

QUAID-I-AZAM MUHAMMAD ALI JINNAH'S SELF- SELECTION AS THE FIRST GOVERNOR GENERAL OF PAKISTAN: SOME HISTORICAL FACTS REVISITED

This paper deals with the controversy on the issue whether to appoint one Governor-General or to have two separate Governors-General for India and Pakistan after their achieving independence. The British, as well as the Congress were hand in hand, therefore, they supported the proposal to have one governor-general for both countries. The Muslim League, however, decided to have a separate governor-general for Pakistan. But the British authorities did not appreciate and respect this decision by Quaid-i-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The reasons behind the League's decision were not fully understood by the British. As a result some anti-Jinnah feelings among some important British officials were created or intensified. The British decision to allow Mountbatten to remain in the sub-continent as the Governor-General of only one Dominion and later some of Mountbatten's decisions as the Governor-General of India, created misunderstandings in Pakistan.

Lord Mountbatten and Pundit Nehru had secret dealings against the Muslim League interest in Simla. It had been decided that power would be transferred to Indian hands earlier than June 1948; being an administrator himself, the Viceroy could had easily imagined some of the problems involved in implementing the decision. There were many important issues yet to be worked out. For instance, the division of Armed forces and assets between the two Dominions had not yet been considered. In order to resolve such problems the proposal for a common

governor-general for both Dominions, at least for some further period, came up. On Mountbatten's initiative, V.P. Menon, the Constitutional Adviser of the Viceroy, prepared the draft 'Heads of Agreement'.¹ It was proposed that 'the Governor-General should be common to both states (and) the present Governor-General (i.e. Mountbatten) be reappointed.'² Nehru gave full approval to this proposal on behalf of his party – the Congress.³ When the question whether Pakistan would prefer to have its own governor-general, or share a common governor-general with India, was first raised before Jinnah, he said, 'it would be better to have two governors-general'.⁴ But at the same time he asked for some more time to think the proposal over before committing himself. Mountbatten's appointment as Governor General of Pakistan was a very big decision which needed time and serious thinking to take a decision. Therefore this request seemed to be appropriate. Similarly, the decision to advance the date for the transfer of power from June 1948 to August 1947 had not then been announced. Mountbatten had told Jinnah, on the very day when he asked for the latter's view about the issue, that he intended to recommend to the British Government that the transfer of power should take place as soon as possible, preferably by 1 October 1947.⁵

The Viceroy left for London on May 18 for consultation on his revised plan for transfer of power in India. During his visit to London, the Viceroy conveyed the impression that both India and Pakistan would accept him as their Governor-General, at least for the initial stages of the partition of India.⁶ On his return to India, Mountbatten found that Jinnah was still undecided on the issue of common governor general for India and Pakistan. On June 3 he told Indian leaders for the first time that power would be transferred on 15 August 1947 instead of 1 June 1948.⁷ Considering that the time available to complete the process of partition was very short, Mountbatten thought it essential that both India and Pakistan should have the same man as their Governor-General. This argument was promptly conveyed to the Muslim leaders. Mountbatten was also using other important personalities for putting pressures on Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah for the acceptance of his appointment as Governor General of

Pakistan. His second in command, Lord Ismay in a meeting with Liaquat Ali Khan emphasized: 'How impossible it would be to get any sort of continuity or any sort of orderly partition if each Dominion had a separate governor-general'.⁸ When Jinnah came to see Mountbatten, the Viceroy also stressed the advantages to be gained from a common governor-general. Jinnah promised to give an early answer.⁹

