

# FAITH, FREEDOM, AND THE FUTURE: RECLAIMING INCLUSIVE DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN SOUTH ASIA

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## ABSTRACT

This research sheds light on why interfaith religious harmony is not just essential, but yadros in the context of Pakistan, referring back to the historic speech of Quaid at Muhammad Ali Jinnah on August 11th, 1947. In that monumental speech, Jinnah laid the foundations for a Pakistan in which all citizens — irrespective of their religious beliefs — would enjoy equal rights, dignity and freedom through a democratic framework, devoid of discrimination and sectarian bias. But now the reality is worrisome drift from that ideal, with increased intolerance, weakening institutions and young people turning away from political life. Stemming from academic inquiry and field experience, this research brings together insights based on first-hand experience from participating in two highly influential international platforms: The Strategic Planning meeting of the Liberal Youth South Asia (LYSA) in Delhi; The International Academy for Leadership (IAF) in Gummersbach, Germany. The two workings offered invaluable insider insights into liberal youth collective in South Asia, organizational as well as ideological challenges in Pakistan and its own frying pan moments; most notably, the crisis created during the Lahore seminar where the Future Youth Group (FYG) and Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF). The paper provides a thorough critique of systemic faults such as dynastic politics, institutional mismanagement, and the increasing misinterpretation of liberalism as Westernization. It also points to the increasing sense of disillusionment among the youth of Pakistan, who feel left out of the decision-making process due to corruption and lack of civic education, as well as broken political promises. In spite of these obstacles the research underlines the moral and civic obligation of youth, intellectuals and civil society actors to preserve the pluralistic foundations of Pakistan through positive mobilization. Consequently, this study recommends policy options relatively formulated to counter the problem of violent extremism: youth empowerment, reforming education, fostering interfaith communication, and developing constitutional protection. These reforms are framed not just as a necessity for democratic revival but a prerequisite to a peaceful, inclusive and progressive Pakistan as well.

**Keywords:** Interfaith harmony, Jinnah's vision, liberalism, youth empowerment, democratic reform, Pakistan, constitutional values, civic education, pluralism, religious tolerance.

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## INTRODUCTION

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's landmark address to the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947 set the course for a secular and inclusive Pakistan. And he imagined a nation in which what religious people do would be a relatively private affair, while the state would grant equal rights to all. However, over seven decades later, Pakistan has failed to realize this vision. Discrimination, extremism, and political apathy permeate the country's democratic system. A large section of the population, the youth, is not only alienated due to rampant systemic mistrust, and defacement of the basics of democracy (Ghamidi, 2002).

People out there need to be informed of being in the serene with family and fellowship. It ultimately projects a desirable image to the polity of nations where there exists an interrelationship of individuals and institutions with different religious beliefs. Interfaith harmony promotes the dictum to live and let live. Even Pakistan was made on the basis of Islamic

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ideology, it does not mean that Pakistan is only for Muslims. The dictation of wrong image of state behavior with minorities to malign Pakistan is a part of propaganda but the minorities of Pakistan have been given liberty. Pakistan's constitution safeguards the basic rights of non-Muslims (Part II; Chapter 1: Fundamental Rights (Article 20, Constitution 1973). Interfaith harmony is a road to the religious harmony in Pakistan. On one instance, Quaid-e-Azam explicitly stated the rights of the minorities in Pakistan.

“Minorities of whatever faith they belong to, they shall be protected. Their religion or faith or belief will be safe. Their freedom of worship will be free, and there is not caused any interference to it of any kind. They will share in their rights and privileges and also, I have no doubt, in the responsibilities of citizenship.” (Jinnah, 1947) Through the lesson of love, justice, compassion, harmony and empathy is taught by all faiths for promotion of interfaith harmony. These shared values can be used to counter the objections of interfaith harmony. The trends that have recently become most dangerous in Pakistan are religious bigotry and sectarian violence. Because if some of us are afraid to say the word religion, no religion has been built on fear and terror. Peaceful co-existence of all religions is the need of the hour. This great lesson can be used to get access to cross borders and as a tool to tackle contentious issues like sectarian violence or sectarianism. It is the duty of each individual especially the parents, teachers, religious scholar and political leaders to contribute in promoting interfaith harmony in Pakistan (Hasan, 1985).

