



RESEARCH PAPER

The Two-Nation Theory: Historical Roots, Political Implications and Contemporary Relevance.

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ABSTRACT

The paper then aims to study the historical background of this theory, analyse the political impact of the Two-Nation Theory and evaluate on the significance of Two-Nation Theory in the modern world. Born in colonial India it was based on the view that Hindus and Muslims constituted two nations with sheer cultural and religious dissimilarities; which paved way for demand for Pakistan. The study employs historical, descriptive and analytical research method which includes colonial documentation, speeches and secondly a historical analysis of literature review of communalism and partition. The study progress identifies that the theory formulated through analyzing British colonial policies, reform movements within communalism and the political awakening of Muslims to Partition 1947. Since the early 1990s, this theory has been widely worked over, and its nature present impacts the nature of bilateral relations between India and Pakistan and the internal socio-political situation in both countries. It suggests preserving cultural memories to foreground common histories, encouraging religious tolerance and resolving competing communal claims through appreciable policies in South Asia.

KEYWORDS Two Nation Theory, Colonial India, Jinnah, Hindus-Muslims, Communalism

Introduction

An important and determinative theory in history, the Two-Nation Theory, was central to the structures of the social- political colonial Indian situation, and contributed significantly to the Path to 1947 Partition. Stating that Hindus and Muslims comprised two different nations regarding culture, religion and society, the theory provided the ground for the demand for a Muslim state – Pakistan. This ideology developed in view of historical circumstance, social and political factors such as the policies of British colonialism, communal reformist movements as well as the political awakening of Indian Muslims.

This article looks at the development of the Two-Nation Theory through events and policies among them the Partition of Bengal, the Morley-Minto Reforms and the Communal Award. I then extend the application of the theory to analyse the political dimension of the enterprise, ranging from the nationalists' struggle to the Partition and beyond. Last, it assesses whether these insights are salient in the current world by investigating the continued application of the theory identifying continued patterns of India-Pakistan relations and domestic politics within these two nations.

Employing historical, descriptive; analytical method, thus this research employs primary and secondary source data in expounding on the Two-Nation Theory. The article also presents an agenda of how the problems that emanates from its socio-political and communal residue can be solved in the modern South Asian society, and this includes issues of historiography of recognizing histories, interfaith dialogues and multicultural incorporation, policies of living together in harmony.

Literature Review

The Two-Nation Theory has gone through the critical analyses by the historians, political scientist and sociologists in the current global world these scholars have often asked the historical question on how it ended the British rule and also led to the partition of Indian in 1947 but had lasting effect on the politics and structure of South Asia. Based on the belief that Hindus and Muslims in India form two separate nations that can never coexist, the conception has received a number of interpretations and analyses from experts across the board.

It is stressed out that the roots of the Two-Nation Theory are to be turned to socio-political activist platform of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who appealed for the education and the political unification of Muslims in British India. Malik (1981) explicates how Sir Syed echoed the sentiment as he called Muslims – as a separate entity – to come to power and protect both their political and ethnic status as the authority of the Mughal Empire waned and the British Empire emerged. Alavi (1972) has also observed that with the establishment of the Aligarh Movement spearhead by Sir Syed the political awakening for the Muslims had begun and culminated in demand for Pakistan.

Even if British colonial policies did not actually dictate the formation of the Two-Nation Theory's communal conception, that theory itself stemmed from British influence. Bipan Chandra (2008) believes that reforms like the Morley Minto, which resulted in the introduction of the separate electorates and the Communal Award that came with the process of dividing the population into religious entities made structures that gave primacy to religious representation over nationalism. The policies advanced targeted nationalist movements, and with them Chandra illustrates how they operated to polarise the population and engender suspicion between groups. Likewise, Ayesha Jalal (1985) analyses the Two-Nation Theory as a political instrument, saying that it was used by the All-India Muslim League to seize political authority when in power instead of pointing to sociology of Indian Muslims. In her view, the theory used the language of fear of being left out from the central power which Congress had been presenting as 'Hindu-dominate' political formation.

There are Pakistani scholars like, Syed Sikandar Hayat (2008) those remain in favour of the Two-Nation Theory and its importance for vailing the rights of Muslim in Indian nationalism. Hayat using Muhammad Ali Jinnah's life and biography and his leadership to understand how he strategized and implemented constitutional framework to operationalise the theory for building Pakistan as a homeland for Muslims. Chawla, (2018) has built further to this perception arguing that Jinnah skilfully applied the theory in managing Muslim political uncertainties when dealing with the British colonial policies as well as the Congress hegemonic politics in India.

