

## PAKISTAN AS AN ISLAMIC STATE

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THE NAME "THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN" GIVEN to the State of Pakistan in the short-lived Constitution of 1956, was abbreviated, almost unexpectedly, to "The Republic of Pakistan" in the new Constitution promulgated in 1962. This change, whether fundamental or merely stylistic, has ever since been the bone of contention between the so-called modernists and the classicists in Pakistan. This essay proposes to analyze and interpret the meaning of "Islamic State" in the context of Pakistan's present-day conditions, with this assumption: that the change in its name, be it fundamental or not, does not in itself make of Pakistan a less Islamic State than it was supposed to be years ago. The view may even be advanced, and with sufficient reasons, that Pakistan, for all practical intents and purposes, continues to be an Islamic State notwithstanding the controversial honing of its previous appellation.

A comparison between the Preambles of the two Constitutions will show, as far as concerns their respective reliance on Islam, only a slight textual difference. The words used in both documents vary in places, but indeed their intent and meaning cannot but be the same. For however divergent are the views and approach of the past and present leaders of Pakistan on the business of state, they share at least one thing in common, namely, belief and faith in the force and validity of Islam, so manifested in diverse ways by the general body of the Pakistani Muslim population.

In Islam it is hardly possible to separate into two air-tight compartments the political from the spiritual; whereas most non-Muslim countries treat of religion as belonging to only one particular aspect of life, the spiritual, so drawing its domain apart from that of the State, in Pakistan as well as in many other Islamic countries religion embraces the whole generality of life. It is in the nature of their creed that such union is possible and in which the real justifications for it can be found. Prophet Muhammad became not only the spiritual guide of the Muslims; he became also their political leader. To look for any historical parallels between Islam and Christianity will be unwarranted, for each developed under entirely different background. Nowhere in the Quran, the Muslim Holy Scripture, is there a ban on the legitimate exercise of the rule over spiritual and temporal affairs alike in the hands of one man, but Christ's stricture, "to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's", reduces to a pro-

bable mistake early Christianity's attempt to amalgamate Europe under one great Crown.

There being such "unity of spirit and matter" (*tawhid*) in Islam, it follows that the question of the spiritual ideals which the people must hold and develop, is one of exceeding importance to which a Muslim State must perforce attend. In the Principles of Policy enunciated in the new Constitution, it is thus declared that the Pakistani Muslims "should be enabled, individually and collectively, to order their lives in accordance with the fundamental principles and basic concepts of Islam, and should be provided with facilities whereby they may be enabled to understand the meaning of life according to these principles,"<sup>1</sup> that "the teaching of the Holy Quran and Islamiat (Islamic laws and jurisprudence) to the Muslims of Pakistan should be compulsory,"<sup>2</sup> that "unity and the observance of Islamic moral standards should be promoted amongst the Muslims",<sup>3</sup> and that "the proper organization of *Zakat*, *wakfs* (religious institutions) and mosques should be ensured."<sup>4</sup> So the implementation of these policies may be ensured, the Constitution provides for the appointment of an Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology<sup>5</sup> and the establishment of an Islamic Research Institute.<sup>6</sup> The Council will recommend to the Central and Provincial Governments ways and means for enabling and encouraging the Pakistani Muslims to order their lives in accordance with Islamic principles and concepts, advise the Central and Provincial Assemblies, the President and Provincial Governors on any question pertaining to Islam referred to that body, and declare whether a proposed law is violative of the Principles of Law-Making, one of such Principles being that "no law should be repugnant to Islam."<sup>7</sup> The Islamic Research Institute is mandated to undertake research and studies on Islam, and provide instruction in the faith with the end in view of assisting "in the reconstruction of Muslim society on a truly Islamic basis."<sup>8</sup>

There are many other quotations of similar import in the new Constitution, but from these few cited above, it might already be thought that the Pakistani Muslims who express deep concern for the place of Islam in the activities of their State, would be profoundly satisfied. The truth is that many of them are not, as can be judged from the continuing appeal being pressed in various forms upon the authorities if only the old name adopted for the State might be restored, and Pa-

<sup>1</sup> Republic of Pakistan. *Constitution* (1962). Part II, Principles of Policy, Clause 1, Section 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Clause-1, Section 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Clause-1, Section 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Clause-1, Section 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Part X, Chapter 1, Article 199.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Part X, Chapter 2, Article 207, Clause 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Part II, Principles of Law-Making, Section 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Part X, chapter 2, Article 207, Clause 2.

kistan fashioned thenceforth, in the vision of its religious proponents, into a "truly Islamic State" in modern times.

