

# The Concept of Nation in Political Philosophy (With Special Reference to Two Nation Theory)

Muhammad Jawwad<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.  
Correspondence: [jawwad.phil@pu.edu.pk](mailto:jawwad.phil@pu.edu.pk)<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

**Study Background:** The words Nation and Nationality are much used by common people and are much exploited by politicians. Surprisingly when anyone bothers to look into the matter a puzzling and confounding situation emerges. In human history these words have been used in quite a different meanings and contexts. The concept of nation is among the fundamental concepts of Political Philosophy, History and Pakistan Studies etc.

**Aim of the Study:** In this article it has been attempted to highlight the original concept of nation by Iqbal in the formation of Two Nation Theory and to understand the different meanings of nation in the course of Social and Political history of the world.

**Methodology:** The research is theoretical and qualitative in nature. Being a fundamentally theoretical subject the research in philosophical writing is, usually, conceptual and argumentative.

**Findings:** It is interesting to notice what K. K. Aziz says in this regard and what has been the interpretation of Dr. Javed Iqbal (son of Allama Iqbal).

**Conclusion:** The popular meanings of nation are to identify a group of people with a common territory, common history or a common culture and civilization. There have been other meanings of this concept which are quite interesting to comprehend and ponder upon. The Two Nation Theory given by Muslim leadership at the time of the partition of India also highlights a different concept of nation. In this concept Religion is the decisive factor to distinguish one nation from the other.

**Key Words:** Nation, Nationality, Political Philosophy, Culture, Language, History, Civilization.

## Introduction

The first and the foremost thing about nation as a concept is that it is almost impossible to present a definition of it which can be considered universal and non-controversial. There have been numerous definitions of nation in human history.

In the Medieval age (which is called Dark Ages usually) the students of a religious college or university were called a nation (Aziz, 1989). In the present world, the number of Arab countries is many. There

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should be a definition of Arabs as a nation, otherwise the Arab world cannot be an Arab world. The definition upon which the title Arab World rests is nothing but people who speak Arabic.

For some philosophers and intellectuals, nation cannot be defined on the basis of religion alone or on the basis of common language. They are of the opinion that the common characteristics within a nation should be:

- i. Common History
- ii. Common Language
- iii. Common Geography
- iv. Common Culture and Customs

Some philosophers disagree with the above-mentioned criteria made by different intellectuals in order to define the concept of nation or nationality. Common history is something different from common civilization. For example, In South Asia we have some countries which have different national history but a common civilization behind. A Pakistani can trace his or her history from 1947; same is the case with an Indian. In the case of a Bengali, the national history should be started from 1971 but should they or can they deny the great Indian Civilization behind?

The famous Pakistani historian K. K. Aziz in his book *The making of Pakistan* tried to present a definition or description of nation. According to him when a group of people consider themselves as nation, then it is a nation (Aziz, 1989). Apparently, the definition given by Mr. Aziz is arbitrary. The second problem with this definition is that the whole concept of nation or nationality becomes subjective in this regard. The common history, territory, climate etc are the objective factors. This definition undermines the objective and impersonal factors. Two nation theory given by Muslim League considered religion as the distinctive factor for considering a group of people as a separate nation. Dr. Javed Iqbal (late) considered this concept as an innovation which was basically a blend of Western and Islamic concept of nation (Iqbal, 2011). In this article the writer has attempted to compare the concept of nation given by K. K. Aziz, the concept of nation given by Two Nation Theory at the time of the birth of Pakistan and the interpretation of the same concept by Dr. Javed Iqbal.

### ***Research Objectives***

The research objectives of this article are

1. To explain the difference between the Western concept of nation and the concept of nation by Iqbal.
2. To study the interpretation of Iqbal's concept of nation by Dr. Javed Iqbal.
3. To study the concept of nation by K. K. Aziz.

### ***Research Questions***

The research questions are:

1. Is the concept of nation Absolute or Relative?
2. Is the concept of nation by Iqbal really a blend of Western concept of nation and Islam?
3. Is the concept of nation really an arbitrary concept?

### ***Research Methodology***

This article has been written in APA (American Psychological Association) format. The research is theoretical and qualitative in nature. Being a fundamentally theoretical subject the research in philosophical writing is, usually, conceptual and argumentative.

## Discussion

In order to clarify this concept, we can take another example. Indian classical music or Pakistani classical music are not the right words for the music which is too ancient to be accepted as national. According to K. K. Aziz, the famous historian of Pakistan internationally recognized, when a number of people get united and declare that they are a nation then they are a nation (Aziz, 1989, 163). Apparently, the views of K. K. Aziz seem arbitrary but in reality, they are not. The problem is that the very concept of nation has already been very arbitrary. For people in the concept of nation, the element of common territory should be included. This will not help solve the issue. There could be many territories of a single nation or group of people having combined history for example the area in Britain which is called Ireland and the independent country called Ireland. The second big example is of sub-continent. Pakistan, India and Bangladesh do not share common territory now a days but have many things in common. For example, a combined civilization (Hindu Civilization which is supposed to be the oldest civilization of the world) (Knowledgia, 2020) a common history, a common culture (the culture of Punjabi, Hindu Punjabi Muslim and Punjabi Sikh). The second example is of Bengali people. They can be framed in India and in Bangladesh. They can be Muslims and they can be Hindus also.

