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Towards a New Medina: Jinnah, the
Deobandi *Ulama*, and the Quest for
Pakistan in Late Colonial India

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Towards a New Medina: Jinnah, the Deobandi *Ulama*, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial India*

Towards the end of a rather long day of research in the Oriental and India Office Collections at the British Library in London, I stumbled upon a rather unexpected document in the private papers of *Qaid-i-Azam* Mohammad Ali Jinnah (Dhulipala, 2014:1). The handwritten document, with its ink fading, was the record of a special séance with Jinnah's spirit held on 13 March 1955, nearly seven years after his death and eight years after the birth of Pakistan. The séance was conducted against the backdrop of Pakistan's first constitutional crisis, by a spiritualist hired by a government officer, a certain Mr. Ibrahim who was at hand to direct the questions. After initial pleasantries, Jinnah's spirit was solicitously asked if it wanted to smoke a cigarette since in life the Great Leader had been a heavy smoker. On the basis of an affirmative answer, a cigarette was lit and fixed on a wire stand for the spirit to smoke while it answered questions. Mr. Ibrahim began, 'Sir, as a creator and father of Pakistan, won't you guide the destiny of the nation now?' The spirit reacted testily saying that it was not its responsibility to guide Pakistan's destiny any more. A worried Mr. Ibrahim enquired, 'Don't you think there is a prosperous future for Pakistan?' The spirit responded icily, 'I don't think so. Prosperity of a country depends on the selflessness of people who control its Destiny. None at all is eager to be selfless there.' Mr. Ibrahim pressed further. 'What advice would you give to the present rulers of Pakistan?' Prompt came the response: 'Selflessness, selflessness. That is

*Lecture delivered by Professor Venkat Dhulipala at the India International Centre on July 26, 2013.

the only advice I can give them now.' Jinnah's spirit then made a telling remark.' It is easier to acquire a country, but it is extremely difficult to retain it. That in a nutshell is the present position of Pakistan to gain which rivers of blood flowed.' As the interview drew to an end, Mr. Ibrahim finally asked 'How are you spending your time nowadays?' Jinnah's spirit replied gloomily, 'Not very well friend. Evil pictures regarding Pakistan are badly in my mind every now and then and I cannot live in mental peace here.'

A burgeoning scholarship on Pakistan has traced the roots of its postcolonial predicament to the circumstances surrounding its traumatic birth in the bloody Partition of British India in August 1947. The story of how the transcript of this séance found its way into the archive would no doubt be fascinating, but what is striking about it is the sense of crisis it communicates about Pakistan not long after its birth, which culminated in the first declaration of martial law in 1958. Yet, successive military interventions have not resolved Pakistan's postcolonial quandary marked by a vexed relationship between Islam and State, fragility of democratic institutions, secessionist and insurgency movements, and sharp inter-ethnic and sectarian conflicts. A burgeoning scholarship on Pakistan has traced the roots of its postcolonial predicament to the circumstances surrounding its traumatic birth in the bloody Partition of British India in August 1947. Pakistan, by all accounts, seems to have happened in a fit of collective South Asian absentmindedness, the tragic end result of constitutional negotiations between the British government, the Indian National Congress (of Gandhi and Nehru), and Mr. Jinnah gone awry, hastily midwifed by a cynical war-weary Britain anxious to get out of the morass of an imploding empire leaving the unsuspecting millions to face its brutal consequences.¹ Moreover, given the assumption that there was a sharp disjuncture between the inchoate aspirations of Indian Muslim masses and the secret politics of their political elites, scholars following in the train of Benedict Anderson have explained Pakistan's crisis in terms of the 'insufficiency' of its national imagination.² It has thus been argued that Pakistani nationalist ideology, the strident two-nation theory while spectacularly successful in rallying the Indian Muslims to the cause of Pakistan, was not accompanied by any concrete

programme around which the nation could coalesce after its realisation. Instead, Pakistan rallies resounded with the popular but vague slogan of '*Pakistan ka Matlab Kya, La Ilaha Illallah*' (What is the meaning of Pakistan? There is no god but God), the implication being that Pakistan was not articulated any further beyond emotional slogans of this kind.³ Pakistan has thus been described as a 'nationalism without a nation' since it does not possess any positive national identity, but at best, a negative identity in opposition to India (Jaffrelot, 2002).