Mountbatten's cheap tactics must have embarrassed the leader of the Muslim League. Instead of giving him a blunt answer promptly, Jinnah kept on waiting on for a few days hoping that the Viceroy would understand that his name as governor-general of Pakistan was not acceptable to him. Jinnah's decision came on July 2. He informed Mountbatten that he was not willing to share a common governor-general with *Hindustan*, and that he himself would like to be the Governor-General of Pakistan from the date of the transfer of power.¹⁰ Explaining the reasons for his decision, Jinnah wrote to the Viceroy that in view of the shortage of senior and experienced Muslim Civil and Military officers, he had decided to appoint some British officers as governors for all the Pakistani provinces, except Sind, and as the three Chiefs of the Pakistani Armed Forces. In Jinnah's view the only way to make this arrangement acceptable to the people of Pakistan was for himself to assume the office of Governor-General.¹¹ This seemed to be a sound reason, for if besides the governors and the Chiefs of Armed Staff, the head of the state of Pakistan was also an Englishman, it would have been difficult for the common man to believe that British rule had ended.' Choudhary Muhammad Ali, who was close to Jinnah when the arrangements for the transfer of power were being made, argues that a common governor-general for both states seemed to be a "constitutional absurdity"¹² to Jinnah. Being a constitutional head of State, the Governor-General was bound to act on the advice of his Cabinet, or rather cabinets. In the explosive situation of 1947, when the interests of India and Pakistan were opposed to each other, conflicting advice by cabinets was bound to be given to the Governor-General. Choudhary Muhammad Ali says, 'Jinnah, who by temperament and lifelong training had a constitutional bent of mind, could not see how a common

governor-general, faced with conflicting advice from two Dominion cabinets, could discharge his responsibilities'.¹³ The political implications of having a common governor-general for India and Pakistan affected Jinnah's decision against it. A common head of state for both countries would have strengthened Congress' propaganda that Pakistan was nothing but a temporary secession of certain areas as claimed by certain Hindu leaders also. It would also have created the impression that the Indian sub-continent still somehow retained its 'oneness'.¹⁴ Such an impression would have been suicidal for the state of Pakistan. It seems inconceivable that Jinnah would not have given some thought to these aspects of the question. It must have seemed to him that in order to establish the identity of Pakistan it was necessary to have a separate governor-general for his country.¹⁵ Here it may be appropriate to mention that Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah had an argument against Lord Wavell's concept of Indian unity. The Muslim League leaders vehemently opposed Lord Wavell's campaign to keep India united and went to the extent of saying that: Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah did not need lectures on history by the British Viceroy.¹⁶

But the motives behind Jinnah's decision were apparently not appreciated by important British officials, such as the British Prime Minister and the Viceroy. Attlee considered Jinnah's self-nomination as Governor-General of Pakistan as 'a piece of egotism'. Mountbatten thought that the decision was taken to 'satisfy his vanity' by becoming 'first head of the state' and for 'the sake of becoming His Excellency'.¹⁷ It may be noted that, Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah had offered very high positions by the British and even by the Congress party but he had not accepted any position so far. An eyewitness to the events in India, Professor Morris Jones, who was one of the Constitutional Advisers to the Viceroy, recalls that Mountbatten's only 'recorded moment of fury' during his Viceroyalty came 'when Jinnah told him that the Governor-General of Pakistan would be Jinnah not Mountbatten'.¹⁸ Sir Firoz Khan Noon expressed the view that Mountbatten 'behaved like an angry *Hindu* ... after the Muslims turned him down as the joint Governor-General'.¹⁹ This view may or may not be accepted but there is no question that

Jinnah's decision had very deeply upset the Viceroy. During an angry conversation,²⁰ Mountbatten warned Jinnah saying that without him as Governor-General, Pakistan would put itself at the greatest risk and disadvantage. When Jinnah did not change his position, the Viceroy asked him, 'Do you realize what this will cost you?' Jinnah answered; sadly, "it may cost me several crores of rupees in assets"; to which Mountbatten angrily replied: "It may well cost you the whole of your assets and the future of Pakistan," and left the room.²¹

There are some Pakistanis writers, who have criticized Jinnah's decision to become the Governor-General of Pakistan. They argue that if Jinnah had not offended Mountbatten, some of the major difficulties, such as Kashmir, which confronted Pakistan later, might have been avoided. In their view, due to Jinnah's decision against the proposal of having a common governor-general, Mountbatten handled questions such as the Radcliffe Award, the division of assets between India and Pakistan and Kashmir problem, in a manner inimical to the interests of Pakistan.²² Sardar Shoukat Hayat Khan is one of those writers who have dealt with this subject in details.²³