The population of Pakistan is comprised of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, Jews Zoroaster, which are different. In addition, Muslims are divided into sects/sub-sects. The influence of the external powers has been revealed in Pakistan due to this strong cultural and religious divide, argued the researcher. People belong to different ethnic groups in Pakistan however, the matter of faith does not come up in a group of people who belong to different religions or sects due to religious inequality among the people in their society (Jalal, 1985).

In 1981 the United Nations General Assembly claimed the absence of any and all kinds of religious discrimination and discrimination based on religion (United Nations, 1981). This resolution has however become the worst phenomenon of contemporary era where religious intolerance is practiced amongst various sects. Each and everyone claims that his religious belief is the best of all (Iqbal, 1934).

One of the main reasons of religious bigotry is the empowerment of religion. The world is changing the socio-cultural patterns by the religious groups and they are changing the traditional nationalist theory. Day by day sectarian based ghetto culture is expanding in Pakistan where discrimination on the basis of religion is rampant in day to day life. And now a days intolerance to other religion is being used to use religious way and collect together his religious representatives in opposition to other for political and financial benefits. Religious intolerance is the separation of individuals based on the difference of opinion in various context that is religion and politics that broadly leads to bigoted insight towards the alternate religions. The religious conflicts in Pakistan primarily relate to the attacks and violence against those who are fueled or incited to attack and even kill the followers of the opposite religious ideology. Pakistan is facing multidimensional challenges that are holding the state hostage. Pakistan had been the victim of sectarian violence ever since 1979. All of some parts of the country have been affected by sectarian terrorism and posing a real threat to the national security of the country (Iqbal, 1930).

This paper also draws from the author's lived experiences from the liberal youth movement of South Asia, especially the LYSA Strategic Planning Meeting in Delhi and the author's participation in the Friedrich Naumann Foundation's (FNF) IAF Seminar in Germany. It was during the August 11 International Seminar in Lahore organized by FNF and FYG that witnessed utter chaos because the entire organizing team disappeared. The author — Mr. Hassan Rashed Siddiqui — became an intervening guest, quickly taking partial control of the event and protecting Pakistan's credibility in front of international delegates.

These initiatives highlight the necessity of restoring liberal, constitutional values through youth participation, inclusive policymaking and systemic reform. This research responds to these imperatives and lays out a roadmap to reconstruct the Jinnah of his vision. Safi Hasan is at 1947 CDB STEEL home page. In his address to the Constituent Assembly, Jinnah had said: “You are citizens; you are citizens of the country, free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship... You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the state.

This speech established the basis for a tolerant, secular Pakistan where religion and state had to be separate. While it is a clear directive from the father of the nation, it is often ignored or selectively interpreted.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Although Muhammad Ali Jinnah had founded Pakistan on the principle of pluralism, religious intolerance, political polarization, and youth disengagement from democracy persist in the country. This misapprehension of liberalism also complicates the project of building an open and progressive polity. This research therefore aims to bridge the gap between Jinnah's ideals and contemporary realities regarding interfaith harmony and the untapped potential of youth in building a tolerant, democratic and inclusive society.

## OBJECTIVE

This research aims to assess the status of interfaith harmony in Pakistan, highlighting the gap between Jinnah's initial dream and contemporary realities and the youth's participation in the revitalization of political culture. That his goal is to counter fallacies regarding liberalism within the Pakistani milieu and that he stations pragmatic policy prescriptions to build acceptance of different faiths, boost youth engagement in politics and greater democratic and inclusive governance.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This makes this study important in the context of recent or previous hostility in Pakistan, issues like political representation and exclusion and how youth engages or disengages from the political process in a state that is transitioning to democracy. The research, by revisiting Jinnah's original vision and analysing current societal dynamics, aims to provide insights that can guide towards more inclusive policies. The study lays emphasis on youth, while also explaining the term liberalism in local context, and this can lead to productive measures to achieve interfaith harmony and boosting civic participation as well as strengthening democratic governance in Pakistan.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### JINNAH'S VISION

