Dalai Lama's View on Partition

What is the issue?

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- Dalai Lama recently asserted that had Jinnah been made India's first PM, it could have avoided the bloody partition.
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- While the Lama had apologized for the same following an outrage against it, there is nonetheless substance to the claim on moral grounds.
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What is the context of the assertion?

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- Speaking at the 60th anniversary of the Tibetan leader's refuge in India, Dalai Lama was stressing the generosity of the then Indian government's gesture.
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- Notably, India had granted him refuge and allowed for setting up a Tibetan government in exile despite immense Chinese pressure against it.
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- Further, he cited the need for a more humane approach towards the "Rohingya crisis" and "Assam's NRC update".
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- In this context, he stated that India missed a moral opportunity to avoid partition by offering undivided India's Prime Ministership to Jinnah in 1947.
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- In fact, Mahatma Gandhi is said to have speculated this possibility and Nehru allegedly refused to it due to the various political complications involved.
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- While the assertion was politically incorrect for someone on asylum, if viewed from a moral angle, there is at least speculative value to it.

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- The statement indeed displayed a disregard for appropriateness, but it was an effort to pluralize the nation's thinking as against "monochromatic patriotism".
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What was the intention of the assertion?

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- Making Jinnah the PM of undivided India was not a practicality in 1947 due to the socio-political context prevalent back then.
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- Nonetheless, Gandhi was open to this idea as a last ray of hope to avoid the catastrophic partition.
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- Hence, Lama's assertion shouldn't be read as a critic of Nehru's view but a mere statement to provoke the conscience of the nation.
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- The offer was for Jinnah to give up his divisive political line and for Nehru to sacrifice his political stature, which proved too costly for both to part with.
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- Despite the impracticality, had this offer gone through, the humanitarian crisis of 1947 and 1971 and various Indo-Pak standoffs could've well been avoided.
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- Considering the current political situation, Lama's views can be perceived as an appeal to the masses to give up jingoistic polarization on religious lines.
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What are the problems with the responses to this assertion?

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- Lama's statements provoked an instant disapproval from multiple quarters, forcing him to apologize for the same.
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- Lama's stress was about the magnanimity of Gandhi's offer, but the mass interpretation was that he perceived Nehru as shallow and self-serving.
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- Clearly, our uni-polar view of history and nationhood seems to have dominated the day, when the appeal was for developing an accommodating

spirit.
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- India is a land of spirituality and Dalai Lama's presence, much like Gandhi's, has added a very new dimension to this land in terms of moral and spiritual appeal.
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- In this context, we would do good to shun hatred and embrace a better moral compass to define the way we live.
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Source: The Hindu

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