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# Ethnic nationalism and the state in Pakistan

Adeel Khan

*University of Wollongong*

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# **Ethnic Nationalism and the State in Pakistan**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of  
the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**from**

**University of Wollongong**

**by**

**Adeel Khan**

**Sociology Program, Faculty of Arts**

**February 2001**

## **Declaration**

I, Adeel Khan, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Sociology Program of Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Adeel Khan

26 February 2001

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My supervisor, Stephen Castles, has been an unrelenting source of encouragement and inspiration. He not only encouraged me to think as deeply and as critically as possible but also, at times, forced me to explore different aspects of the argument whenever he felt I could do better. I have particularly benefited from Stephen's knowledge of European history. What impressed me the most about Stephen, however, is that he is one of those people who are so comfortable with themselves that they hardly care what others think of them, and therefore they are unassuming and full of humility. I wish I could learn that from him, too.

My wife, Rafat, deserves more than a few words of gratitude for she is the one who had to put up with my anxiety, self-doubt, writer's block, mood swings, and all the other 'hazards' that come with a person who agrees with Adorno that "(o)nly those thoughts are true which fail to understand themselves." I stand obliged to her for bearing with me.

As is customary, and in legal terms, too, I must admit that only I am responsible for the mistakes and weaknesses in my work, but as I have made it obvious that I would not have been able to produce this work without the help of all those mentioned above, and therefore, morally at least, they cannot escape the responsibility. The only consolation I can offer to them is that I apologise for the mistakes and weaknesses and promise to try harder, next time, to fail better.

## Abstract

Nationalism is a way of dealing with a world where 'everything melts into thin air'. It is a form of self-love in which individuals celebrate their collective identity. And like all forms of self-love it gets its strength more from the hatred of others than its love for the self. Here lies the secret behind some of the most intractable conflicts in the world.

Nationalism is, probably, the only form of self-love that gets its life-blood from an institution, the modern state. Had the state not been behind the self-love of the Germans, they would not have been able to torture and murder so many Jews in such a short period of time. Likewise, had the west not helped the Jews to establish their own state in Palestine, the Jews would never have been able to displace and kill so many Palestinians.

Nationalism is not the 'pathology' of the modern world, but is, as a sentiment and as a doctrine, only a pathetic way to deal with a pathetic world. But nationalism as a game of power, as a politics, is lethal and destructive. As a sentiment and as a doctrine nationalism may be the child of an unstable and fast changing world but as a politics it is the child of the nation state.

This thesis explores the relationship between the nation-state and the nationalisms of four ethnic groups, namely, Pukhtun, Sindhi, Baloch and Mohajir, who have, at various points in time, contested the legitimacy of the administrative structure of the Pakistani state. It starts with identifying the issue of ethnic conflicts, goes on to review the available literature and then outlines a framework for studying ethnic

nationalism. As the emphasis here is on the role of the modern state in provoking ethnic discontent and resistance the second chapter discusses the interventionist role of the state and tries to highlight its relationship with nationalism. The second section of the chapter looks at various approaches to nationalism and explains as to which approach is more suitable and why for dealing with ethnic nationalism.

The third chapter endeavours to explicate the difference between pre-colonial and colonial state in India as well as the way the colonial state despite being modern was different from the modern state system in the west. The fourth chapter discusses the state system in Pakistan and argues that the postcolonial state is a replica of the colonial state. The next four chapters examine the emergence of four ethnic movements and their varying strategies for dealing with the centralising and homogenising policies of the state. Throughout, the focus remains on the ethnic groups' distance from and proximity to the state system as the major factor in determining their relationships.

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# The whole is the false

Adorno<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Inversion of Hegel's famous dictum, the whole is the true (1978:50)

Please see print copy for image

*Source: 1998 Census (Statistical Pocket Book  
of Pakistan, 2000)*

**PAKISTAN**