

By Prof. Dr Mehdi Hasan

**P**AKISTAN is the only nation in the world not clear about its concept of nationalism and not clear about the ideology on which it was based 60 years ago. This controversial issue is still debated by various forces in the country. The lack of respect for people's will and violation of democratic norms that had taken over the society soon after independence have resulted in an ironical situation. Those who had openly and vehemently opposed the movement for the creation of a separate Muslim nation have taken upon themselves the responsibility of interpreting the philosophy of Pakistan. The unwarranted debate about how and why Pakistan was created has resulted in confusion and uncertainty about the nation's destination.

The division of British India into Pakistan and India is still being discussed in a manner, which creates an impression that the creation of Pakistan is still controversial. The criticism of Pakistan's creation by Hindu extremists and the Indian politicians belonging to the older generation was understandable, as the All-India Muslim League and Mohammed Ali Jinnah had succeeded despite opposition from the Indian National Congress. The opposition also included the Muslim ulama and their religious parties. The prevailing confusion about the ideology of Pakistan is the result of a deliberate attempt to distort historical realities by vested interest groups to suit their designs of controlling political power through undemocratic means.

The political struggle for the democratic rights of the depressed and backward Muslims of the south-asian sub-continent has distorted into a religious movement for the establishment of a theocratic Islamic state. If the movement for Pakistan was to create a 'laboratory for experimenting with an Islamic state', then why did all the ulama, Muslim religious groups and parties vehemently opposed the idea of a separate Muslim nationhood in the sub-continent? This is a question nobody has so far dared to answer. If the rulers of Pakistan, after the death of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, had followed the guide lines he clearly enunciated for the future of Pakistan in his famous historical address to the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947, the unnecessary and irrelevant debate on the philosophy of Pakistani nationhood would not have started. But to follow the principles of the Quaid, adherence to the principles of democracy was needed.

The political opportunists and adventurers opted for a short-cut to power through emotional slogans of religion and a vague concept of an Islamic state. However, the people of Pakistan, whenever asked to express their will, rejected the use of religion in politics. Apart from four military dictatorships and ten years of PPP rule, the country has been ruled by four parties calling themselves the Muslim League. Since 1906, when the All-India Muslim League was founded, there have been eleven Muslim League parties in the field. Each of

these has claimed to be the Muslim League that created Pakistan.

The All-India Muslim League first faced a split in 1931 when it was divided into the Jinnah League and the Sir Shafi League. At the time, some political opportunities tried to dissolve the party and merge it into the All-India Muslim Conference. However, the move failed as the overwhelming majority of Muslim population in India supported Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the All-India Muslim League. After independence, Quaid-e-Azam himself declared that the All-India Muslim League had achieved its objective, and announced the organization of the All-Pakistan Muslim League. Two more versions of the Muslim League emerged in 1962 when the military dictator Ayub Khan allowed political parties to participate in politics after a break of four years. Ayub Khan himself became the president and of a political party which he named the Muslim League.

During the same period there were two more Muslim Leagues in the field. Once was known as the Council Muslim League while the other was headed by a Faisalabad-based politician Zahid Sarfraz. A Muslim League that emerged during the Zia era was headed by the Pir of Pagara. When Mohammed Khan Junejo was nominated prime minister by Gen Ziaul Haq after the non-party elections in 1985, he also named his ruling group Muslim League. At the same time, Malik Mohammed Qasim had his own faction of the Muslim League that opposed Gen. Zia and his Martial Law regime.

After the Junejo government was sacked by Ziaul Haq, a number of his Muslim Leaguers' including Mian Nawaz Sharif and many of his present day colleagues decided to support the non-party philosophy of Ziaul Haq. This way they were kept in power by the military dictator. However, when the political atmosphere in the country changed after the death of general Zia in the plane crash and party politics was restored, Mian Nawaz Sharif also named his ruling group the Muslim League. On the other hand a few loyalists of Junejo, however, called themselves the Junejo Muslim League. Recently Manzoor Watto, the former chief minister of Punjab announced yet another Muslim League, the Jinnah Muslim League. Noen of the Muslim Leagues identified above, including the league headed by Liaquat Ali Khan, followed by philosophy of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah. And all of them, whenever in power compromised with the religious extremists. Religious extremism and sectarianism has become so deep-rooted in the society during the last 28 years that it has over-shadowed the real history of the area. The Muslims, since the advent of Islam in south Asia, have maintained their separate religious and cultural identity through out the years. However, the need to stress these differences was not felt as they were the rulers. With the end of the Mughal rule and the introduction of some form of democracy - a new system of

