah, ta’limī khidmāt, aur silsilah-i nasab* (Mumbai: Qāzi Sayyid Mahtāb Aḥmad Ḥusainī, 2001).

Ali Khan also publicly declared that maltreatment of Muslims in India would be prevented by repaying in the same coin the Hindu minority in Pakistan.<sup>33</sup>

Jinnah held out further hope for Muslims left behind in Hindu India by declaring that they retained the option of migrating to the new nation state. As he declared soon after the Lahore resolution, “*exchange of population, on the physical division of India as far as practicable would have to be considered.*”<sup>34</sup> It was a theme that he repeated over the next few years. In a later interview, he spelled out three courses available to Muslims in Hindu India. “They may accept the citizenship in the state in which they are. They can remain there as *foreigners*; or they can come to Pakistan. I will welcome them. There is plenty of room. But it is for them to decide.”<sup>35</sup> In tune with his leader, Liaquat told a British official during the Congress-led Quit India Movement that he was contemplating popularising the slogan that Hindus should “Quit Pakistan.”<sup>36</sup> To conclude this section, it is not my intention to explore the minutiae or insidious implications of the Cabinet Mission Plan here. These have been discussed elsewhere.<sup>37</sup> What I wish to underline is that the narrow focus on the Partition’s “high politics” and especially the Cabinet Mission Plan has been used to steer attention away from the ideological underpinnings of the Pakistan movement as well as the styles of mobilisation deployed by Jinnah and the Muslim League in the run-up to Partition.

### Correcting Distortions

Devji dismisses my discussion of these crucial planks in the ML’s campaign as tantamount to adducing “endless proofs of varying quality” for “scoring points.” His own book completely ignores such inconvenient facts, misrepresents them, or often comes up with bizarre explanations. For example, I have pointed out that in their assurances of Pakistan’s assistance to Muslims left behind in India in case they were oppressed, Jinnah and his colleagues publicly compared their approach to Hitler’s stance toward the Sudeten Germans of Czechoslovakia. The Pakistani columnist Khaled Ahmed recently reminded us that it was this position on the Sudeten question by Jinnah and the Muslim League that motivated Czechoslovakia to abstain from

<sup>33</sup> *UP Police Abstracts of Intelligence* for the week ending May 11, 1940. Record Room, UP CID Headquarters, Gokhale Marg, Lucknow, India.

<sup>34</sup> Ahmad, *Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, 1:183.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:383–84.

<sup>36</sup> *Weekly Report of the DIB, Home Department, Government of India*, New Delhi, August 15, 1942, No.33, L/PJ/12/484, File 230/35, OIOC, British Library, London.

<sup>37</sup> Anil Nauriya, “Cabinet Mission Reconsidered” in *Looking Back: The 1947 Partition of India 70 Years on*, ed. Rakshanda Jalil, Tarun Saint, and Debjani Sengupta (Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2017), 3–16.

voting on Pakistan's membership of the United Nations.<sup>38</sup> Devji falsifies the ML's position on the matter by claiming that "the role played by Germany for Sudetenland then appears to have been reserved for Britain in the eyes of many in the League."<sup>39</sup> It is not hard to understand Devji's aversion to facts since they show similarities in the thinking of the ML leadership and that of the Nazis on some crucial points. He, therefore, resorts to creating "alternative facts."

Devji's interpretation of Jinnah's Kanpur statement about sacrificing Muslims of the minority provinces for the sake of Pakistan, is ludicrous. Rather than reading it alongside Jinnah and the ML's articulations of hostage population theory or threats of war against India, he sees it in terms of Jinnah "*sacrificing Pakistan for India's liberty as a nation state.*"<sup>40</sup> This whimsical formulation is explained as "evidence of Jinnah's continued if distinctly peculiar attachment to India's freedom. And this he thought he had guaranteed by sacrificing the majority of her intractable Muslim population because they were unable by their size and concentration to be a minority there." Devji attributes the Quaid's largesse toward India to his "own dislike of Muslims in general, or perhaps his shame and pity at their backwardness." He commends Jinnah's insistence on partitioning the subcontinent for it was "meant to do nothing more than create friendly relations between groups torn apart by violence."<sup>41</sup> Wild speculation with lack of evidence or the misrepresentation of existing evidence characterises Devji's writing. In the same vein, he sees Jinnah's "betrayal" of the Dravida movement as further proof of his loyalty to India. "Is it possible that the Qaid's curious reluctance to support any other movement that might help destroy both the Congress and its vision of India, including his well-known lack of seriousness when conducting desultory negotiations with the Sikhs to opt for a better deal in Pakistan, demonstrated the remnants of his loyalty to India in some perverse way? Or did he want to be the only one to destroy the country he had fought to keep united for so many years?"<sup>42</sup> New sides to the "inwardness" of Jinnah's grand strategy are being discovered these days. Jinnah is cast as the great unrequited lover, sacrificing everything for the sake of Hindu India. Devji

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<sup>38</sup> Khaled Ahmed, "The Sudeten Parallel," *The Indian Express*, April 11, 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-sudeten-parallel/>.

<sup>39</sup> Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 37.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

could have done better still by summoning the Quaid's spirit for questioning by using the services of a competent spiritualist.<sup>43</sup>

### **Pakistan as Muslim Zion?**

Devji's discomfort with ideas that were central in the ML's muscular advocacy of Pakistan and his diatribe against my work is not surprising. This is because the arguments put forth in *Creating a New Medina* undermine the thesis of his own book, *Muslim Zion*. He, therefore, dismisses my principal arguments as "simple" and "familiar" and offers his own thesis as the truth about Pakistan. A summary of his purportedly intellectual history of Muslim nationalism should help clarify the issues at stake. Pakistan, Devji argues, is an unrecognised twin of Israel, a *Muslim Zion*, with Zion being the name of "a political form in which nationality is defined by the rejection of an old land for a new."<sup>44</sup> Like Israel, Pakistan was not a conventional nation state based on "blood and soil" nationalism as manifest in nineteenth-century European states or their twentieth-century derivatives. These two states were more akin to Settler Colonies formed in the New World like the US and Liberia and predicated on the Enlightenment idea of a social contract (between Jews in the case of Israel and Indian Muslims in the case of Pakistan), which could be actualised into a state in *any* territory. Both thus represent a different type of political geography since their territory was incidental to their formation. In this regard, Devji argues that just as lands in different continents were envisaged as the site for Israel before its actual birth, Pakistan's territory too was often imagined with "wildly fluctuating borders." These are therefore homelands "lacking historical roots" based on a "rejection of the past and a radical orientation to the future." As he notes, "when the time comes for either to abandon a portion of its territory, it does so without an apparent crisis of nationality."<sup>45</sup>

Islam, according to Devji, was the basis of the social contract in the case of Pakistan. This Islam was not "some old-fashioned theological entity" but an abstract and modern form of belonging. It was kept an "abstract, empty idea," its specificities never laid out to preclude intra-Muslim schisms. Moreover, it allowed for a private sphere of faith for individuals, the result of the "ecumenism" of Shia elites such as Aga Khan, Raja of Mahmudabad, and Jinnah himself. Devji argues that Jinnah exemplified this ecumenism in both his personality (given his lack of religiosity and famously anglicised ways) and

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<sup>43</sup> See Ali Usman Qasmi, "The Spirit of Jinnah," *The News on Sunday* (Pakistan), April 5, 2015. <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/the-spirit-of-muhammad-ali-jinnah/#.W1CszNJKhPY>.

<sup>44</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–23.



politics (due to his alleged indifference to blood and soil, history and geography). Practicing “principled” politics, he pursued a constitutional settlement between Hindus and Muslims in terms of a “social contract” between equals. To achieve that, Jinnah, according to Devji, deliberately eschewed the language of history by imagining both communities as emerging from a “state of nature” and defined the nation as a “legal” entity and not a territorial space. Devji concludes that *Muslim Zion* highlights “the lines of argument or debate that have emerged as the most important and productive ones in the history of Muslim nationalism.” It, therefore, purports to illuminate a field plagued by tomes on “conspiratorial politics,” or by local histories that he derisively dismisses as “proctology.”<sup>46</sup>

*Muslim Zion* seeks to do three things. First, it tries to elevate the history of Muslim nationalism in colonial India above subcontinental histories of communalism, and embeds it in the processes of twentieth-century global imperial history that also led to the creation of Israel. Second, it seeks to elevate Jinnah from a skilled political practitioner to a constitutional thinker, a principled champion of rational secular politics, and ultimately a child of the Enlightenment. Finally, it tries to fashion a cosmopolitan history of the Muslim League by portraying it as a “non-sectarian” organization comprised of modern, entrepreneurial, international minded leaders, hence bringing it on par with the Indian National Congress. Devji attempts to establish these formulations as the new truths. An engagement with them is, therefore, necessary to clarify issues in Partition studies.

### Problems with *Muslim Zion*

*Muslim Zion* is thinly researched, cavalier with facts, makes extravagant claims that are largely unfounded, indulges in excessive speculation, and reads like an unfulfilled fantasy. Its arguments often rest on misrepresentations, elisions, or distortions, and are presented in pompous and often impenetrable prose, which nowadays is often considered a sign of profundity. Let us look closely at whether Pakistan fits the definition of “Muslim Zion.” It is true that Pakistan, like Israel, was espoused and established on the basis of religious identity. The other similarity they share is that, contrary to Devji’s claim, they are *not* “accidental homelands.” Israel’s territory coincides with Jewish sacred geography and the Zionists very quickly decided upon Palestine as the site of the Jewish homeland.<sup>47</sup> Pakistan itself was created where it was,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 6–9.

<sup>47</sup> For a concise introduction to the vast literature on Zionism, see David Engel, *Zionism: A Short History of a Big Idea* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2009). Also see Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press,

precisely because Muslims constituted a majority in these territories. Jinnah repeatedly made this argument during the Pakistan movement. Pakistan's representative at the UN made this very argument while opposing the Partition of Palestine.<sup>48</sup> If on the other hand, Indian Muslims were spread out evenly throughout the subcontinent, it is difficult to see how the demand for Pakistan could have arisen or have had any traction. The similarities end here. Devji's claim that Pakistan is defined by the "rejection of an old land for the new" is a surreal formulation. Israel certainly was a new land for European Jews who through successive migrations (*aliyahs*) augmented the tiny Jewish minority in Palestine and constituted the overwhelming bulk of the new nation state's Jewish population at independence. In the case of Pakistan, tens of millions of Muslims already lived on its territory—sixty million as Jinnah pointed out—and constituted a self-aware *majority* in whose name the state was created. In his own words, he "was willing to allow the two crores of Muslims in the Muslim minority provinces to be smashed in order to liberate seven crores of Muslims in the majority provinces." As David Gilmartin has noted, "To ignore this population and their own thinking about the meaning of Pakistan while projecting the story as one of a Muslim Zion, like a settler colony, amounts almost to a historical erasure."<sup>49</sup> In the same vein, the portrayal of Pakistan as an exilic state is rather strange. Pakistan's 1951 census noted that one in ten Pakistanis was a refugee.<sup>50</sup> Importantly, most migration happened in a few violence-stricken months of 1947 and not because Muslims were irresistibly drawn to Pakistan as a "pure idea" as the political scientist Ishtiaq Ahmed has shown in painstaking detail in his recent book.<sup>51</sup> Again, most migration happened "internally" within the previously undivided provinces of Punjab and Bengal. These people were quickly absorbed into Pakistan and the *muhājir* (migrant) appellation never stuck to them. It is the migrants from UP and Bihar who were called the *muhājirs*, and they constituted an even smaller percentage of the overall refugee population. Devji's inattention to arithmetic becomes evident in his claim that "the

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1995); Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 1981). Also see Simon Rabinovitch, "Pakistan's 'Jewish' Roots," *Haaretz*, October 1, 2013) on this issue.

<sup>48</sup> Samuel M. Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: A Historical Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 138.

<sup>49</sup> David Gilmartin, review of *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea*, by Faisal Devji, *H-Asia*, January 2015, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/22055/reviews/58780/gilmartin-devji-muslim-zion-pakistan-political-idea>.

<sup>50</sup> Cited in Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 101.

<sup>51</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed, *The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed: Unravelling the 1947 Tragedy through Secret British Reports and First-Person Accounts* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012).

majority of South Asia's Muslims, have remained outside the homeland created in their name."<sup>52</sup> In fact, Pakistan became the home for the majority of the subcontinent's Muslims and was the largest Muslim state in the world at its birth, as Jinnah himself proudly noted. Devji seems to have forgotten to count the East Pakistanis or decided not to count them for some reason.

The weakness of Devji's argument is heightened in the claim that "both Muslim and Jewish states survive with the rhetorical fear of being divided or altogether extinguished by their enemies. *Yet when the time comes for either to abandon a portion of its territory, it does so without an apparent crisis of nationality.*"<sup>53</sup> This suggestion ignores the deep wound to Pakistan's national psyche caused by the secession of Bangladesh; an event, which dealt a mortal blow to the two-nation theory and had a defining impact on Pakistani historiography. In the wake of this second Partition, an important strand in Pakistani historiography began to read pervasive divisions within the Muslim community back to the 1940s, denying, discounting, or retrospectively questioning the spread, depth, and efficacy of the two-nation theory, not to mention raising questions as to whether Jinnah ever wanted Pakistan.<sup>54</sup>

### **Pakistan as a New Medina**

Contrary to Devji's speculations, the rhetoric of blood and soil was heavily used by Jinnah and the ML during the Pakistan movement. ML functionaries hailed the nation's "geo-body" by publicising Pakistan's maps, natural resources, infrastructural assets, strategic location alongside contiguous Muslim allies in the Middle East and celebrated the boundless potential of its inspired Muslim population once freed from both British and Hindu domination. The repudiation of the Congress' nationalism predicated on India's geographical integrity and the unity of all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race, language, ethnicity, gender, caste or class, does not mean that the ML forsook territorial nationalism. Rather, ML leaders insisted that India did not constitute a geographical unity and constantly drew parallels between Europe and India. They argued that just as Europe had several nationalities and nation states, India too was not a single nation but contained various nationalities of which Hindus and Muslims were the most important ones that deserved separate states of their own. Thinking about Pakistan on the eve of the Lahore Resolution, an Aligarh student, Anīs al-Dīn Aḥmad Riḏvī in his pamphlet titled *Taḥrīk-i Pākistān*, argued that if Europe could have twenty

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<sup>52</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, 44.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–23.