I wish to prod Partition historiography out of its comfortable moorings at the twin poles of either secretive elites playing high stakes political poker or hapless subalterns mired in confusion, by staking out the middle ground between them. I will therefore analyse how the idea of Pakistan was articulated and debated in the public sphere and how popular enthusiasm was generated for its successful achievement in the last decade of British colonial rule in India. In this regard I will turn to the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (now UP), a particularly appropriate site for exploring popular underpinnings of Pakistani nationalism. After all it is in the UP that the idea of Pakistan arguably found the earliest, most sustained and overwhelming, support, much before it found traction in the Muslim majority provinces of British India where it was ultimately realised. I will argue that far from being a vague idea that accidentally became a nation-state, Pakistan was popularly imagined in the UP as a modern Islamic State—a New Medina as some called it—that would emulate the Prophet's Medina to herald the renewal and rise of Islam in the modern world, arise as the new leader and protector of both the Indian and global community of Muslims, and emerge as a worthy successor to the defunct Ottoman Caliphate as the foremost global Muslim power.

One should be left in no doubt that Pakistan became the most pressing political issue confronting the subcontinent in the 1940s. It would be talked about, discussed, debated and fought over in the public sphere through books and pamphlets, in public meetings and political conferences held in cities, towns, bazaars and *qasbas* across north India—not surprising for an 'argumentative' society like India. A firestorm of controversy began immediately after the Muslim

League demanded India's division at its historic Lahore session in March 1940. The 'nationalist' press immediately excoriated Pakistan as a confused medley of ill-informed ideas at best or empty slogans at worst and insistently demanded elaboration and clarification on Pakistan. If Jinnah was to emerge as the 'sole spokesman' of the Indian Muslims and the Muslim League its 'sole representative organisation', they needed to take firm charge over the message of Pakistan besides disciplining a multiplicity of voices in this process. Jinnah therefore took personal charge over the Muslim League propaganda for Pakistan which began to be published under the auspices of the Home Study Circle Series whose office was located at his own residence in Bombay. He also personally funded the English daily newspaper *The Dawn* as well as its Urdu counterpart the weekly *Manshoor* to counteract propaganda by the nationalist press aligned to the Indian National Congress. Through these organs, the Muslim League addressed both an international audience and the party's loyal base. In the first place it sought to convince its audience that Pakistan would not just liberate the majority provinces Muslims from Hindu domination, but would also protect the rights and interest of Muslims who would be left behind in Hindu India. In this regard, it claimed that Pakistan would not just be a far more powerful state than Hindu India, but the most powerful Muslim state on the global stage replacing Turkey. Celebrating the 'geo-body' of the nation, it laid out Pakistan's geographical domains, listed its natural resources and infrastructural assets, highlighted its strategic location alongside contiguous and powerful Muslim allies in the Middle East, and celebrated the boundless potential of its population freed from both British and Hindu domination (Dhulipala, 2011: 377–405).

At the very outset, Muslim League propaganda clarified that Pakistan entailed sovereignty over the Muslim majority provinces in the northwest and the east where Muslims occupied compact areas with distinct geographical limits, and dismissed all schemes of federation or confederation between Hindu and Muslim sovereign units. It also laid out possibilities of territorial readjustment and partition with Hindu India, thus placing geography, maps and their alteration to create new sovereignties at the very centre of debates on the Partition. Pakistan was

also held up as an economically viable entity. Muslim League propaganda argued that the revenue deficit provinces of Sind, NWFP and Baluchistan could become economically self-sustaining if local revenues currently siphoned off by New Delhi accrued to these provinces. Sind was expected to become self-sufficient if the customs duties for the port of Karachi were to be held back locally and the Lloyd barrage scheme bringing vast amounts of land under agriculture was completed. Bright prospects for floriculture, sericulture and allied industries were seen for NWFP while oil wells in Baluchistan were hailed as sufficient to meet all of Pakistan's petroleum needs. Great optimism was also expressed about the development of agriculture and industry in Punjab and Kashmir. East Pakistan too was seen as possessing great potential for developing, especially its textile and jute industries.