In early June, the Viceroy had told his staff that he would not stay as Governor-General of only one of the two Dominions.²⁴ But he seemed to have second thoughts about the decision. During a discussion on the question whether Mountbatten should remain as the Governor-General of India alone, it was suggested that from the point of view of British prestige it was a tremendous thing that the Congress, at the moment of victory in its struggle against the British, should go out of its way to invite a British Viceroy to stay on as their governor general. It was further thought that Mountbatten's stay in India would give British relations with the new India, a good start.²⁵ On July 5 Mountbatten decided to send Lord Ismay to London to convey to His Majesty's Government (HMG) that subject to their approval he was willing to accept the Governor-Generalship of India alone. He mentioned in a letter to Prime Minister, Attlee that if he refused to stay in India now, the *Hindu* leaders would say that 'Jinnah had secured his last triumph over

the Congress and through me'. The Viceroy, who clearly favoured staying on in India, further suggested that 'it would embarrass HMG with the government of the future dominion of India if they refused to allow an Englishman to accept the position of first Governor-General of India.²⁶ This was a case that was structured by the Viceroy in order to get the highest positions in India and Pakistan at the same time.

Now the situation was that the work on the partition was only partly done, there was a general agreement among the ministers in London that Mountbatten should stay in India for some time to complete the work he had started already.²⁷ Taking also into account the fact that Mountbatten had great influence over the Congress, and was in a position to see that India would decide to remain in the Commonwealth, the Cabinet advised Mountbatten to accept the Congress's offer.²⁸ Clause five of the Indian Independent Bill, which allowed the same person to be the Governor-General of both Dominions, was amended to suit Mountbatten's interests. During the second reading debate on the Indian Independence Bill, on 10 July 1947, Attlee announced that Mountbatten had been recommended as the first Governor-General of India and Jinnah for Pakistan.²⁹

Lord Ismay argues that the decision to assume the appointment of Governor-General of Pakistan himself 'lost Mr. Jinnah a lot of ground in England among all shades of political opinion'. Ismay says that 'that British grievance was not so much the substance of Jinnah's decision, but the fact that he had waited until the eleventh hour to announce it'. Ismay thought that if, early in June, Jinnah had said 'frankly' that he proposed to be the Governor-General himself, a great deal of misunderstanding and trouble would have been saved. Denying the charge, Jinnah reminded Ismay at a meeting on the matter, that he had from the start dissented from the idea of a joint governor-generalship and had never given the Viceroy the slightest ground for believing that he would agree to a common governor-general. Jinnah said that he had always been sure that it would not have worked.³⁰ Now at this point in time, Lord Mountbatten should have taken 'NO' to be an answer by Jinnah.

The events that followed the partition of India soon raised the question whether a mistake had not been committed by the British Government in allowing Mountbatten to stay in the sub-continent as the Governor-General of one Dominion alone. The situation arose mainly because Mountbatten also held the position of the Chairman of the Joint Defence Council, which was responsible for seeing that the process of partition should be completed on a fair basis. Having accepted the Governor-Generalship of India, Mountbatten could not have been expected to act impartially on partition matters; nor was it reasonable to think that the Government of India would allow him to be impartial in respect of their interests. It was 'only natural that Government of India should regard itself as having proprietary rights over their Governor-General'. Mountbatten himself accepted this position. By allowing Mountbatten to continue as Governor-General of one Dominion alone, the British Government, in fact placed him in a singularly difficult position.