<sup>54</sup> See Jalal, *Sole Spokesman*.

sovereign states, there was no reason why India should not be divided.<sup>55</sup> Nawab Ismail Khan, the UP Muslim League President, declared that if England and France could ally together to take on their common enemy Germany without forsaking their separate identities, Hindus and Muslims could likewise do the same to confront British imperialism.<sup>56</sup> At Badayun, a local ML functionary likened Indian Muslims to a living body and called for the amputation of the arm represented by the minority provinces Muslims, in order to save the main body that would become Pakistan.<sup>57</sup> The very language of “majorities” and “minorities” was borrowed from the script of European nationalisms.

The significance attached to Pakistan’s territory and its representation on the map in popular consciousness comes out most evidently in an incident at a movie theatre in Bombay in April 1946 during the screening of the film *Forty Crores*. A film about India’s indivisibility and the unity of its 40 crore inhabitants, it included a particular scene in which a map of India is brought out by both Hindus and Muslims who then stand around it and deliver strong dialogues on the theme of Hindu-Muslim unity, threatening those who came in the way of that unity. During the 4 pm show on April 14, 1946, ML supporters fired some crackers, stood up shouting, and then one of them ran up to the screen and cut it across with a six-inch blade. The significance of the act would not have been lost on the votaries of a united India.<sup>58</sup> For Devji to therefore claim that Pakistan lacked a “strong national imagination” is baseless.

Jinnah himself, in contrast to Devji’s claims, did *not* see the US and Pakistan as twin settler states. In response to the Congress leadership’s citation of American federalism as a possible model for India, Jinnah repudiated it as inapplicable and inappropriate in the Indian context, firmly declaring that Pakistan could never be part of an Indian federation or confederation. He also maintained that just as the USA and Canada had friendly neighbourly relations, so could India and Pakistan. At the same time, Pakistan was seen as a first step toward the unification of the Islamic world under Pakistani leadership. Khaliqzaman called this pan-Islamic entity the Qur’anic state that would mark the renaissance and rise of Islamic power in the modern world. Sohaib Khan has concisely summed up the relationship between territoriality and the nation state of Pakistan in his thoughtful essay. “Rather

<sup>55</sup> Sayyid Anis al-Din Ahmad Rizvi, *Tahrik-i Pakistān* (Bareilly: Bareilly Electric Press, 1940).

<sup>56</sup> Mufti Muhammad Shafi, *Ifādāt-i Ashrafiyah dar masā’il-i siyāsiyah: Siyāsāt-i Ḥāzīrah Muslim Lig, Cāngrais vagbairah kē muta’līq Mujaddid al-millat, Ḥakīm al-ummat Ḥāzrat Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī ṣāhib Thānavī kē irshādāt kā majmū‘ah* (Deoband: Dār al-Ishā‘at, 1945).

<sup>57</sup> Maulavi Muṣavvir ‘Alī Khān, *Musalmānān-i Hind kā siyāsī naṣb al-‘ain aur jambūriyat-i Hind* (Badayun: Hāshimī Press, 1940).

<sup>58</sup> Judas, “Bombay Calling,” *Film India*, 12, no. 5 (May 1946): 11.

than relying primarily on abstract doctrine or scriptural provenance to make territorial claims, the Muslim league's demand for sovereign nationhood hinged on colonial India's image as an "ethnographic state. . ." Relations of blood and soil were thus integral and not merely adjunctive, to Pakistan's territorially bound conception of nationhood. These relations, however, were also articulated on the transnational plane of a global Muslim fraternity."<sup>59</sup>

My book also demonstrates the problems in seeing Pakistan as a state lacking historical roots. Devji seems to posit nations possessing objective, given histories, instead of acquiring histories due to nationalist efforts at constructing distinct national narratives. These efforts were evident during the 1940s when Jinnah presided over the production of ML propaganda, which laid down the broad outlines for a separate history of Pakistan that was divergent from that of Hindu India. It emphasised the distinctness of Pakistan's territory and population as opposed to that of Hindu India, and portrayed it as a Muslim land from the time of the first Muslim invasions of the subcontinent. Thus, the Punjabi ML leader, the Nawab of Mamdot, stressed that Pakistani territory had been the national homeland of the Muslims for 1200 years. Hindu India on the other hand was "occupied territory" where Islam had never fully established its dominion. Ambedkar too saw Pakistani territory as distinct from India's territory.<sup>60</sup> Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī pointed out as to how Akbar's *dīn-i ilāhī* (which he likened to the ideology of *muttaḥidah qaumiyat*) had been opposed by a glorious son of Pakistan like Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī in the sixteenth-seventeenth century.

Devji's claim that Jinnah sought to rescue the vocabulary of politics from the swamp of history is unfounded. At the height of tense negotiations over the Cabinet Mission Plan, Jinnah lectured Lord Wavell for an hour on Indian history and cultural differences between Hindus and Muslims to show how and why Pakistan was the only solution to the communal problem in the subcontinent.<sup>61</sup> The importance he attached to history can further be inferred from the ML's *Pirpur Report* that vehemently criticised Congress attempts to brainwash Muslim students and de-Muslimize them through Gandhi's Wardha Scheme of education. It came down most heavily on its History syllabus, arguing that it marginalised Islamic history, glorified Hindu heroes, and

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<sup>59</sup> Sohaib Khan, "Imagining Pakistan: Religion at the Origins of Nationalism," review of *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India*, by Venkat Dhulipala, *Marginalia: Los Angeles Review of Books*, July 18, 2017, <https://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/imagining-pakistan-religion-origins-nationalism/>.

<sup>60</sup> Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Pakistan*, 58.

<sup>61</sup> Singh, *Origins of the Partition of India*, 154.

downplayed the role of Muslim heroes with an “Islamic outlook” and their seminal contributions to Islamic history or Muslim society. It alleged that the Wardha Scheme only highlighted Muslim figures like Akbar, Dārā Shikōh, and Amīr Khusrau who had attempted to forge a synthesis with Hinduism and weakened Islam. Castigating Akbar for undermining Muslim rule over India through his religious accommodation, the ML instead lionised Aurangzēb for having acted as the ideal Islamic ruler. Historians supporting the ML platform like Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, Professor of History, Delhi University, saw Indian Muslims maintaining their separate identity through its *longue durée* history.<sup>62</sup> Khaliqzaman, utilising pointed historical metaphors, likened the 1946 central and provincial assembly elections to the fourth and fifth battles of Panipat and asked Muslim voters to vote for the ML so that it could lead them to victory in these battles.<sup>63</sup>

The claim that Jinnah was a constitutional lawyer who saw Pakistan only as a legal and not a territorial entity, is speculative with no basis in fact. Jinnah once pointedly remarked, “What is the use of merely saying we are a nation? A Nation does not live in the air. It lives on land, it must govern land and it must have a territorial state and that is what you want to get.”<sup>64</sup> Contrary to Devji’s claim about Pakistan’s “wildly fluctuating borders,” Jinnah was precise about where Pakistan existed. Once he forcefully noted, “The Muslim League was fighting for its creation not in Bombay but in the Punjab which was the keystone of Pakistan.”<sup>65</sup> Jinnah’s public insistence on six full provinces for Pakistan and his public rejection of a “moth-eaten” Pakistan are hardly the actions of a man indifferent to territory. In this context, Devji again misrepresents when he says that the Congress insisted upon a Partition on “purely demographic lines” while the ML saw it purely through a “criterion of bureaucratic convenience” since Pakistan “was intended to include a very large numbers of non-Muslims.”<sup>66</sup> He conveniently forgets that the ML’s demand for creating a sovereign Pakistan in the Muslim majority provinces was the original claim that was based precisely on the logic of demography. It also allows Devji’s to skirt around Jinnah’s rhetoric on “transfers of population” between India and Pakistan for bringing about religious homogeneity or the ML’s invocation of the “hostage population” theory.

The corollary idea that Jinnah was a constitutionalist who wanted to bring about a “social contract” between the Hindus and Muslims, seeing them

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<sup>62</sup> Ishtiaq H. Qureshi, *The Development of Islamic Culture in India* (Lahore: n.p., 1946).

<sup>63</sup> *Deccan Times*, December 2, 1945.

<sup>64</sup> Ahmad, *Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, 1:247.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:98.

<sup>66</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, 27.

as emerging from the “state of nature,” is another figment of Devji’s imagination. For example, Jinnah refused point-blank to grant franchise to non-Muslims in the event of a plebiscite in the Punjab and Bengal, insisting *that it be reserved for Muslims only*—hardly the gesture of a constitutionalist, seeking a “social contract.” With Muslims constituting feeble majorities in Punjab and Bengal, Jinnah’s fear was that non-Muslims voting solidly alongside even a small number of “quisling” Muslims in these provinces would effectively torpedo Pakistan. Responding to this unreasonable demand, C. Rajagopalachari noted, “The minority communities in those [Pakistani] areas must be allowed to participate in the plebiscite inasmuch as it would be a most unpromising start for a new State claiming to be constituted for the progress of liberty, to keep large bodies of people away from the ballot box on the score of their religion or other grounds.”<sup>67</sup> The idea, therefore, that Jinnah saw these two communities as emerging from a “state of nature” untouched by prior history, is untenable.

Ultimately, Pakistan was widely understood as an Islamic state. ‘Uthmānī called it the new Medina. Medina had been the originating moment in Islamic history marking the beginning of the Islamic calendar, created under the Prophet due to the combined efforts of the native *anṣār* and the *muhājirīn* who followed their Prophet out of his native Mecca to create the first Islamic society and polity. Medina had been the locus for Islam’s rise in Arabia and the wider world beyond as a global power. Pakistan was similarly seen as the nucleus for the rejuvenation of Islam in the modern world in a territory where the Muslims would be free from both British and Hindu domination. It would herald the return of Islam as the ruling power in the subcontinent<sup>68</sup> just as it would signal its rise as a great power in the modern world due to a unified *ummah* under Pakistan’s leadership, thus fulfilling the promise never redeemed by the Ottomans in the modern world. What this Islamic state would look like, and how and when it would be reached would be decided once Pakistan came into existence. Till that time Muslim unity had to be maintained and no splits allowed to occur due to any differences on this matter. That various segments of Muslim political opinion attached different meanings to this idea would become clear once Pakistan came into being, but these differences were expected to be resolved over time.

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<sup>67</sup> Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, preface to *Gandhi-Jinnah Talks: Text of Correspondence and Other Relevant Matter, July-October 1944* (New Delhi: Hindustan Times, 1944).

<sup>68</sup> See Ajmal Kamal, “Stating the Hidden Obvious,” review of *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India*, by Venkat Dhulipala, *The News on Sunday* (Pakistan), August 9, 2015 <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/stating-the-hidden-obvious/#.W0I7Y9JKhPY>.

‘Uthmānī himself made it clear that the Islamic state would be attained gradually, just like Medina had developed gradually under the guidance of the Prophet. As Keerthik Sasidharan has pointed out in his perceptive essay, this was part of ‘Uthmānī’s long-waiting game with the ‘*ulamā*’ seeing themselves as pivotal in shepherding Pakistan into that Islamic state.<sup>69</sup> ‘Uthmānī expressed this idea quite pithily through the metaphor of the Arab pilot and the English sea captain. He noted that when Muslims from India went on a *ḥajj*, they usually boarded a ship skippered by an English captain. The ship carrying *ḥājjīs* on reaching the vicinity of Jeddah, usually stopped short of the port due to the treacherous shoals and underwater rocks that the English captain was not competent to negotiate. At this point, an Arab mariner known as the pilot came from the shore to the ship to take charge from the English captain and safely guide the ship to the port so that the pilgrims could disembark and step on the holy land. Mr. Jinnah, ‘Uthmānī concluded, was the English sea captain who could take Muslims only up to a certain point. After that point, an expert in the *sharī‘ah* was required and it is here that the ‘*ulamā*’ would fulfil their duties like the Arab pilot.<sup>70</sup>

Pakistan was, therefore, not an “accidental homeland” or an “exilic state,” or a “Muslim Zion” without any history or geography, nor was it fired by a narrowly modern Kemalist vision for the future. The struggle for its creation was also not about frightened Muslims in India trying to “imagine non- or even anti-national political futures for themselves in imperial, international and other ways,”<sup>71</sup> as Devji would have it. Rather, the struggle for Pakistan needs to be seen alongside histories of nationalism in the Islamic world in which religious scholars and Islamic religious groups, using Islamic political vocabulary, played an important part in building the nationalist upsurge in these societies. Revisionist studies of contemporaneous Indonesian and Egyptian nationalisms make this quite evident and provide much better comparative models for studying the Pakistan movement than the Zionist movement and Israel.<sup>72</sup> As in the case of Pakistan, these studies also underline the continuing relevance of Islamic groups in the social and political life of these post-colonial states.