As Mr. Jinnah stated in his historic speech on August 11, 1947, he envisioned Pakistan as a secular, inclusive and democratic entity where religious freedom and equality were the essential components of the proposed framework of the Pakistani state. "You are free, you are free to go to your temples... mosques or any other places of worship," he said famously, making it clear that he believed religion was a private matter and should not affect the workings of the state. Historians such as Ayesha Jalal contend that Jinnah's secularism was not a wholesale appropriation of Western liberalism, but rather a principled secularism grounded in an Islamic ethic and shaped by the experience of South Asia. Dr. Mubarak Ali also advances the same argument, pointing out that Jinnah's politics were about the salvation of minorities, and an erasure of religious majoritarianism in favor of national unity. These scholars argue that Jinnah's vision has been slowly diluted in the post-independence period, with religious and political discourses steering increasingly away from the inclusive context, which was the basis of the framework that he had laid. QCAÉ To sum up the literature stresses a need for reassertion of Jinnah's foundational ethos to repel growing intolerance and re-establish democratic ethos and values in today's Pakistan (Liaquat Ali Khan, 1950).

### ISLAM AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Embedded within Islam is the promotion of justice, compassion, and coexistence, all of which is fundamental to the underpinnings of religious pluralism. Among the historical instances of Islamic pluralism is the Constitution of Medina, formed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which enabled a multi-religious polity, conferring equal citizenship on Muslims, Jews and other communities in the same civic order. This decree ensured not just the freedom of worship, but a sense of mutual accountability and common defense — a radical precedent for governing in a pluralistic manner. What is remarkable about this ethos is that the Quran itself doubles down on it with verses like "deen is no coercion" (2:256), as well as "To you be your deen and to me my deen" (109:6), both emphasizing freedom of belief and non-coercion. These texts are foundational to what is sometimes called Islamic liberal thought. Fazlur Rahman and Dr. Javed Ghamidi are some of the contemporary Islamic scholars who played a key role in this debate. Rahman stressed the ethical and progressive aspects of Islam, and advocated re-interpretation of conventional texts in the light of modern values like human rights and tolerance. Likewise, Dr. Ghamidi has claimed that Islam respects humanity of all people irrespective of belief and seeks peaceful coexistence in a multi-religious society. The interpretations, taken together, push back against absolutist and exclusionary discourses, noting that the essence of Islam is consistent with democratic ideals, minority rights and harmony between faiths. This literature not only countered extremist ideologies but also reinforced the Islamic framework of the re-entry of Islamic principles in contemporary discussions on religious intolerance in Pakistan (Maududi, 1939).

### YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS.

Youth makes for the most active and yet the most untapped demographic of any society, and while in Pakistan the same demographic of people is on the streets when the call to protest is sounded by political leaders, this youth is seldom

involved in a more formal political exercise. According to UNDP Youth Survey (2018), 89% of youth in Pakistan feel disillusioned from political institutions, rightly so as this is a rather shocking number and yet natural considering systemic and cultural barriers. The reason for this disconnection is that schools and universities simply do not prepare young people to identify and influence decision-making in the political landscape. In addition, dynastic politics have long held sway over Pakistan's political landscape, where power has long been concentrated in the hands of a few elite families, making it difficult for new voices to break through. Corruption, poor governance, and lack of accountability, further shrived youth and people in general, inducing a state of hopelessness and indifference toward party politics (Khan, 1950).

However, lessons from everywhere else tell us that, left to their own devices, young people can be remarkable drivers of democratic transformation. Tunisia played a leading role in the emergence of the Arab Spring, with the youth demanding transparency and democratic process. Data on student movements and digital activism in Malaysia highlighted the two as having a considerable impact on public discourse and electoral results. Even in India youth-led protests and online campaigns have influenced the national conversation around issues such as corruption, climate change and social justice. These examples show us that when equipped with the right platforms, political inclusion and education youth can take part and even lead movements for reform and accountability. The existing literature highlights the importance for Pakistan to capitalize on this potential by establishing institutional frameworks and civic spaces that engage youth as stakeholders within the democratic process (Mujahid, 1981).