Ghulam Shabbir (2024) explores how the Two-Nation Theory involved socio political consequences to freedom movement and addressed the aspects of Muslim politics altogether movements of identity formation and mobilisation. Shabbir's work also presents positive but failing states in the British colonial manipulation as a strategy to perpetuate divide and rule tactics and Jinnah's response through constitutionalism and minority rights paradigm. This perspective is of immense importance while explaining the internal politics of the Muslim League and their capacity to sell Two-Nation Theory as the rallying point for Muslims in India.

Those, who criticized the Two-Nation Theory, state about its flaws and contradictions. Kamran (2010) claims that the theory failed the account the rich socio-cultural relations of Hindus and Muslims in 'Two-Nation Theory,' in the vortex of a pluralistic Pre-Partition Indian society where people of the two faiths were intertwined with each other through shared histories, culture, economies together. Likewise, independently and also in a similar manner, Venkat Dhulipala (2015) disapproves the politics developed at that time and

communal politics and sends the notion that this theory not only widened the gap of Partition but also paved the way for post-Partition religious politics. This paper indicates that Dhulipala administration underestimates the inflexibility of Two-Nation Theory that did not consider regional, linguistic, and cultural differences in Muslim population.

While the Two-Nation Theory has often focused on much on political and geographical contexts however its socio-cultural perspective has also been discussed under the British colonial education and media. Actually, following Pandey's analyse (1990), colonial curricula modeled the Indian history in a communal way celebrating some rulers according to their religious belonging, and condemning other ones. This educational strategy trained the collaborative consciousness in the Indian youth and froze out the categories which indeed continued in the post-colonial South Asia. Chatterjee (1993) also explains how the colonial controlled media served the purpose of stereotyping the indigenous community and passing on other distortive figures that reinforce communal divisions.

Other comparative analysis have also located Two-Nation Theory within the general context of colonial administration of Britain. Similarly, Bayly (1999) who compares the policies formulated in Britain for India and for other colonies in Ireland or parts of Africa shows that Division and Rule was persistently used to ensure colonial control was sustained. As these comparisons will show, that this is another typical colonial practice of fomenting religious and ethnic tensions in order to disarm nationalist struggles.

Although there is a good amount of prior literature associated with the historical and political aspects of Two-Nation Theory, little research has been conducted regarding the future consequences of the theory on the modern South Asia region. Little has been written on how the theory has been implemented and or applied and how it relates to today's identity politics and sectarian crises leading to regional insecurity. This article enriches the given topic with a focus on the historical and modern approaches to the concept of the Two-Nation Theory, notions on the continued effects of this theory, and recommendations for how those effects might be mitigated. These strategies are creating cultural, religious, historical memories, and giving due importance for religious tolerance, and Socio- economic injustice to establish harmonious South Asian region.

Material and Methodology

This work uses historical, hermeneutical and contextual analysis, to examine the development, political consequences, and contemporary significance of the Two-Nation Theory. The study therefore proposes to analyse historical records, regional differentiation and socio political aspects of the theory in order to understand how the theory evolved and how it has been expanded.

The historical method gives an account of events and ideas which led to the evolution of the Two-Nation Theory. It analyses historical materials including speeches, letters and political documents of personalities like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and British documented content. Information from the Lahore, Delhi, and London archives forms the basic background on the ideological and legal developments that cemented the role of the theory in Indian politics. Some focus is provided to alternative historical development pathways in Bengal and Punjab which turned into key regions of emerging communal conflict.

Another method employed is interpretive concerning the identification of the changes in the ideological and political contexts. The discussion is made on reformist tendencies such as the Aligarh Movement and the All-India Muslim socio-political mobilization strategies. It also examines how such colonial administrators packaged policies consistent with their goals; in this case, encouraging communalism as a form of taming rebellious subjects. Insofar as the Morley-Minto Reforms was a decisive turning point in the Indian political awakening it is helpful to see what secret motives and hidden feelings lay

behind the response to this development and subsequent events such as the Communal Award through this interpretive lens.

This methodology also takes into account the social, political and economic environment that defined the theory. Existing literature review exempts the technique to the society of colonial India and places the theory in the context of the classes and economies and cultures. This is followed by how these contexts defined Muslim political demands and the subsequent emergence of the demand for a separate state. Sikandar Hayat and Venkat Dhulipala present dissenting views on these themes and explain why elements of the theory are being advanced.