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<sup>69</sup> For an elaboration on this issue, see Keerthik Sasidharan, “Dreams of a Muslim Cosmopolis,” <http://www.ks1729.com/blog/2018/5/18/dreams-of-a-muslim-cosmopolis>.

<sup>70</sup> *Sidq*, June 5, 1946.

<sup>71</sup> Devji, “Voung Fogeys.”

<sup>72</sup> See Michael Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Ummah Below the Winds* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003); Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation 1930–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).



### Islam, State Power, and Muslim Nationalism

Devji writes that Dhulipala “is not concerned with novelty of this political vision [of Pakistan]—and in fact thinks it to be neither very original nor even political.” His primary accusation is that I “depoliticise” Muslim nationalism and reduce it to “old-fashioned religion,” which filled the masses with “enthusiasm.” As he derisively notes Dhulipala “might as well have said ‘fanaticism,’ for which enthusiasm was, after all, once a synonym, since Dhulipala considers Islam to be an irrational element that, in explaining the paradox of Muslims in UP acting against their own interests in voting for Pakistan, actually explains nothing.” He continues, “The Islam that Dhulipala writes about is a stereotype, as when he describes the *madah-e sahaba* conflict between Shias and Sunnis in 1939 Lucknow as an example of the behaviour to be expected from the ‘two warring sects of Islam.’ The fact that this conflict was unprecedented and had a context-specific history and politics . . . is of no consequence.”

These charges are again fallacious and misleading. Associating Jinnah or Pakistani nationalism with “religion” seems to greatly upset Devji. To get around it, he first differentiates “old-style religion” or what he calls in his own book, “old-fashioned theological entity” from its new form as an “empty,” “abstract and modern idea,” which is merely another aspect of the “social contract.”<sup>73</sup> Bleached of any content, this latter modern form of “religion” supposedly has no connection to Islam’s “life-world of belief and practice.”<sup>74</sup> Devji prefers to call this new form “faith” and, furthermore, claims that this “faith” is “decidedly non-religious,” having a “completely mystical character.”<sup>75</sup> He insists that even in Jinnah’s motto of *Unity, Faith, Discipline*, “faith” meant “Muslim self-confidence and self-reliance in a secular or non-religious way,” and did not really refer to Islam.<sup>76</sup> It is this abstract “faith,” he argues, that allowed Indian Muslims to transcend time, place, history, geography, inherited traditions, and “nature” itself, providing them with the requisite escape velocity to propel themselves into the brave new world of Pakistan.

All this is purely speculative reasoning. If old-style religion had indeed been relinquished by Indian Muslims under the impact of Jinnah’s leadership and replaced by a large-scale adoption of the new “faith,” which was nothing more than the spirit of “self-confidence” and “self-reliance,” one wonders why Pakistan has had to deal with the crises it has since its creation. If religion, transformed into a mystical faith, had been so purified, why have there been

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<sup>73</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, 47.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

constant efforts for greater purification in the land of the pure? And before we move further, let us bear in mind that Jinnah himself defined *Faith* as faith in Almighty God, faith in ourselves, and in our destiny, *precisely in that order*.

Moreover, it is questionable if the bulk of the population (or Jinnah himself) thought along such abstract lines or got carried away by this “pure idea” or “groundless principle.” This is baseless conjecture and Devji provides us with no evidence on this count. Rather as I have shown, the arguments put forth by the ML about Pakistan’s viability, its ability to throw a protective umbrella over Muslim minorities in Hindu India both due to its own strength as also due to the presence of hostage populations on both sides, the assurance that Muslims need not flee to Pakistan but could continue to live in India as Pakistani citizens or to migrate at the time and place of their choosing—these *ideas and interests* had a visible impact on the thinking of the UP Muslims. Moreover, the prospect of the emergence of an Islamic state that would emulate the Prophet’s Medina and play a pivotal role in the unfolding destiny of the Islamic world provided a powerful motivation for pursuing this grand project. As the socialist K. M. Ashraf, writing about his sea voyage to Pakistan poignantly wrote, “I can never forget the scene we witnessed when on reaching the coast of Pakistan the Islamic green flag with a crescent and star first appeared before our eyes. The whole atmosphere immediately and spontaneously reverberated with the recitation of the *Ayas* from the Holy Quran and people shouted the *Takbir*. All the immigrant passengers had tears in their eyes as if the caravan of those performing hijrat from Mecca had reached Medina on the invitation of the Ansars and now wealth would be equally distributed among the people according to their needs.”<sup>77</sup> But rather than doing careful research and engaging seriously with its dynamics, Devji delinks the Pakistan movement from both ideas and interests to reduce it to a species of abstract mystical longing.

Contrary to his accusation, I do not one-sidedly reduce ML-led Muslim nationalism to “religious fanaticism.” After all my book makes it clear that the ML was not the only party associating with men of religion. The Congress too had Deobandi ‘*ulamā*’ in its ranks who too used Islamic rhetoric to seriously question the Pakistan demand or dismissed the claim that Jinnah was the great deliverer of Muslims into a glorious Islamic state. At the same time, it is difficult to separate religion and politics when they were so inextricably intertwined, especially when the ML protagonists self-consciously proclaimed that Islam did not permit a demarcation between them. What becomes clear is that religious rhetoric was deployed by dueling sets of ‘*ulamā*’ and parties for a

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<sup>77</sup> Kunwar Mohammad Ashraf, *An Overview of Muslim Politics in India*, trans. and ed. Jaweed Ashraf (Delhi: Manak Publications, 2001), 125; Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*, 493–94.

variety of purposes. Moreover, my book shows how political parties with different ideological leanings and internal schisms made their decisions and compromises in an evolving political field. Thus, Communists who hobnobbed with the Congress during the Muslim Mass Contact Programme and fashioned its “secular” “bread, peace, and land” rhetoric, shifted allegiance to the Muslim League in 1945–46 and supported the Pakistan demand with some using overtly religious rhetoric. Asrarul Haq Majaz’s soaring *Pakistān kā millī tarānā* is a case in point, which has lines like *Sau Injeelon par hai bhaari ek quran hamaara* (a hundred gospels taken together stand no match for the Qur’ān) or *Ham sab Pakistan ke ghazi* (we are all ghāzīs in service of Pakistan).<sup>78</sup> And fascinatingly, Ambedkar, who did not spare any opportunity to attack the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi, adopted positions on Pakistan that came close to that of a Hindu conservative. Sohaib Khan has, therefore, perceptively noted that my book does not pit a “unified nationalist spirit against communalist fervor” or “rational secularism” against “religious dogmatism.”<sup>79</sup>

Contrary to Devji’s next accusation, I do not reduce Islam to a “stereotype,” nor do I cite the *madah-i ṣaḥābah* conflict as “behaviour to be expected from the ”two warring sects of Islam.” Elsewhere, I provide a detailed “context specific history” of this Shia-Sunni conflict in Lucknow and give the lie to such an accusation.<sup>80</sup> This material could not be incorporated into my book given its already large size, but this essay is duly mentioned in a footnote.<sup>81</sup> Devji ignores the reference, extracts this phrase, de-contextualises it, and proceeds to make a smear. In the same vein, his assertion that I reduce Islam to “fanaticism” or an “irrational element” is again baseless. If anything, it is he who reduces Islam and Muslims to an irrational element by conceptualising Pakistan as a mystifying essence with no body, borders, history, or geography. This “pure idea” becomes something that Indian Muslims dare not associate with or translate into anything for fear of desecration, let alone discussing it. Their rationality (barring Jinnah’s perhaps) seems in any case to have been charred (per Devji), irresistibly drawn as they were to Pakistan as moths to a flame. Elsewhere, he calls Pakistan a “psychic projection”<sup>82</sup>—whatever that means. He may as well have described it as a case of collective acid tripping. My book, on the other hand, shows contestation

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 447.

<sup>79</sup> Khan, “Imagining Pakistan.”

<sup>80</sup> Venkat Dhulipala, “Rallying the Qaum: The Muslim League in the United Provinces, 1937–39,” *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 3 (2010): 603–40.

<sup>81</sup> Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*, 116n152.

<sup>82</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, 6.

over Pakistan that was marked by *both* reason and passion in which a variety of individuals and groups participated in an intense wide ranging and sophisticated debate on the meaning and implications of Pakistan. More importantly, contrary to Devji's obsession with Jinnah, my book brings in a whole host of other actors and gives prominence to the '*ulamā*' in these debates.

Thus, espousing the ideal of composite nationalism (*muttaḥidah qaumiyat*) of all of India's communities, Maulānā Ḥusain Aḥmad Madanī utilised *both* "Islamic" as well as "secular" arguments to make a case against Pakistan. This *muttaḥidah qaumiyat* of Hindus, Muslims, and other communities, Madanī argued, had an auspicious precedent in the common nationality forged by Muslims and Jews during the Prophet's era in the Covenant of Medina. He was ferociously attacked for taking this position but he held on to it. While Madanī is well known in the annals of modern Indian history, some of the most cogent arguments on this count were made by his lesser known colleagues in the JUH that I detail in chapter five of my book (which Devji blanks out in his review). These critiques of Pakistan tell us a few things. First, Pakistan was not some "pure idea" floating in the ether but held precise meaning and was comprehended in terms of its implications in the real world. Second, contrary to Devji's claim that it was only "the ML's leaders who were concerned with the state as a political entity," I show how the '*ulamā*' saw state power as critical for achieving their goals whether they opposed or supported Pakistan. Thus, 'Uthmānī provided detailed justifications for creating Pakistan as a sovereign Islamic State since it would be the new leader of the Islamic world and the protector of the *ummah*. He also expounded on how Pakistan would impact the structure of regional and global politics by establishing trade and diplomatic relations with other sovereign states in the world.<sup>83</sup> The Deobandī '*ulamā*' aligned with the Congress and opposed to Pakistan also saw state power as essential since a sovereign independent India would provide a fillip to anti-colonialism and lead to collapse of colonialism around the world. Devji's claim that the '*ulamā*' "were interested not in the state so much as a self-regulating society, which they would of course shepherd"<sup>84</sup> is a cliché.

In this regard, his declaration that "even by his own evidence, Dhulipala's Muslim divines seem to have been more interested in circumscribing the role of the post-colonial state, whether Indian or Pakistani, than in creating an Islamic one" is another half-truth. It is true that the legendary '*ālim* Maulānā

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<sup>83</sup> Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī, *Hamārā Pākistān: Šūbah-i Panjāb 'Ulamā-i Islām Cānfrains Lāhōr* (Hyderabad: Nafis Academy, 1946).

<sup>84</sup> Devji, "Young Fogey's."

Ashraf ‘Alī Thānavī, who through his *fatwās* provided critical support to ML candidates during the by-elections to Muslims seats in UP between 1937–39 (declaring that joining Congress was impermissible for Muslims who should join the ML and make it Allah’s *lashkar*),<sup>85</sup> did not want the ‘*ulamā*’ governing the state. But that does not mean that he was against the creation of an Islamic state. His nuanced position—which I lay out in chapter two—underlined his belief in the importance of men of religion in the ruling matrix. Before his death, Thānavī told one of his students that “our sole aim is that whatever (Muslim) state is established that should be in the hands of religious and honest persons so that Allah’s *dīn* reigns supreme.”<sup>86</sup> But his disciple ‘Uthmānī shrugged off such reservations about the active role of the ‘*ulamā*’ in creating a state and capturing state power. Devji cannot bring himself to even mention ‘Uthmānī, from whom the phrase “New Medina” that is in my book’s title is borrowed.

Devji completely ignores the role of the ‘*ulamā*’ in these contests as also their impact upon the struggle for Pakistan, since he associates them with “old-fashioned religion.” He, therefore, claims that this “focus on old-time religion also means that Dhulipala sees Muslim divines as its only representatives.”<sup>87</sup> Moreover, he accuses me of not considering “the fact that so many of the Muslim League’s leaders and propagandists were products of a reformed or modernist Islam, like that retailed by the Aligarh movement, and that it was this version of the religion that defined the party’s Islamic vocabulary—to the degree of subordinating clerics and Sufis to it.”<sup>88</sup> The tone Devji adopts towards men of religion is characteristic of most English-language scholarship on Pakistani nationalism that has sought to frame it as a species of secular nationalism for the creation of a Muslim majority state, à la Kemalist Turkey, rather than an Islamic state. Its discomfort with the ‘*ulamā*’ is such that they have been all but written out of most accounts of Pakistani nationalism.

The dismissal of ‘*ulamā*’ as purveyors of “old-time religion” is strange especially in the light of burgeoning scholarship on the “reformist” ‘*ulamā*’ in the subcontinent. The Princeton scholar Muhammad Qasim Zaman has shown that it is not just Muslim modernists who were reformist. Rather, the ‘*ulamā*’ through their guardianship of traditions of scholarship in the Qur’ān, the *ḥadīth*, and Islamic law, have successfully carried out their reformist

<sup>85</sup> Aḥmad Sa‘īd, *Jidd-o jubd-i āzādī aur Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānavī* (Rawalpindi: Khālid Nadīm Publications, 1972), 137; Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*, 103.

<sup>86</sup> Rizwan Malik, “Muslim Nationalism in India: Ashraf ‘Alī Thanawi, Shabbir Ahmad Uthmani and the Pakistan Movement,” *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture* 18, no. 2 (1997): 76.

<sup>87</sup> Devji, “Young Fogeyes.”