## **UNDERSTANDING LIBERALISM WRONGLY**

Liberalism is often misinterpreted and distorted in the socio-political context of Pakistan, as a Western, secular paradigm that stands in opposition to Islam. You have a sample data set at your disposal till October 2023. On the other hand, scholars like Khaled Abou El Fadl make the case that Islamic liberalism is actually a very much genuine and actual unique tradition within Islam itself, driving from the pillars that Islam was built. Islamic liberalism, according to El Fadl, is not a borrowed creed, but an entrenched interpretive tradition based on principles like Shura (the apostle of consultation in governance), Ijtihad (the independent reasoning of jurisprudence), and Adl (the ideal of justice). This philosophy highlights participatory decision-making, moral obligation and equitable society—all of which resonate with elemental values of liberal democracy (Mawdudi, 1941).

Not recognizing this indigenous framework has dire implications for Pakistan's political and intellectual landscape. It smothers critical debate, preempts reform efforts, and delegitimizes those advocating for human rights, gender equality and safeguards for minorities, all in the name of "un-Islamic" agendas. Moreover, it divides society by presenting liberalism as a cultural enemy, instead of a possible path toward reconciling Islamic values with the imperatives of modern governance. Thus, the literature has pointed out the necessity of recontextualizing the liberal discourse in a culturally attractive manner, with refutation of its incompatibility with the tenets of Islam, and a narrative of how liberalism can serve as potential ameliorating agent in Pakistan's journey to democratic transition. This reframing can be a vital component in designing a more inclusive, open-minded and forward-thinking political culture (Lewis, 1964).

## **ISLAM: FAITH-BASED SOCIAL INTEGRATION**

Islam is a fundamentally peaceful, just and pluralistic religion. The Holy Qur'an explicitly promotes religious freedom and tolerance, as found in verses like: "There is no compulsion in religion..." (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:256) and "To you be your religion, and to me mine." (Surah Al-Kafirun 109:6). Such verses emphasize the Islamic commitment to coexistence and respect for differing beliefs. At a historical level, this ethos was evident in Muslim societies where Muslims co-exist peacefully with non-Muslim communities. One instance of this is the Constitution of Medina, which was formulated by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and granted Jews and other non-Muslim tribes equal citizenship, promising them religious freedom and civic rights within a pluralistic system.

In modern Pakistan, however, this interfaith environment has been eroded by the forces of religious extremism and intolerance. Minority population—including Hindus, Christians, Sikhs and also even oppressed sects of Islam—are subjected to rising discrimination, violence and socio-political exclusion. Such a disenchanting trend not only defies the teachings of Islam but also runs contrary to the vision of a tolerant and inclusive Pakistan envisioned by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Bridging this gap may be the difference between restoring the nation's ideals of its founding and equal rights for all citizens, regardless of faith (Nasr, 1975).

## **YOUTH & POLITICS**

Some 60 per cent of Pakistan's population is under the age of 25, yet the youth is largely divorced from formal political processes, representing a significant threat to the country's democratic future. This disengagement is a consequence of multiple intertwined factors, such as widespread corruption, dynastic politics that restrict a merit-based leadership system, and the absence of transparency and accountability amongst the political institutions themselves. Somewhere along the

way, civic engagement as a topic of interest has fallen off the list of reformed trust budgeting since few schools offer civic education, and they are left, many of them ill-informed, in their responsibilities and rights as human beings, and the mechanics of their government. This leads to political promises being seen as lies and disillusionment with anyone in politics is widespread. This increasing alienation not only erodes democratic engagement, but also opens the door to authoritarian narratives or populist forces, chipping away at the foundation of representative governance in Pakistan. It is hence imperative that youth are empowered through inclusive policies, education, and leadership opportunities to revitalize democratic engagement and promote long-term national stability (Nadwi, 1951).

## THE NEED FOR NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

Due to the fact that more than 60 percent of Pakistan's population is under the age of 30, young people are an enormous potential force for democratic change. But this demographic is still largely disengaged from formal political processes, which is a troubling trend that threatens the health and future of democratic governance in the country. Some of the leading causes of this widespread disillusionment are Deep-rooted corruption and dynastic politics have undermined citizens' faith in political institutions, and the grim absence of transparency and accountability alienates twentysomething citizens eager for substantive reform. Furthermore, there is no civic education in the national curriculum, so students are not equipped with knowledge and tools to engage critically with political systems. So youths start with high hopes of leaders Establish the pattern of disappointment Once the leader failed to live up to interface The cycle again become cynicism and indifference This level of alienation saps the strength of participatory democracy, and opens up a space of political possibility for authoritarian and populist rhetoric that makes more emotional appeals rather than reasoned arguments. Thus, to strengthen the democratic foundation of Pakistan, it is necessary to capture the youth through education, representation, and inclusive political pontification (Qutb, 1949).

