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Lahore Resolution

With the introduction of political reforms in India by the British, the Muslims realized that they would become a permanent minority in a democratic system and it would never be possible for them to protect their fundamental rights. They only constituted one-fourth of the total Indian population and were much lesser in number than the majority Hindu community. In order to protect their political, social and religious rights they first demanded for separate electorates. However, as the time passed and the Muslims of India gained political maturity, they realized that even the right of separate electorates would not be enough and they had to search for some other long term solution. Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, being their leader, not only identified the problems, but also worked hard, both physically and mentally, to find a viable answer to their dilemma. The attitude of Congress leadership during 1920's further endorsed what the Muslim leadership had realized. After the failure of Khilafat / Non-cooperation Movement, the Indian politics revolved around the process of introducing new political reforms for the upcoming Act. Simon Commission was rejected by the majority of the local political parties including Indian National Congress and All India Muslim League (Jinnah Group) on the plea that it lacked indigenous voice. However, when the British threw the ball in the locals' court and asked them to come up with a consensus formula, the Indian leadership failed to bridge the gulf between them. Jinnah went an extra mile as he was ready even to drop the Muslim demand of separate electorates, provided Congress concedes some concessions to the Muslims especially in the Muslim majority provinces.¹ But Motilal Nehru in his famous Nehru Report rejected almost all the demands presented by Jinnah in his Delhi Proposals. The recommendations of the report were so much one-sided that both the Muslim members of the committee did not give their consent to the document.

All this was very disappointing for Jinnah, who was considered to be the champion of Indian Nationalism and the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. After the failure of the Round Table Conferences in London, Jinnah had a realization that the Western concept of Territorial Nationalism might not suit Indian environment. Since, he had no alternative in mind, he decided to quit India and settle in London. Even when the period of his disillusionment finished, and he decided to return back to his motherland, he was yet not clear about the alternative strategy on resolving the political problems of Indian Muslims. The only policy he adopted was to reorganize the League and to turn it from a party which was only involved in drawing room politics into the one which had roots amongst the masses.³ Jinnah knew that Muslim League would not be in a position to dictate its terms and conditions without mobilizing the masses in its support. On the other hand, Muhammad Iqbal, the poet philosopher in his famous Allahbad address of 1930 had

presented an idea that Islam has its own social and economic system and in order to implement it, a political entity was required.⁴ When Jinnah came back to India, he got the opportunity to interact with Iqbal through exchange of letters. Iqbal tried to convince Jinnah that ‘the enforcement and development of the Shariat of Islam is impossible in this country without a free Muslim State or States. This has been my honest conviction for many years and I still believe this to be the only way to solve the problem of bread for Muslims as well as to secure a peaceful India. If such a thing is impossible in India the only other alternative is a civil war which as a matter of fact has been going on for some time in the shape of Hindu-Muslim riots’.⁵ He also suggested, ‘In these circumstances it is obvious that the only way to a peaceful India is a redistribution of the country on the lines of racial, religious and linguistic affinities’.⁶ It seems as if Jinnah was convinced by Iqbal’s idea⁷, but being a realist himself and also as advised by Iqbal, he was not ready to announce the new plan until he was confident that the vast majority of the Muslims were behind the Muslim League. However, one could see that between 1938 and 1940, Jinnah and Muslim League, time and again raised the voice for separate Muslim state(s). During this period various plans advocating partition and establishment of Muslim zones in to a state or states were put forward by different Muslim leaders including Nawab Abdul Latif, Muhammad Sharif Toosy, Abdus Sattar Kheiri, Asadullah, Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, Nawab of Mamdot, Abdul Wadud, Sikandar Hayat Khan, Mian Kifayat Ali and Muhammad Afzal Qadri, etc.