A comparative lens is also applied to contrast the institution of colonial polarising policies in India with these strategies in other British colonies. Comparing the current situation to the cases in Africa and Ireland the study finds similar trends in the manipulation of identity politics to divide radicals. With this comparison, there is a possibility of assessing the policy's impact in a broader context and the effects elicited by the same across the world.

To increase the validity of the study, there are oral histories in addition to local narratives of communal strife to give first-person perspectives of the situation. However, this approach is preferable because in addition to archival research, one gets a plethora of perspectives on Two-Nation Theory outcomes.

Limitations of the study are also discussed, such as archival sources restriction related to the period of British colonial rule and biases of sources written from nationalist/colonial perspectives. To address these difficulties, it uses data from various sources and avoids making polemical conclusions.

This methodology assures a rich and detailed investigation of the Two-Nation Theory that integrates historical research with modern application. It aims to offer a new perspective on the manner in which the theory unfolded the social-political realities of South Asia and still colours identity politics and international relations of the region.

Results and Discussion

An analysis of the study on the Two-Nation Theory importance in the formation of demand for Muslims homeland in South Asia presents far-reaching implications on the social and political structure of the two nation states. Critically, the research emphasizes the theory's construction as an ideological index to the specific socio-political context of Muslim in colonial India. While the mainstream nationalism which arrived with the Indian National Congress was intended to give India a united entity, the concept of two nations provided a clear cut idea of the cultural, religious and political differences between Hindus and Muslims. (Hayat, 2008, 2014)

It is conceived that the theory, in its formative phase, was more socio-political in its orientation responding to the situation of the Indian Muslims who witnessed a social and economic degeneration as well as political demeaning after the fall of the Mughals and the arrival of the British. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's leadership of reformist endeavours had a huge contribution in developing an identity that has been categorised as Muslim political. To these factors, were added the communal representation policies of the British, which polarised religious loyalties and entrenched sectarian strife. The research results imply that socio-political awareness amongst Muslims owing to their specific historical and culture put down helped generating the Two-Nation Theory as a legitimate politics model. (Hayat, 2000)

A novel contribution of this research is the proposition that the Two-Nation Theory serves as the bonding agent of the various Muslim communities in India. Nonetheless, in order to seek similar political objectives, the theory provide a general framework for regional,

language and cultural diversity. It offered the rationale for the creation of Pakistan, which for the Muslims set out a vision that shed a clear light on cultural or religious persecution from the dominant and numerically strong Hindus. However, the findings also highlight the fact that this unity was qualitatively different from simple unity and was accompanied by conflicts, as the theory often reduce Muslim communities to general notions, lacking any distinctions. (Chawla, 2011, 2023)

Unlike other theories of political culture, the implications of the political structure of the colonial India based on the concerns of the theory was tremendous. It became evident that asserting the Muslims' political existence as a nation apart made the All-India Muslim League's political agenda. Another remarkable fact is that under Jinnah's leadership the Two-Nation Theory turned from sheer theory into a political power. This is evident due to the finding of this study that although the theory helped to unleash the Muslims in India, it at the same time created hostile relationship with Congress and also ignited communal riots which led to the creation of Pakistan in 1947. The division was not only political but also psychological and cultural since it left permanent bitter divisions among those who had lived first for centuries in one society. (Shabbir, 2024a)

The Two-Nation Theory is most relevant today in Pakistan as it is still a part of official Pakistani ideology. However, the study notes that development of the theory was helpful in establishing the state of Pakistan and have been criticized for lack of distinguishing the ethnically and linguistically diversified nation. These tensions pre- and post-1990 between the central government and different ethnic groups to show that a unifying ideology of religion only is a weakness. Furthermore, the formation of theories regarding this subject has spilled over Pakistan to India where it is used in communal politics in order to support Hindu nationalist parties. (Shabbir, Jawad, & Ashraf, 2022)

The study also presents information on how the Two-Nation Theory played the part of orchestrating regional relations. The violent partition of the Indian subcontinent based on religious nationalism engendered enmity between the two states, India and Pakistan, in their international relations in the past six and half decades. This is true in respect of the matters such as Kashmir dispute, which continues to be a burning question in the region. Accordingly, the study indicates that this theory's articulation of identities as fixed and oppositional still remain an obstacle toward coordinated actions at the regional level and, consequently, toward building a harmonious post-war society. (Javed, 2009)