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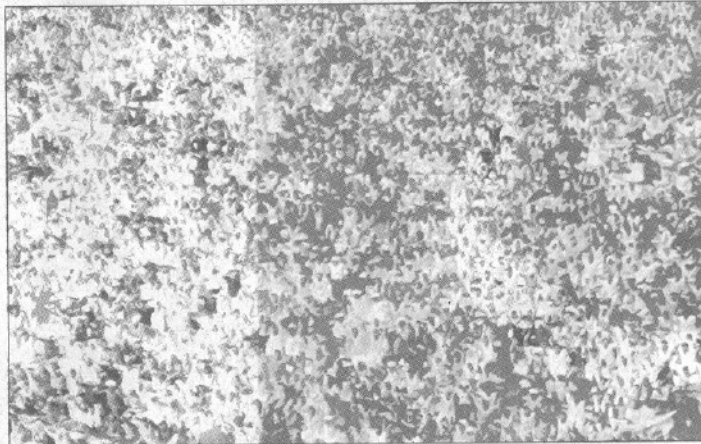
government that had already taken roots in Europe - the Muslims became conscious of their minority status.

Democracy, as a rule, requires equal opportunities for various cultural, religious, racial and linguistic groups residing in a multi-faceted society. The Muslims of the Indian sub-continent as a separate cultural and religious group lacked that equal status. Muslim leaders like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, and Syed Amir Ali in the earlier phase of the British colonial rule and Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Dr Mohammed Iqbal in the later period realized this difference among the two communities. They struggled for the democratic rights of the Muslims to bring them at par with the Hindu majority till 1928, when the all-parties conference at Delhi failed, the All-India Muslim League had no concept of separatist politics.

As the chief articulator of Muslim aspirations, Jinnah summed up the position of the Muslim League, the final goal of Indian Muslims and his own role when he pronounced that "the ideology of Muslim League is based on the fundamental principle

1947 because of worst communal violence and influx of millions of refugees from across the border. The founding fathers had a dream for a modern democratic progressive state for Muslim India. However, the state of affairs to come was evident three days before the state of Pakistan was established on the world map. The father of the nation, who had worked very hard for the establishment of the Pakistani nation throughout his life single-handedly, was over-ruled by a member of the establishment that was to rule and manage the state of Pakistan in coming years. The founder of the nation had given a vision of the newly created state of Pakistan in the opening session of the constituent assembly of Pakistan on August 11, 1947. He had said after taking oath of the president of the assembly that all citizens of Pakistan will have equal rights as members of Pakistani nation irrespective of the cast, creed and religion. He had said that religion will play no role in politics.

Expectations are high after the elections of 2008, despite the fact that more than 500 people were killed and



that Muslims of India are an independent nationality and any attempt to get them to merge their national and political identity and unity will not only be resisted, but, in my opinion, will be futile for any one to attempt it. We are determined, and let there be no mistake about it, to establish the status of an independent nation and an independent state in this sub-continent."

This was stated by Quaid-e-Azam in April 1941, about a year after the adoption of the Lahore Resolution, at the madaras session of the All-India Muslim League. The basic feature and foundation of Muslim nationalism, throughout the period that Muslims have been in India, has been the preservation of the distinct and separate identity of Muslims. This was accepted after the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 and Muslim nationhood was proved and the ideological debate had been settled. To restart the debate and that too by those who had opposed the move at the time when their support was most urgently needed, is nothing but an exercise in creating philosophical confusion and political uncertainty.

After 60 years of independence the conditions are so uncertain as these were soon after transfer of power to All India Muslim League on Aug 14th,

many more were injured by terrorists during campaign rallies and procession. The highest profile assassination was on December 27th, when chairperson of PPP, Benazir Bhutto, was killed at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi. The bomb blast killed 37 and injured many others as she was leaving the meeting ground after addressing a politically charged and motivated rally. Some gun fires were also echoed. The meeting proved to be the last appearance for Benazir. Her death stunned not only the Pakistani nation but the whole world.

The public opinion about the current military administration is discernibly different from what it was in the previous three military regimes. Soon after the first military takeover by Gen Ayub Khan in 1958, people were generally happy. The armed forces respected as defenders of our geographical boundaries in view of the tense relationship between India and Pakistan. This was especially true of Punjab where the criterion of patriotism was to be an enemy of India. Any one talking of friendship between India and Pakistan was considered to be a traitor and an Indian agent.

