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Pakistan and India: The Case for Unification

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History is replete with evidence of leaders who, for their vested interests, have pulled nations into wars or even divided them. One such example is the dissection of India in 1947, which was characterized by a level of devastation and tragedy rarely seen in man's history. To anyone who believes in the unity of the human race, regardless of religion, class, color or creed, partition, indeed, was one of the biggest blunders of the last century. The proponents of the partition of India vowed in front of the world that division would resolve the issues and hostility between Muslims and Hindus, two major communities of the Indian sub-continent; their claims have failed and desired results have not been achieved.

Today, continued hostility exists between Pakistan and India. The rivalry between the two nations, which began with the partition of India, will not end until we spread the message of love and co-existence, and work toward the re-unification of the two countries.

Why should Pakistan and India unite? This is the topic of my piece today. A main driver for this proposition is that the basis for division was flawed, and this divide continues to hinder the growth of the region today. Moreover, as today's world in general is heading towards self-destruction, a united India could set the stage for cooperation and peace throughout the world.

Upon examination of historical documents and analysis of the reality on the ground, it becomes clear that the reasoning underlying partition was significantly flawed. While there is much evidence in this regard, I will now highlight some main elements of this argument.

As I read through this piece, I would like to state that my intent is not to vilify or disrespect anyone, but is rather to provoke thought, encourage us to learn from the past, and promote a sense of solidarity, camaraderie, and love in order to bring about progress in South Asia and the world.

The Two-Nation Theory, in brief, stated that Muslims and Hindus should have two separate homelands because of religion; this was in essence the basis of the partition of British India. However this theory was simply promoted to further the Divide and Rule

policy of the British. Muslims and Hindus, the two major communities in the Indian sub-continent, had lived peacefully for centuries prior to the arrival of the British, and any political matters could have been resolved through negotiations and implementation of a constitution and an independent and strong judiciary, which could protect the rights of Muslims, Hindus, and other communities. However, political differences between Muslims and Hindus were blown out of proportion, thereby working in the interests of the imperialist power.

Though not publicly admitted, from the British perspective, it was imperative that India be divided. The ground reality offers insight into the reasons for dividing British India. Partition would prevent the spread of Communism into the entire region of India and the oil rich Middle East, as Pakistan (a separate Muslim state) would act as a buffer state to prevent this spread in the region. This would also serve to further weaken the Muslims after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Importantly, such division of the people and territory would prevent a united India from emerging as a world power and keep the two nations dependent on pivotal powers. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (President of the Indian National Congress in pre-partition days) wrote in his book:

“If a united India had become free...there was little chance that Britain could retain her position in the economic and industrial life of India. The partition of India, in which the Moslem majority provinces formed a separate and independent state, would, on the other hand, give Britain a foothold in India. A state dominated by the Moslem League would offer a permanent sphere of influence to the British. This was also bound to influence the attitude of India. With a British base in Pakistan, India would have to pay far greater attention to British interests than she might otherwise do.

...The partition of India would materially alter the situation in favor of the British.”
(*India Wins Freedom*, p. 225)

Indian leadership (Muslims and non-Muslims who held negotiations with the British) was both a victim of, and a contributor to, the British Divide and Rule policy; it essentially played in the hands of the rulers.

The Divide and Rule policy manifested itself in the form of the Two Nation Theory, which as stated espoused that Muslims and Hindus needed two separate sovereign homelands. While promoted by the All-India Muslim League (AIML) leadership, one of the Muslim parties, the Two Nation Theory would not have been allowed to be propagated, if the British rulers were not supporting it behind the scenes. This adds further merit to the argument that underlying the Two Nation Theory was the Divide and Rule policy and not the differences between the two communities.