In conclusion, Two-Nation Theory did emerge into driver into the political and socio-Society of Muslims in colonial India and was an effort to turn into a cultural and political vision. Despite this, the AIM continues to be questioned in the light of regional diversity, unresolved contemporary political problems. Solving such problems seems to challenge the essence of the theory and call for collaboration to overcome the rifts it created. This may be done by the practice of pluralism in government policy, dialogue between people of different faiths and cultivating overarching stories. All these efforts are vital to achieve the future of peace and stability in the South Asia region. (Kailash, 1986)

The effulgence of the Two-Nation Theory in East Pakistan which finally led to the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 can be mainly attributed to the failure of this theory to address the multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-socio political Pakistan. While the theory was at least useful for Pakistan's creation it did not prove to be as useful for constructing a state for a country that is multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic. The division of the nation into geographically and culturally distinct wings, by over thousand Indian miles, added these complications. (Wells, 2006)

A serious drawback towards Two-Nation Theory in East Pakistan was that this theory was based solely in religion for nationalist accomplishment. Despite the fact that Islam joined the two portions of Pakistan in idea, cultural, linguistic, and economical differences

hindered this unity. Bengali ethnicity based on language and tradition was in sharp fight with the endeavour of the central authority to impose Urdu, the other official language of Pakistan. For Hindus this imposition was seen as a planned move to downgrade the Bengali majority and reduce the feeling of nationalism. The Language movement of early fifties marked the begin of unrest in the east part of the Pakistan proving that religion alone could not create bonded nation. (Shabbir, 2024b)

Thing remained worse due to economic disparities, which led to the failure of the Two-Nation Theory in East Pakistan. Nevertheless, as the more populated part of Pakistan, East Pakistan was long a region that was economically dominated by the western part of the country with its capital in Islamabad. Money was channelled primarily towards West Pakistan, while the revenues that the eastern region received from exporting jute were spent on the western part. This economic marginalization gave rise to bitterness and backed up the notion of exploitation which in turn deepened the political estrangement of East Pakistan from the present West Pakistani dominated narrative. (Jalal, 2010)

The Two-Nation Theory failed to unite East and West Pakistan also because of political marginalisation. The centralized system of over centralization where the military bureaucracy in West Pakistan was dominant provide little opening for East Pakistan to be involved in decisions making. The power struggle in Pakistan and the victory of Awami League, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the general elections of 1970 gave a signal of politico – ethnic assertiveness of the Bengalis in East Pakistan. Nevertheless, the unwillingness of the West Pakistan's political leadership to respect the result of the polls of the Awami League and hand over power exacerbated this impasse reached its climax as the two wings plunging into a civil war that resulted in secession of East Pakistan. (Jalal, 1985)

This it was truly seen as people of India and Pakistan had different ethnic and cultural beliefs and since Pakistan had diverse ethnic and cultural diversities it proved a problem to the Two-Nation theory. Thus, even though the theory stressed the principle of the Islamic solidarity, it did not pay much attention to the ethnic, linguistic, and regional loyalties of Pakistan's peoples. Ethnic disparities, for instance, the Punjabi domination, Sindhi hostility, Pashtuns' resentment and Baluchistan's struggle supported how the bureaucratic liaison has failed to grasp internal heterogeneity of the entity known as Pakistan in West Pakistan alone. The heavy representation of Punjabi elites in the military and bureaucracy further perpetuated prejudices of exclusion for the others, which destabilised national integration. (Singh, 2010)

Bangladesh emergence exposed the failure of the Two-Nation Theory as a tool in nation making. This was clearly seen when the theory's only pillar – religion – failed to provide adequate glue for a multi ethnic and multi linguistic state. Lack of understanding and promotion of the principle of nationhood that entails acknowledgement of difference as well as respecting of regional, cultural and economic differences compromises the unity of the nation. The catastrophe of the erstwhile East Pakistan proved that beyond question, while people of a region may be bonded by religion, for a lasting unity, they must be governed and administered, culturally and economically fairly. (Ahmed, 2012)

The Two-Nation Theory did not pay attention to the internal heterogeneity, especially in East Pakistan, consequently, people's identities matter in a nation-state. Furthermore, the theory used for the creation of Pakistan failed to unite such diverse population and this indicates that pluralistic approach is needed for nation-making. Bangladesh is a powerful evidence of the fact that failure to read the territorial and ethnic characteristics in the process of construction of unified state eventually lead to negative results. (Bilgrami, 1985)