Having made a case for the financial stability of Pakistan's provinces, Muslim League propaganda claimed that the central government in Pakistan would generate revenues higher than those of existing Muslim states like Turkey, Egypt, Iran and Afghanistan. And given Pakistan's ample financial resources, it was expected to become a militarily viable and powerful state. Pakistan's territorial integrity on the west would be secured by relinquishing the costly British frontier policy and causing the Frontier Muslim tribes to lose fervour for *jihad* against a Muslim state like Pakistan. And since frontiers between Muslim states such as Afghanistan and Persia or Persia and Turkey were defended by small armies, it was claimed that the same would apply to the frontier between Pakistan and Afghanistan. But the most important factor ensuring Pakistan's security were deemed to be its martial races strongly represented in the British Indian army that made Pakistan a militarily powerful nation. These military capabilities were expected to extend Pakistan's protective umbrella over both the Islamic world at large to bring about its political unification as a separate bloc in a setting dominated by western imperialist powers. As a top ranking Muslim League leader declared, 'Pakistan would bring all Muslim countries together into Islamistan—a pan-Islamic entity' (in Haqqani, 2005: 18). The contribution to the Islamic world was however conceptualised in more ambitious terms that extended beyond

its mere physical defense. Pakistan was hailed as the 'laboratory of Islam' that would creatively blend Islam with the Indian Muslim experience of modernity, take the lead in finding definitive Islamic solutions to the problems of the modern world, and indeed inaugurate an Islamic renaissance in the 20th century. Shaukat Hyat Khan, son of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, the former Punjab Premier, recalls Jinnah telling him that Pakistan would be the base where Muslim scientists, doctors, engineers, economists would be trained, and from where they would spread throughout the entire Middle East to 'serve their co-religionists and create an awakening among them' (Khan, 1996: 42).

Equally important was the promise of protecting Muslims opting to stay behind in Hindu India. Muslim League leaders on different occasions declared that if Muslims in Hindu India were persecuted by the Hindu majority, a sovereign Pakistan would exert diplomatic pressure on a bilateral basis, take up their cause in international bodies, provide them with moral and material support, and even go to war with Hindu India. Thus, the Sind Muslim League leader Haji Seth Abdullah Haroon drew parallels to the situation of Sudetan Germans under Czechoslovakia and admiringly referred to Hitler's actions to liberate them. Jinnah himself noted that, '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?' (Ahmad,.....: 286). Referring to another possible scenario, a Muslim League tract noted that if the American minority in Shanghai were killed by the Japanese, America would surely go to war with Japan. The fact of two countries being sovereign states would thus not prevent one from interfering in the affairs of the other. The other reassurance centred on the 'hostage population theory', which held that the presence of 'hostage' Hindu and Sikh minorities in Pakistan would ensure Hindu India's good behaviour towards its own Muslim minority. The pervasiveness of this theory is underlined by the account of P.W. Radice, a serving ICS officer in the UP. While visiting Muslim weavers in Fyzabad district, he asked them what they hoped to gain from Pakistan. Their reply was that 'if the Hindus annoyed them, their brethren in Pakistan would be able to take

their revenge on the Hindus there.' 'A pleasant prospect', Radice exclaimed grimly (see Radice).

These 'secular' ideas were combined with the claims that Pakistan would not just be a Muslim majority state but an Islamic State. Thus, the top ranking Muslim League leader Khaliqzaman noted that just like the Prophet had created a Pakistan in the Arabian peninsula, the Muslim League was striving for creating a Pakistan in the Indian subcontinent. Jinnah himself regularly made statements invoking Islam in the context of Pakistan. As he once told a functionary of the Jamat-i-Islami, 'I seek to secure the land for the mosque; once that land belongs to us, then we can decide on how to build the mosque' (Nasr, 1994: 113).

