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Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (London: Hurst & Company, 2013), viii + 278 pp.

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In today's world of nation states, the distinct pedigrees of independent polities are often organised into two foundational trajectories: States whose traditions of collective belonging are derived from, or adjusted to, the conventional mythology of European nationalism, with its focus on (the presumed bonds of) 'blood and soil', and states, such as settler societies, that somehow diverge from it. In *Muslim Zion*, Devji provides a seething analysis of Pakistan's foundational narratives, guided by a bold claim that this state was founded on a radical, and quintessentially modern, demand for 'the forcible exclusion of blood and soil in the making of a new homeland for India's diverse and scattered Muslims' (p. 9). For Devji, this demand emerged primarily from 'the fantasy of creating a state by purely rational means, one that was founded upon its idea alone' (p. 39). And just what was this foundational idea? That by working in the laboratory of Pakistan, to borrow Liaquat Ali Khan's famous phrase (p. 249), a state primarily based on religious belonging, a 'Muslim homeland' *par excellence*, could be established.

This idea, argues Devji, makes Pakistan 'Muslim Zion' and thus, in several important respects, Israel's 'Muslim twin' (p. 20). Provocative as this may seem, Devji's definition of Zion as a 'political form in which nationality is defined by the rejection of an old land for a new' (p. 3) is sophisticated enough to make political parallels between Zionism and Muslim nationalism on the Indian subcontinent focused on such common themes as the principle of territoriality (p. 24), or discourses around the ever-problematic concept of national minority, rather than on daily politics or the 'motives' and 'intentions' of groups and individuals, a kind of historiography that Devji squarely rejects (pp. 9 and 246). The result is a book of refreshing political theory and political history combined that gives the by-now-tiresome academic debate on Pakistan's foundations an intriguing new angle.

Crucial for Devji's understanding of Pakistan as Zion is his description of Muslim religion, as rendered in the works and speeches of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Mohammad Iqbal. 'For the famously "secular" and irreligious Jinnah', writes Devji, 'as well as for his more observant associates in the Muslim League, religion was an abstract and even empty idea because they had no intention of defining Islamic practice for Pakistani citizens' (p. 47). Instead, 'religion was deployed to name only the most general, disparate and shifting qualities', and 'this is what made it so radical as a founding idea for the nation' (p. 47). Such Islam was sought to provide a social glue—indeed, an informal social contract—necessary to bring together 'widely different regional, sectarian and linguistic groups whose more formal aspect was the negotiated settlement that produced Pakistan' (p. 47). On the one hand, as Devji demonstrates in depth (pp. 49–88), such an empty signifier was required to forcefully reject 'the logic of numbers' (p. 70) that rendered Muslims in the British Raj a 'national minority'.

On the other hand, both Jinnah and Iqbal sought to do away with dominant forms of Muslim political history. Fearful of both literal and symbolic violence that narratives of Muslim imperialism could conjure up on the subcontinent, Jinnah, in Devji's opinion, rejected the focus on history *as such*, save for the purposes of most basic statecraft: 'The only history that mattered for Jinnah was the contractual or rather constitutional past ... in British India' (p. 100). This move, however, proved imprudent, not least because of the colossal-scale brutality unleashed by partition (p. 98) and British colonial legality, firmly locked in the emerging state's judicial and administrative machinery (p. 90). As for Iqbal, Muslim political history was to be rejected so that 'its republican or pre-imperial phase' (p. 111) could be rediscovered, one that could serve as a spiritual, philosophical and constitutional model for a future society. Importantly 'Iqbal also dismissed geography as a basis for political life, favouring instead a foundation made up of ideas alone' (p. 112).

Devji's analysis is at its best when it ponders into the meeting places of the Enlightenment and Islamic mysticism in Iqbal's poetry and prose as well as in Jinnah's speeches to account for the demand for what one could term *entheogenesis* (p. 149), or the Divine within the human (that, *mutatis mutandis*,

may also be devilish in its daring), as an inspirational foundation for Muslim self-confidence. This is, indeed, a type of syncretic conviction between *yaqin* ('certitude') and *iman* ('faith', p. 135). This conviction, which eventually gave birth to the idea of Pakistan, is for Devji a prime example of Enlightenment politics (p. 123) leading to a full-fledged Enlightenment state (p. 48).

And yet, such an ideal, attuned as it may have been to the exigencies of the complex and idiosyncratic citizenry it was intended to serve, could not but succumb to the perils of political life in a nation state. Far from resolving the perturbing problem of 'minorities'—religious, linguistic, ethnic or otherwise—the logic of Muslim nationalism in Pakistan gradually turned *outwards*, making the observance of Islam 'such a raw, passionate affair, with its great dramas of blasphemy and desecration demonstrating the urge to externalize religion completely as a kind of citizenship without politics' (p. 247). This is why, for Devji, Pakistan has become 'the sepulchre of Muslim nationalism' (p. 248), a state that, 'instead of protecting Islam as an abstract idea, ... has only nationalized it' (p. 250). Implicit in this critique is Devji's discontent with Jinnah and Iqbal's rejection of history and, to an extent, geography, which seems to have made 'of Muslim identification itself a nation in suspense' (p. 243) and inadvertently paved the way to the forms of political and religious belonging akin to that propounded by Abul Ala Maududi (pp. 230–40).

With its keen attention to 'more cynical forms of national belonging' (p. 25), or indeed, political practices of belonging in the interstices of nationalism, *Muslim Zion* provides a theoretical and historical background for a profound reconsideration of 'nation-building' in the long twentieth century, especially on the Indian subcontinent. South Asianists of various sub-regional foci will find the book's numerous 'sideway glances' particularly instructive, such as the substantial exploration of Muslim–Dalit relations and politics in British India (pp. 163–200). Overall, the book represents an important contribution to the study of Pakistan's past, present and, to the extent to which one can imagine a world free from the yoke of nation states, its future.

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