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

agenda in the subcontinent and beyond. They have been successful “in broadening their audiences, in making significant contribution to public discourses, and even in setting the terms for such discourses. In many cases, they have also come to play significant religiopolitical activist roles in contemporary Islam.”<sup>89</sup> Zaman has also shown how Islam itself is a congeries of discursive traditions marked by “etiquette, styles of argumentation, and modes of transmitting knowledge.”<sup>90</sup> It should, therefore, make us pause when we encounter references to “old-fashioned religion.”

The obsession with whose vocabulary dominated or subordinated whom does not account for the fact that there was a convergence if not startling uniformity in the language spoken by the ML leadership and the *‘ulamā’*. While the *‘ulamā’* incorporated economic, political, social, military, and foreign policy justifications for creating Pakistan in their public speeches, borrowing a modern vocabulary from their ML partners, the ML leadership increasingly adopted an Islamic idiom to seek popular support for Pakistan. The overlap between the ideas held by Muslim modernists and the *‘ulamā’* allowed them to come together under a broad tent, which had space for even Communists who pitched for Pakistan. The modernists’ vision of an “Islamic” Pakistan did attain hegemony after 1947, but it has remained shaky for it has been fiercely contested, constrained, and limited by Islamist visions, not to mention those of the *‘ulamā’* throughout Pakistan’s history.

In this regard, it should be also remembered that Pakistan was cast as a holy land even by the so-called secular leaders of the Muslim League. Jinnah himself, if some reports are to be believed, declared that Pakistan would be “an Islamic state on the pattern of the Medina state.”<sup>91</sup> During the 1945–46 elections, Liaquat Ali Khan cautioned Muslim voters against Communists, claiming that by following them the Muslims might “secure Pakistan of the conception of Communism but they would not be able to secure Pakistan of the Islamic conception.”<sup>92</sup> Khaliqzaman claimed that just like the Prophet had created the first Pakistan in the Arabian Peninsula, the Muslim League wanted to create another Pakistan in the Indian subcontinent. He insisted, “Pakistan was not the final goal of the Muslims. . . . The time is not far distant when the Muslim countries will have to stand in line with Pakistan and then

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<sup>89</sup> Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>90</sup> See *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>91</sup> See Kunwar Khuldune Shahid, “The Irrelevance of Jinnah’s Pakistan,” *The Nation* (Pakistan), December 24, 2015, <https://nation.com.pk/24-Dec-2015/the-irrelevance-of-jinnah-s-pakistan>. I personally have not been able to find this quotation in my researches into the newspapers of the time.

<sup>92</sup> *The Pioneer*, May 13, 1945.

only the jumping ground will have reached its fruition.”<sup>93</sup> As he elaborated at another time, Pakistan would bring all Muslim countries together into Islamistan, a Pan Islamic entity.<sup>94</sup> The ideal of the new Medina, as it were, resolved the contradiction between the ideals of Islamic brotherhood whose category of belonging is the global *ummah* and the territorial nation state that invokes the divisive category of national belonging.

### Jinnah, ML, and the Lack of Subaltern Turn

Subaltern studies did a critical take down of the Mahatma as a conservative upper-caste figure who perpetuated hierarchical structures of Indian society and politics dominated by caste Hindus, thus precluding a China-style Maoist revolution in India. It was, however, very careful with Jinnah. Its eleven volumes do not contain a single essay on Jinnah similar to Shahid Amin’s “Gandhi as Mahatma.”<sup>95</sup> In assessing my book, Devji gestures towards subaltern studies whilst ruing what he sees as a recrudescence of national, imperial, and Marxist histories in its wake.<sup>96</sup> We need not hold our breath waiting for a Subaltern interpretation of Jinnah. Instead, what we see is yet

<sup>93</sup> *Star of India*, May 30, 1942.

<sup>94</sup> Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan Between Mosque and Military* (Washington D. C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005) 18.

<sup>95</sup> Shahid Amin, “Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921–2” in *Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranjit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 1–67.

<sup>96</sup> Devji also does not let go of the opportunity to comment on Gandhi. In his review essay, he claims that Gandhi’s *Ramarajya* was the “Hindu” equivalent to the Muslim League’s idea of Pakistan. The incongruity of equating *Ramarajya* to the Muslim League’s conception of Pakistan outlined above seems to escape Devji. It is particularly a travesty since Gandhi himself was careful to “warn my Mussalman friends against misunderstanding me in my use of the word *Ramarajya*. By *Ramarajya* I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean by *Ramarajya*, Divine Raj, the Kingdom of God. For me Rama and Rahim are one and the same deity. I acknowledge no other God but the one God of Truth and righteousness. Whether the Rama of my imagination ever lived or not on this earth, the ancient ideal of *Ramarajya* is undoubtedly one of true democracy in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice without an elaborate and costly procedure. Even the dog is described by the poet to have received justice under *Ramarajya*.” Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 98 vols. (New Delhi: Publication Division, Government of India, 1999), 41:374. In other places, Gandhi gave it the name *Khudai Sultanat* to address Muslim concerns. Elsewhere he tellingly wrote, that “in modern times Abu Bakr and Umar [the first caliphs of Islam] may be said to have established *Ramarajya*.” “Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umar collected revenues running into crores, and yet personally they were as good as fakirs” (*ibid.*, 25:558–59). Moreover, Gandhi’s *Ramarajya* was not a well systematised theory or ideology but rather a vision of society that was against oppressive structures, instrumental rationality, and mindless technology of the modern age. It is quite unlike the vision of a “new Medina” articulated by the ML leadership and the ‘*ulamā*’ supporting them.

another hagiography. This is clear when Devji claims that Jinnah's views on the community he led indicate "a notion of representation not premised on his identification with them,"<sup>97</sup> and the leader appears in "Satanic" solitude.<sup>98</sup> This is a round-about way of saying that Jinnah remained aloof from the masses. The reference to Satan is also meant to firewall Jinnah from charges of playing with religious sentiment. In doing so, Devji presents us with another iteration of what the historian Dilip Simeon once tongue in cheek termed the ham-sandwich theory of secularism. According to this theory, Mr. Jinnah is a bona fide liberal, secular figure since he wore western suits, smoked cigarettes, drank alcohol, reportedly ate ham sandwiches, raised dogs, never sported a beard or went on a *hajj*. Such misleading formulations conflate lifestyle preferences with politics. Jinnah's religious gestures towards his base became pronounced from 1937 onwards but these are conveniently ignored. It is well known that Jinnah became a regular presence at the Friday prayers at the Null Bazaar mosque in Bombay, a noteworthy development that Ambedkar commented upon. He gave up his suits for the Sherwani, and the Samur cap in his public appearances, a sartorial statement not lost on his followers. He also no longer stayed aloof from the crowds. The cover photo of my book shows a traditionally clad Jinnah surrounded by young men sitting in their midst, engaging with them. Performing like a regular sub-continental politician, he waded through crowds, sat on decorated trucks and was taken in huge processions. A report by the OSS, the forerunner of the CIA, noted that during the 1942 AIML Allahabad session, his motorcade passed under 110 gates each named after an Islamic hero.<sup>99</sup> ML meetings usually began with recitations from the Qur'ān and its annual sessions included prayers in which Jinnah participated.

Jinnah also increasingly invoked religious imagery, declaring that the ML flag had been bequeathed to Muslims by their Prophet, to take just one example. His pan-Islamic sympathies were fully evident during the Pakistan movement through his public speeches and press statements. Z. A. Suleri's reminiscence of Jinnah's pan-Islamic remarks at Iqbal's grave underlines this facet of the Quaid,<sup>100</sup> as also his statement during his trip to the Middle East in which he noted that Pakistan was the shield that would guard the Middle East

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<sup>97</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, 137.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>99</sup> "Pakistan: A Muslim Project for a Separate State in India," February 5, 1943, Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch, 097.3z1 092 No.700., US State Department Papers, NARA, College Park Maryland.

<sup>100</sup> See Ziauddin A. Suleri, *My Leader* (Lahore: Progressive Papers, 1982), 179.



from Hindu imperialism.<sup>101</sup> This pan-Islamism was not about escaping the crisis of the nation state as Devji would have it, but about fashioning a new political form for a rejuvenated and reunited *ummah* led by a new vanguard in the brave new world of the twentieth century.

Finally, the image of Jinnah as an Indian nationalist to the very end as also his liberal democratic constitutionalist credentials are too frayed to require any extended comment. The “sole spokesman” of the Indian Muslims had no time for any dissenting views within his own party as evident from the confessions of his subordinates that were recorded in the OSS report that I quote in my book. That Jinnah instituted the Viceregal system of power in Pakistan is not news either. He peremptorily dismissed elected governments in NWFP (North-West Frontier Province) and the Punjab while in East Pakistan he declared Urdu to be the sole national language, inflaming Bengali sentiments. This is not to mention Jinnah’s stereotyping of Gandhi as the Bania, using it as a term of opprobrium and abuse similar to the use of the term Jew by the Nazis to connote a congenitally devious, scheming, lying, despicable or untrustworthy people. We have already alluded to Devji’s claims regarding Jinnah’s sacrifices for India’s sake. To this must be added his claim that Churchill saw the Soviet Union as a model for a post-British order in the subcontinent. Absolving Churchill of any interest in prolonging the Empire is a trail blazer in Partition historiography. It remains to be seen how many will follow on this path in which British imperialism disappears as a factor in the Partition and birth of Pakistan.

Devji’s attempt to place the Congress and the ML on an equal footing is invidious. Quoting the writer Patrick Lacey, Devji insinuates that the Congress was a fascist party and that British appeasement of the Congress was akin to appeasement of the Nazis. In this context,, his claim that the ML was a “non-sectarian” organization seemingly akin to the Congress is bogus since its organisational membership was open only to Muslims. Even after the creation of Pakistan, Jinnah refused to open its doors to non-Muslims. As he said, “Time has not come for a national organization of that kind. Public opinion in Pakistan is not yet ready for it. We must not be dazzled by democratic slogans that have no foundation in reality.”<sup>102</sup> In the end, Devji’s alternative history of the Muslim nationalism with prominent roles for Shias and western Indian Muslim merchants, diminished roles for UP men, and near total erasure of Punjabis such as Sir Fazl-i-Husain is to put it mildly, unconvincing.

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<sup>101</sup> Dispatch No. 2077, December 21, 1946, Memorandum of Conversation between Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Ireland, First Secretary of the American Embassy Cairo, 845.00, US State Department Papers, NARA, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>102</sup> *The Pioneer*, December 20, 1947.

## Ambedkar and Pakistan

Devji takes exception to my highlighting Ambedkar's sharp criticisms of Muslim nationalism in his seminal *Thoughts on Pakistan* and for showing how he saw Pakistan as a good riddance for Hindu India. He accuses me of making Ambedkar's "text speak for itself" by evacuating the context within which his writings should be understood. He is especially riled by my observation that Ambedkar's writings reflected his truly held beliefs. Devji instead locates the "hyperbolic statements within Ambedkar's political rhetoric" in the context of the Untouchable leader's narrow political interests, "where they were arguably meant to frighten upper castes into turning to Dalits for support." Aiming for a knockout blow, he asks, "How, then, are we to account for his good relations with Jinnah, whose statement, that Ambedkar wanted Dalits to replace Muslims as the favored subjects of quotas in partitioned India, is passed over in silence? Or the support Ambedkar enjoyed from the Muslim League before and after his book was published?"<sup>103</sup> To emphasise these "good relations," he adds, "Dhulipala doesn't mention this, just as he doesn't tell us, when describing with horror the 'Day of Deliverance' Jinnah declared to celebrate Congress's resignation of government in 1939, that both Ambedkar and Savarkar joined the festivities."<sup>104</sup>

It is comical to see Devji cry out for some context given his own cavalier attitude towards context (and facts) in his own work. Contrary to his observations, *Creating a New Medina* reads and interprets Ambedkar's writings in the intellectual and political context of the 1940s. It presents *Thoughts on Pakistan* as an attempt by an acute political thinker at providing intellectual clarity on the vexed issue of Pakistan. Ambedkar was the first to clearly define the problem, explain the issues at stake, delineate its implications, and express his own views on the matter. For Devji to suggest that Ambedkar did not really mean what he wrote in this tract and that his writings on Muslims and Pakistan were a mere feint is misleading and grossly reductionist. In doing so, he strips Ambedkar of all idealism, reduces his intellection to a "fishes and loaves of office" matrix, and debases his politics to what the historian Tapan Raychaudhuri once termed in another context, "animal politics."<sup>105</sup> Devji also seems blissfully unaware of the double standards he maintains while decoding political figures. When it comes to Jinnah, Devji elevates his thoughts, words, and deeds to the level of high principle and pure reason, loftily dismissing all attempts to connect them to any political interest as a crude reduction of

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<sup>103</sup> Devji, "Young Fogeyes."

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri, "Indian Nationalism as Animal Politics," *The Historical Journal* 22, no. 3 (1979), 747-63.

Jinnah's thinking to conspiratorial politics. In doing so, he often completely de-contextualises Jinnah's own speeches, writings, and statements to come up with bizarre formulations. But when it comes to Ambedkar, Devji has no compunction about diminishing him to a grubby bargainer in the circus of politics.