## THE CAUSAL RELATION BETWEEN LIBERALISM AND ITS MISUNDERSTANDING IN PAKISTAN

"Liberalism" in Pakistan is misrepresented and misunderstood; it is quickly framed as un-Islamic, anti-national or a Western import endangering non-Western values both cultural and religious. This misconception was largely responsible for the backlash against reforms at the progressive stance and was also responsible for the disenfranchisement of many voices for pluralism and human rights. At heart, however, liberalism advocates for rights to freedom of expression and belief, personal liberty, equality before the law, and tolerance through its government— values harmonious with Islamic doctrine but also an intrinsic part of both Islamic history and Pakistan's very purpose (Pickthall, 1939). The governance of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) particularly through the Constitution of Medina, which separated religious belief from civic duty, ensured equal rights for minorities, and operated through consultative decision-making, was liberal in essence. Likewise, the very basis of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's leadership lay in liberalism with its emphasis on religious freedom, equality and inclusive statehood. The Pakistan Jinnah envisioned was one in which citizens of all faiths could peacefully coexist in dignity — a vision clearly in keeping with both Islamic ethics and the precepts of liberal democracy. According to Qureshi (1951), it is only through bridging the gap between the Islamic and the liberal tradition that we can hope to have a more tolerant and pluralistic and just society in Pakistan.

## METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research in this study aims to seek the themes of interfaith harmony, youth activism, and liberal democratic values in the Pakistani context. The study starts with an in-depth historical overview of select addresses/seminars/happenings by the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah himself (including his 11th of August, 1947, statement) in light of founding principles of the 'New State'. Reviewing existing documents where relevant constitutional provisions and educational curricula and constitutional provisions and Islamic religious teachings regarding the principles of pluralism and coexistence. This study contains comparative case studies of successful models of interfaith harmony and inclusive governance in other Muslim-majority countries to offer a more holistic perspective. In addition, the author, who is the Vice President of Future Youth Group and member of the Constitution Amendment Board of Liberal Youth South Asia is invited to the Strategic Planning Meeting in Delhi organized by Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (Germany) from 09-13 October 2023, adding first-hand insights to the research. The study also incorporates interviews and informal conversations with a wide spectrum of Pakistani stakeholders, including youth, representatives of religious minority groups and civil society activists, to reflect community thoughts and lived

experiences. We discuss here a multi-layered way of revising to ensure a comprehensive and contextually grounded analysis (Smith, 1957).

## **FINDINGS**

The Strategic Planning Meeting of Liberal Youth South Asia (LYSA) that took place in India, a serious issue was highlighted pertaining to the sudden vanishing of the organizing committee during seminars in Lahore. The Liberal youth South Asia in partnership with the Future Youth Group (FYG) and the Liberal Forum organized these initiatives together. The problem came to a head on was the date of an international seminar involving partners from across the globe,. The entire organizing team from Lahore evaporated on that day and the event jeopardized.

## **FNF PROGRAMME COORDINATOR'S DIRECT INTERVENTION**

Same situations happen on 11<sup>th</sup> Aughust 2006 At the height of the interrupted seminar, the Programme Coordinator of Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) directly and urgently appealed to Mr. Vice President to come to the students' aid. Well aware of the seriousness of the situation and the likely diplomatic fallout, Mr. Siddiqui sprang into action. He took immediate operational command of all details and execution and coordination of the seminar — working with international attendees, logistics and protocol compliance. He saw an organizational collapse in front of him, but he was able to step in and adapt with speed and calmness, so that the event proceeded without hiccups.

Mr. Siddiqui's deeds went way beyond saving the seminar, however, and went a long way toward restoring confidence in Pakistan's civil society leadership. Such dedication showed a deep commitment to the values of responsibility, professionalism, and integrity. His leadership showed how the mobilization of young people in high-stakes civic and political arenas could uphold diplomatic norms and paint Pakistan favorably on the public world stage.