These heady ideas about Pakistan were bitterly attacked by opponents, most prominently a section of the Deobandi *ulama* (clerics) aligned to the Indian National Congress who strongly advocated a composite Indian nationalism. These critiques make it clear that the idea of Pakistan was fiercely contested within the Muslim community and that multiple perspectives emerged on this question during the run up to the Partition (Dhulipala, 2011: 377–405). We may club the critics of Pakistan under the party of Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani. Madani and his associates first denounced the 'hostage population theory' for its threat of retributive violence against religious minorities. No Muslim government, they argued, could commit atrocities on its own peace-loving citizens simply because Muslims were being persecuted elsewhere. Such a policy was contrary to the *Sharia* which expressly enjoined Muslim rulers to treat their minorities with fairness and compassion. Moreover, they noted that it did not even conform to conventions of international relations, nor did it have any historical precedents. Here, they pointed out that Muslims around the world had long been oppressed by British imperialism and yet Turkey, the foremost Muslim power of the world that Pakistan was expected to emulate, had never retaliated even once against its own Christian subjects. As regards the efficacy of the threat of war against Hindu India to protect Muslims therein, they again noted that Turkey had not come to the aid of Indian Muslims even during the 1857 Mutiny which was

eventually crushed by the British. Indeed, neither Turkey nor any other Muslim state had mustered sufficient courage to serve even a diplomatic notice to Britain for the atrocities it had committed against the Indian Muslims, leave alone going to war for their sake. More recently, Albania had forcibly been annexed by Italy, and yet all that the Muslim states of the world had done was to passively watch the show. But the most prominent example they highlighted was that of Palestine whose Muslims had repeatedly narrated their tale of woe to the Islamic world, especially petitioned Muslim governments to help them in their fight for freedom, and also given a call for *jihad* to overthrow imperialist domination. Yet, they pointed to the sad fact that Indian Muslims and the Islamic world had largely ignored Palestinian entreaties. Moving to more practical arguments, they noted that population figures of Pakistan would be 60 per cent Muslim and 40 per cent Hindu, while Hindustan would be 10 per cent Muslim and 90 per cent Hindu. In Pakistan, the Muslims would thus have a precarious majority while in Hindustan they would constitute a very feeble minority. The Pakistani government would thus not be able to target its own non-Muslim minorities in response to Muslims being persecuted in India. In the light of these examples, they warned Muslims not to live under any illusion or hope that hypothetical theories regarding their protection would ever be put into practice. In this context they also criticised another idea—that of population transfers—which some sections of the Muslim League leadership were considering in pursuance of the principle of national homogeneity. While pointing to the practical problems involved in such mad policies, more importantly, they argued that such moves would sound the death knell of Islam in India. After all, Hindu India contained primary sites of Muslim culture and civilisation, had a greater number of mosques, shrines of saints, graves of martyrs and ancestors than the Pakistan areas.

These Deobandi *ulama* further attacked Pakistan as an economically poor, militarily feeble, politically impotent, and administratively feckless entity that would collapse and be forced to meekly return to the Indian fold sooner rather than later. They reiterated that the revenue deficit provinces of Sind, NWFP and Baluchistan would drag Pakistan into an economic quagmire besides noting

that Pakistan had few natural resources and little capital to extract them. Scoffing at plans for Pakistan's economic development involving invitations to foreign and even Hindu capitalists to invest in Pakistan, they argued that such a policy would only enslave Pakistan to either Hindu or foreign capital. Providing examples from different parts of the world, they pointed out how Iranian oil fields had come under the control of foreign oil companies and had to be nationalised by Reza Shah to free Iran from their domination. Even Ibn Saud had cancelled similar agreements with oil companies to gain his freedom. Equally importantly they noted that Pakistan would also have an impact on the economic future of Muslims left behind in India. Since Pakistan was to be founded on the basis of religious difference and communal hatred, it was possible that after the Partition, Muslims in India would be deprived of capital and loans and reduced to penury as a result of discriminatory economic laws that an indignant India would legislate. Through this economic critique of Pakistan, the *ulama* sought to demonstrate that they were not just men of religion but keenly aware of issues relating to modern economics and their ramifications on domestic politics as well as international relations.

