

pendent states was announced to the world. More important, the Indian and Pakistani people had to know, or at least begin the process of enlightenment, that they had become the Indian and Pakistani people.

On September 12, 1947, less than a month after the transfer of power, Jawaharlal Nehru addressed the diplomatic corps in New Delhi and tried to explain the causes of the communal rioting and bloodshed which had accompanied the partition of the subcontinent into two successor states. "The history of India has been one of assimilation and synthesis of the various elements that have come in," he declared, and it was "perhaps because we tried to go against the trend of the country's history" that the current tragedy was taking place.

In this context, the creation of the Pakistani state 25 years ago can be seen as the major failure to accommodate one significant element of the Indian mosaic, i.e. the Muslim minority. The partition, in effect, gave nation status to two regions of the country in which the primary identity factor was Islam. The leaders of the Indian National Congress were far too concerned with their "national" ideal to placate the regional bias of the Pakistan movement in the Punjab and East Bengal. On the other side, fears of a repressive Hindu Raj stimulated political development on a regional-religious level, finally causing the rejection of all-Indian nationality in favour of Pakistan. The composite state had been rejected as untrustworthy.

History may never repeat itself exactly, but there are lessons to learn from past events, and to ignore. The events of the last ten months and the successful emergence of Bangladesh as a new state carved out of Pakistan suggest one obvious conclusion. Here again, as in the case of the whole of Pakistan 25 years ago, regional identity has gone far beyond the limitations meant to protect national integrity, and the nation was dismembered. Here again, a variety of factors — some old, some new — converged to create the moment of opportunity and commitment to break from the old order and set out on a new path.

Three themes

Three major themes dominated the brief history of united Pakistan — both supporting the national ideal and eventually stimulating its denial: (a) the Islamic state; (b) Indo-Pakistani confrontation; (c) Punjabi-Bengali incompatibility. Islam was the regional force which

prevented the establishment of a subcontinental state in 1947. It was also the key factor in establishing national identity in the fragment which broke away. All the obvious difficulties of geographical separation and historical and cultural difference were ignored by the Pakistani leaders in Muslim majority areas, just as they had been ignored by the Hindu élite in the Congress. Whether the cry was a conservative "back to the Koran" and "Islam in danger" or a progressive "revival of Muslim culture", the thrust of the campaigns was the same — separation. If nothing else could claim a common loyalty from these Punjabis, Baluchis, Biharis, and Bengalis, Islam could. Recent events suggest that religion was not a strong enough tie to hold together peoples who shared virtually nothing else.

Communal animosity

The entrenched animosity between India and Pakistan is the well from which many of the major troubles of the region have risen in the last 25 years. It has exaggerated communal animosity, which had already a long and unhappy history.

India's commitment to a secular state as an accommodation to the 50 million Muslims who remained in India after partition was officially ignored by the Pakistani leadership. Even 50 million were overwhelmed by 400 million Hindus. Since Muslim numbers were too small to allow them control of their own destiny, they lived under a Hindu Raj, Islam's ancient enemy in the subcontinent.

Indo-Pakistani rivalry has continually reinjected communal bias into the affairs of the area and has been the primary reason for the failure of responsible attempts to deal with it in India. This rivalry has also diverted the attention of both governments from internal development to grossly-inflated military expenditure. It has also provided the key to big-power involvement. It was perhaps inevitable that both India and Pakistan should become dependent to some degree on those nations able and willing to provide development support. The degree of dependence, however, was vastly exaggerated in the context of their unfriendly relations. Finally, this antagonism has caused the Pakistani leadership to overemphasize and overvalue the significance of Islam as a national unifier. Although some may have believed that Islam was still in danger from a Hindu threat to the south, many Pakistanis were too taken up with internal issues to accept the old war cry uncritically. They had lived in an Islamic state for 24 years and those problems which

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