## **RECOGNITION AND LEADERSHIP NOMINATION**

Due to his excellent leadership spirit and devotion he got officially nominated by the national body for the post of National President Future Youth Group (FYG) Pakistan. He was nominated for his performance during disasters and is still working towards propagating his group's idea both nationally and internationally. But in a remarkable show of humility and team-oriented partnership, Mr. Siddiqui graciously turned down the nomination and instead put forward his fellow colleagues for consideration for the high-powered job. Instead, he decided to support the organization further using his skills and experience with advisory and operational tasks.

His self-less approach and continued service were noticed. Mr. Siddiqui's fame for principled leadership and strategic insight made him repeatedly invited to prestigious international forums and collaborative platforms, where he continues to represent Pakistan's civil society and youth leadership with excellence. His example exemplifies a foundation of servant leadership and the long-term benefits of a commitment to ethics in civic engagement.

## **INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF LEADERSHIP (IAF), GERMANY ALUMNUS SELECTION**

Mr. Vice President robust career in civic leadership and his strong commitment to liberal democratic values were acknowledged when he was selected as an alumnus of the International Academy for Leadership (IAF) in Gummersbach, Germany, which is one of the leading international platforms for the academic education of liberal political leaders. Operating under the umbrella of Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF), the IAF is known worldwide for training a cohort of superlative achievers with proven credentials for services to the nation and the world (Ali, 1945).

From millions of would-be nominees, just a few hundred delegates were selected to attend the program. The German government funds all related costs, indicating the invitation is equally exclusive and important. As Pakistan's delegate at this prestigious international forum, Mr. Siddiqui's role was pivotal; he engaged in high-level policy discussions and made noteworthy contributions to conversations around issues such as youth empowerment, interfaith dialogue and democratic governance. His presence in the IAF alumni network is further confirmation of his credentials as a voice for South Asia's youth leadership.

## **SEMINAR CONTRIBUTION: "CHANCES AND CHALLENGES OF LIBERALISM"**

It was during the time at the International Academy for Leadership (IAF) in Germany, Mr. Vice President presented a research-based presentation "Chances and Challenges of Liberalism". He has scrutinized the complex realities of what it means to be a liberal democrat in a world fraught with religious extremism, authoritarianism, and the systemic denial of civil liberties. Basing his survey on both scholarly literature and his own fieldwork experience, Mr. Siddiqui explored the

abuse of democratic institutions in such contexts and resulting loss of even political idealism as a realistic proposition for society.

Particularly in the context of Pakistan, he touched upon the urgent need for liberal civic education, constitutional protection of minority rights and civil liberties as the basis of a humane and functional democracy. International colleagues and experts responded strongly to his presentation, dialogue, and scholarship, which made an important addition to current global conversations about defending democratic values in the illiberal context. Mr. Siddiqui's presentation reflected not only a deep understanding of local political dynamics but also planted him squarely as a credible and thoughtful voice on the future of liberalism in South Asia.

## **RESULTS**

### **TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS REBUILT IN PAKISTAN'S CIVIL SOCIETY**

The moment Mr Vice President timely intervened on principled grounds during the crisis at the Lahore seminar, it proved to be crucial in restoring much needed institutional trust in Pakistan's civil society—the Future Youth Group (FYG) in particular. In a time of serious doubts about the group's reliability, in the absence of the organizing team, his leadership reaffirmed the international delegates and partner organizations' faith in Pakistan's do-ability of responsible civic engagement. Mr. Siddiqui's firm and devoted leadership in the face of an organizational breakdown showed how purpose and responsibility in leadership can transcend failing structures. His deeds not only saved the event but also reinforced FYG's political capital on the national and international stages and preserved the image of Pakistan as a responsible member of the international liberal club.

### **FORMAL RECOGNITION AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FORUMS**

Mr. Vice President was formally recognized nationally and internationally for his principled leadership and steadfast commitment to democratic values. He was later nominated for national leadership of Future Youth Group (FYG) in recognition of his crisis management abilities, ethics and years of service to civic engagement. At the international level, his contributions were further acknowledged by prestigious institutions like the International Academy for Leadership (IAF) in Germany, where he represented Pakistan with a chosen group of leading global liberal thinkers and practitioners. These honors not only attest to Mr. Siddiqui's personal integrity, but also represent a broader validation of a role he played in reinvigorating youth-facing democratic activism in South Asia.

