



Which Version of Pakistan?

This 27th Ramadhan 1441 AH – it will be exactly 75 Hijri (Islamic) years since Pakistan burst onto the world map on 14th August 1947, corresponding to 27th Ramadhan 1366 AH. Being created on the night of power, the most blessed day in the Islamic year, has not been lost on its people and arguably a divine sign that Pakistan stands destined for greater purposes in the service of Islam.

It is no surprise then that the Muslims of Pakistan remain exceptionally charged on the concept of being Pakistani as it is in sync with their Islamic faith. They are proud to adhere to this identity, eager to defend it and anger readily evoked if this positioning challenged.

But tangibly this is as far as this first, Islamic, version of Pakistan manifests itself.

For that's where Islam and its interweaving with the Pakistani identity ends. Shift to matters of state; Pakistan's constitution, its courts and its ruling apparatus – and Islam is left far behind as a mere abstract concept without any legal standing, as law making and governing in the country strictly adhere to democratic norms where legislation enacted by way of majority vote, rendering the constitutional provision of no law being contrary to Islam as defunct. The result – the entirety of the state's sub-systems, namely the economic system, social system, judicial system, foreign and internal policy and ruling system are rendered functionally un-Islamic as laws are determined by the powerful and self-serving clique that inhabit the provincial and federal parliaments.

All the while successive governments have duplicitously spewed Islamic narratives and sloganeering, interwoven with political innuendo and legal discourse, to carry on reigning with an Islamically incompatible system, whilst bluffing the masses that their prized Islamic version of Pakistan remains in play.

Take the PTI's claim to a Riyasat-e-Medina model as an example, or an Islamic welfare state, or the original concept of an Islamic republic. Highly resonating mantras to align charged masses into defence and service of the motherland, but null and void with no legal Islamic weight in the secular governments that have continuously held power, where religion resolutely expunged out of the state's regulatory affairs.

And this predicament disingenuously allows for a second, shadowy version of Pakistan to dominate. One eagerly championed by the Western infatuated, social media active, liberal class of Pakistan – many a direct subsidiary of the country's corrupt presiding mafia. Equally proud and vocal in their claim of being Pakistani, they tactfully draw upon the resonance of this national identity amongst the duped masses to ultimately justify the ever unfolding secular agenda in the country undertaken in its name.

Thus culturally tawaf around the catwalk circuit takes centre stage, the feting of a growing list of foreign festivals – in a manner shaming Western nations where they

originate form – become the new Eids, and so forth. Politically it is Pakistan first where an ‘us or them’ mind-set prevails vis-à-vis dealings with other Muslim lands, be they distant such as Palestine and Burma, or closer to home such as Afghanistan or Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK). With the enthusiasm and love for the Islamic version of Pakistan in mind, the masses are muddled and muted into falling behind this warped, second secular version of Pakistan which effectively rallies the populace to its defence under the claim that the concept of Pakistan is under threat and its interests challenged.

Recent times however have suddenly and unexpectedly thrust the identity of Pakistan into the spotlight. Seismic shockwaves of hit series Ertugrul Ghazi reverberate across the country as tens of millions tune in within a mere three weeks to make the Turkish extravaganza an instant number one, sending the erstwhile robust secular mouthpieces of society reeling and scurrying to regain orientation. Lame attempts by the latter to explain away the popularity of the captivating series a result of epic acting or enchanting artistic sets prove lame.

In reality the drama has reignited the dormant and highly cherished Islamic version of Pakistan. Notions of a greater purpose, of Afterlife, of moral and ethical values entrenched in Islamic hukm and precedence, of a struggle against the oppressive powers that be, for your people and beyond, of worldwide ascendancy even - have erupted to the surface of Pakistani society with blistering force and decimated the secular version of Pakistan in the process.

And such a societal earthquake could not have come at a more sensitive time for the country. Millions have been rendered jobless amidst coronavirus lockdowns, leaving them in desperate poverty and struggling to feed their families, whilst the state support infrastructure – in continuation with its track record of abject economic failure – remains non-existent and unable to alleviate the crisis. In neighbouring India, a belligerent fascist Modi government, continuously ramping up its brutality and genocidal practices, beats the war drums louder and louder against both indigenous Muslims and those in Kashmir, with extremist Hindutva ideological rhetoric directing increasing fire towards Pakistan itself.

Given this predicament, can the secular version of Pakistan retain its grip over the state’s apparatus, keeping the inhabitants in check despite the horrendous poverty and injustice inflicted upon them?

Or will the masses, day by day awakening to Islam’s history and glory, one not shackled to the confines of national anthems, national flags or predefined colonial era borders – and with a global vision for the Ummah – be able to shake of the status quo and revert Pakistan to its true version of a wholly Islamic entity?

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