

[A Tale of Two States: India & Pakistan](#)

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Recently, while glancing at the *kwtanweer.com* site, I was attracted by the title of an article:

“Al-Hind wa Pakistan ... al-‘Ilmaniyya’ Tantaser” (India & Pakistan ... Secularism Wins.)

Here was an Arab Muslim intellectual, who having compared the history of these two states since their independence from Britain in 1947, concluded that the Indian experiment was a success story, while in contrast, Pakistan has done very poorly. The following are excerpts from the article, followed as usual, by my analysis, and comments.

“As we compare the secular Hindu State of India with the Islamic State of Pakistan, we are struck by the utter contrasts between the two. To begin with, India’s president now is a Muslim, which indicates that his religion did not keep him from reaching this high position. Furthermore, we should remember that he has played a major role in the development of the Indian nuclear program. Add to that, India has made great strides in the fields of technology, economics, agriculture, and education. It has achieved a remarkable level of democracy in its government. Compare all that success with the awful backwardness of the Islamic State of Pakistan, its system of religious education, its failing economy, the rise of terrorism with the blessing and encouragement of the tribal and religious leaders of the land.

“A comparison between India and Pakistan would lead an independent observer to pity the Pakistani government and its Muslim people. In contrast, India, having adopted a secular model for its government, has managed to spare itself many problems. It is true that India is not free of Hindu fanaticism; nor may we forget that its society is marked by the existence of the caste system; and has to cope with the problems stemming from population explosion. However, by adopting a secular system of government within a democratic framework, India has been in a better position to tackle its many challenges, when compared with such countries as Pakistan and Egypt.

“Thus, by developing its secular regime, India has succeeded in creating a new way of life, both in government and in society. An Indian, regardless of his religion or ethnicity, participates in the decision-making process. India has been free from those religious schools that have negatively impacted the Pakistani political system. In India, the role of Hindu religious teachers is restricted to the social realm; they are not allowed to interfere with legislative matters. While India is a secular state that did not keep several of its politicians from being religious people as may be observed in the press and the documentary films. However, the role of religion stops at the door of politics, economics, education, and culture; in the sense that a political decision is not subject to a specifically religious influence. This has spared India a great deal of political strife, and enabled it to achieve its prominent place on the global scene. Through education, India has created the [new] Indian man, on the foundation of the separation of religion from

the state, where a religious identity has been replaced by the rise of an Indian citizenship.

“While India has achieved all that progress, Pakistan, as an Islamic state, has failed to implement those Islamic religious principles, such as faithfulness and trust that would have enabled it to succeed in its societal and governmental venture. The tribal tendencies in Pakistani society, by deforming its Islamic values, have created a fertile ground for terrorist activities and a myriad other problems. As we contemplate the terrible deterioration in the life of Pakistan, notwithstanding the presence of its nuclear arsenal, the question persists: would not secularism have been the savior of Pakistan from its unending crises?”

Analysis

The author of the article, by contrasting the history of India with Pakistan since the partition of the Indian Subcontinent offered a simple thesis: **Secularism (‘Ilmaniyya) has provided India with a blueprint for success, domestically and on the international scene. On the other hand, Pakistan while striving to be a model Islamic State, has foundered for the last sixty years, and has been plagued with innumerable domestic and international problems.**

Comments

The study of the history of India and Pakistan since 1947 provides us with an irrefutable proof that the attempt to create *“a purely Islamic state”* as envisaged by the Muslim Indian ideologues of the past was a sure recipe for political, social, and economic disasters.

A little bit of history will help us to better understand the subject. Quite early in the history of the *Islamic Futuhat*, the Arabs reached the western parts of India, the province known as the *Sind*.

Later on, the Islamic *Mughal Empire* ruled India for around three hundred years before it came under the impact of British colonialism. Early in the 17th century, the **British East India Company** got many concessions to exploit India, gradually raising its own army in order to extend its control of India.