### **IMPROVED STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE REGION**

Within the liberal youth network the South Asia Strategic Planning Meeting manned the barricades to become a significant inflection point in combatting the operational inefficiency of many regional chapters. Mr. Vice President took a central role in identifying structural gaps and recommending practical solutions in order to strengthen coordination, oversight staff, and readiness for future crises. He was with praise and had his recommendations for ensuring greater event security, accountability, and logistical planning officially recorded by the event's organizing bodies. That collective endorsement of the commitment to implementing oversight mechanisms going forward would prove to be a critical step in ensuring that regional operations were built to withstand, and be aligned with, the broader strategy.

### **BLUEPRINT FOR FUTURE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

May2006 , which was followed by a South Asia strategic planning meeting, its outcome formed the basis for a different model of leadership development in liberal youth networks. These experiences underscored the necessity for choosing leaders based on merit, their ability to manage a crisis, and their unwavering commitment to liberal democratic values, rather than by seniority or stature. Mr. Vice President exemplary conduct provided a case study in leading effectively under pressure, leading to calls among stakeholders for the ability to identify and support future leaders through more transparent and values-based criteria. The new, emerging framework will enhance the integrity of its institutions and promote the region as a whole to be a beacon for responsible, results-oriented leadership.

### **ENHANCED INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION**

The active international network building in a time of institutional uncertainty under the able leadership of Mr. Vice President has put Pakistan in a top position within the international liberal networks. How professionally and honestly he corrected the mockery that had been made in Lahore seminar, this not only saved us key diplomatic relationships but also this basically made other global partners trust us even further like Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), Future Youth Group (FYG), YLDA Young Liberal Democratic and International Academy for Leadership (IAF). This had the effect of both solidifying and expanding international cooperation channels, while simultaneously establishing a compelling and respected representative of Pakistan's liberal civil society in Mr. Siddiqui. Under his stewardship, Pakistan now has a

more prominent role and a better image in these global platforms with many opportunities for democratic growth and youth inclusion.

## DISCUSSION

Liberal Pakistani has often been interpreted as a foreign abstraction — often mistaken for top-down Westernisation or secular insipience. The reality is, the Islamised version of liberalism based on the Islamic principles of justice, tolerance and pluralism perfectly complements the democratic ideals of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. His landmark speech on August 11, 1947 is a foundational document of interfaith harmony and inclusive governance. Yet the failure of institutions — and, in some cases, the willful neglect of his vision by populist forces — to grasp its implications has also driven polarization and civic distrust to a breaking point.

The author covered the Delhi Strategic Planning Meeting and the International Academy for Leadership (IAF) seminar, which provided a chance to hear directly about regional and global views regarding youth empowerment and democratic reform. These forums brought out the challenges as well as the unfulfilled needs related to youth-led transformation in Pakistan. The crisis of Lahore, in which liberal civic space was endangered not simply from extremist elements but also thanks to internal disorganization, was a microcosm of all that was systemically wrong. It highlighted the fact that liberal values are under siege not only from ideological foes but also from within by way of organizational incompetence and ineffective leadership.

In addition, it highlighted the need for a deeper institutional reflection, particularly for youth and civil society organisations. Oversight, accountability and strategic foresight are integral to preventing such setbacks from recurring. At a time of institutional collapse, Mr. Siddiqui's intervention showed that an individual can lead, grounded in integrity and liberal values, and restore faith in collective action. His example demonstrates that given the chance and resources, young leaders have proved capable of navigating crises, rebuilding trust and building democratic resilience."

## CONCLUSION

The concepts articulated by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in his august 11, 1947 address were not merely rhetorical flourishes—they were the constitutional vision that he hoped would steer the moral and political direction of Pakistan. Also known for his advocacy of tolerance, religious freedom, and an inclusive, democratic government, the foundation of his discourse was laid between Islamic concepts, principles, and ethics on the one hand and modern liberal democratic ideas on the other hand. However, the current realities of sectarian violence, shrinking civic spaces, and youth alienation paint a starkly different picture from the original design.