It is difficult not to appreciate the position of the classicists demanding stricter adherence to Islam in the activities of their State. Pakistan was sought and fought for on the basis of religion or, more precisely, of the Islamic ideology. For the Pakistani Muslims the faith of Islam has therefore both religious and historical significance, aside from emotional value. Not only their chosen religion, Islam is also the principal force that commenced their history, that gave them their status as an independent people. And, among the Muslims, history and religion in their broadest sense are considered one and the same thing which is expressible in the phrase "Islamic ideology."

Iqbal (1873-1938), one of the main creators of the ideology, died without seeing the fruition of his thesis that in their free state the Muslims were to practise their own way of life. The All-India Muslim League based its Charter on Iqbal's idea, and launched the struggle, under the leadership of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, that culminated in the establishment of Pakistan in August, 1947. But the demand for Islamic State posed, and still poses, an obdurate problem. In principles everybody might be agreed on it, but how exactly spiritual ideals could be welded into the business of statecraft so as to realize the aspiration of an Islamic State for Pakistan, is a type of question all the more baffling if it be considered that Pakistan has a sizeable number (about 15% of the total population of 93.5 millions per 1961 Census) of non-Muslim inhabitants, which include Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and Parsis.

All the arguments of the protagonists in this issue examined, it seems the main reason for their difficulty in reaching a common view or, at least, a compromise on the problem of whether or not Pakistan should realize itself as a "truly Islamic State", stems from the peculiar connotations if not ambiguity of the term Islamic State. What it is in concrete, meaningful terms, cannot indeed be stated, for far from being a static concept as "Islamic State" may appear, in actual operation it is dynamic. Both Pakistani modernists and classicists with opposed attitudes of mind, thus labor under the difficulty of having to define their ideology in the contemporary and medieval senses of the term, respectively. Looked at from any senses, as long as the principle of its having both a dynamic and static character is accepted, Islamic State cannot, however, be a paradox.

Islam is not only a religion, it is also a way of life, and a way of life changes with the times. The Islamic State of today cannot remain the same throughout the ages, as the Islamic State during the period of the first four Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Omar, Osman and Ali — 632-656 A.D.),

was a different picture from the Islamic State observed in operation in Pakistan and elsewhere. As Pakistan comes nearer to its chosen ideal form of State, the same becomes farther from attainment because it changes itself, certainly in gradual but steady pace. Though in fact at this stage Pakistan is already an Islamic State, as it has avowedly declared its wish to adhere to values and principles Islamic since its very inception, and has sufficiently practised and upheld them, it is still endeavoring to become an Islamic State. The change in the pursuit, as distinguished from the essence, of that ideal does not invalidate it. To such seeming paradox of Pakistan being in actuality an Islamic State while at the same time it is still striving to be one ideally, no other meaning can be given.

Among other Muslim intelligentsia of the Twentieth Century, Iqbal had taken pains to define the complementary features of Islam, its positive or dynamic, and its passive or conservative, aspects. Islam, he said, would cease to be Islam if it were not living enough to allow a continuous process of fresh experiments and adjustments to changes in society and lend support to its followers in their attempt to approach modern problems with an independent and realistic attitude. But from their past it would be unwise for Muslims to turn their back entirely, because life, in Iqbal's own words, moves with the weight of its own past on its back so that in any view of social change the value and function of the forces of conservatism cannot be lost sight of. In accepting a liberal interpretation of their religion, therefore, the Muslims must not, in so doing, reject their Islamic ties, for it is their connection with Islam, their past, which has given them their social and political identity.

How to convince the modernists on the one hand that life is not pure change, as it has within it elements of conservation also, and the religious orthodox on the other that they need to reconstruct their thinking on many problems of their day, is admittedly not a mean task. The latter could not insist on their claim of finality for the popular schools of Muslim thought, since things have changed since the day of their Prophet, and since today Islam is confronted and affected by new forces set free by the extraordinary development of human thought in all directions. That being so the Muslim liberals are therefore perfectly justified in reinterpreting Islam in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of modern life. In his widely quoted *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore, 1960 reprint), Iqbal says: "The teaching of the Quran that life is a process of progressive creation necessitates that each generation, guided but unhampered by the work of its predecessors, should be permitted to solve its own problems."