In 1858, India became formally an integral part of the vast British Empire, and Queen Victoria was crowned as its Empress! Early in the 20th Century, Indian leaders began to work for the ultimate day of independence. *The Muslim League* in 1909, under the leadership of *‘Allama Iqbal* sought to create within the Indian subcontinent, a purely Islamic State. By 1940, the Muslim League leader, *Muhammad Ali Jinnah*, was determined that upon the end of the British presence in the country, the land would be partitioned between Muslim and Hindu states. The last British Viceroy, *Lord Louis Mountbatten*, presided over the partition, and the States of India and Pakistan were born on 15 August, 1947. It should be remarked that Pakistan consisted then of two sections: *East Pakistan* and *West Pakistan*, separated by over 1,000 miles of Indian territory!

Terrible events followed the partition. Most Hindus living within the new Pakistani areas, fled to the Indian areas, while many Muslims rushed to Pakistan. There were tragic scenes of killings on both sides of the new borders. Added to that, came the problem of **Kashmir**; its Indian ruler opted to join India, even though the majority of his subjects were Muslim. Pakistan never acknowledged the legality of that decision. To this day, the Kashmir problem has remained an unresolved matter between the two countries.

The political courses of the two new countries have been entirely different. India has succeeded in forging ahead on several fronts, and notwithstanding some tragic events in its history, is now considered as the world's largest democracy. In contrast, Pakistan's course has been marked by political upheavals and social instability. In 1971, **East Pakistan**, resenting the hegemony of the **Punjabi West Pakistani** leadership, seceded with the help of the Indian Army, and became the **State of Bangladesh**.

While the article declared, by its very title, its enthusiasm for '**Ilmaniyya**' (secularism), it nevertheless equivocated by claiming that Pakistan "**failed to implement those Islamic religious principles, such as faithfulness and trust that would have enabled it to succeed in its societal and governmental venture.**" The truth is that those very religious principles were responsible for the failure. As V. S. Naipaul, an expert on the history of the region put it in his book, "**Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples**"

"It was Muslim insecurity that led to the call for the creation of Pakistan. It went at the same time with an idea of old glory, of the invaders sweeping down from the northwest and looting the temples of Hindustan and imposing the faith on the infidel. The fantasy still lives; and for the Muslim converts of the subcontinent it is the start of their neurosis, because in this fantasy the convert forgets who or what he is and becomes the violator. P. 247

"The Indian subcontinent had been bloodily partitioned to create the state of Pakistan. Millions had died, and many more had been uprooted, on both sides of the new frontiers. More than a hundred million Muslims had been abandoned on the Indian side, but virtually all the Hindus and Sikhs had been chased away from Pakistan." P. 290

Rather than bringing peace and prosperity to Pakistan, Islam has been the source of its troubles. The article in **Tanweer** arrived at the conclusion that '**Ilmaniyya**' was the answer; it was tried in India, and made it a success story. But how could Pakistan have adopted a secular model for its state, when its **raison d'être** required the establishment of an Islamic polity?

In conclusion, back to Naipaul's sober words from the **Prologue** of his book:

"Islam is in its origins an Arab religion. Everyone not an Arab who is a Muslim is a convert. Islam is not simply a matter of conscience or private belief. It makes imperial demands. A convert's worldview alters. His holy places are in Arab lands; his language is Arabic. His idea of history alters. He rejects his own; he becomes, whether he likes it

or not, a part of the Arab story. The convert has to turn away from everything that is his. The disturbance for societies is immense, and even after a thousand years can remain unresolved; the turning away has to be done again and again. People develop fantasies about who and what they are; and in the Islam of the converted countries there is an element of neurosis and nihilism. These countries can be easily set on the boil.” P. xi

Note

V. S. Naipaul has written two books on contemporary Islam:

Among the Believers: *An Islamic Journey*

(Random House, 430 pp. 1981)

Beyond Belief: *Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples*

(Random House, 408 pp. 1998)