### *Two Nation Theory*

The formation of Pakistan and the partition of India rests upon a concept of Nation which is unique in itself. All the Muslims in India (Punjabis, Banglois, Pathans, Balochs and Sindhis) considered themselves as a nation and Allama Iqbal was supposed to be the thinker behind this concept (Mustansir, 2008). According to Dr. Javed Iqbal (a famous intellectual of Pakistan and the son of Dr. Muhammad Iqbal) this concept is a kind of *Ijtihad* in itself (Iqbal, 2011).

Dr. Javed Iqbal, in the above-mentioned lecture elaborated and explained the concept of nation of Muslim League as follows:

1. According to him this concept is a kind of *Ijtihad* because in pure Islamic teachings, we hardly find this kind of a concept of nation.
2. According to him this concept is a kind of innovation.
3. It can be considered as a creative idea.
4. According to him this concept is the blend of the Western concept of nation and Islam.
5. According to him this concept is an Islamization of the Western concept of nation.

So far, the first major point of his lecture is concerned, it throws light and explains the situation that why Abul Kalam Azad and Molana Modudi (in spite of being great Muslim Scholars) were not convinced by the concept of Nation of Indian Muslim League. So far, the second point is concerned, it should be kept in mind that he considers it an innovation and not a fabrication. So far, the fourth and fifth point of his lecture are concerned, it sounds convincing that it is a creative blend of the Western and Secular concept of Nation with Islam.

Interestingly the findings of K. K. Aziz as a historian and the interpretation of Dr. Javed Iqbal as an intellectual seem similar on different points. One can explain the similarity in the following steps:

1. According to K. K. Aziz this concept is Arbitrary (being arbitrary and being meaningless are two different things). Dr. Javed Iqbal considers the concept of Nation of Indian Muslim League as blend of Islam and the secular concept of nation. In this way he also agrees with K. K. Aziz that concept of nation is not absolute and universal.
2. According to K. K. Aziz when a number of persons and a group of people consider themselves as nation then it is a nation.

3. Both of the views of Mr. Aziz and Mr. Javed Iqbal explain many things but resolve very little. For example, if Punjabi, Pakhtoon, Baloch or Sindhis start considering themselves as nations and not nationalities, what will be the status of a united nation? If people start recognizing each other as a nation on the basis of language, what will be the future of the country as a whole? In the humble opinion of the author of this article there should be a conceptual clarity between nation and nationality. Different nationalities of India have been the same since long but the concept of nation given by Allama Iqbal was on the basis of religion and not on local identities (Iqbal, 2018).

*In Taza Khudaon Mein Bara Sub Se Watan Hai  
Jo Pairhan Iss Ka Hai, Woh Mazhab Ka Kafan Hai*

### ***The Psychological Factors behind the Concept of Nation***

It should be kept in mind that any concept of Nation can definitely give different groups of people different identities. Man cannot live a normal and full filling life without proper identities. Individual identity as a person is not enough. Man, always longs for social and political identity also. These identities give him or her a confidence, security and motivation. Interestingly these identities vary in different situations.

1. Two persons of an area in a city can be the enemies of each other but out of this area they often will be seen quite helpful to each other.
2. Two persons of a city can be in bad terms with each other but they could be seen helpful to each other in some different cities.
3. Two persons of country can be in bad relations with each other but they will often be seen quite helpful to each other in some area out of their own country.

The above mentioned three examples show that if nation or nationality give persons an identity, this identity gives them security. In a challenging or threatening situation, they identify themselves with each other in spite of their internal problems and strife. The same situation was prevalent in British India before partition. Two Nation Theory gave the Indian Muslims an identity, a security and a confidence (Aziz, 1989). The history of Pakistan witnessed this sort of unity in the war of 1965.

In the humble opinion of the writer the concept of nation should not be considered as ultimate, unchanging or absolute. This concept should be flexible and an all-embracing concept of brotherhood should be kept in mind always. Allama Iqbal rejected the narrow Western concept of nation and embraced the concept of Muslim brotherhood (Shafique, 2010). Apparently, the concept of Iqbal seems narrow too but actually it is not. My own interpretation of Iqbal's concept is as follows:

1. Unlike Judaism, Islam does not bound its people in to cast, creed or race.
2. Unlike the Western concept of nation Islam does not confine its believers to some area or territory.
3. Islam does not deny the existence of different tribes having different cultures and customs.
4. Islam does believe in different sort of agreements with non-Muslims (Esposito, 1999).
5. Islam believes in peaceful co-existence (Saeed, 2017).