The first practical step which presented the change of attitude in the Muslim League leadership was a four days conference of the Sind Provincial Muslim League, held at Karachi from October 8 to 11, 1938. Jinnah presided over the conference. In his presidential address, he gave reference of the breaking of Czechoslovakia and hinted that the fate of India might not be different as the Muslims of the land would never forgo ‘their national entity’.⁹ While speaking on the occasion Sir Abdullah Haroon presented the idea of ‘an independent federation of Muslim States’.¹⁰ Sheikh Abdul Majid threatened ‘that if the Congress did not concede Muslim rights, Muslims would have no alternative but to fall back upon the Pakistan Scheme’ and that ‘nothing would prevent Muslims from Karachi to Calcutta to march to their own selfdetermination’.¹¹ At the end of this magnificent conference a resolution was passed which read as follows, ‘The Sindh Provincial Muslim League Conference considers it absolutely essential in the interests of an abiding peace of the vast Indian continent and in the interests of unhampered cultural development, the economic and social betterment and political self-determination of the two nations, known as Hindus and Muslims, that India may be divided into federations, namely the federation of Muslim States and the federation of non-Muslim States’.¹² This resolution proved to be the forerunner of the historical Lahore Resolution.¹³ From then onwards, the idea of the partition of India was discussed by Muslim League members on different official and unofficial forums. In March 1939, Choudhury Khaliquzzam and Abdur Rahman Siddiqi in a meeting with Marquess of Zetland, the Secretary of State for India, discussed the idea of the creation of separate Muslim state(s).¹⁴ Working Committee of the Muslim League, in its meeting held at Meerut on March 26, 1939, with Jinnah in chair, passed a resolution in which they rejected ‘the Scheme of Federation embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935’ and appointed a committee ‘to examine

various schemes already propounded by those who were fully versed in the constitutional developments of India and other countries and those that may be submitted hereafter to the president'.¹⁵ Jinnah while addressing the meeting of the League Council on April 8, made it clear that the committee had not pledged to any scheme. He said that the committee 'would examine the whole question and produce a scheme which, according to the committee would be in the best interest of the Muslims of India'.¹⁶ In his letter to Linlithgow Jinnah made it clear that, 'no declaration should in principle or otherwise be made or any constitution be enacted by His Majesty's Government nor Parliament without the approval and consent of the two majority communities of India viz. Musalmans and Hindus'.

Third, Lahore Resolution is allegedly in clear about the areas to be included in the states. In response to Beverly Nicholas's question that why Pakistan has not been defined in detail, Jinnah replied, "All details were left to the future and future is often an admirable arbitrator". It is beyond the power of any man to provide in advance a blue print in which every detail is settled." The resolution was deliberately kept vague to take full advantage of elements of uncertainty and the power of manipulability. It also distracted the congress from targeting a visible goal set by the league. Muslim League purposely left this matter ambiguous to get as many Muslim majority areas as possible, including some in the Muslim minority provinces. Fourth, a question is usually asked as to why the word Pakistan was not mentioned in the Resolution and why there is no reference to the princely states like Kashmir. The word Pakistan as coined by Chaudhary Rehmat Ali was used in specific context in which he proposed the idea of Bengal and Assam to constitute a separate Muslim state of Bang-i-Islam. The Lahore Resolution pointed to the areas of both North-western and eastern India. The resolution did not favor the exchange of population. The word was not used as it could give the impression of pan-Islamism and scare the British and provoke Hindu propaganda. But when the Hindu press regarded the Lahore Resolution as the Pakistan demand, the Quaid owned it.

Legislators was not the forum competent to amend the Lahore Resolution. Nor could Jinnah amend it after the General Election in the country in which the Muslim League contested on the basis of the Lahore Resolution. He assured the Muslim League leaders from Bengal who met him on a deputation that the Lahore Resolution was not amended. At his Malbari Hill House on 30 July 1946 Jinnah encouraged Abul Hashim to work on the basis of the Lahore Resolution. Cabinet Mission arrived in India on 24 March 1946 to make negotiations with the recognized party leaders in India towards self-government for India. Comprised of three members of the British Cabinet - Secretary of State Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander - the mission proposed a two-tiered federal plan, which was expected to maintain national unity while conceding the large measure of regional autonomy. There was to be a federation of the provinces and the states with the federal centre controlling only defence, foreign affairs and communications. At the same time, individual provinces could form regional unions to which they could surrender, by mutual agreement, some of the powers. The existing provincial assemblies were to be grouped into three sections while electing the constituent assembly: Section 'A' for the Hindu majority provinces, Section 'B' and 'C' for

the Muslim majority provinces of the Northwest and Northeast (including Assam). The sections would have the power to set up intermediate level executives and legislatures of their own.