These *ulama* also lambasted the two-nation theory as fraudulent and concocted by the British to divide the Indian nation and perpetuate their own rule. In this context, they reminded fellow Muslims about the Arabs who, during World War I, were incited by the British to revolt against the Turks according to the ideology that they were a separate nation that had been enslaved by the Turks for centuries. However, once the Turks had been defeated and ejected out of Arab lands, the British reneged on promises made to the Arabs about their freedom, and the Arabs thus passed from the control of Turks to slavery under the British and the French. The Arab example therefore clearly showed how a powerful nation could be enslaved by inciting discord amongst its different communities so that they would demand a division of the country. They therefore appealed to fellow

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Muslims to avoid the trap of Pakistan as it would only pave the way for the reconsolidation of British rule in the subcontinent. Finally, they attacked Pakistan as un-Islamic, given the contradiction between territorial nationalism and Islam, denounced Jinnah as an infidel, as he was famously a non-practicing Muslim who enjoyed his wine, smoked cigarettes and reportedly liked ham sandwiches, as the last person who could make Pakistan Islamic, and finally downgraded Pakistani territory as inferior when compared to the blessed land of India with its Islamic monuments, mosques, shrines, graves of saints and martyrs in the cause of Islam.

The critical figure is Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani who went on to start the Jamiatul Ulama-i-Islam, one of Pakistan's main religious parties. Usmani first put the two-nation theory beyond the pale of critique by arguing that it was not the invention of any man and that its origins lay in the *Quran*. While ideologues of Pakistan could still contend with secular critiques of Pakistan by coming up with their own set of facts, figures and statistics, they were vulnerable to Islamic arguments against Pakistan. It is in this context that a significant section of *ulama* from the seminary at Deoband came to the rescue by providing theological cover to the idea of Pakistan. Here the critical figure is Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani who went on to start the Jamiatul Ulama-i-Islam, one of Pakistan's main religious parties. Usmani first put the two-nation theory beyond the pale of critique by arguing that it was not the invention of any man and that its origins lay in the *Quran*. He pointed out that the final prophecy brought to mankind by Muhammad had deemed that the only valid classification by which mankind could be ordered was that between the *Momin* and *Kafir*. Indeed the significance of this classification lay in that while the division between *Iman* and *kufir* had always existed, it was only Muhammad's unique prophecy that was able to wipe out all myriad small identities to fashion a Muslim identity. Here Usmani quoted from the *Hadis Sahih Muslim* 'when the Prophet asked his flock what *qaum* are you, they did not reply that they were Hejazi, Yemeni, Najdi or Qureshi. All said in unison that they were Muslim.' The arrival of Islam therefore meant the all the idols of *watani* and *nasli asabiyat* broke down and all that remained was their Islamic identity. Usmani concluded

that the Muslims of India had always carried the 'revelation' of their separate nationality in their hearts and never gave it a second thought until the Congress raised such a hue and cry with its theory of *Muttahida Qaumiyat*.⁴

Usmani declared that Maulana Madni's theory of *Muttahida Qaumiyat* was false and anti-Islamic. To begin with, he noted that even their common teacher Sheikhul Hind Maulana Mahmoodul Hasan had talked of Hindus and Muslims as two separate *qaums* just nine days before his death. Usmani then countered Madni's interpretation of the pact between Jews and Muslims which was the presumed bedrock of *Muttahida Qaumiyat*. Usmani clarified that under the original treaty between the Prophet and the Jews, the term *qaum wahida* had never been used to designate both Muslims and Jews together as one single community. Even when the term *umma wahida* was used, the Prophet always gave a cautionary warning that this application was only an extension, a broad interpretation that was valid only under certain conditions. The Prophet had also explicitly declared that in case of a dispute between Jews and Muslims, the resolution of the dispute could happen only through the final judgement delivered by Allah and His Messenger. Here, Usmani pointedly asked the nationalist *ulama* whether the votaries of *Muttahida Qaumiyat* in the Congress party would be willing to accept such a condition in which the *Quran* would be the final word in the disputes between Muslims and Hindus. He also declared that the theory of *Muttahida Qaumiyat* was suspect as it was espoused by Nationalist Muslims who utilised the same arguments against Pakistan as were being used by the Congress in the Hindu press.