The second context in which Ambedkar's *Thoughts on Pakistan* must be understood is indeed the political one. As a mature politician, patriot, and statesman, Ambedkar had serious concerns about India's future in the context of the Pakistan demand as also the politics unleashed by the ML in pursuit of this goal. He was particularly seized by the question of India's defence and in this regard expressed grave misgivings over Muslim domination of the Indian army and more importantly the loyalty of that army to the government in a free India. He therefore asked the question, "How would Muslims in the Indian army react to invasion by a Muslim neighbour like Afghanistan? Would this army fight in case India decided to invade Afghanistan for the sake of its own national interests?"<sup>106</sup> Ambedkar's own blunt answer was that the Muslims, especially those from Punjab and NWFP, would rather join their Afghan Muslim brethren than defend India and would almost certainly disobey orders if India were to ever decide on invading Afghanistan. Ambedkar, therefore, wanted Hindus to carefully decide whether it was in their interest to disallow Pakistan's creation so that they could have a "safe border" of their imagination, or to welcome its separation from India in order to have a "safe army."

Furthermore, the Hindus needed to consider whether it was better to have these Musalmans "without and against or if they should be within and against." For Ambedkar, the answer was clear as daylight. The best option was to concede Pakistan. As he noted, "indeed it is a consummation devoutly to be wished that the Muslims should be without. That is the only way of getting rid of the Muslim preponderance in the Indian Army." Once Pakistan was created, Hindustan would be free to build its own army "with nobody dictating the question of how and against whom it should be used or not used." He, therefore, concluded that "the defence of Hindustan far from being weakened by the creation of Pakistan will be infinitely improved by it." Ambedkar repeated this concern in the second edition of his treatise, which he titled *Pakistan or the Partition of India*.

What was equally disturbing for Ambedkar was the ML's brand of politics or what he termed "Muslim communal aggression." It included the ever-growing catalogue of political demands such as the "extravagant and

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<sup>106</sup> All quotes in this section on Ambedkar are taken from chapter three of my book, *Creating a New Medina*.

impossible, if not irresponsible [Muslim] demand” for a 50 per cent share in everything. The Muslims wanted to reduce Hindus from a majority in India to a minority in real terms while at the same time “cutting into the political rights of the [other] minorities.” He, therefore, had no hesitation in stating that “the Muslims are now speaking the language of Hitler and claiming a place in the sun which Hitler has been claiming for Germany. For their demand for 50 per cent is nothing but a counterpart of the German claims to *Deutschland Uber Alles* and *Lebensraum* for themselves irrespective of what happens to other minorities.”

Similarly, Ambedkar termed the demand for making Urdu India’s national language, “equally extravagant.” He objected to the language of twenty-eight million Muslims being imposed on 322 million Indians. What he found even more alarming was that Muslim demands were compounded not just by an increasing British inability to resist them, but by their willingness to grant Muslims even more than what they themselves had demanded. He alluded particularly to the example of the Communal Award. As he noted, when Muslims demanded that they be granted either one of the two options—statutory majorities with joint electorates or a minority of seats with separate electorates—the British took statutory majority from the first demand and separate electorates from the second and gave them both.

The second feature of Muslim aggression, Ambedkar elucidated, lay in their desire to exploit Hindu weaknesses. He noted that whenever Hindus objected to anything, Muslim policy was to concede the point only if they received some additional concessions in return. Ambedkar saw a prominent instance of this “spirit of exploitation” in Muslim insistence on cow slaughter and stoppage of music before mosques. Islamic law did not recommend cow sacrifice nor did Muslims who went on *hajj* to Mecca usually slaughter a cow. But in India they insisted on sacrificing the cow and would not be content with sacrificing any other animal. As regards music before mosques, Ambedkar again argued that it was not an issue in any Muslim country. In particular, he gave the example of Afghanistan, hardly a secularised Muslim country, which still allowed music before mosques. However, within India, Muslims insisted on music being stopped before mosques just because Hindus claimed it as a right. The third feature that Ambedkar elaborated upon in this regard was what he termed Muslim “gangster methods” in politics. He saw them as consciously imitating Sudeten Germans in their tactics against the Czechs. Ambedkar, therefore, warned that a policy of appeasement and concession would only exacerbate Muslim aggressiveness for they would interpret it as a sign of Hindu defeatism. The Hindus could thus find themselves in same fearful situation that the Allies found themselves in as a

result of their appeasement policy towards Hitler. The only remedy to put an end to the limitless Muslim political appetite, Ambedkar concluded, was to arrive at a settlement. And, “if Pakistan is a settlement, then as a remedy it is worth consideration.”

Devji derides the “repertoire of colonial scholarship,” which, he suggests, Ambedkar was deploying only *instrumentally* in his treatise. But whether one likes it or not, Ambedkar seems to have had no problems in accepting the validity of this scholarship. He quoted at length colonial historians such as Stanley Lane Poole as also their translations of medieval Muslim chroniclers such as Minhaj-us-Siraj and others, to enumerate the violent methods adopted by Muslims in the process of their conquest over India. He believed that Hindus and Muslims, therefore, shared no historical antecedents as “matters of common joy or sorrow.” And rather than constituting a unitary nation in India sharing common history and culture, historically they were “two armed battalions warring against one another.” Ambedkar’s historical sense stood in contrast to and repudiated Jawaharlal Nehru’s view of Indian history in his *Glimpses of World History* and *Discovery of India*, which emphasised Hindu-Muslim synthesis exemplified by the *Gangā-Jamunī tadbhīb*. That Ambedkar was not merely using the “repertoire of colonial scholarship” instrumentally, but accepted its validity is evident from his diagnosis regarding the collapse of Buddhism in India. He believed that while Hinduism had a role in the decline of Buddhism, it was Islam that struck the death blow as Muslim armies burnt the great Buddhist libraries at Nalanda and killed Buddhist scholars. Ambedkar was clear that “Islam destroyed Buddhism not only in India but wherever it went.”<sup>107</sup> One wonders what motive Devji would attribute to this statement by Ambedkar.

The instrumental explanation that Devji again provides for Ambedkar’s “hyperbole” in his writings on Muslims and Pakistan is that these were part of his attempt to frighten the upper castes and compel them to turn to the Dalits for support; or that it was a gambit to make the Dalits favoured subjects of quotas in a partitioned India. These are again baseless speculations. The Congress was not as fearful of losing Dalit support as Devji would have us believe. It won seventy-three out of the 151 seats reserved for Scheduled Castes during the 1937 elections, in which Ambedkar’s Independent Labor Party did well only in Bombay province, winning eleven of the fifteen reserved seats. Ambedkar bitterly denounced the Poona Pact as the reason for Congress success, for in these reserved seats the Congress could easily control and crush non-Congress opponents because of the joint electorates of caste Hindus and

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<sup>107</sup> Vasant Moon, comp. and ed., *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches* (New Delhi: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2014), 3:230.

Dalits. In 1946, the Congress swept the elections winning 142 of the 151 reserved seats across India with Ambedkar's Scheduled Caste Federation winning only 2 seats. In a seminal essay, Sekhar Bandyopadhyay has argued that this sweep cannot simply be explained in terms of the provisions of the Poona Pact that enabled upper castes to push Congress Dalits past the finish line against independent Dalit candidates. Rather, the Congress' spectacular success in the reserved seats for Scheduled Castes was due to an upsurge of nationalist sentiment across all sections of society.<sup>108</sup>

We need to assess Devji's claim that one should not take Ambedkar's writings on Muslims and Pakistan at face value since a) he enjoyed "good relations" with Jinnah; b) Ambedkar and Savarkar joined Jinnah to celebrate the Day of Deliverance; and c) the ML supported Ambedkar politically before and after the publication of the book. To say that Ambedkar enjoyed "good relations" with Jinnah, who kept almost every individual at arm's length, is quite fanciful. Ambedkar was appalled by and as impatient with Jinnah as he was with Gandhi. His book, *Ranade, Gandhi, Jinnah*, makes clear that he "disliked" them both, "It would be difficult to find two persons who would rival them for their colossal egotism. . . . They have made Indian politics a matter of personal feud."<sup>109</sup> The presence of Savarkar and Ambedkar on the same platform as Jinnah for the Day of Deliverance celebrations is surely revealing in itself. Jinnah himself was forthright in his portrayal of the relationship as an example of politics bringing strange bedfellows together. Such a politics of convenience would also explain the Hindu Mahasabha's joining the Fazlul Haq ministry in the 1940s.

Ambedkar was an independent thinker who could be critical of both Congress and ML politics as also of Hindu and Muslim communities and their practices. Ambedkar's views on the caste system and Hinduism are well known. The section of his book entitled *Pakistan and the Malaise* shows that his views on Islam and Muslim social practices were equally scathing. Devji's attempt to discount these criticisms and insinuate "good relations" between Ambedkar and Jinnah is part of an ideological attempt to create a friendly genealogy of Dalit-Muslim relations to help inaugurate a politics of Dalit-Muslim unity. The fact that Muslim society could treat Dalits in as vicious a manner as did caste Hindus in colonial India is brushed under the carpet.

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<sup>108</sup> Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, "The Transfer of Power and Crisis of Dalit Politics in India 1945–47," *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no. 4 (2000): 893–942.

<sup>109</sup> Bhimrao R. Ambedkar, "Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah" in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, comp. and ed. Vasant Moon (New Delhi: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2014), 1:226. The Ambedkar volumes can be accessed at <https://www.mea.gov.in/books-writings-of-ambedkar.htm>.

Thus, after the birth of Pakistan, Dalits seeking to come to India were detained by the Pakistani authorities under the provisions of the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA). This was stridently denounced by Ambedkar, who condemned Pakistan as also Hyderabad state for violence against Dalits and attempts to convert them to Islam. When Sriprakasa, India's High Commissioner to Pakistan, asked Liaquat why these people were being barred from going to India to see their families, Liaquat responded "Who would clean the streets and latrines of Karachi if they did not come back?"<sup>110</sup> In this regard, it must be noted that even in the *'ulamā'* discourse, the *chamār* is the most frequently mobilised category of derision. Those wistful about the lost opportunity of an ethnic alliance against the Congress in colonial India are now pitching for a Dalit-Muslim alliance.<sup>111</sup> But deliberate distortion of historical facts should not become the means of pushing a political agenda.

Ambedkar's views regarding Muslim nationalism and the Pakistan movement seem to have been genuinely held, for at no point did he qualify or retract his writings. Let us attend to this startling paragraph in his *Thoughts on Linguistic States* in 1955, which marks a continuation of the ideas he expressed in *Thoughts on Pakistan*, "I was glad that India was separated from Pakistan. I was the philosopher, so to say, of Pakistan. I advocated Partition because I felt that it was only by Partition that Hindus would not only be independent but free. If India and Pakistan had remained united in one State, Hindus though independent would have been at the mercy of Muslims. A merely independent India would not have been a free India from the point of view of the Hindus. *It would have been a Government of one country by two nations and of the two the Muslims without question would have been the ruling race notwithstanding the Hindu Mahasabha and the Jana Sangh.* When the Partition took place, I felt that God was willing to lift his curse and let India be one, great, and prosperous."<sup>112</sup>

Devji passes over these remarks by Ambedkar in complete silence. These lines were written well after the Indian Constitution had been inaugurated, and the Dalits, to use Devji's own words, "had replaced Muslims as the favored subjects of quotas in partitioned India." One wonders what further advantage he sees Ambedkar gaining by making such remarks in independent India. When evidence such as this is not to his liking or does not fit his speculative framework, Devji chooses to ignore it. Finally, he claims that during the 1940s Ambedkar contemplated a "Dalithstan" as a Dalit

<sup>110</sup> Sri Prakasa, *Pakistan: Birth and Early Days* (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1965), 76.

<sup>111</sup> See Faisal Devji, "Is a Dalit-Muslim Alliance Possible?," *The Hindu*, August 31, 2016, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/Is-a-Dalit-Muslim-alliance-possible/article14598312.ece>.

<sup>112</sup> Bhimrao R. Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Linguistic States* (Delhi: Anand Sahitya Sadan, 1955), 16.

homeland.<sup>113</sup> To set the record straight, Ambedkar called it “Acchutistan.” Moreover, the term “Dalit” did not come into currency in Indian political discourse till the 1970s.

### Turning the Clock Back

If Faisal Devji argued that Pakistan was imagined and came into existence as an ideological state, Barbara Metcalf writes that “Pakistan did not, pace Dhulipala, become an ideological State.”<sup>114</sup> Metcalf, as also Yasmin Khan, in their respective review essays have called into question the central argument of my book—that the idea of Pakistan did not remain vague, but increasingly attained coherence, clarity and substance as a result of public debates on its meaning and implications. Their comments attempt at resurrecting previous certitudes about Jinnah and the Pakistan movement as also cherished beliefs about what Pakistan would have been like had Jinnah lived longer. Metcalf reiterates the existing consensus in Partition historiography—that there was continuing confusion in the public mind regarding Pakistan over crucial questions of sovereignty, territoriality, and the meaning of the State itself. Moreover, that this confusion was to no small extent caused by Jinnah’s refusal to provide clarity on these matters. Thus, she refers to Jinnah’s “deliberate lack of precision” on Pakistan and also points out that as late as 1945 Liaquat spoke of “states” in plural. She also notes that “not everyone had a feeling for what sovereignty meant.” Rather, “they were not realistic about modern state boundaries” since a local ML functionary wrote that even after the creation of Pakistan people could still hop on the Frontier Mail in UP and go to the Punjab. Similarly, she adduces the well-known fact that no one knew where the lines for Punjab and Bengal would be drawn even a few days after Independence, to bolster her claim that there was widespread confusion about Pakistan’s territoriality. She further argues that if one were to go by ‘Uthmānī’s rhetoric that Pakistan would belong equally to all Indian Muslims, “this was a vision of a *qaum* undefined by territory.” Similarly, Khan writes that ideas of “nation,” “state,” “sovereignty” were not clear to those writing or speaking at that time. Moreover, the word *Āzādī* used by ML functionaries cannot simply be translated as “independence” for it had multiple meanings just like Gandhi’s “Swaraj.” Khan implies that “invoking freedom did not really directly translate into envisaging completely independent nation-states at a time when no British Asian or African colony had achieved full sovereign

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<sup>113</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, 196.