After the formation of Pakistan and the partition of India in 1947, there have been two rival schools of intellectuals. One was called Left Wing and the second Right Wing intellectuals. According to the Leftist the partition of India and the formation of Pakistan is basically due to the insecurity of Muslims and their severe economic problems (Jalal, 1999, 104). According to the Rightist the formation of Pakistan was due to the Two Nation Theory and the realization of Indian Muslims as a separate identity (Rahaman, 2004). Many Leftists and Rightists were of the opinion that Nation cannot be identified only with religion. In this context the point of views of K. K. Aziz (as historian) and Dr. Javed Iqbal (as an Intellectual) seem moderate and balanced. But the concept of Allama Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (according to my

understanding) seems much more convincing and logical. According to Dr. Javed Iqbal the concept of Allama Iqbal is a blend of secular concept of nation with Islam. This is his own interpretation and we hardly find this sort of any statement in Iqbal's writings. Mr. K. K. Aziz highlighted very intelligently the point that the concept of nation is not static and absolute but changing and relative. The problem with this view or opinion is that it makes the whole concept of nation or nationality as complete arbitrary. Iqbal invites all the Muslims of the world not only that he believes in Islam but because according to him Islam is the only existing religion which does not limit its believers to any cast, creed, language, custom or culture. The universal character of Islam as a conduct of life always attracted him.

Allama Iqbal wrote many letters to Mr. Jinnah in order to clarify the concept of nation and the idea of Pakistan in this respect (Sabir, 2017, 72-86). This is his great service as a Philosopher and as a Visionary. He criticized the very narrow and territorial Western concept of nation on one hand and the Muslim scholars like Molana Azad and Molana Modudi on the other. Iqbal in his lecture 'The Spirit of Muslim Culture' explains that Islam and the Muslim Culture (as a product of it) is not Static and Dogmatic (Iqbal, 2012). For him the spirit of Muslim Culture is dynamic and progressive. In this culture the fundamental principles of Islam will remain permanent but the interpretation of them will be according to the Modern and Progressive standards of the Modern world (Mas'ud, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

Two Nation Theory of Muslim League of British India has always been a debatable and controversial concept. Many Muslims including the famous Muslim scholars like Molana Azad and Molana Modudi did not agree with the concept. Left wing intellectuals did not accept the concept also. The views of K. K. Aziz (in this respect) are quite unique and interesting. Being a historian, he tried to prove his view that the concept of nation has never been a permanent or universal concept. The meanings of nation and nationality have been changing over the years. Dr. Javed Iqbal was of the view that the concept of Two Nation Theory of Allama Iqbal is basically an Islamization of the Western concept or it's a kind of *Ijtihad*. The author of this article tried to highlight the importance of the reconsideration of Two Nation Theory and the concept of Nation as its pivotal concept. The author is of the view that the traditional criticism of Two Nation Theory by Left Wing or Right Wing intellectuals do not do justice to the concept of Iqbal. The author is also of the view that neither K. K. Aziz nor Dr. Javed Iqbal have been successful to clarify the concepts. The view of K. K. Aziz is interesting but his views about nation makes it completely arbitrary. The views of Dr. Javed Iqbal are actually an interpretation of his own about the Two Nation Theory. In the humble opinion of the author Allama Iqbal himself never claimed that this concept is an *Ijtihad* or Islamization of the Western concept. According to Iqbal (keeping in view his lectures) the fundamental teachings of Islam are permanent and absolute but we can interpret them according to the needs of the Modern times (M. Iqbal, 2012). All the Muslims (especially the Muslims of India at that time) can be considered a Nation because Islam as a religion does not limit its followers to any specific culture, language and civilization. The universal character of Islam as a religion attracted Iqbal and the universality of Islam was the primary reason for him to accept it as a concept quite different from the Western concept of Nation. Allama Iqbal himself did not present this concept as a blend of Western concept and Islam and he did not consider it himself as an Islamization of the Western concept of Nation. Keeping in view the overall character of Iqbal's poetry and prose (especially of his lectures) his point of view about Nation is quite consistent with his other major concepts like Khudi, Interpretation of Religious experience and the reconciliation of Modern Science with Religion.

## **Recommendations**

All Pakistanis should rethink and reconsider the Two Nation Theory of Muslim League. According to the Leftist this concept is invalid and the formation of Pakistan is because of the economic and social problems of Muslims in India. According to Rightist Two Nation Theory is the realization of Indian Muslims as a unique group of people or as a separate nation. Many intellectuals (like Javed Iqbal and K. K. Aziz) interpreted the concept of nation from their own point of views. It is the humble submission of

the author of this article to reconsider the concept of Nation by Allama Iqbal without pre-supposing and ideological notion. One should study this concept from the original writings of Allama Iqbal.

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### ORCID iDs

Muhammad Jawwad <sup>1</sup> <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8783-8967>

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