Complementing his defense of the two-nation theory, Usmani emphasised Pakistan's great significance by impressing upon his audience the many uncanny parallels between the creation of the first 'Pakistan' in Medina by the Prophet and the current ongoing struggle for the formation of Pakistan in the subcontinent. Usmani explained that the Prophet had not established Pakistan in his native Mecca but had instead migrated to Medina since he was convinced that Pakistan could be established only in an area where Muslims could practice their religion with complete freedom and without any external hindrances, for it

was only in such a land that the Muslim community could develop to its fullest potentiality. Usmani consequently stressed upon the cardinal importance of establishing Pakistan in a part of India where the Muslims were in a majority and where they could set up their own state based on their religious laws, completely free from Hindu or British domination. Pakistan was impossible in the framework of a united India even if the constituting provinces were given the greatest possible autonomy. Usmani next noted the unprecedented unity and cooperation that had developed between the followers of the Prophet during the creation of 'Pakistan' in Medina. These were the inhabitants of Medina (*ansar*) and the migrants (*muhajirin*) of Mecca who had left behind their shrines, their families, and dependents in order to develop Pakistan. A similar unity was developing between Indian Muslims. The *muhajirin* from the minority provinces such as the UP, were sacrificing their lives for the formation of Pakistan even though they themselves were neither its inhabitants nor did they indeed intend to permanently leave their homelands. Usmani however declared that their sacrifices would not be in vain. Just as Medina had provided a base for the eventual victory of Islam in Arabia and the wide world beyond, Pakistan would pave the way for the triumphal return of Islam as the ruling power over the entire subcontinent. Thus, the whole of Hindustan would thus be turned into Pakistan just as the Prophet himself had turned all of Arabia into Pakistan.

Usmani also pointed to the blessed nature of Pakistan's territory by justifying Pakistan as part of God's divine plan (Pakistan *ka Ghaibi Ishara*). It was a sign of God's unfathomable wisdom, that instead of being a uniform minority all over the country, the Muslims were a majority in some provinces which were also pivotal from a geographical point of view. Usmani further noted that it was from Lahore in the Punjab that Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi had launched his *jihad* against the Emperor Akbar's *Muttahida Qaumiyat* and *Din-i-Ilahi*. It was again at Lahore that the Pakistan resolution had been passed by the Muslim League in 1940, thus connecting it to the earlier *jihad* of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. Usmani therefore declared that 'It is possible that in his (Sirhindi's) revelations there may be a pointer in this direction that when in the future, *Muttahida Qaumiyat*

in another form arises, when Din-i-Ilahi in the form of Gandhism comes to the fore, it will be Lahore from where the voice for breaking these new idols would issue forth, spread and flourish.'

Usmani therefore made it clear that Pakistan would indeed be an Islamic state in which the *ulama* would have primacy in matters of passing legislation, administering law, besides regulating the religious and cultural life of Muslims. He laid out the different Islamic offices that would be part of the institutional fabric of Pakistan. Indeed the Jamiatul Ulama-i-Islam's founding charter declared that it was against the evils of Gandhism, Communism and the Godless politics of Kemalism called Laicism or secularisation of the state and economy and divorce of life from the universal moral laws of the *Shariat*. While dwelling at length on the Islamic functionaries of the state, Usmani did not go into great detail about the kind of Islamic laws that he envisaged for Pakistan. He in fact warned that an Islamic state implementing Islamic laws could not materialise overnight. It could only emerge out of a process of gradual evolution. As Usmani noted,

Just like the night withdraws slowly and the light of the day spreads, just like an old chronic patient takes a step towards health and does not at once become healthy, in the same way, Pakistan is a step in the direction of our national health (*qaumi sehat*), towards our high noon (*nisfun nihar*); but a gradual step (*tadriji kadam*) (Dhulipala, 2011: 99).

Defending this approach, Usmani noted that even Medina had reached its crest only in a gradual way. The Prophet could have crushed his enemies in an instant and established Pakistan immediately, but then it was God's will that the *ummah* had to arrive at it gradually, receiving guidance from the Prophet at every step. Usmani however promised that Pakistan would certainly be the first step in the eventual establishment of such an Islamic state. This theory of the gradual development of the Islamic state therefore dovetailed neatly with the declared aims of Jinnah and the Muslim League leadership since it left room for

deliberation and negotiation in the process of the establishment of an Islamic state in the future.