<sup>114</sup> Barbara Metcalf, review of *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India*, by Venkat Dhulipala, *The Book Review* 39, no. 6 (2015).



independence.”<sup>115</sup>

It is difficult to sustain the argument that Indians did not understand the meaning of territorial sovereignty after having lived under the British Raj for several generations and participated in mass movements against colonial rule. If we were to accept the Metcalf and Khan position, nationalist politics and the struggle for freedom in the subcontinent lose their very meaning. Territorial sovereignty was at the core of the Congress-led movement for independence (*Purna Swaraj*) and later during the ML’s struggle for Pakistan. This awareness was particularly acute in the case of the Pakistan demand since that is what distinguished the ML’s platform from that of the Congress, which was willing to concede maximum autonomy to the Muslim majority provinces of British India, but not territorial sovereignty.

The comments about Jinnah’s “lack of precision” or popular nebulosity about Pakistan is astounding in the face of extensive evidence I have adduced to the contrary in my book, which these reviewers pass over in silence. Far from being vague, Jinnah’s unequivocal stance on Pakistan’s sovereignty was famously brought out in his exchange with Gandhi in 1942. When asked whether he saw Andhra’s bid for separation from Madras province in the same light as the Pakistan demand, Gandhi wrote, “There can be no comparison between Pakistan and Andhra separation. The Andhra separation is a redistribution on a linguistic basis. The Andhras do not claim to be a separate nation having nothing in common with the rest of India. Pakistan on the other hand is a demand for carving out of India a portion to be treated as *a wholly independent sovereign State*. Thus, there seems to be nothing in common between the two.”<sup>116</sup> Jinnah in response declared that Gandhi “has himself put the Muslim demand in a nutshell.”<sup>117</sup> Gandhi poignantly responded, “I have read with attention Quaid-e-Azam’s reply to my article in *Harijan*. “Pakistan,” according to him, “in a nutshell” “is a demand for carving out of India a portion to be wholly treated as an independent and sovereign State. This sovereign State can conceivably go to war against the one of which it was but yesterday a part. It can also equally conceivably make treaties with other States. All this can certainly be had, but surely not by the willing consent of the rest. But it seems he does not want it by consent.”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Yasmin Khan, review of *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India*, by Venkat Dhulipala, *The American Historical Review* 121, no. 1 (2016): 217.

<sup>116</sup> Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 83:78.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 83:120n2.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 83:120.

Jinnah was not vague about Pakistan's territoriality either as noted earlier and also repeatedly quelled any talk of a Federation or Confederation between Hindu India and Pakistan. As he clearly stated, "Federation, however, described and in whatever terms it is put, must ultimately deprive the federating units of authority in all vital matters. The units, despite themselves would be compelled to grant more and more powers to the central authority."<sup>119</sup> He, therefore, exhorted his followers to "remove from your mind any idea of some form of such loose federation."<sup>120</sup> As regards Liaquat's use of "states," it must be noted that he referred to the singular "state," in the same quote as also on many other occasions. He also used "State," quoting Jinnah, in a special article that he contributed to the *Indian Annual Register* after the 1941 annual AIML Madras session, which had passed the resolution declaring Pakistan to be an independent State.<sup>121</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising when at the convention of ML legislators in 1946, Jinnah dismissed the use of "states" in the Lahore Resolution as a typographical error, there was very little protest.<sup>122</sup>

To underline its sovereignty, Jinnah portrayed Pakistan as a vector for pan-Islamic unity on the world stage, which would be a bulwark against the depredations of both Hindu and Western imperialisms. As Jinnah told associates during a visit to Iqbal's grave in 1942, "Pakistan holds the key to the liberation of the entire Islamic world."<sup>123</sup> He also saw Pakistan as the base from where scientists, doctors, engineers, economists would be trained and spread throughout the Middle East "to serve their co-religionists and create an awakening among them."<sup>124</sup> He showed keen interest in the affairs of the Islamic world, particularly commenting on Palestine. During the 1945-46 elections, he asked, "Why Palestine should become the dumping ground for such a large number of Jews?"<sup>125</sup> As regards 'Uthmānī, his views on the relationship between Pakistan and Indian Muslims were identical to Jinnah's as outlined above, as also was his faith in the hostage population theory or Pakistan's promise to protect Muslim minorities in Hindu India. In addition,

<sup>119</sup> Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, ed., *Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1947* (Karachi: National Publishing House, 1970), 2:426.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:426-27.

<sup>121</sup> Liaquat Ali Khan, "All India Muslim League: Activities of the League from January to December 1941," *The Indian Annual Register* 1 (1941): 294.

<sup>122</sup> See Khaliqzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, 343-44; M. A. H. Ispahani, *Qaid-i Azam as I Knew Him* (Karachi: Forward Publications Trust, 1967), 144-45; Yunas Samad, *South Asian Muslim Politics 1937-1958* (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1991), 80.

<sup>123</sup> Suleri, *My Leader*, 179.

<sup>124</sup> Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan, "The Commander I served Under," in *Qaid-i-Azam as Seen by His Contemporaries*, ed. Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad (Lahore: Publishers United, 1966), 42.

<sup>125</sup> Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*, 487.

Jinnah, the ML, and the *'ulamā'* supporting the Pakistan demand defended its viability as a nation state against charges that it would not survive due to economic, political, social, and military reasons. Both Metcalf and Khan choose to ignore or stay silent on these principal planks of the ML's ideology.

Metcalf further writes that "Dhulipala fails to persuade the reader that there was "clarity" and "substance" about the expectations for an Islamic State." She points out that my book variously documents "visions of a totalitarian Khilafat, of a liberal democracy infused with Islamic values, of a State simply ruled by Muslims." She notes that Ishtiaq H. Qureshi, the author of some pamphlets on Pakistan sponsored by the ML during the 1945 elections, "expected Pakistan to have the law of Islam, but averred that we cannot leave these matters to the *ulama*—hardly Usmani's view." Finally, she brings up two letters written by ML supporters in UP (reproduced verbatim at the end of chapter six in my book), wherein they express bewilderment about Pakistan to the Quaid-i-Azam, thus underlining her overall point that Pakistan remained a vague idea in the public mind

When Metcalf writes in this vein about Qureshi and the *'ulamā'*, she sets up an untenable dichotomy between them, downplaying the vast areas of their convergence. Firstly, the two-nation-theory was an article of faith for both of them. As Qureshi wrote, "we are a mass of heterogeneous men and women held together by our common allegiance to Islam. Weaken this allegiance and we are lost: like the seared leaves of autumn we are blown in all directions, ultimately finding our way to the manure pit to enrich the growth of other peoples, other systems, other ideals."<sup>126</sup> Secondly, like the *'ulamā'* in general, Qureshi held the European liberal democratic state in contempt. He spoke of the "evils in the western system of elections" and disapproved of it "since it maximized the individual's liberty defining limits on his actions as narrowly as possible." Islam, on the other hand, gave the individual the fullest freedom to ascend to his highest stature but could not allow him to "indulge in meaningless and destructive pleasure or wield an unhealthy influence upon society." Qureshi went on to dismiss liberal democracy as a Jewish conspiracy and in this regard approvingly noted that Hitler was not wrong when he identified democracies with international Jewry, because high finance and big business, which are the backbone of social organisation in the democracies are very much in the hands of the Jews; and because finance is the real master of bourgeoisie democracy, the Jews are very much in control."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *The Future Development of Islamic Polity* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1946).

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

Thirdly, both Qureshi and ‘*ulamā*’ like ‘Uthmānī were committed to the idea of fashioning Pakistan as an Islamic state. As Qureshi noted, “those who say that politics has nothing to do with religion talk in a terminology which does not concern us. . . . The principles enunciated by the Quran and the Prophet should form the Supreme and basic law of a Muslim State.” The question that remained was how to realise such a state. It is in this context that Qureshi declared that matters could not be left to the ‘*ulamā*’. But this did not imply confidence in the capacities of modern Muslim intellectuals like himself to attain the goal. As he wrote, “are we free of blemishes ourselves? Are we not open to the great accusation that we do not know either the Quran or the Traditions of the Prophet? And of course who are we to criticize the jurists without studying them.” He, therefore, wanted modern academicians to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge of the Quran, the Hadith, the writings and discussions of medieval jurists as well as Islamic history. This was easier said than done and as Qureshi acknowledged, mastery over these subjects could take a lifetime. The key for him, therefore, lay in *cooperation between specialists working in these various disciplines*.<sup>128</sup> This kept a door open for consultations with the ‘*ulamā*’. This view did not differ from that of ‘Uthmānī who did not expect the ‘*ulamā*’ to monopolise the work of crafting Islamic laws for Pakistan. Rather, as I point out, there was a broad understanding that the Islamic state in Pakistan under God’s law would not materialise overnight but would emerge only *gradually* as a result of negotiations and deliberations between various stakeholders in Pakistan. Metcalf’s remark that I fail to persuade the reader that there was “clarity” and “substance” about the expectations for an Islamic state is, therefore, astonishing. More so since, Metcalf herself strangely concludes her review by noting that “Dhulipala leaves no doubt that many UP Muslim voters wanted both an independent State and a State that in some ambiguous Islamic sense would be imbued with transcendent purpose and meaning.”

Contrary to Metcalf’s claim, if someone in UP thought that even after Pakistan’s creation he could hop on to a train and go to Peshawar or Calcutta as always, he was not being unrealistic about modern state boundaries. Rather, he articulated the expectation that the rise of twin sovereignties following the demise of the British empire in India would not necessarily foreclose possibilities of exchanges across borders of nation states. This sentiment was captured by a young ML supporter writing in the *Dawn* a few months before the Partition. The writer noted with relief the return of sanity in international social affairs following the announcement from London of abolition of visas between Britain and France. The second World War has shown that these

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

barriers and safeguards have not brought about any special security and happiness to the countries or nations concerned or to the world at large. Free and unhindered travel between the countries, he maintained, would go a long way in fostering friendly relations between the Asian countries thus enabling them to co-operate with one another for the freedom and glory of the whole continent.<sup>129</sup>

This brings us to the next set of criticisms that Metcalf levels against my book. She accuses me of “tainting” Jinnah by “quoting without comment an OSS report comparing him to Hitler.” She also notes that “he [Dhulipala] invariably has ML speakers and writers referring to Jinnah as “my Qaid” or “our Qaid” as if he were a leader of a cult, even when the possessive is not present in Urdu.” Furthermore, according to Metcalf, Jinnah’s statements that the Pakistan demand was not a bargaining chip “cannot be taken at face value.” She also asserts that “Jinnah wanted a ‘new Medina’ where Muslims and non-Muslims would live together as they had in the Prophet’s day. Exactly the Medina that Madani espoused for an undivided India.” Finally, Metcalf suggests bias and lack of even handedness on my part by declaring that I let the Congress leadership off the hook by not criticising their rejection of the Cabinet Mission Plan.

Metcalf’s pique is not unusual. Many historians remain invested in upholding the image of the secular Jinnah, a tragic figure wronged by history and historians. However, the OSS report I quote was not the only one that likened Jinnah to Hitler and the ML to the Nazi party. On various occasions letters written by ML supporters and even members of the AIML Working Committee themselves, addressed Jinnah as “My Fuehrer.” Ambedkar too, compared the ML programme to that of the Nazis. Metcalf’s insistence that we should not take Jinnah seriously even when he solemnly declared that Pakistan was not a “bargaining counter” but “a matter of life and death for the Muslims,” is inexplicable. Her remarks about the translations of poetry are untenable. One wonders how a reference to Jinnah as “our Leader” reduces him to a cult leader. That would be more likely if he were referred to as “the Leader.” Moreover, my use of the possessive is apt since the poet startlingly uses the singular in the same poem while referring to Jinnah, thus casting an intimate relationship between the *Quaid* and his people. Hence, “*Jis ne hamein bedar kiya hai,*” or “*Nahin hai jis ke dil mein keenah,*” or “*Tum ko dekar aaj dua’ein.*”<sup>130</sup> In any case, these translations were personally vetted by C. M. Naim, Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago, and that more than suffices for me.

<sup>129</sup> Mahmud Ispahani, “Passports and Visas,” *Dawn*, November 26, 1946.

<sup>130</sup> Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*, 429.

Metcalf's claim that Jinnah's "new Medina" was identical to the Medina espoused by Madanī, is very strange. It is based on a willful blindness to the fact that in Pakistan, the non-Muslims who remained were rendered second-class citizens even in Jinnah's day. They could not join the ML, which only admitted Muslims, unlike in India where any person irrespective of religion, region, caste, or sect could become a Congress member. Metcalf also completely disregards Jinnah's public comments about establishing an Islamic democracy in Pakistan, or an Islamic economy rather than a capitalist or socialist one, which implied that Muslims were the primary members of this nation state. As regards letting the Congress off the hook even though it rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan, I have already dealt with it above.

