

The Quaid's Role in the Making of Pakistan

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How critical was Quaid-i-Azam's role in the making of Pakistan? Surprisingly though, it was most succinctly and brilliantly summed up in rather unsuspecting quarters — in H.V. Hodson (d. 2000)'s *The Great Divide* (1969), perhaps the most authoritative British account of the imperial retreat from the subcontinent. He says:

Of all the personalities in the last act of the great drama of India's re-birth to independence, Mohammad Ali Jinnah is at once the most enigmatic and the most important. One can imagine any of the other principal actors ... replaced by a substitute in the same role – a different representative of this or that interest or community, even a different Viceroy – without thereby implying any radical change in the final denouncement. But it is barely conceivable that events would have taken the same course, that the last struggle would have been a struggle of three, not two, well-balanced adversaries, and that a new nation State of Pakistan would have been created, but for the personality and leadership of one man, Mr. Jinnah. The irresistible demand for Indian independence, and the British will to relinquish power in India soon after the end of the Second World War, were the result of influences that had been at work long before the present story of a single decade begins; the protagonists on this side or that of the imperial relationship were tools of historical forces which they did not create and could not control Whereas the irresistible demand for Pakistan, and the solidarity of the Indian Muslims behind that demand, were creations of that decade alone, and supremely the creations of one man.¹

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1. H.V.Hodson, *The Great Divide* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), pp.37-38.

Of relevance here is how Alfred Broachard evaluated the role of Kemal Ataturk (1881-1938) in the making of modern Turkey:

Without Napoleon, without de Gaulle, there would still be a France.
Without Washington, there would certainly be the United States.
Without Lenin, it is certain that there would be the Soviet Union; but
without Ataturk, it is certain that there would have been no Turkey.²

Turkey had, of course, had a territorial, political, cultural and ethnic existence in history for over five centuries before Ataturk transformed it into modern Turkey in 1923. In contrast, Pakistan fell even below the category of middle nineteenth-century "Italy" which the Austrian Chancellor, Metternich (1809-48), had most disparagingly characterized as a mere "geographical expression": Pakistan was not even such an expression barely fifteen years before its emergence. There was a "nation" called Turkey for several centuries, but there was none called Pakistan before 1947. Hence if Ataturk's presence in the early 1920s was critical to the making of modern Turkey, how much more critical should have been Jinnah's presence in the 1940s in the emergence of Pakistan, especially since she was bereft of any historical prototype and parentage? Hence Leonard Mosley and a host of other contemporary observers and historians (including Penderal Moon, Ian Stephens, John Terraine, Margaret Bourke-White, Frank Moraes, and D.F. Karaka) rate Jinnah as being the critical variable in its emergence to a point that they characterize Pakistan as a "one-man achievement".³

It is, among others, this aspect of Jinnah's achievement that Stanley Wolpert was referring to when he said:

Few individuals significantly alter the course of history. Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly anyone can be credited with creating a nation-state. Mohammad Ali Jinnah did all three. Hailed as 'Great Leader' (*Quaid-i-Azam*) of Pakistan and its first governor-

2. Le Soir (Antwerp), 26 March 1981.

3. For detailed documentation, see Sharif al Mujahid, "Jinnah and the Making of Pakistan: The Role of the Individual in History", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, XX:1, Fall 1997, p.3.

general, Jinnah virtually conjured up that country into statehood by the force of his indomitable will.⁴

Hindsight, it is said, helps to evaluate the significance of an event in perspective. In the case of Jinnah's achievement, however, even contemporary accounts speak of its magnitude. For instance, *The Economist* had this to say barely a year after Jinnah's death:

In a recent poll the Germans voted Bismarck [1815-98] the greatest of all time. On any standards they were wrong, for even in the same genre Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah stands higher. It took Bismarck the same seven years, from the Schleswig-Holstein war to the treaty of Frankfurt, to create the German Empire as it took Jinnah, from the Lahore Resolution of 1940 to Independence Day, to make Pakistan. But Bismarck started with all the advantages: a hundred-year old nationalism, the Prussian Army and Civil Service, the Ruhr, 15 years of experience of high office, and youth enough still to have 20 years as Chancellor before him in 1879. Jinnah began with nothing but his own ability and the disgruntlement of a religious minority in which he was only an unobservant member of the most heretic sect, at an age so great that he only survived his creation by one year and without any experience of public office until he nominated himself Governor-General.⁵

On a theoretical plane, the above comments underline a basic assumption – that is, in the making of an historical event, the prime role is played by the individual rather than by mere circumstances that give rise to him, a view that has come to be known as a “Great Man” theory.⁶ At the other end of the continuum is the social Darwinist theory that regards man as “creature of his environment, whether natural or social”,⁷ that give primacy to circumstances in the making of an historical event. The foremost exponent of this concept is, of course, Karl Marx and his basic formulation runs as follows:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by

4. Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.vii.

