



COVER STORY

FOGGY FUTURE

Until Pakistanis stop taking the “green pill,” a future in which all Pakistanis are safe will remain elusive.

By [C. CHRISTINE FAIR](#) | April 2021



While many Pakistanis ascribe the myriad terrorist attacks in Pakistan to an Indian-Afghan saazish, deep down I suspect most know that this is not the case. In fact, these are the bitter fruits of seeds which were planted long before Partition and which have subsequently been nurtured by Pakistan’s deep state which has harnessed Islamist violence for domestic and international policy objectives while feeding the public a toxic pabulum of fictions. Until Pakistan abandons its past ideological commitments and forges a future free of Islamist rhetoric, no Pakistani will be safe.

Perhaps Pakistan’s founding problem was the Two Nation Theory itself, which essentially propounded a fear-mongering narrative that Muslims could not live in dignity in a unified India under the control of a Hindu majority. Indeed Muhammad Ali Jinnah found few subscribers to this concept initially as the 1937 elections demonstrated. In those elections, the Muslim League was routed. By the 1947 elections, Jinnah had been more successful in garnering support for the concept which had become synonymous with an independent Pakistan, yet many in what was then the North West Frontier Province did not support the Muslim League and its notion of Pakistan and many in what is now Pakistan had no vote at all, such as those living in Balochistan and other Princely States.

After Independence, Pakistan clung to the Two Nation Theory like a life raft in the middle of turbulent seas, even though there was adequate evidence to further invalidate the notion. Not only did many Muslims in India reject the Muslim League and its Pakistan, before Partition, many still rejected it after Partition. And the loss of East Pakistan, which demonstrated that being a Muslim was inadequate for ethnic Bengalis who suffered for decades under the jack boot of West Pakistan, was yet another nail in the coffin of the Two Nation Theory. Finally, Pakistanis today—whether they are Barelvi or Shia—are finding that they are not the “right kind of Muslims,” and subjected to violence. This is in addition to Hindus and Christians who have long been marginalized by the state and its governance apparatus.

The Two Nation Theory was a fundamentally othering ideology which was antithetical to democracy. If the Two Nation Theory had its utility in securing an independent Pakistan, it has had little utility in uniting the modern state. For one thing, at independence, one in four Pakistanis were not Muslims. If Muslims could not live safely in India under the purported tyranny of a Hindu majority despite political promises and later constitutional protections, how could non-Muslims feel safe in a country dominated by Muslims which embraced Islam as a political and governance ideology? They could not.

If the Two Nation Theory was Pakistan's first sin against its future polity, the Objectives Resolution, passed by the Constituent Assembly in March 1949, was the second. The Objectives Resolution, which has served as the preamble to the 1956, 1962 and 1973 Constitutions was finally incorporated into the 1973 Constitution by the Zia-era Eighth Amendment. While some Pakistanis laud the genius of the Objectives Resolution, claiming that it melded the basic principles of an Islamic political system with the lineaments of Western Democracy, in fact it did no such thing. In a democracy, the sovereignty of the state lies in the hands of the voters. Yet the Objectives Resolution proclaimed that the sovereignty of the entire universe - not just Pakistan or Muslims — belongs to Allah alone and that authority would be delegated to the state through its people under the rules set by Allah. There is nothing democratic about this, especially not for the one in four Pakistanis who were not Muslims and who consider themselves to be Muslims but who are considered apostates by the state.

Not only did the the Objectives Resolution render Pakistan an apartheid state for its non-Muslim citizens, who have subsequently endured myriad campaigns of communal violence, it also set the state for the brutal sectarianism that has haunted Pakistan for decades. Pakistan is not like Iran, which is a Shia-majority state with a definitive clerical hierarchy. With one clear sect in predominance with a defined clerical hierarchy, Iran has an orderly way of arriving at a consensus of what rules Allah has set forth. In Pakistan, there are at least five major sectarian traditions (or maslaks): Deobandis, Jamaat-e-Islami, Ahl-e-Hadees, Barelvis and Shias (who in turn have numerous sub-divisions). Among them, there is neither a single sectarian tradition that has a dominant market share of believers and within each vying sect, there is no clerical hierarchy. In Pakistan, there is clerical anarchy and each maslak seeks to maximize its power at the expense of others. They maximize their power both through interacting with the Pakistani state as well as foreign powers, whether the wealthy Gulf State monarchies or Iran.

Because the deep state has selectively empowered specific maslaks over time for specific purposes in the pursuit of its foreign and domestic politics, some of these maslaks have grown more powerful than others. The Jamaat-e-Islami has always been an ideological ally of the deep state. It played an important role in cultivating Jamaat-e-Islami in Afghanistan, which in turn gave rise to many of the persons who would be important in the anti-Soviet jihad, begun by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1974 and later supported by the United States and Saudi Arabia after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. Jamaat-e-Islami also played an important role in brutalizing the Bengalis in East Pakistan. Jamaat-e-Islami continues to support the Hezbul Mujahideen, conducting terror attacks in Indian Kashmir. The Lashkar-e-Tayyaba/Jamaat ud Dawa which draws from a minority Ahl-e-Hadees interpretative tradition, had done yeoman's work at home and abroad where it has killed at the behest of the deep state in Afghanistan and in India.

However, despite these important contributions to the deep state's objectives, it were the Deobandis who became the clearest workhorses of the deep state. The Deobandis gave rise to the Afghan Taliban; numerous so-called “Kashmiri tanzeems” (despite their paucity of Kashmiri participation and dominance of Punjabis and Pashtuns) such as Harkul-ul-Jihad-Islami, Harkat-ul-Ansar, Jaish-e-Mohammad and the Pakistani Taliban as well as myriad



“The truth is that Pakistan’s quest for nationhood has been thwarted by sectarian, tribal and ethnic impulses in the face of an unduly centralized, authoritarian and heavily ideologised state apparatus.”

– Najam Sethi, Editor, Friday Times

sectarian groups such as the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan which enjoyed legitimacy as a political party. While the state has explicitly supported many of these groups such as the Afghan Taliban and the “Kashmiri tanzeems,” it has taken a selected approach to the others. Sometimes anti-Shia pogroms have advanced the interests of the deep state while it has disrupted commercial interests. Some commanders of the Pakistan Taliban have been allies of the state while others are enemies. The problem with the Deobandis is their doctrine of takfir, or declaring some Muslims apostates which, in turn, renders the latter wajib-ul-qatal, which suggests that they not only merit death but that the person who kills them has rendered a meritorious service to the *ummah*.

This sectarian competition for power has directly been aided by the deep state and has been constitutionally created through the Objectives Resolution as different ulema compete for the unfettered right to say what Allah’s rules are and who should be the arbiter of those rules. Ironically, the very fundamentals of Pakistan’s ideology mean that no Pakistani will ever be safe.

Unfortunately, forging a new ideological basis that is inclusive and appropriate for the modern state of Pakistan will be impossible. After all, if Pakistan were to abandon the fundamentally othering Two Nation Theory, it will have no ideological claim to Kashmir for which Pakistan already has no legally defensible claim per the Indian Independence Act of 1947. If Pakistan’s deep state were to forego its instrumentalization of political Islam, how will it cultivate the petting zoo of Islamist militants to prosecute its policies at home or abroad? Most importantly, how will a demand for a new ideology take root in Pakistan when the deep state feeds its polity a pabulum of fictions and declares those demanding a new and inclusive ideology “enemies of the state”? But until Pakistanis stop taking the “green pill,” a future in which all Pakistanis are safe will remain elusive. 🇵🇰

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