When Ayub Khan assumed the role of a political after abusing politics, politicians and political parties for about four years - he was supported

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by the traditional opportunists. This gave birth to convention Muslim League - the general's party. Initially the only resistance to the first martial law came from students in Karachi. This was the time when most of the political parties had gone into hibernation. The resistance in Karachi forced Ayub Khan and his strategists to shift the federal capital from Karachi to Rawalpindi, where the GHQ was which later led to the construction of Islamabad.

It was the agitation by all sections of society, Fatima Jinnah's decision to enter into practical politics and loss of 243 lives that forced Ayub Khan out of politics. Even after countrywide agitation for more than a year, general public was reluctant to directly criticize the armed forces; the target Ayub Khan and the constitution he had adopted as a politician. Gen. Yahya Khan was acceptable to the people because he had accepted all their demands during the year-long agitation - including the holding of first general elections on the basis of adult franchise. However, the military junta refused to honor the people's mandate



an unprecedented agitation ensued in the former East Pakistan. This culminated in a civil war and later war with India. People in the former eastern wing were happy, while public in the western part was shocked and depressed about their failure.

The third martial law came in the wake of violent agitation by the religious parties and a visible American wrath against Bhutto and his policies. The judiciary once again played a key role in commenting the political power of the military junta. One of the many collaborators of Zia-ul-Haq, Maj. Gen. Rahat Latif has recently denied Mustafa Khar's equally recent claim that he was one of the two officers who had physically thrashed Bhutto in Jail. Many others like him have tried to clear their names from the doings of the most ruthless dictator, after his removal from the scene of course.

But more interesting is Gen. Rahat's disclosure that the army contingent called by the Bhutto administration to help civil administration in Lahore to control law and order situation had refused to open fire on civilians of their own country. One wonders if some conscientious officers had also refused to become a party to flog political workers, or to open fire on their own countrymen in former East Pakistan, or in Morro in Nawabshah

district in 1983 and in Baluchistan during the Bhutto senior's government. When the PNA components had demanded from Bhutto to end military action in the province he asked Zia-ul-Haq to withdraw forces. Zia-ul-Haq had refused saying that armed forces would not like it. Bhutto had asked Zia to convince the PNA leaders, and Zia-ul-Haq had made a presentation before them. However, forces were withdrawn from Baluchistan, after the imposition of martial law. This and a lot of other historical evidence confirms that military establishment was, and still is, based against PPP and its leaders. The difference between the previous three military regimes and the present Musharraf administration is in the caliber of civilian supporters, calling themselves politicians in each case. The slide downward in the quality of political leadership, both among the supporters of the military rulers and the opposition, has resulted in greater encroachment by the armed forces in political affairs. Even the assemblies elected on the no-party basis in 1985 were qualitatively better than the present crowd in the parliament. Mohammad Khan Junejo, the nominee of Gen. Zia, never called the Martial Law administrator his boss. Complete control of military establishment of the civilian affairs in the present setup even after the elections without any efforts of resistance from the ruling alliance. Politics all over the world is a controversial field. Whoever decides to indulge in politics cannot expect to remain above criticism and uncontroversial. That is why besides recently retired Gen. Musharraf along with his comrades in arms and many members of the judiciary, serving and deposed, have become controversial. The country saw the birth of a new wave of political religious groups and their sectarian fanaticism in the absence of healthy political activities. The cold war policies of the United States and its last conflict with rival Soviet Union in Afghanistan and Gen. Zia's decision to join the American holy war against a Godless society in Afghanistan provided an unprecedented boost to religious fanaticism in Pakistan and much needed legitimacy to the ruthless military dictator. The two elected governments after the death of General Zia in the military plane crash inherited religious obscurantism, drugs menace and gun culture as a legacy of the long military rule. The absence of political activities for a long time combined with the oppression of the political workers had left political institutions in total disarray. Therefore, the elected political governments, especially the government by PPP twice adopted the governance techniques followed by Gen. Zia and his henchmen, thus making it difficult for the elected governments to deal with religious extremists, politically or administratively. Any effective policy against religious militant groups was not going to work as they were patronized by a section of the military establishment sympathetic to these sectarian and religious outfits. Moreover, the same forces in the civil and military bureaucracy had made arrangements to keep the elected governments dependent on the support of the establishment. The dependence of the political elite on the civil-military bureaucracy had started soon after independence as most of the elite that came to power belonged to those

areas of the sub-continent that had been left in India. This group had a very narrow base of support on the mass level. Members of these ruling elite were reluctant to share their political power with the local smaller leaders and avoided elections for the fear of losing power to regional leaders and political groups. To remain in power these elitists had to seek support from the civil and military bureaucracy. Thus a close working alliance developed between the establishment and the unelected rulers. After 1954, the military elite realized that instead of supporting the politicians to remain in power, they should work for their own political power.