It is more or less on the lines adumbrated by Iqbal in his writings, that the Pakistan government is endeavoring to construct an Islamic

State for Pakistan. Simply this means a State which ought to improve the living conditions of the people, provide education to a vast number of unschooled and illiterates, increase health amenities, in short change for the better the face of the country and raise the general standard of living; but, at the same time, a State which must inculcate in both the young and the old the spirit and qualities of Islam, which in the past proved to be the motive force and salvation of the Muslim world. Between the forces of reaction and change the present government is trying to work out an effective and practicable compromise, such that Pakistanis, while generally remaining true to their faith and keeping spiritual values alive, are not left behind in material progress induced by the technical revolution going on everywhere.

In other words an Islamic State is not only one which professes belief for its own sake in Islamic principles like equality, brotherhood and devotion to God; in addition it must be a State wherein the opportunities to practise these principles exist. First and foremost that State must assure its citizen of their basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, education. Just as people do not live by bread alone, neither can they live purely in faith. All professions of belief in Islam, if they do not carry with them any social content for the faithful, sufficient food, clothing, shelter, education and so forth, all of which in the first place are part and parcel of the concept Islamic way of life, thus reduce themselves to a hypocrisy. An Islamic State, therefore, is one that is not only good, as is now believed so with the State of Pakistan, but also ideally perfect for the people. Such a perfect State may or may not arrive; this appears of no moment. The important thing is that it be fixed and Pakistanis agree in common to its being the primary goal of their national efforts.

From the reforms being undertaken and from the actuations of present leaders, it is apparent that Pakistan has cleared away much of the dust of ambiguity and confusion that its ideology has accumulated over the years, with the consequent bifurcation of the Pakistani society into two main conflicting streams of thought. The framing of the old Constitution was characterized by severe controversies between the classicists and the modernists; the former insisting that the State being so established ought to be ruled by Muslim theologians, while the latter calling for a State wherein sovereignty resided in the people. Ultimately, the *ulema* (religious leaders) seemed to have lost the great debate. The Constitution adopted in 1956 decided that final authority should rest with the people themselves, and not with the *ulema*. But the decision, it was argued, did not detract from the Islamic character of the State. For, again, between the essence and the form exists a great distinction. The form of State which Pakistan may choose may not necessarily be the same form manifested under the first four Caliphs, but as

long as that State is fundamentally based on Islamic principles, and intends to be guided by them, it is Islamic still. The Khalifa was elected, but the method of election then was altogether different from the method of elections of today. In both cases, the principle of election is there, only the method has changed.

Ironically, when the new Constitution was promulgated in 1961 the religious orthodox of the country made use of the very Constitution of 1956 which they had previously held with doubt, to prove their claim of the former's abandonment of Islam as guiding principle in the task of national reconstruction. It is improbable that Pakistan would return to its old Constitution, or change once again its Constitution to mollify the feelings of its orthodox class. In any event the present government appears disinclined with such academic hair-splitting, but quite serious about the practical implementation of a number of material reforms of far-reaching consequences, not the least of which concerns Pakistan's inherited system of education, as a concrete step toward the bridging of the gap in outlook that exists between the religious and intellectual sectors.

Much of the disagreement between them can be traced to the kind of orientation, independent if not divergent, they have received. In classicist and modern schools, as observed by an articulate scholar on Islam, Dr. Wilfred Smith, the point of divergence lies not only in the subjects studied and pupils taught, but also in method and flavor and valuation, a divergence that surely becomes fundamental to the whole social order.<sup>9</sup> Thus by and large, persons growing up with a modern education, and persons brought up under the strict guidance of religious teachers, are two different sets of people, and the dichotomy in their attitudes stands out more clearly when they start to grapple with problems of their community. So while emphasizing the need for technological and scientific bias in the proposed educational system, the Report of the Commission on National Education recommended the compulsory teaching of Islam for all Muslim students during their first eight years in school. But the Report also called upon religious leaders and institutions to present Islam as a progressive movement which could endure through the changing times, and to impart knowledge not only of religion as such but also of the sciences.