The All-India Muslim League attempted to uphold the said theory, but partition was opposed by all other major Muslim leadership. Among those who opposed the vivisection were Allama Mashriqi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Many other Muslims and non-Muslims alike were against partition. In the nationalists' view, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the President of the All-India Muslim League and later founder of Pakistan, had been misleading the Muslim community in order to go down in history as the savior of the Muslim cause and to become founder and first Governor General of Pakistan. To nationalists, such as Mashriqi, Quaid-e-Azam had become a tool in British hands for his political career. Further, son of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Khan Abdul Wali Khan quoted Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of

India, in his book titled, *Facts are Sacred*. Mountbatten speaking in reference to Quaid-e-Azam's desire to become the first Governor General of Pakistan stated:

“I [meaning Viceroy] asked him [referring to Quaid-e-Azam], ‘Do you realise what this will cost? He sadly said, ‘It may cost me several crores (Several Million) of rupees in assets, to which I replied some what acidly, ‘It may well cost you the whole of your assets and the future of Pakistan’.” (*Facts are Sacred*, Chapter 21)

Mountbatten's resentment is also reported on in another source, *The Times* London of April 23, 1982.

Aside from the questions around Quaid-e-Azam's motives, the nationalists opposed division for a number of other reasons. For Allama Mashriqi, a prominent nationalist, these reasons included the following: First, he saw no issue with Muslims and Hindus living together and he saw no threat of Hindu domination, as propagated by the Muslim League, regardless of the fact that there were a greater number of Hindus in the country; to Mashriqi, power was not a matter of quantity (i.e. number of people) but is rather about quality (i.e. the brains). Case in point, the British themselves were a minority in number but were ruling the majority; the British population in India, as per Gandhi, was less than 100,000¹ vs. 400 million Indians. Moreover, Islam was not under any danger in India as the Muslim League had publicized.

Second, Pakistan with two provinces separated by well over a thousand miles was an impractical idea. Mashriqi conveyed this to Quaid-e-Azam in 1942; this was later proven by the emergence of Bangladesh. Third, the migration of a massive Muslim population (scattered all over British India) to Pakistan would be impossible. Fourth, the division of the country into three parts would weaken India and the Muslims. Fifth, this hostility between the two countries would be exploited by foreign powers. Sixth, division would bring slaughter and suffering of millions. And seventh, partition would lead to rivalry and bring everlasting antagonism between the two countries. Today's reality has proven that Mashriqi's point of view to be true.

Along with prominent Muslim leaders and nationalists, even the majority of the general population did not accept partition — ultimately a significant number of Muslims never came to Pakistan after its creation. Maulana Azad wrote:

“Congress as well as the Moslem League had accepted partition... this would normally have meant that the whole country had accepted partition. The real position was, however, completely different. When we looked at the country immediately before and after partition, we found that the acceptance was only in a resolution of the All India Congress Committee of the Congress and on the register of the Moslem League. The people of India had not accepted partition. In fact, their hearts and souls rebelled against the very idea... there was a large section in the community who had always opposed the League. They had naturally been deeply cut by the decision to divide the country.” (*India Wins Freedom*, p. 241)

Despite the tremendous opposition to partition, Quaid-e-Azam ignored the ground realities and, for the sake of himself and his lieutenants' ambition, refused to listen to any nationalist. To prove to the world that the two major communities could not live together,

¹ Gandhi wrote: “You [British] are less than one hundred thousand in the midst of 350 [400] millions over whom you rule.” *Harijan*, May 04, 1940. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Vol. 078, p. 183.

the All-India Muslim League maintained a confrontational stance toward other parties, and refused to take even leaders of Muslim political parties into confidence regarding the future of the Muslim community. The Muslim League declared Muslim leaders who opposed the division of India to be traitors and anti-Pakistan. To accomplish the All-India Muslim League's goal, Leaguers used the religion card and played upon the emotions of the uneducated Muslim masses. Of course, blame for partition also falls upon some non-Muslim leadership. The end result was a country divided under false pretenses.

Thus, the ideas of partition and the Two Nation Theory were essentially a farce; they were simply promoted for the vested interests of the few. In some intellectual circles, it is believed that Quaid-e-Azam regretted partition soon after the creation of Pakistan, though he did not make a public statement in this regard. Nevertheless, Quaid-e-Azam's secular mindset is reflected in his speech to the Legislative Assembly on August 11, 1947, in which he essentially contradicted the rationale behind the Two-Nation Theory. In this speech, Quaid-e-Azam stated:

“You may belong to any region or caste or creed --that has nothing to do with the business of the State...We are starting in the days when there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State.