Being the Governor-General of India, he was bound to come into conflict on partition matters, as well as other important matters, with Pakistan. It was nearly impossible for him, constitutionally, legally and mentally, to remain impartial on such questions just because he was a British citizen: If impartiality on the partition matters was regarded as important by the British Government then surely Mountbatten's impartiality as the representative of the Crown should have been equally important. Not unexpectedly some of Mountbatten's decisions, such as to send Indian troops to the state of Kashmir in October 1947 and the takeover of Junagadh state by the Indian military, were seen in Pakistan as an evidence of Mountbatten's partiality in favour of India. Some accused the British Government of favouring India in Indo-Pakistan conflicts. Part of this bitter feeling against Britain in Pakistan might have been avoided if a Briton had not been appointed the Governor-General of India. It is hard to credit that the British Government were not aware of this possible reaction in Pakistan to their decision to allow Mountbatten to stay on. It is no secret that the British were most anxious to keep their relations with India on good terms. Ismay had recorded that the decision to allow Mountbatten to

have top position was reached mainly because it was thought that the Congress would be offended if Mountbatten rejected the honour they had offered him, and the 'marked improvement in their relations with the British might receive a sever set back'. The credit for the improvement in relations between the Congress and the British was undoubtedly due to Mountbatten. It was expected in Britain that Mountbatten's presence in India would give British relations with the new India a very good start; it was also hoped that as Governor-General of *Hindustan*, Mountbatten would be able to influence India to remain in the British Commonwealth. These two factors were most significant from the British point of view. It seems likely that the British Government ignored the possible negative effects of Mountbatten's presence in India; and took the risk of possible accusations of partiality on their representative from Pakistan.

Notes and References

- 1 Heads of Agreement, May 1947, (Transfer of power, henceforth *T.P.*) X, Annex to Document 454
- 2 According to V.P. Menon, the Congress accepted the proposal without hesitation because they felt that Mountbatten could help as Governor-General with the problem of States. Cited in R.J. Moore, *Escape From Empire*, p.319.
- 3 Jinnah suggested that there should be a representative of the Crown to be responsible for the division of assets between India and Pakistan. Jinnah wished Mountbatten to fill that post. (Meeting between Jinnah and Mountbatten, 17 May 1947, *T.P.*, X,473). Mountbatten did not like the idea.
- 4 Meeting (henceforth *Mtg.*) between Mountbatten and Jinnah, 17 May 1947, *T.P.*, X, 473.
- 5 Attlee, in a telegram to the PMs of the Commonwealth countries, informed them that 'the Governor-General for each state would be appointed on advice of provisional executive though at outset these posts might be held by Lord Mountbatten', (Tel., 23 May 1947, *T.P.*, X, 527), Mountbatten had also told the Opposition leaders in Britain that both states wanted him as Governor-General (Tel., Mountbatten to Attlee, 4 July 1947, *T.P.*,XI, 508). Churchill, when told of the proposal, even suggested that if Mountbatten was appointed Governor-General of both India and Pakistan, he might adopt the title 'Moderator'. (*Mtg.* between Churchill and Mountbatten, 22 May 1947, *T.P.*, X, 513.)
- 6 Viceroy's Conference Papers, VCP 63, 2 June 1947, *T.P.*, XI, Annex to No. 28.
- 7 Letter (henceforth *Ltr.*), Ismay to Mountbatten, 20 June 1947, *T.P.*, XI, 275.

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- 8 Mtg. between Mountbatten and Jinnah, 23 June 1947, T.P., XI, 331.
- 9 Tel., Mountbatten to Attlee, 3 July 1947, T.P, XI, 483.
- 10 Viceroy's Personal Reports, (henceforth V.P.R.), para 23, 4 July 1947, T.P.. XI, 506.
- 11 Waheed-uz-Zamman, 'Quaid-i-Azam — Mountbatten Clash: the question of joint Governor-Generalship for India and Pakistan. *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. XXIV, July-October 1976, pt. III & IV, p.206. Even the decision to appoint British Governors was strongly criticized. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the leader of the Red Shirt Movement, asked the government: 'Were there no Muslims in Bengal or the Punjab who could become our Governors?'(Ibid.,p.208.)
- 12 Choudhary Mohd Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan*, p.174.]
- 13 It is not a mere speculation because while suggesting a common governor-general for India or Pakistan, V.P. Menon had clearly stated that 'having realized the usefulness of a common governor-general, the Governments of India and Pakistan might conclude that... a unified constitution would be better for all1. (Note by Menon, undated, T.P., X, Appendix to 222.) Mountbatten himself had pointed out in a meeting that Jinnah might object to the proposal of a common governor-general on the ground that on Mountbatten's departure from India, the Congress would attempt to secure one of their own nominees for the post1. (Minutes I.B (47) 26 mtg., 20 May 1947, T.P., X,494.)
- 14 For more details on the subject, Khalid bin Sayeed, *Pakistan: the Formative Phase*, p.224.
- 15 Ltr. Mountbatten to Cripps, 9 July 1947, T.P., XII, 35.