Given the persistent suspicion regarding the Muslim League leadership, and the insistent demand in a section of Muslim opinion that the *ulama* should assume the leadership of the Muslim masses, Usmani attempted to clarify the role of the *ulama* in a future Pakistan. He asked Muslims not to be upset by references to Jinnah as the *Qaid-i-Azam* since it seemed to place him on a higher pedestal than the religious elders. The term simply meant the tallest among them in the field of politics. However, the question still remained as to whether an *alim* could lead the Muslims better than Jinnah. Usmani sought to answer this question with the help of a metaphor. He explained that when the famous American wrestler Zabisco came to India, Gandhi was not sent to fight him. Neither were Jinnah nor Maulana Husain Ahmad Madni sent to wrestle with him. Even he, Usmani himself, had not been sent to challenge Zabisco. Instead, the Indian wrestler Gama was sent to confront Zabisco since he was an expert in the field of wrestling. In the same way, Jinnah was the best expert when it came to the question of representing Muslims during complex constitutional negotiations and the *qaum* needed to be eternally grateful to Allah for giving them such a capable, honest and peerless lawyer. But Jinnah's task was limited to the task of tackling the British and the Congress on constitutional negotiations. The role of the *ulama* would begin once this phase was completed. Here Usmani employed another telling metaphor. He noted that when Muslims from India went on Haj, they usually boarded ships skippered by an English Captain. When this ship carrying *hajjis* reached the vicinity of the port of Jeddah, it stopped well short of the port itself, given the many treacherous shoals and underwater rocks which 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, Usmani concluded, was the English Captain who could take the Muslims only up to a certain point. After that point, an expert in the *Sharia* was required and it is here that the *ulama* would fulfil their duties like the Arab pilot. Usmani however warned that the work of Muslims could be completed only through the cooperation of these two personnel and would be unsuccessful if such cooperation were lacking.

Usmani stoutly defended the Muslim League leadership and particularly Jinnah, while at the same time debunking Jamiatul Ulama-i-Hind propaganda that portrayed the Muslim League leadership as atheist, Westernised, and comprised mostly of self-serving Rajas, Nawabs and title holders. At the outset, he acknowledged that the Muslim League and its leaders had weaknesses and shortcomings that were objectionable in the eyes of the *ulama*. He went so far as to call Jinnah a *fasiq* (sinner). He also conceded that the reputation of the Muslim League leaders was preventing a number of religious minded Muslims (*deendar*) from joining the Muslim League. Usmani confessed that he himself had joined the Muslim League after prolonged deliberation, prayer and a close reading of the *Quran*, the *Sunnat* and *Hanafi* law. He singled out the clarification provided by the *Hanafi* jurist Ibn-i-Hasan Shaybani in his book *Al Siyar al Kabir* for providing him with the mental breakthrough and removing any doubts about joining the Muslim League. The clarification pertained to Shaybani's view of the *Khawarij* (Kharijites) and their relationship to the Muslims. Usmani noted that according to the *Hadith*, *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, the Prophet himself is supposed to have declared that the *Khawarij* were in the bad book of Allah since they had been Muslims in the beginning but then had turned into *Kafirs*. The Prophet had therefore advised his followers to kill the *Khawarij* for their apostasy, wherever they encountered them. For Usmani, Ibn-i-Hasan Shaybani's brilliance lay in the fact that he came up with an alternative view regarding the *Khawarij* and the way Muslims should deal with them, for this medieval jurist decreed that in case the *Khawarij* were fighting *Moshreks* or the *Kafirs*, it was the duty of the Muslims to support the *Khawarij* in these battles. This was because the *Khawarij*, though despicable, still upheld the *Kalimah*

as against the *Moshreks* and the *Kafirs* who were fundamentally opposed to the *Kalimah*. The Muslim League too had its share of *Khawarij*, noted Usmani, but since the party was fighting the *Moshreks*, it was vital to support this organisation.