5. *The Economist* (London), 17 September 1948.

6. Carl G. Gustavson, *A Preface to History* (New York: McGrath Hill, 1955), pp. 213-14.

7. David C. McClelland, *The Achieving Society* (New York: D. Von Nostrand, 1961), p.391.

themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.⁸

By any criterion, the creation of an altogether new nation of Pakistan out of the body politic of India was an historical event of lasting significance in the post-war world. In the making of such an event, it may be argued, as does F.J. C. Hearnshaw, both character and circumstances are equally crucial,⁹ if only because without their interacting on and mutually affecting one another all the while, the final configuration of events, and the integration of interests, could never be produced.

In the first instance, it is true, circumstances make the character what it is, and what it tends to become. But it is equally true that the character, once it has emerged on the scene, begins to play an increasingly critical role: he moulds, shapes and exploits to the utmost the circumstances it inherits to suit, advance and achieve its ultimate purposes and objectives. Interpreted thus, circumstances alone cannot create an historical character which rises to the occasion, helps crystallize the historical forces, causes a new integration by harmonizing them with each other and by bringing about their confluence and configuration, and, finally, works through a series of bold decisions and heroic actions. And this more balanced approach is commended by historians called upon to evaluate the measure of achievement of those credited with changing the course of history.

Speaking of Napoleon (1769-1821), for instance, J. Christopher Harold remarks,

8. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), p. 398.

9. F.J.C. Hearnshaw, "The Science in History", in William Rose (ed.), *An Outline of Modern Knowledge* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937), p. 800.

... in spite of the prodigious amount that has been devoted to the man and his times, there is still little general agreement as to whether Napoleon is more important as a product and a symbol ... of circumstances that were not of his making, or as a man who, pursuing his own destiny shaped circumstances that governed the course of history. Like all great men, Napoleon was both, of course....¹⁰

The same is equally true of Jinnah.

Opinion, may, of course, differ, even sharply, about the relative weight assigned to circumstances and the character – i.e., about the measure of criticality conceded to a character, in the making of an historical event; but unless the environment is characterized by certain “determining tendencies”, circumstances alone, unmatched by the character, cannot create an event.¹¹

Applied to the case of Pakistan, it may, therefore, be contended that whatever be the strength, the momentum and the intensity of historical forces working towards Pakistan, without the matching of the character — in this case, that of Jinnah — with the circumstances, it could not have come the way, nor at the time it did. This was especially true in the present case, since Pakistan was apparently not in the realm of possibility, even a decade before its emergence. More so because of the fundamental fact that “few statesmen”, to quote *The Times*, “have shaped events to their policy more surely than Mr Jinnah”.¹² This he did especially after the adoption of the Lahore (Pakistan) Resolution on 23 March 1940.

All through the critical 1940-45 period, Jinnah's single-track, supreme strategy was not to join any coalition at the centre (but more or less on his own terms), lest the arrangement should get crystallized and become permanent. Even when, in order to safeguard Muslim interests both within and without the government, he agreed to send in the Muslim League team into the Interim Government on 25 October 1946, it was sent, first, in

10. J. Christopher Harold, *The Age of Napoleon* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., 1963), pp.6-7.

11. For an elaboration of this point, see Sharif al Mujahid, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah: Studies in Interpretation* (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1981), pp.365-67.

12. Editorial, “Mr Jinnah”, *The Times* (London), 13 September 1948.

opposition to, and not to coalesce with, the Congress bloc; second, not “to leave the entire field of administration of the Central Government in the hands of the Congress”, which, of course, would have been “fatal” to Musalmans’ interests;¹³ and, third, as part of the League’s Direct Action Plan, to confront counter and confound the Congress at the governmental level as well.¹⁴ Till the fag end, Jinnah, like Kemal Ataturk, kept his own counsels, without showing his cards, sometimes not even to his lieutenants, till the time was ripe — his decision not to withdraw the Direct-Action resolution (29 July 1946) boycotting the Constituent Assembly, for one. Once the League had joined the Interim Government, it was generally assumed, the resolution would be withdrawn – but Jinnah did not. And Jinnah’s supreme sense of political timing in this case, as in other cases, paid him immense political dividends. For, when he did finally make known his intentions on 19 November, both the Congress and the British were literally baffled and found themselves completely outwitted and outmanoeuvred.

In a rather desperate bid to end the deadlock and salvage the situation, the British issued His Majesty’s Government (H.M.G.)’s Declaration of 6 December 1946, at the end of the hastily-convened London Conference. While upholding the League’s interpretation of the Mission Plan, this Declaration, in a sense, foreshadowed the setting up of a second Constituent Assembly, in case the Declaration failed to induce the Congress and the League to agree upon the H.M.G.’s authorized interpretation of the clauses under dispute. And the Declaration’s failure to accomplish an understanding between the Congress and the League, the latter’s continued boycott of the Constituent Assembly, summoned on 9 December and the Congress’s ultimatum to the Viceroy in January 1947, calling on him to dismiss the League nominees in the Interim Government, led directly to Prime Minister Attlee’s 20 February statement, paving the way to both partition and Pakistan.