The Two-Nation Theory is considered remains a discussed topic regarding its nature by historians and political scientists. It was a necessity of the time when due to political radicalization of British India, and Muslims 'identity marginalization, British Indian

Muslims, especially those who joined IAG, felt the Congress party did not respect their rights culturally and politically enough. Recently, due to up surging communal tensions and the Congress's inability/demur to provide proper political protection to the Muslims, Jinnah came to advocate the said theory as had been appropriate for dealing with the recurring problems of Muslims. Others have contended that Jinnah actively employed the theory for the purposes of unifying Muslims, funding a separation of Pakistan knowing that it could be used in the fight against Hindus. Alternatively, the theory can also be seen as the situational consequence of British Divide and Rule policies whenever British sought to institutionalise communal identity and foster the mistrust between Hindus and Muslims. These policies fuelled communal tensions with the Congress's unitary vision of India that offered no independence for the Muslims making the Two-Nation Theory not just an angry politics of vote-getting but the response of fearing political outcomes as well.

Conclusion

A product of socio-political tradition of the British India, Two-Nation Theory had central role in the continental dynamics which led to the creation of Pakistan. This policy was advocated by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League who insensibly felt that Muslims were being politically and culturised dominated in India, and Congress did not provide them any political space to actualize their aspirations. While the theory established religion as the principal determinant for nationalism, it offered a perfect political solution to the Muslim states while failing to capture the ethnic, linguistic, and regional ear of the pie in Pakistan itself.

The debates surrounding the theory highlight its dual character: on the one hand, as a technique used to pursue political objectives and, on the other hand, as a result of the exploitation of intra-communal rivalries that British colonialism fostered. Divide and Rule not only established communalism as the official framework, but ensured peoples' distrust and made it progressively less possible to have a nationalist united front. Jinnah's leadership concretised the theory to pose for Muslim self-governance but the binary structures it engendered formed lasting structural features of post-colonial South Asian political context. This is why the Two-Nation Theory is still valid today – it served as the basis for the formation of Pakistan and the task of the masses is to create a unified country out of millions of diverse individuals. That it was not possible to maintain unity in East Pakistan and finally gave birth to a new nation namely Bangladesh explains why the theory failed to meet challenges of diversity and equity in the country. Furthermore, its construction of sectarian categories persists in shaping contemporary politics both in Indian-occupied Kashmir and in Pakistan, thus maintaining the sectarian cleavage that destabilises the region.

Thus, the Two-Nation Theory, in retrospect, was constitutive of the immediate exigencies of colonial politics in South Asia, even as it register the deeper communal logic of colonial India. Despite achieving the goal of the formation of Pakistan it has ever faced problems in inclusion and integration. In this regard, the lessons learned from the theory are to encourage the understanding and acceptance of diversity within the nation state so as to espouse the principles of fairness in the political authority, and the celebration of history that will effectively embrace certain incidences that necessarily call for the regional Integration cum respect for the neighboured countries.

Recommendations

To overcome the Two Nation Theory and its consequences resulting into generation of hostility in context of South Asian region, few important steps are needed to be taken. Thus, the concept of 'inclusive governance' should first be practiced to consolidate ethnolinguistic and cultural Diversity of Pakistan. This means that there should be policies that make sure that there is equal representation and not just move on the religion as the key factor to source unity from. Accepting internal diversity and Tanner's proposal can become

a powerful instrument for building a united and harmonious state placing emphasis on avoiding social tensions between regions and sects.

The second crucial area, which both India and Pakistan must focus is the issue of inter-faith dialogue so as to reduce the religious polarization among its people. Community leaders and teachers, religious institution and civil society should join hands in order to avoid radical conflicts. Therefore, the educational curricula that has been taught over the years in both nations should be reviewed and their many histories rewritten to cut out the hatred that has been inculcated. Educationists should popularise common working historical and cultural values within schools so that people move forward and eliminate hatred incidences based on community differences.

Integration should also be improved on regional stages including SAARC through which the South Asian countries can sit and discuss. This is because regional concerns on issues of economy and environment can make partners overcome other contentious issues. This paper contends that socio-economic disparities as a source of unrest should be considered as requiring directed investment in the regions and communities that are least serviced. Cultural, and political gaps that exist among these nations can be closed in order to enhance social and political stability of the region as a whole.

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