But by Islamic State, is not theocracy actually meant? The question appears ill-founded; the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and Pakistan, being already as has been said an Islamic State, has not shown to any conclusive degree tendencies which may be characterized as theocratic. Moreover in Islam theocracy, aside from being hardly possible in the absence of any *organized* body of clergymen or people hav-

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<sup>9</sup> The author is indebted to Dr. Smith's many brilliant insights into this problem.

ing a monopoly of religious knowledge, is repudiated if not explicitly at least by inference. Pakistan in fact cannot lay claim to being an Islamic State if it discriminates between its classes of people, between the infallible interpreters of the Divine Will and the abject followers of those interpreters. In the ideology of Islam, to restate its peculiarity, the Church and the State are looked at from a point of view different from that with which these two institutions are regarded — as separate entities — in most non-Muslim countries. In Islam it is the same reality which appears as the State viewed from one perspective, and the Church from another, but the two always remain as a single “unanalyzable reality.” Therefore the question of theocracy does not arise in Islam. It is almost impossible to understand how such a unity of Church and State can operate in Islam without producing thereby a form of theocracy, unless the phenomenon is analyzed in its own mode of operation, not in the context of one’s preconceived ideas, and experiences gained in a dissimilar setting. But it is valid to consider the reason why, if Islam in political terms is the same reality as Church and State, there still exist in Pakistan a number of theologians and other religious exponents. Actually their role in society is rather not unlike that of technicians in other fields of human undertaking. They can have their say in the affairs of the State, in fact under the old and the new Constitution the better intellectually equipped of them could examine proposed legislations, especially on religious matters, and recommend, but only recommend, their approval or disapproval, which is to say, theirs is not necessarily the last word.

It follows that at least theoretically the religious minorities are fully safeguarded from any prejudices of the Muslim majority in an Islamic State. Needless to say, the persecution of the minorities is explicitly forbidden in Islam. Its principles of equality and brotherhood of all men irrespective of race and creed, are fundamental, and permeate the whole body of Islamic traditions and doctrines. The spirit of these principles was contained, for instance, in the Charter which the Prophet Muhammad granted to the Jews after his arrival in Medina and in his message to the Christian of Najran and the neighboring territories, after Islam was fully established in the Arabian Peninsula. The Charter in part says: “There should be no interference with (the practice of) their faith or their observances, nor any change in their rights or privileges.”

How far this injunction is being observed in Pakistan, may be indicated by the position of its religious minorities, a position which is invariably secure, as may be reflected (Census of 1951 and 1961) by the increase in their number. The number of Pakistani Christians, for example, is estimated to have reached nearly 300,000 in 1961, or ten times as many as their total population for 1941 in the territory comprising the present Pakistan. Some of the finest educational institutions in Pa-

kistan are run by Christian missionaries including Karachi's St. Patrick's School, where His Eminence Valerian Cardinal Gracias was educated. The recent Chief Justice of Pakistan's Supreme Court, Mr. Justice A. R. Cornelius, is a Christian, a fact which may stand out as the most eloquent proof to the toleration with which the minorities are regarded in a predominantly Muslim country.

From this discussion of the status of the religious minorities, a clearer meaning of Islamic State can now be stated. First, as an Islamic State, whether as an actual fact or as an ideal still to be pursued, Pakistan is to be run by the people themselves and not by any special class of citizens much less by the religious orthodox. This explains why Pakistan is often also referred to as an Islamic Democracy, though the phrase among the Muslims sounds redundant inasmuch as Islam, taken as a temporal power, is a democracy *per se*. An Islamic State is one which intends to be guided but unprejudiced by the generality of the principles, the ideals, philosophies, manners, values, in a word the ideology defining and setting apart the distinct character and individuality of Islam from other faiths.

This ideology is generally held by the Muslims as rational, dynamic and capable of promoting the social ends of all citizens regardless of sympathies and beliefs, and in the exclusive case of Muslims, both social advancement and spiritual redemption. An Islamic State is therefore considered to be the best aspiration for Pakistanis, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, because it alone is endowed with the inherent power to satisfy to a large extent the basic requirements of citizens in a society where the conditions and the strains are peculiar, and the elements composing it are many and still to be coalesced into one whole, and owing only one great loyalty, that is, to Pakistan.