Referring to the debates between the '*ulamā*' ranged for or against the Pakistan demand, Metcalf writes that "Dhulipala needed to recognize that his *one sided sources* for Usmani (and Thanawi) require analysis in terms of standard debate rhetoric, *where opponents are always silent, look abashed, change the subject, and so forth.*" She suggests that I have sometimes "*over-read*" the texts under analysis. It is difficult to understand the thrust of her criticism, especially her reference to "one sided sources." Firstly, it should surprise no one if Thānavī or 'Uthmānī or Madanī made the strongest possible arguments for their respective positions—this is customary in any debate. Secondly, the opposing sets of '*ulamā*' maintained courtesies of debate by carefully laying out their opponent's views, pointing out their weaknesses, and critiquing them before presenting their own position and playing up its merits. For example, before aligning himself with the League and issuing *fatwās* in its favour, Thānavī sent questionnaires to the "nationalist" '*ulamā*' in the JUH as well as to the Muslim League to elicit their respective views on issues facing Indian Muslims and tried to find common ground between them. Similarly, his critique of the "nationalist" '*ulamā*' while sharp, included a sober assessment of their claims. Their writings and pamphlets were thus hardly one-sided.

Thirdly, for Metcalf to refer to 'Uthmānī or Thānavī's *public* speeches, statements, or writings as being "one-sided sources" or to their opponents as "always silent, looking abashed, changing the subject, and so forth" is profoundly misleading for another reason. Their utterances were not made in a vacuum but were part of a raucous public debate on vital questions confronting Indian Muslims—including the choice of supporting the Congress or the League; undivided India or Pakistan. Thus, Thānavī's *fatwā*, *Tanzīm al-Muslimīn*, asking Muslims to spurn the Congress and organise themselves under the ML's banner as Allah's *lashkar*, his *fatwās* to Muslim voters to vote for ML candidates, or his *fatwās* against *Bande Mataram*, Hindi, and the tricolour, were widely circulated in by-elections in the UP legislature. These

messages were forcefully countered by Madanī and his associates who through their own *fatwās* and arguments, supported the Congress candidates and sought to defeat ML candidates. The amplitude of campaigning by both sides was accentuated by the stakes involved. For the Congress, it was an opportunity to substantiate its claim of being India's only party that represented all Indians irrespective of caste, creed, religion, language, or gender. For the Muslim League it was a struggle for survival and the chance to bolster its claim of being the "sole authoritative and representative organisation of the Indian Muslims." The debate between these opposing sets of '*ulamā*' reverberated across India during the 1945–46 elections when 'Uthmānī and the nationalist '*ulamā*', clashed with each other. In the light of these raucous public exchanges, it is strange for Metcalf to refer to "one-sided sources," more so since she concludes her review by observing that "Dhulipala has richly succeeded in making a case for the extraordinary density of public debate on the Pakistan idea."

The only place where 'Uthmānī's opponents possibly "look abashed or change the subject" (*but are by no means silent*), is in an account of a meeting on December 7, 1945 between him and his opponents—Maulānā Ḥusain Aḥmad Madanī, Maulānā Ḥifẓ al-Raḥmān Siyūhārvī, and Muftī Kifāyat Allāh—to discuss Pakistan.<sup>131</sup> According to this account produced by 'Uthmānī's side, Madanī's party begged 'Uthmānī to stop campaigning for Pakistan, or at least stay neutral during the 1945–46 elections. They presented him with a series of arguments to show how Pakistan would be an unmitigated disaster for both Islam and Muslims in the subcontinent, besides questioning Jinnah's sagacity, credibility, and leadership. 'Uthmānī demolished each of his opponents' arguments calmly and clinically, making it clear that he would not desist from campaigning for Pakistan. The account shows how this legendary '*ālim* rendered Madanī and his associates speechless in the end through the sheer force of his arguments. For my part, I did try and locate other versions of this meeting that could modify this narrative. But despite my enquiries, I was unable to find any such account. And while it is true that the two letters that I reproduced verbatim at the end of chapter six of my book express some bewilderment about Pakistan, they also reflect the clear realisation that it would be a sovereign state. Hence, their writers refer to transfers of population for the sake of national homogeneity besides invoking the "hostage population" theory for the protection of national minorities.

Ironically, there is a one-sidedness in the way Metcalf chooses references convenient for her argument and discards those that contradict it, before over-reading them. Despite acknowledging the density of debate on Pakistan, she

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 381–88.

downplays the role of ideas and raises doubts as to whether they really mattered. Referring to the 1946–47 elections—dubbed a referendum on Pakistan—she asks, “Did people vote because of ideas?” She answers the question by stating that when “two Deobandis were at loggerheads in the 1930s, yet a third Deobandi basically advised the reader to forget about ideas and follow whichever Imam meant more to him.” She seems to, therefore, imply like colonialist writers before her that the natives talk a lot but in the end their words amount to nothing.

### Call for Ideologically Correct Histories

If Metcalf and Khan seek to push Partition historiography back to the previous consensus that Jinnah reluctantly led a secular nationalist movement to create Pakistan (which he was forced into by the Congress), and about which there was widespread confusion, Manan Ahmed Asif realises that the horse has bolted and we have a crisis. He, therefore, gets down to asking for ideologically correct histories in which historians discipline themselves and teach the laypersons correct histories in order to build bonhomie among India’s dueling communities.<sup>132</sup> Asif begins his review essay with a survey of Partition historiography that he divides into three phases, according to political transitions in subcontinental history. His first phase “ends in either 1979 or 1984” coinciding with General Zia-ul-Haq’s regime, Mrs. Gandhi’s assassination, and the anti-Sikh riots. The second phase goes from here till the mid-2000s coinciding with the end of the first BJP government in New Delhi and the “reopening of US aid to Pakistan in 2001.” In the current phase, he notices that “new archival work is emerging after a long gap.”

The first phase, according to Asif, was dominated by scholarship from the US and England and here he mentions the work of Roger Long, Paul Brass, Peter Hardy, Craig Baxter, Ian Talbot, Wayne Wilcox, and Lawrence Ziring. He claims that “their efforts concentrated on linking modernization theory—developed at Harvard, this theory held that postcolonial states can be made modern with the help of usually dictatorial strongmen and western funding from bodies such as the World Bank, and IMF—and its antecedent fascination with elite politics to the years leading up to the Partition.” They supposedly produced biographies of key figures and examined exigencies of politics from “a highly structured perspective.” Asif writes that the social and cultural aspects of the Partition were absent in these works since community as such was not within the purview of their analysis.

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<sup>132</sup> Manan Ahmad Asif, “Between the Lines: Excavating the Many Histories of Partition,” *Caravan* (New Delhi), July 2015, 84–90.



The only problem with this seemingly erudite typology is that it is quite off the mark. To begin with, Asif gets basic facts wrong. Roger Long never published anything on Partition or Pakistan during this so-called first phase. In fact, to this day he has not published a single monograph in this area. His earliest venture into this territory is an annotated bibliography on Partition scholarship, *Founding of Pakistan* (1998). Craig Baxter, during this so-called first phase, is better known for his monograph on the *Bharatiya Jan Sangh* (1969). His foray into Pakistan scholarship begins with an introduction to the translation of Syed Nur Ahmed's Urdu book into English, *From Martial Law to Martial Law* (1985), followed by an edited volume on *Authoritarianism in Pakistan in the 1980s* (1991), and *Bangladesh: From Nation to a State* (1997). Ian Talbot's earliest publication during this period is an essay on the 1946 elections in the Punjab (*Modern Asian Studies* 1980)—his volumes on *Punjab and the Raj* and *Provincial Politics and Pakistan Movement* appeared only in 1988. Wayne Wilcox's book deals with the problem of integration of princely states into Pakistan and is a counterpart to V.P. Menon's work on India, while Lawrence Ziring's work deals with Pakistan's post-colonial challenges and has nothing to do with the Partition. How any of these volumes are linked to modernisation theory developed at Harvard, is left unclear. Contrary to Asif's claim, none of these authors "produced biographies of key figures," and as regards their examination of "exigencies of politics from a highly structured perspective" one is left clueless as to what that means. The one figure who *did* produce an important biography—Stanley Wolpert (*Jinnah of Pakistan*, 1984) is missing from this lineup. Asif's caveat that none of them studied Partition makes one wonder why he links them to Partition historiography.

Asif's bunching together of a disparate set of historians such as Ayesha Jalal, Gyanendra Pandey, Urvashi Butalia, Joya Chatterji, Mushirul Hasan, Ritu Menon, and David Gilmartin is also problematic. These individuals asked different questions and were responding to separate intellectual and political contexts during the so-called second phase between 1984 to the mid-2000s. Jalal's book needs to be understood against the backdrop of the crisis over East Pakistan in 1971, and more immediately the hanging of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the takeover in Pakistan by General Zia-ul-Haq. The subsequent Sunnification campaign that General Zia unleashed in Pakistan had much to do with motivating liberal Pakistanis to turn to the "secular" Mr. Jinnah for succour. "This is not the Pakistan Jinnah would have wanted"—became the rallying cry. Asif's silence on this context, especially on the role of the Pakistan army, speaks louder than words.

Asif's assumption of a common zeitgeist for the subcontinent as a whole in the 1980s and 1990s to which all these individuals were allegedly responding

is fallacious. It places India and Pakistan on the same footing when their postcolonial trajectories have been vastly divergent. Looking at Asif's typology, one wonders how Jalal was affected by Hindu-Muslim and Sikh riots in India (which would have influenced the work Gyanendra Pandey, Urvashi Butalia, or Mushirul Hasan) or how these historians or Jalal and Gilmartin were influenced by the re-opening of US aid to Pakistan in 2001. Asif perhaps expects the bedazzled reader to not ask any questions about the grand connections he makes between late twentieth-century subcontinental zeitgeist, geopolitics, and scholarly agendas.

On the current phase, Asif mentions the works of Faisal Devji, Vazira Zamindar, Farzana Shaikh, Neeti Nair, and Yasmin Khan as important and having led to "the opening of new archives and the introduction of new analytical questions." Shaikh's inclusion in this phase is bizarre given that her most important work *Community and Consensus in Islam* appeared in 1989. It challenged the Jalal thesis inasmuch as it pointed to the inevitability of the Partition given the incommensurability between the values of liberal democracy and the ideas of north Indian Muslim *asbrāf* (elites) who believed that only Muslims could rule Muslims. To suggest that Shaikh's work is part of a genre that sees Partition as "a process that unfolds slowly, unevenly, and at different costs for different communities" is misleading to say the least. Moreover, the work of Faisal Devji and Yasmin Khan is based largely on printed sources and known archival material and did not open any new archives. Asif's attempt at a panopticon view of partition scholarship is therefore quite unproductive.

Coming to my book, Asif begins by claiming that it "takes as its central concern the differences between Hindus and Muslims." Claiming that "Dhulipala foregrounds the supposed foreignness of Muslim thought," he suggests that I put forth a primordialist history in which monolithic Hindu and Muslim communities are always already locked in combat with one another. This is so fallacious, one wonders if Asif actually read my book. After all my book is entirely about intense, wide ranging, and sophisticated debates *within* the Indian Muslim community on the question of Partition and Pakistan. *Nowhere* does it posit a monolithic Indian Muslim community. Asif next states that in my formulation Deobandi theologians who popularised the vision of Pakistan as a new Medina, "were guided by a vision of faith resistant to modernity." This again is not true. Rather, I show how these men were certainly *not* resistant to modernity. This is evident from 'Uthmānī's advocacy of a close alliance between the United States and Pakistan for which he gave very modern reasons. He argued that Pakistan as the land of five rivers could imbibe valuable lessons from the US, which had mastered the technology of

building dams and channeling water resources. ‘Uthmānī also marshaled facts and statistics about Pakistan’s population, natural resources, armed forces, geopolitical location, and trading links with other countries, to argue the case for its developmental potential.<sup>133</sup>

Asif is dismissive of ‘Uthmānī, suggesting that he was an inconsequential figure during the Pakistan movement. He claims that it was only in 1972, when Pakistan was a different place, that ‘Uthmānī’s writings were published and he was elevated to the pantheon of Pakistani national heroes. Here, Asif finally but obliquely hints at the creation of Bangladesh as a factor in the evolving historiography of Pakistan’s creation, but his claim about ‘Uthmānī’s insignificance is highly dubious. ‘Uthmānī importance can be discerned from the fact that he presided over Jinnah’s state funeral; and it was to him that India’s serving Governor General Rajagopalachari sent condolences on Jinnah’s death, and not to Liaquat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan.<sup>134</sup> More importantly, ‘Uthmānī was the main force behind the passage of the 1949 Objectives Resolution in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. The Resolution put forth a clear hierarchy of sovereigns for Pakistan—Allah, state, and people. Following its passage, Liaquat Ali Khan declared that Pakistan was founded because the Muslims of this subcontinent wanted to build up their lives in accordance with the teachings and traditions of Islam. As Saadia Saeed has noted, the ‘*ulamā*’ and Islamists were crucial in shaping the content of the Objectives Resolution. It was through the combined efforts of the ‘*ulamā*’ led by ‘Uthmānī and Islamists led by Abū ‘l-A‘lā Maudūdī that references to Islam came to occupy such a central place in the Objectives Resolution. She also highlights the observation of one Muslim League politician who claimed that these references to Islam were made solely to satisfy ‘Uthmānī.<sup>135</sup>

The Objectives Resolution was opposed by all members of religious minorities in Pakistan’s Constituent Assembly but was passed by the majority. This mirrored the popular understanding of Pakistan as an Islamic state, something that a sharp contemporary observer and scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith acknowledged.<sup>136</sup> The minority representatives pointed in vain to Jinnah’s August 11, 1947 speech.

Asif states that I build my case regarding ‘Uthmānī on the basis of a single pamphlet published in 1942, besides his speeches in UP. This is part of his

<sup>133</sup> Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*, 379–81.