- 16 S. Qalb-i-Abid & Massarrat Abid, *Quaid-i-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Grand Strategy, Pakistan: Paper to Reality*, Research Society of Pakistan, 2011, pp.
- 17 Morris-Jones, 'Transfer of Power 1947', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 16, (1982), p.29.
- 18 Feroz Khan Noon, *From Memory*, p.218. Ian Stephens believed that Jinnah's refusal to have Mountbatten as the common Governor-General for India and Pakistan had not only caused Mountbatten politically worry, but had also badly hurt him. (Ian Stephens, being an editor of newspaper, had several chances to meet the Viceroy). Ian Stephens, *Pakistan*, (London, 1963), p.376.
- 19 Lord Mountbatten described the conversation as 'bombshell. V.P.R., No. II, 4 July 1947, T.P., XI, 506.Ibid
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 For above views, see Shorish Kashmiri, *Bu-i-Gul, Nala-i-dil, Dud'i-Chiragh-i-Mahfil*, (Lahore, 1972, 1972), pp.529-30 quoted by Waheed-uz-Zamman, *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society (JPHS)*, XXIV, July-October 1976, p. 199, see also Khaliq-uz-Zaman,, *Pathway to Pakistan*, (Lahore, 1961), p.391.
- 22 Minutes of Viceroy's Staff mtg. 9 June 1947, T.P., XI, 108.
- 23 Shoukat Hayat Khan, *The Nation that lost its Soul*, Jang Publishers,.....
- 24 Note by Alan Campbell-Johnson, undated, T.P., XI,471, (also see his *Mission with Mountbatten*, pp. 128-30, see also note by Erskine Crum, 3 July 1947, T.P., XI, 470.
- 25 Mountbatten to Attlee, 5 July, Prime Minister's Files, PREM 8/549, (Public Record Office, London) PRO.
- 26 Minutes of Cabinet I.B. (47) 41 mtg., 7 July 1947, T.P, XI, 564. Lord Listowel attached great importance to this

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- factor, he believed that Mountbatten with his unique influence over the Congress, was in a position to see that India would decide to remain in the Commonwealth and hold negotiations with them on future defence arrangements. (Ibid).
- 27 Minutes of Cabinet I.B.(47) 41 mtg., Ibid. When asked, many years later what were the main reasons for him coming to the conclusion that Mountbatten should stay in India, Attlee replied,'... I thought it would do more than anything to keep India in the Commonwealth. If he had refused the job ... it would have looked like a victory for that twister Jinnah. See for details (Kenneth Harris, *Attlee*, p.384.)
- 28 Hansard, (House of Common Debates) Vol. 439, Cols. 2448-50. The announcement came as a surprise in Britain where it had been expected that Lord Mountbatten would be appointed the interim Governor-General of both Dominions. (*The Times*, 12 July 1947.)
- 29 Mtg. between Ismay and Jinnah, 24 July 1947, T.P., XII, 222.
- 30 Ismay to Mountbatten, undated, Ismay Papers, III, 7/67/43. (Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London.) The latter was most probably written in the second week of September 1947. See Ismay's letter to Darry, 16 September 1947, (quoted in Wingate, *Lord Ismay: a Biography*, (London, 1970), p. 167) in which he informed her of this meeting.