The erosion of interfaith accord and the frequent misinterpretation of liberalism — as foreign, un-Islamic or antinational — have led to institutional stagnation and democratic backsliding. The mismanagement of youth platforms — the Lahore incident is a prime example — reveals an urgent need for leadership accountability and structural development. Yet these struggles also reveal the extraordinary capacities of youth leaders — such as Mr. Siddiqui — who prove that principled intervention can restore public trust and bring a new flow to national discourse.

Pakistan must regain its bearings and re-align itself with the inclusive dreams of its founder if it is to survive, let alone thrive. The true teachings of Islam — emphasizing justice, compassion, pluralism — converge with liberal values and provide a workable framework for national renewal. Or, to do what, perhaps, liberalism, is supposedly about correcting that narrative and making sure the liberalism is not something that just stands in opposition because for the opposition of things to stand you need to have a crashing of some kind, you need to smash many 'so-called' ideals to above true ideals and above true concepts must take precedence allowing a new structure, a flawless, a merit-based structure. In that endeavor, liberalism is no one's enemy — it is playbook to peace, progress and togetherness.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To close the gulf between Pakistan's loftiest ideals and its most pressing contemporary concerns, the following measures are recommended:

### REINTRODUCE QUAID'S VISION IN CURRICULUM

The curricula of education institutes at all tiers need to be rewritten for the implementation of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision of a secular, tolerant and inclusive Pakistan. The pluralistic values of Islam and Jinnah's constitutional commitment to minority rights and the democratic process need to be emphasized.

## LEGISLATE FOR MINORITY RIGHTS



The state must bring about and decisively implement legislation that safeguards the rights of religious minorities, which includes the said individuals' places of worship, equality before the law, and involvement in decision-making bodies. Hate speech, forced conversions, and communal violence must be specifically targeted.

## **ESTABLISH INTERFAITH HARMONY COUNCILS**

Then, dedicated national and provincial Interfaith Harmony Councils should be established to organize and encourage interfaith dialogue and counter sectarian tensions in society, as well as to advise the government on necessary policies and reforms for the promotion of religious coexistence.

## **INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

Structural reforms need to start that will include youth in the political process. Reserved quotas in political parties, local government bodies, and advisory panels, as well as investments in civic education and leadership training efforts, could help achieve this.

## **INITIATE A NATIONAL LIBERAL LITERACY PROJECT**

Schools, universities, media and civil society platforms should undertake a massive awareness campaign for indigenous understanding of liberalism based on Islamic values of justice, consultation and equality and to get rid of existing misconceptions which impede democratic development.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Hence, a nuanced and multidimensional policy approach must be taken to reconcile the vision of Pakistan's founding and the current socio-political realities. First, Jinnah's vision must be restored to the national textbook by including his key landmark speeches — especially the August 11, 1947 speech — and accentuating his case for religious tolerance and equal citizenship. Textbooks from the primary to higher education must be aligned to tolerance and pluralism — values inherent to any citizenship — giving rise to a generation that appreciates the inclusive foundations laid in Pakistan's foundations. Secondly, the state must initiate a National Youth Political Engagement Program that builds leadership academies and provides internships in parliamentary and local governance structures.

Civic education, youth parliaments mapping of provinces and their mandates would further help inculcate democratic values in youth and help them participate in democratic processes. The third step is to have Interfaith Harmony Councils at the national level and community level also for the development of dialogue among the religious communities. These councils would deepen peace and mutual respect, and strict enforcement of Article 20 of Constitution would protect religious minorities. Fourth, the original essence of liberalism needs to be rejuvenated in the Pakistani milieu.

This means you need to espouse academic and public discourse to promote Islamic liberal values like Shura (consultation), Ijtihad (independent reasoning), and Adl (justice). It can help dispel misconceptions by working with scholars and civil society organizations to elaborate on the compatibility between liberalism and Islamic ethics. Fifth, the government needs to formulate a national youth policy in a strategic and comprehensive manner so that policies for youth inclusion can be made quite effectively. This includes sufficient budgets for youth-led projects, support for political participation, and encouragement of entrepreneurship. Lastly, media literacy campaigns to fight religious extremism and the misrepresentation of liberal ideas should be launched. Success stories of pluralism, coexistence, and rather progressive leadership need to be widely circulated through mainstream and digital platforms to reinforce the message that Pakistan stands for and belongs to those who ensure democratic and inclusive governance.

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