Usmani did not confine himself to making Islamic arguments for Pakistan but also sought to bolster the Muslim League's secular arguments for Pakistan by providing them with Islamic referents. He too echoed the Muslim League's celebration of Pakistan's geo-body. Regarding the hostage population theory, he tersely asked, 'Just like we are worried about our minority in Hindustan, don't you think the Hindus are worried about their three crore Hindu minority in Pakistan?' In this regard, Usmani narrated to his audience a legend in Islamic history from the time of the Abbasid Caliph Mu'tasim. Usmani recounted that during this time when a Christian government was reigning in Rum, a Christian soldier slapped an old Muslim woman. The poor old woman in her terror began to scream for help from the Caliph Mu'tasim. At this, the Christian soldier slapped the old woman again and asked her whether the Caliph riding on a white horse would come to take revenge upon him for assaulting her. This little episode gradually reached Baghdad and finally the ear of the Caliph himself. On hearing the story, an indignant Mutasim resolved that he would not step into his palace unless the old woman's cry for help had been answered. He then ordered all white horses in the region to be requisitioned at whatever price they were available, raised a powerful army, attacked Italy and won a great victory. The wretched soldier who had assaulted the old woman was captured and presented to the old lady by the Caliph who declared that Mu'tasim had come to her aid. A sovereign Pakistan, Usmani noted, would confer similar advantages. Nobody would dare to molest Muslims in Hindustan once Pakistan came into existence.

In conclusion, I would like to argue that while the idea of Pakistan may have had its ambiguities, its dismissal as a vague emotive symbol hardly illuminates the reasons as to why it received such overwhelming popular support, especially in provinces such as the UP which would remain inside India. As evident, the idea of Pakistan was richly debated in the public sphere and it is precisely due to these public debates that Pakistan assumed popularity and substance in the

popular mind. Popular articulations of Pakistan blended both secular and theological arguments. Thus, it was assumed that while the geo-body of Pakistan would provide it with material strength, Islam would demonstrably constitute its soul and spirit. In protecting both Indian Muslims and the *ummah* at large, and heralding the rise and renewal of Islam in the modern world, this material spiritual complex was seen as carrying forward the South Asian Muslim contribution to Islam from the 18th century. Finally, tropes of insufficient national imagination, secular nationalism and accidental state formation have long dominated explanations regarding not just Pakistan's origins, but also its post-colonial trajectory. Thus, Pakistan has been seen primarily in terms of a bargaining counter never intended to be achieved, whose accidental achievement set the tone for the trajectory of the postcolonial state. Even if one were to discount this idea, the struggle for Pakistan is still seen as a quest for the establishment of a liberal democracy led by secular elites. The state's birth in the trauma of the Partition, the early deaths of Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan, the weakness of the Muslim League's organisation in the provinces where Pakistan came into existence, the fractiousness and venality of its second-rung politicians, the insecurities that it experienced vis-a-vis its hostile neighbour India—all these factors are seen as adding up in explaining its structural weaknesses and the consequent rise of the 'ideological' state in Pakistan, often led by the army. This has further been described in terms of a tragic betrayal of Jinnah's vision. While not denying the importance of these factors in explaining Pakistan's postcolonial trajectory, I would argue that the origins of the 'ideological' state in Pakistan lie not just in its post-independence insecurities, but at the very core of its nationalist ideology that developed in the run up to the Partition. Studies of Pakistan that emphasise its 'insufficient imagination' therefore overstate the case. Indeed, it is not the insufficiency of Pakistan's imagination but its very plenitude and ambition, coupled with the failures (and successes) of the postcolonial state in matching up to its expectations, which accounts for the crises that confront Pakistan today.

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Notes:

1. For a recent reiteration of these arguments see Stephen Cohen (2005) and Husain Haqqani (2005).
2. The phrase 'insufficiently imagined' has been coined by the writer Salman Rushdie. See Daniel Herwitz and Ashutosh Varshney (2008).
3. The prominent work in this regard is Ayesha Jalal (1985).
4. For an elaboration of Shabbir Ahmad Usmani's arguments in favour of Pakistan, see Chapter 7 in Dhulipala (2014).

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