13. See Jinnah’s letter to Wavell, 13 October 1946, Resolutions of the All India Muslim League from January 1944 to December 1946 (Delhi: AIML, N.d., 1947), pp. 69-70.

14. Jinnah’s press conference, 14 November 1946, *Deccan Times* (Madras), 17 November 1946.

Sidney Hook has argued that “if Lenin had not been on the scene, not a single leader could have substituted for him”,¹⁵ the same could be said of Jinnah in respect of the Muslim situation during 1937-47. Comparing Jinnah’s position with Gandhi’s, Beverley Nichols had said in 1943, “if Gandhi goes, there is always Nehru, Rajagopalachari, or Patel or a dozen others. But if Jinnah goes, who is there?”¹⁶ Indeed, there was none. Likewise, Pothan Joseph (d.1979), the ace journalist and the first editor of *Dawn* (f. 1942), had pointed out in 1945 that “on Mr. Jinnah’s exit, there will be a sort of vertical drop in the leadership of the Muslim League”.¹⁷

Moreover, like Lenin (1870-1921), Jinnah had the knack of influencing people through the party, of “using and winning for his purposes those in his own ranks who disagreed with him” and of working with people “who without him could not work with each other”.¹⁸ For instance, it was because of Jinnah’s personality, prestige and tact that those who differed with him on certain specific issues – such as M.A. H. Isphani (d. 1981) and Abdur Rahman Siddiqi (d.1956) on the observance of the Deliverance Day (1939), Hasrat Mohani (d.1951) on the Cripps Proposals (1942), Yamin Khan (d.1966) on the 29 July 1946 Bombay resolution rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan and calling for Direct Action – continued to work with him and the League. Jinnah thus represented a cementing force between rival, and ideologically disparate, elements in the various provinces.¹⁹ Indeed, of all the

15. Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), p.209.

16. Beverley Nichols, *Verdict on India* (Bombay: Thacker, 1946), p.188.

17. Pothan Joseph, “What would happen if Qaede Azam and Gandhi are gone?”, *Deccan Times*, 14 January 1945.

18. About Lenin, see Hook, pp.221, 224-25.

19. For instance, Mian Iftikharuddin, Shaukat Hayat, Nawab Iftikhar Husain of Mamdot in the Punjab; Sir Ghulam Husain Hidayatullah, Ayub Khuhro and G.M. Syed (till December 1945) in Sind; Aurangzeb Khan, Abdul Rab Nishtar, and Qaiyyum Khan (since September 1945) in the N.W.F.P.; Khawaja Nazimuddin, Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy, Maulana Akram Khan, Abul Hashim, and Fazlul Haq (till 1941) in Bengal; Hasrat Mohani, Chaudhry Khaliqzaman and Z.H. Lari in the U.P.; Ismail Ibrahim Chundrigar and Dr Abdul Hamid Kazi in Bombay; Syed Rauf Shah and Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan in C.P.; and M. Muhammad Ismail and Abdul Hamid Khan in Madras.

Muslim leaders he alone was capable of transforming the League into a nationalist coalition, representing all the shades in the political spectrum, and gathering together on the single platform of Pakistan the various segments in the society — the landed aristocracy and the landless peasants, the West-oriented elites and the ulama, the modernists and the traditionalists, the revolutionaries, and the moderates the literates and the illiterates, the urbanites and the ruralites, the intelligentsia and the masses, men and women, the elders and the youth.

And as with the Muslim League, so with the Pakistan idea. This idea was, of course, in the air; but before Jinnah entered the scene as its foremost advocate, it was something vague: it was considered a poet's dream, a political chimera, a student's fantasy. It was Jinnah who gave it a concrete shape: he gave it sinews and muscles, flesh and blood. It was, again, Jinnah who provided modern political parlance. In addition, by creating a viable political platform, an institutionalized hierarchical political structure and it with a politically viable structure — and this by defining it in universally recognized principles of formidable machine in the Muslim League, and by enlisting the support of a mass following to confront and counter the long-entrenched Congress both at the polling booth and on the streets, he was adroitly to bring the Pakistan idea at the threshold of reality. Thus, it may be said that but for the directing leadership of Jinnah, the battle for Pakistan could well have been lost. This explains why the central theme of his achievement of Pakistan figures so prominently in everything that has been said and written about Jinnah.²⁰

20. For elaboration of Jinnah's criticality, see Sharif al Mujahid, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah: Studies in Interpretation*, pp. 412-15, and "Jinnah and the Making of Pakistan...", pp.1-16.