<sup>134</sup> Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad, *Quaid-i-Azam as seen by His Contemporaries* (Lahore: Publishers United, 1966), 238–39.

<sup>135</sup> Saadia Saeed, *Politics of Desecularization: Law and the Minority Question in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>136</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Pakistan as an Islamic State* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1951).

reduction of my book to being mostly about “boastful accounts of contending theologians and reports from colonial police surveillance.” Asif’s blindness to the many “source texts” and “archives” that I have utilised in my book reveals his unwillingness to simply see the evidence. My discussion of ‘Uthmānī is based on his speeches that he delivered across the length and breadth of India including places in Punjab, NWFP, and Bengal, besides UP, as also his writings and correspondence. Asif’s claim that after a thirty-page discussion of ‘Uthmānī’s thought, I do not provide a single counter debate that addresses his invocation of a new Medina, is again bizarre. He completely glosses over chapter five of my book, which details how the JUH ‘*ulamā*’, associates of Madanī and aligned with the Congress, ridiculed the idea of Pakistan as an Islamic state besides providing detailed critiques about its economic, military, and administrative feasibility. Madanī (who lived in Medina for many years) was the one who originally introduced the metaphor of Medina to claim that just as Jews and Muslims there during the Prophet’s time had become one *qaum*, in India too Hindus and Muslims could forge a composite nationality (*muttabīdah qaumiyat*) to overthrow the Raj. This interpretation of the Covenant of Medina invited scorching critiques by the poet Muhammad Iqbal, the Islamist Maudūdī, and the legendary ‘*ālim* Thānavī. ‘Uthmānī himself reiterated his master Thānavī’s critique of Madanī’s interpretation (which I highlight in chapter two of my book) before introducing the metaphor of a new Medina. Madanī never retreated from his position and only reiterated the ideal of *muttabīdah qaumiyat*. For Asif to claim that I do not provide a counter debate is, therefore, highly disingenuous.

Asif insists that the “source texts” I used to substantiate my argument did not enjoy wide circulation, thus suggesting that the debate on Pakistan remained an elite exercise with no popular impact. In particular, he takes issue with my analysis of a pamphlet on Pakistan that was published from Bareilly in 1940 as also an ML report on an Islamic constitution for Pakistan. This is a bizarre comment. The fact that in the localities, individuals were thinking of Pakistan as a separate Islamic nation state even before the Lahore Resolution, publishing tracts about it, articulating ideas about its territory, government, foreign policy and population transfers etc., shows that Pakistan had become a popular idea at the grassroots. As the *New York Times* correspondent in India wrote at the time, “Support for Pakistan is strongest in the provinces with Muslim minorities.”<sup>137</sup> The reception of Pakistan in small towns is underlined by the report of P. W. Radice, a serving ICS officer in UP. Visiting Muslim weavers in Tanda in Fyzabad district, Radice asked them what they hoped to gain from Pakistan. Their blunt reply was that “if the Hindus annoyed them,

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<sup>137</sup> *New York Times*, September 8, 1942.

their brethren in Pakistan would be able to take revenge on the Hindus there.”<sup>138</sup> Symbols of Pakistan’s sovereignty were displayed across districts, towns and *qasbahs*, through marches of uniformed Muslim League National Guards with their swords and other accouterments, the hoisting of the ML flag as a national flag, prominent displays of Pakistan maps with its areas coloured green on *pandāls* at ML political conferences and public meetings, distribution of card labels showing maps of Pakistan, and prominent positioning of Pakistan maps in front of groups, carrying *ta’ziyahs* and *alams* during Muḥarram processions.

Asif has a similar problem with my examination of the ML sponsored report regarding an Islamic constitution for Pakistan that was produced under the chairmanship of Maulānā Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī. This report was included in the book for two reasons. Firstly, the fact that it was commissioned by the ML leadership shows that they were thinking seriously about inaugurating some species of Islamic state in Pakistan. Secondly, while this report did not get any public airing in the 1940s, it became the primary source of recommendations made by the *Ta’līmāt-i Islāmiyah* a committee set up by the Pakistan Constituent Assembly to advise it on framing an Islamic constitution for Pakistan. The *Ta’līmāt-i Islāmiyah* was again headed by Nadvī who was specially invited from India for this purpose. Gail Minault’s otherwise thoughtful review of my book also misses this point.<sup>139</sup>

Asif also takes issue with my analysis of Ambedkar’s writings on Pakistan; and is dismissive of Ambedkar’s claim that he was “the original philosopher of Pakistan.” Unlike Devji, who acknowledges that Ambedkar’s book was widely read and cited, Asif writes, “Ambedkar’s text did not circulate among Muslim voters or thinkers on any remarkable scale—and Dhulipala does not claim or show that it was.” This is again disingenuous. From the vigour with which Pakistan’s viability and logistical feasibility were discussed by proponents and opponents of Pakistan using his themes and tropes, Ambedkar’s influence is unmistakable. If he was not acknowledged by those writing popular tracts, it is not surprising. Ambedkar himself wrote, “Thoughts, ideas, and arguments contained in it have been pillaged by authors, politicians and editors and politicians to support their sides. I am sorry they did not observe the decency of acknowledging the source even when they lifted not merely the argument but also the language of the book.” He also provided the reason for this omission. “The book has displeased both Hindus

<sup>138</sup> Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*, 204.

<sup>139</sup> Gail Minault, review of *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India*, by Venkat Dhulipala, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/22055/reviews/88726/minault-dhulipala-creating-new-medina-state-power-islam-and-quest>.

and Muslims. . . . That it is disowned by the Hindus and unowned by the Muslims is to me the best evidence that it has the vices of neither.”<sup>140</sup> During the 1944 negotiations with Gandhi, Jinnah singled out Ambedkar’s book among the many tracts on Pakistan, which compelled Gandhi to read it. It also led to the production of propaganda material on Pakistan under the auspices of the Home Studies Circle to respond to Ambedkar’s book. All this speaks volumes about its circulation and impact.

Asif is upset by how my book “quotes with aplomb Ambedkar’s comparison of Muslims in India to Nazi fascists and militant jihadis.” He decries my not taking into account “the biases in Ambedkar’s understanding of an antagonistic Hindu-Muslim past derived from colonial historiography with its own biases and prejudices.” Asif has a point—yes, Ambedkar was certainly influenced by colonial historiography on the Hindu-Muslim encounter. But the task of a historian studying the rise of Pakistani nationalism is to examine how existing historical literature, tropes, figures, events, symbols, and concepts had an extraordinary valence among both the leadership and the masses and how they were critical to the success of the ML during the process of popular mobilisation. To dismiss them as Orientalist clichés that became building blocks of a false consciousness is facile. If one were to follow Asif’s logic, the birth of Pakistan could simply be reduced to the success of British Orientalist knowledge. Denizens of the subcontinent, in such an analysis, are reduced to unthinking dupes, gullible consumers of this knowledge, with only the progressive historian surveying them left with rational critical faculties.

Asif accuses me of writing “biased” history since I supposedly reproduce the colonialist perspective that “an irrevocable break—both communal and sectarian—had already formed between communities in India before Partition.” He further writes, “That his historical subjects held this view is beyond debate, but the book should have helped us understand the construction of their position.” This is a strange accusation, because, after all, my book carefully delineates the intricate ways in which various actors constructed their positions for or against Pakistan. As Keerthik Sasidharan has noted in his perceptive essay, “thinking about Pakistan was complex, self-aware, and underscored by a density of thinking and borrowing from a common Islamic past” with the individuals involved here being “self-aware enough to parse the lineaments of their own influences.”<sup>141</sup> For Asif to therefore claim that I read my sources “uncritically” and “take them at face value,” is simplistic.

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<sup>140</sup> Bhimrao R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India* (Bombay: Thacker & Co., 1945), x.

<sup>141</sup> Sasidharan, “Dreams of a Muslim Cosmopolis.”

Asif pontificates that the need of the hour is not books like mine that give credence to the articulations of ML leaders and intellectuals about “Muslim foreignness to India, and of Islam having its origins in Arabia.” Rather, it is works like those of the Indian Marxist historian Mohammad Habib who excavated the past “not to fuel sectarian or communitarian difference in the present but to assert a historically sound vision of Indic Muslim past to counter the British take of India’s history.” This is again rather astonishing for Asif blanks out Marxist interpretations of medieval history that informed the Muslim Mass Contact Program (MMCP) of the Congress party conducted by Communists like K. M. Ashraf, Sajjad Zaheer, and Z. A. Ahmed under Nehru’s direction. I have examined this programme in detail in chapter two of my book and also showed how it failed miserably when confronted by the ML’s campaign that decried the MMCP’s subordination of religion to Marxist class analysis.

Asif’s plea is not for “unbiased” histories but for political correctness. He believes that ideologically correct histories will reinforce and promote solidarity among Indians. Ironically, such calls only undermine claims by left-wing historians that their writing is “unbiased” and “scientific,” unlike that of their Sangh Parivar opponents. Textbooks by scholars with left leanings have indeed been used in schools and colleges in India for many decades—at least since the late sixties. It is only recently they have been challenged, especially in the social media, and accused of whitewashing the past, first to build a united front of India’s communities against the Raj, and later to fortify the ideological basis of Indian secularism.<sup>142</sup> This has led to an acknowledgment that portrayals of Indian pasts as shining examples of syncretistic co-existence or economic explanations for temple destruction like the one provided by Habib and other Marxists are inadequate, and that we need to come up with explanations that also sensitively discuss the violence in medieval Indian past.

## Conclusion

*Creating a New Medina* tried to go beyond the pull of ideologically correct histories. Not surprisingly, it has met with some resistance among some sections in India and Pakistan, especially in the community of historians. This is not surprising since previous certitudes, which were comforting for many reasons, now seem to be in peril. For liberal Pakistani historians, the figure of

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<sup>142</sup> The popular Kannada writer S. L. Bhyrappa has written of his experiences as a member of the NCERT committee in the 1960s, which was tasked with crafting social studies textbooks based on “secular” narratives of the Indian past even at the cost of distortion and falsification. See <http://prekshaa.in/distorting-indian-history-s-l-bhyrappa-girish-karnad-u-r-ananthamurthy-parthasarathy-ncert-indira-gandhi-distortion-mughals-tipu-sultan-aurangzeb/#.WzX58dJKhPY>.

a secular Jinnah was a critical bulwark from where they could push back against the rising tide of Islamism in Pakistan. Jinnah combining with a putatively retrograde ‘*ulamā*’, his utilising anti-modern or non-modern religious metaphors to drum up support for Pakistan, his deploying the rhetoric of war and hostage population theory or demanding transfers of population, or indeed the common political vocabulary combining ideas of Islamic nationhood and modern state that the ‘*ulamā*’ and the ML leadership used during the struggle for Pakistan’s creation—this line of enquiry punctures the earlier neat storyline and causes a crisis among them. They see it empowering Islamic parties and radicals and providing legitimacy to their agenda of establishing an Islamic state in Pakistan.<sup>143</sup>

In India, one of the book’s principal arguments—that there was a sophisticated, wide-ranging and intensive debate on the meaning and implications of Pakistan in the public sphere and that consequently it did not remain a vague idea in the public mind—causes a similar disquiet. The apprehension is that the new argument may be used to further paint Muslims as fifth columnists in India by the votaries of Hindutva. Another cause of discomfort with the book is because of how it shows Ambedkar using unflattering stereotypes in his assessment of Indian Muslims and their politics, as also advocating Partition using arguments that seem startlingly akin to those of a Hindu conservative realist. Another section might be dissatisfied since Nehru does not come off badly and does not get blamed for the Partition in the book.

Some of these apprehensions seem overblown and unnecessary. After all, *Creating a New Medina* was not an argument about the innate enmity between Hindus and Muslims or a normative argument for Muslim separatism as I have underlined both in my book and at different places in this essay. By foregrounding popular understanding of Pakistan, my book instead took seriously the aspirations of a community that do not neatly fit with the desire for secular political beginnings. It also highlighted the ‘*ulamā*’ as actors in the Partition story whether they espoused Pakistan or opposed it. The book also did not try to replace a secular Jinnah with a religious Jinnah. Rather it sought to complicate our understanding of his persona in a way that takes seriously his engagement with and mobilisation of Islam rather than reducing it to a strategic ruse. It is those who essentialise Jinnah as an arch-secularist who rob him of his complexity. My book tried to bring out similar complexities in Ambedkar and other political figures who were important in shaping the history of the times, something which is necessary in an era where leaders

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<sup>143</sup> See Nadeem F. Paracha, “Smokers’ Corner: Whose Two-Nation Theory is it, anyway?,” *Dawn*, October 9, 2016.



have been reduced to icons on the wall to be worshipped unquestioningly. It is perhaps for these reasons that scholars in other fields such as religious studies and political science have been far more hospitable and receptive to my book's arguments. This is not surprising since an important strand of scholarship in religious studies has called into question the claims and universality of secularism and does not necessarily see it as an antiseptic against religious fundamentalism.

In any case, much as this essay tried to address various questions and issues raised about my book, the Partition remains a sensitive topic and will continue to be debated with persistence, passion, and zest. However, for the debate to be productive it needs to be conducted with civility and on the basis of rigorous new historiographical research to enable further dialogue. This research needs to be presented in clear prose so as to include not just scholars but as large a community of people as possible in the spirit of democratic debate. Falsification based on half-truths, lies, and distortions; exaggerated speculation, turgid prose that obscures issues, and immoderate speech will only contribute to the ideologically charged climate of the times. Reiterating politically correct certitudes or fashioning ideologically correct histories will not help either.

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