Since 1958, the military establishment had held the real power. When General Pervez Musharraf was returning from his official trip to Sri Lanka and was informed by his comrades during the historic and dramatic air journey that could land at Karachi, the fourth successful military takeover took place. The address by the new military rulers was similar to earlier martial law administrators' that politicians were responsible for all the ills of the country and that the armed forces had taken over to restore genuine democracy in Pakistan. The public, like in the past, welcomed the military action and the parties supposing the Nawaz government and the traditional opportunists in the ranks of the Nawaz government itself also appreciated the military action. Reaction of the judiciary was also a repeat performance of the past and thus Musharraf administration initially got legitimacy for three years from the Supreme Court. Although Gen. Musharraf and his comrades have not formally declared martial law nor established military courts, the presence of in-service military personnel in all civil departments and in political spheres is so extensive that martial law regulations are no more required for the influence of the armed forces in the society. Like other military regimes the present administration has also imposed a ban on the public activities of politicians and political organizations. Even if there had been no restrictions, disarray in political parties and political vacuum created by lack of political agenda and pro-people policies of the mainstream political groups, the military rulers would not have faced any problems. However, the indifference of the political parties has provided a lot of space to anti-democracy and intolerant religious extremist organizations.

The beginning of civil war in Afghanistan in 1979, with the United States, Pakistan and many other US camp nations supporting one faction, provided legitimacy to General Zia-ul-Haq. The terrorist attack on United States on September 11, and declaration of war by American president on Afghanistan helped Gen. Pervez Musharraf in over-coming difficulties of international isolation and pressure from the international community for the restoration for a democratically elected setup in the country. Political elements who were oppose to Zia-ul-Haq policy of involving Pakistan in big power politics failed to take a stand in the 1980, while political forces opposed to the pro-Taliban policy of the establishment in the past and by the present military rulers failed to take up this important policy issue in their political programs.

When the Musharraf administration decided to extend unconditional support to the US military campaign

against Afghanistan, the strong religious outfits in the country declared it a war against Islam and announced Jihad. Those who called themselves 'liberals' and 'progressive' were happy that the US war machinery would solve the problem of Talibanisation for them. However, they were reluctant to come out in the open as they did not want to show their support for the United States. Their dilemma is over as the end of the armed attacks on Afghanistan is in view.

However, the mainstream political parties have so far not come out with any specific political program regarding the Afghan issue. To say that there should be a board-based government in Afghanistan is not enough and to desire that the new arrangement in Afghanistan should not be friendly with India is the extreme of wishful thinking. There is a need for serious thinking, and sound efforts should be made to devise a long-term policy for Afghanistan. Afghanistan should be considered as the most important area in Pakistan's foreign policy because of its geography and centuries old historical and cultural background in relation to Baluchistan and NWFP. But so far no political party has come up with a specific policy statement on this important issue. Either they do not realize the urgency of the issue or they are incapable of taking up such important exercises at the party level. The stress on unity and solidarity is avoided in a democracy, as dissent and freedom to have individual interpretations of events are considered crucial to the success of democratic culture. These freedoms are respected and considered sacred. Opposition to the official standpoint does not amount to treason and anti-state activity.

Since Pakistan has failed to imbibe democratic traditions, the totalitarian vocabulary and rhetoric are frequently used. The first prime minister of Pakistan Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan waved his punch to warn India and the punch became a symbol of Pakistan's military. Other such symbols like models of Chaghi mountain and cardboard replicas of long and short-range missiles abound. Even the names are evidence of our psyche.

Dictatorships all over the world have always revealed in the meaningless rhetoric and generalities. Be it a Hitler in Germany, a Saddam in Iraq, or Ayub, Yahya, Zia or Musharraf in Pakistan. They all played on popular emotions to divert the public attention from the real issues. Relying on totally controlled mass media, the dictators have been usually successful in hoodwinking the masses, but only until the social, political and economic conditions take the natural course and the authoritarian setups are wiped out. Also damaged in the process is the social fabric of the society.

Mian Nawaz Sharif after his return from exile in Saudi Arabia through the intervention of Saudi King was for boycotting the elections under the influence of APDM and the lawyer's community, who feared a rigged election. However, Benaizir Bhutto insisted on taking part in the elections to bring about a democratic change through vote. She was very right as the result so the elections clearly showed. Now Nawaz Sharif is a political hostage of this campaign slogans about the restoration of the deposed judges. The two different political approaches to the question of the freedom of judiciary have made the transfer of power to a coalition at the centre is still uncertain.