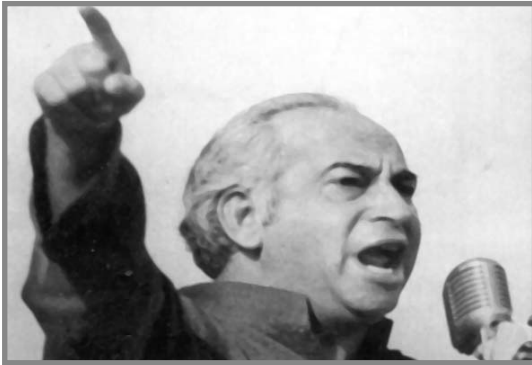


What is the most iconic speech given in Pakistan and why?

The history of Pakistan is replete with the rousing words of national leaders, indignant politicians, fiery clerics and the occasional sportsman; their speeches are now symbolic snapshots, capturing the spirit of a certain age and time. From Jinnah's August 11, 1947 speech – the anthem of liberals nationwide – to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's performance at the United Nations Security Council in 1971; from that first public broadcast announcing martial law in 1958 to the now ubiquitous refrain of "democracy is the best revenge". What, so far in Pakistan's history, has been the most iconic speech ever made?



Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, December 1971

By December 12, 1971, Dhaka was surrounded by the Indian forces and the war was lost. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, appointed by General Yahya as the deputy prime minister and foreign minister, was in New York hoping for the United States to send in its Seventh Fleet to the Bay of Bengal. That day, the Soviets backed India and vetoed the third UN Security Council Resolution calling for a ceasefire.

Yet, on December 15, 1971, Bhutto gave a theatrical speech at the Security Council which he concluded by ripping his papers and storming out of the session vowing to keep fighting. Bhutto's speech was defiant and was meant for audiences in Pakistan. He blamed the fall of Dhaka on global conspiracies. He vowed that a new Pakistan will be built. He referred to the slaughter of civilians in East Pakistan as "mistakes" which could be rectified in a "civilised manner".

The speech's belligerent tone, its chest-thudding theatricality, and its sheer disregard for truth and consequence, makes it a pivotal speech in the history of post-colonial Pakistan. It was this speech that convinced generations of Pakistanis that their army and their politicians were not responsible for the crime of breaking up the country and decimating their own population.

Manan Ahmed Asif
Assistant professor of History at Columbia University



Liaquat Ali Khan, March 1949

One of the most iconic speeches in the history of Pakistan is the speech by the first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, to the Constituent Assembly on March 7, 1949, introducing the Objectives Resolution. Where Jinnah's August 11, 1947 speech was his blueprint for Pakistan, Khan's subsequent speech became the actual basis of Pakistan as the preamble of the constitution.

In fact, Khan himself noted the importance of the speech saying that "...I consider this to be a most important occasion in the life of this country, next only to the achievement of independence..." It was in this speech that Islam was given a central role in the state. Khan emphasised that "Pakistan was founded because the Muslims of this sub-continent wanted to build up their lives in accordance with the teachings and traditions of Islam..." and, therefore, the state could not be a secular republic but a religious, yet not theocratic, one where Muslims shall be "enabled" to live their lives as "set out in the Holy Quran and Sunnah."

While no Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly questioned the Resolution, the Hindu members of the assembly were at a loss to understand who would interpret the principles of Islam. We are still figuring that out.

Yaqoob Bangash
Chairperson of the History department at Forman Christian College, Lahore

Chandra Chattopadhyaya, March 1949

After Muhammad Ali Jinnah's speech of Aug 11, 1947, to the Constituent Assembly, perhaps the most eloquent argument for keeping religion out of politics came from Chandra Chattopadhyaya, a member of the Pakistan National Congress from West Bengal.

The Assembly adopted the Objectives Resolution just months after Jinnah's death (I doubt he'd have agreed to it), and on March 12, 1949, in a passionate and prescient speech, Chattopadhyaya clearly outlined the perils of allowing religion a place, and that, too, a defining one, in matters of the state.

"All powers, in my opinion, rest with the people and they exercise their power through the agency of the State. State is merely their spokesman. The Resolution makes the State the sole authority received from God Almighty through the instrumentality of people ... The State will exercise authority within the limits prescribed by Him (God). What are those limits, who will interpret them?" he asked.

In a country inhabited by people of different religions, "there is no place for religion in the State. Its position must be neutral: no bias for any religion," he argued. "I say, give up this division of the people into Muslims and non-Muslims and let us call ourselves one nation. Let us call ourselves one people, people of Pakistan."

Had the Constituent Assembly heeded his words, Pakistan may have been a very different place today.

Beena Sarwar
Journalist, artist and film-maker

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, August 1948

The nature and shape of the nation state and the inter-nation state system was unclear to most – if not all – indigenous parties on the political stage of British India right up to the moment of decolonization and beyond. This was, one, because, as Jinnah astutely pointed out in his presidential address to the March 23, 1940 session of the All-India Muslim League in Lahore, there was no historical experience of such a state form in our region. And, second, because the whole question before Indians was precisely what form would the decolonised nation state be. In the event, the debate was largely irrelevant, as the form dictated the content with little room for genuinely indigenous shaping of the form of our collective lives together in this region.