Now, I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual but in the political sense as citizens of the state” (Source: <http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/Quaid/speech03.htm>).

Present day circumstances offer clear proof that partition was not successful. The concept of partition was touted as a means of bringing security and prosperity to the region. However, today's circumstances reveal quite the contrary, as political, social, and economic problems prevail in the region.

Instead of resolving political issues, the partition of India in 1947 left behind a legacy of hostility in the region. Not only do the issues of the past remain unresolved, but the lack of peace has been exacerbated over the decades. The Kashmir issue, a bone of contention between the two countries, is a prime example. Progress on this issue remains stagnant and the dispute continues to take a significant number of lives. Because of confrontation over such issues, Pakistan and India have fought three wars and the Kargil conflict in 1999 since partition. Leave alone small skirmishes between the armed forces of both countries which continue to take place from time to time. *Moreover, terrorism and lack of peace and security are fast becoming the norm, rather than the exception.*

Owing to this hostility, the two nations continue to build up armaments for the fear of aggression from the opposite side. What is deeply concerning is that since both countries are now nuclear powers, one irresponsible decision, by a current or future Head of the State from either country, could lead to a human tragedy of tremendous enormity, which has no comparison in human history.

In addition to political issues, significant fiscal and social problems exist in the region. Partition hampered the potential economic growth of Pakistan and India, with obvious ramifications for other countries. While economic progress is being seen in the region (mainly in India), it is still hindered by the lack of solidarity and other problems in the region. Every year, both countries continue to allocate significant amounts of their annual budgets for the maintenance of armed forces as well as building of deadly armaments. The countries' pre-occupation with the arms race has depleted resources, which could have been invested in social and economic development. Both countries are ignoring the fact that a substantial percent of their population lives below the poverty line. A large number of people in the two countries are suffering because they lack the basic necessities of life, such as hygienic living conditions and proper medical facilities. Countless numbers of people have poor diets and are homeless. The illiteracy rate is very high, and the quality of education lags far behind that of the developed world. Only the privileged are exploiting the region's resources. As such frustration and terrorist activities prevail.

Such circumstantial evidence leads one to conclude that the state of present day South Asia would have, economically, politically, and socially, advanced much more so had partition not occurred. The division of India led to significant devastation at the time and continued loss over the decades.

At this point, we can only learn lessons from the past and apply them to progress toward a better future. Pakistan and India must unite in order to remedy the circumstances that prevail and bring peace and prosperity to the region. Some may consider the concept of unification to be contradictory to nationalistic pride or political interests. However, this school of thought neglects to realize that Pakistanis and Indians come from the same backgrounds and that their commonalities outweigh their differences — for example, Indians and Pakistanis speak the same main language of Hindi and Urdu, wear the same dress, eat the same food, enjoy the same music and movies, and communicate in the same style and on a similar wavelength. While progressive steps, through cultural exchange of ideas and confidence-building measures at the government level continue to take place, real progress continues to be hampered.

Uniting will no doubt be a challenge, but will not be impossible, as the falling of the Berlin wall has already set an example. The challenge will perhaps be greater for the leaders than the public, which already shares common threads and is simply living life day-to-day to put food on the table. For them, not much will change in the cultural sense, and they will only stand to benefit from additional prosperity brought into their homes.

For the leaders, who are consumed with political aims and gains, they must remind themselves of the similarities which already tie the people together and focus on the bigger picture — that is, unification will not only lead to overall peace and growth for the region, but uniting the two countries will also create greater economic opportunity globally, by opening up a larger market and additional avenues for trade and foreign investment. Peace and prosperity brought to the region by unification will also directly work against the threat of terrorism and the chance of a nuclear war between the two angry brothers.

To conclude, it is imperative to realize Allama Mashriqi's vision of unity of the human race and that his concept of a united India reaches beyond India itself. A *united India* (comprising of over a billion people) can set the stage for unity and peace throughout the world.