In this context, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's famous August 15, 1948, speech on the subject of the meaning of Partition and migration for the Muslims of India is, for me, most iconic for its extraordinary synoptic and predictive power over its historical moment.



It is exceedingly difficult for us to fathom, today, the sheer experience of massive contingency that was the denouement of decolonisation. Recent historiography has made clear that, in their wrangle over one or two nation states, the overwhelming majority of the constituents of these political arguments had not expected to have to move. How could they? The historical record is irrefutable right up to the end: Pakistan was nothing more than a bargaining chip in the colonial poker game of the high politics of British India. It is remarkable, then, that Azad was able to specify, so clearly, the historical yield of the freshly created inter-nation state system — specifically with respect to the Muslims of the subcontinent. The point that Pakistan was a net loss for Muslims in India was obvious, but to see with such clarity that it was a catastrophe for the Muslims of Pakistan itself, condemning them to not only economic dependency, but to separatist politics internally, as well as stunted political growth, in general — that was Azad's mature genius at work on its historical constellation, giving us a political speech of the highest rhetorical and existential power.

Nauman Naqvi
Acting dean and founding faculty of Habib University, Karachi

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Nasir Bagh, Lahore

Being in my dotage, I can now look back with a baleful eye over the many 'iconic' events and speeches the people of this nation have been subjected to.

I remember well the slurred speech of General Yahya Khan in 1971 [as he led us into a terrifying civil war] and the '90 days election deadline' of General Ziaul Haq, which stretched beyond our wildest nightmares. Another one of my favourites from the same benighted source was when he blithely declared that he would 'screw' those who disobeyed him! The announcement of the referendum was yet another jewel emanating from the presidency. Declared to be a "vote for Islam", it was pointedly ignored by the populace who flew kites and played cricket in the streets instead of stamping the ballot to prove their faith.

There was, of course, the somber 'iconic' speech by Ghulam Ishaq Khan (later president) telling us that, by an act of God, a plane had exploded in the sky [*"Jahaz phatt gaya"*], a speech which lit up our lives like no other. Free milk was distributed in Gawalmandi, Lahore. That night, I slept like a baby, with a smile on



my lips, after eleven long years!

But, perhaps, the cutest iconic speech for me was the little remembered confessional from Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Gol Bagh [later renamed Nasir Bagh] across the road from the National College of Arts, which we trotted over to hear. With no security barricades, we were listening to a harassed politician, fighting for his political survival; hard pressed and hoarse from electioneering. Reviled by the Maulanas for his liberal lifestyle, including his consumption of alcohol, the Prime Minister of Pakistan was not backing down. Yes, he did take a tittle now and again, after a long, exhausting day in the service of his

people — "*Thori si pee leta hoon kabhi kabhi, jab aapka kaam kar ke thakk jata hoon.*" I can still hear the roar of approval from the Lahori crowd ringing in my ears — reminding me of the times when both politicians and the public were human enough to say it like it was, without being sanctimonious or hypocritical.

Salima Hashmi
Artist, writer and dean at
Beaconhouse National University, Lahore

Readers of the Herald responded to the question, via dawn.com. Excerpts follow:

Masoud. In my opinion, the September 6, 1965, and September 7, 1965, Radio Pakistan address by Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan were the best speeches that totally invigorated the nation to a peak of national pride.

Balach Tahir Baluch. At first glance, I am compelled to say that it would undoubtedly have to be Bhutto's speech at the UN where he tore the papers after delivering a fiery speech and walked out. I love that moment because it portrayed the flair and fury our national leaders should naturally embody — especially today, when we continue to behave meekly before international crowds instead of conducting ourselves with the natural arrogance, which should come to a nuclear-powered nation. However, whilst I love every moment of that speech, the purpose it achieved is unclear. Yes, we showed we had spine for the first (and last?) time in an international audience but the rest is history, as they say.

M Siddique. In my recollection, the most tantalising speech was that of Bhutto, the day he was sworn in as president on December 20, 1971. The nation was demoralised to the last bone after the fall of Dhaka. Everyone in the country was looking for some consolation from a leader who will help pick up the pieces of a shredded nation. People were not looking to point a finger of blame. And Bhutto did deliver a speech which signaled a new beginning for the country and provided a ray of hope. The speech was postponed several times during the course of the day and when it was finally delivered late at night, many people shed tears but looked up to start anew.

Bilal. General Ayub Khan's speech on September 6, 1965, was the most iconic speech after the Quaid's August 11 speech. This was the speech that united us as a nation, all the other speeches divided us.

Umer Bin Ajmal. I believe Imran Khan's Lahore speech [in October

2011] would qualify as the most iconic because, in a country like Pakistan where politics is largely based on ethnicity and at a time when the ruling parties were on the verge of negotiating the terms of ruling the country, Khan's presence made it all competitive. It changed the dynamics of local politics and made politicians work harder to get votes.

I may disagree with Khan on many occasions but he was the man of the hour, then, and helped allow democracy to flourish

Adil Rana. The most iconic speech in the history of Pakistan, was the Quaid-e-Azam's speech delivered on August 11, 1947. The Quaid's message in that speech is remarkable. He emphasised the equality of rights of the citizens and also the good behaviour of the government servants towards civilians and vice versa. Later in his speech, the Quaid gave a lesson of tolerance as a tool for the prosperity of the nation of Pakistan. ■