JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal

ISSN (Online): 3006-2071 | ISSN (Print): 3006-2063
Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

THE 1937 ELECTIONS IN SINDH: FACTIONAL RIVALRIES, FEUDAL POLITICS, AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE MUSLIM LEAGUE

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23434421

Keywords
Sindh, Politics, Muslim League, Elections, Rivalries

Article History
Received: *25 June 2026*
Accepted: *16 September 2026*
Published: *17 October 2026*

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Abstract
The separation of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency in 1936 and the provincial elections of 1937 marked a pivotal moment in the region's political development. This paper explores how factionalism, feudal rivalries, and religious leadership shaped Sindh's early political landscape. It contends that the 1937 elections exposed the entrenched influence of pirs, landlords, and elite families, who prioritized personal interests over a collective vision. By analyzing the Sindh Azad Party, Sindh United Party, and Sindh Muslim Political Party, the study demonstrates that internal divisions among Sindhi Muslim leaders hindered the formation of a unified provincial front. As a result, the Muslim League entered Sindh with limited organization and minimal popular support. The paper concludes that the League's eventual consolidation in Sindh resulted less from ideological appeal and more from shifting alliances and elite maneuvering. This underscores the complexities of Sindh's socio-political context before Pakistan's creation.

INTRODUCTION
Local rivalries, economic hierarchies, and the interplay between religion and power shaped Sindh's political history in the late colonial period. After its separation from the Bombay Presidency in 1936, Sindh gained provincial autonomy for the first time in nearly ninety years. The 1937 elections, conducted under the Government of India Act 1935, offered Sindhi Muslims a significant opportunity for political organization. Rather than fostering unity, these elections revealed deep divisions among Sindh's feudal landlords and religious elites. This study examines how factionalism and personal ambition undermined collective Muslim representation and hindered the Muslim League's early influence in Sindh. By analyzing the formation of local political parties such as the Sindh Azad Party, Sindh United Party, and Sindh Muslim Political Party, the analysis demonstrates that power politics, rather than ideology, shaped Sindh's early electoral landscape. The argument is advanced that the Muslim League's later success in Sindh resulted not from popular mobilization but from elite accommodation and Jinnah's strategic engagement with Sindhi landlords and pirs.

Methodology
This study uses a qualitative historical methodology, relying primarily on archival records, official correspondence, and contemporary newspapers to reconstruct Sindh's

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ISSN (Online): 3006-2071 | ISSN (Print): 3006-2063
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political landscape in the 1930s. Secondary sources, including memoirs, academic monographs, and scholarly articles, were used to contextualize the role of Sindhi feudal elites, pirs, and nationalist leaders. The approach is analytical and interpretative rather than descriptive, seeking to explain how internal rivalries and elite interests influenced the emergence and early weakness of the Muslim League in Sindh. By combining primary and secondary materials, the paper aims to provide a nuanced understanding of factional politics in pre-Partition Sindh.

The Formation of Muslim Political Parties in Sindh

Sindh's political evolution is marked by its separation from the Bombay Presidency in 1936, which led to elections in 1937. This separation granted Sindh a form of autonomy, allowing the Sindhi people to establish their own government, though the powers remained limited. In this nascent political environment, prominent feudal families and influential lords of Sindh endeavored to secure positions within the newly formed Sindh Legislative Assembly. The political landscape was characterized by the emergence of various political parties, each spearheaded by notable figures within these influential families. The 1937elections serve as a critical case study illustrating the pervasive influence of these power holders on the province's political scene. Out of a total of 60 seats in the Sindh Legislative Assembly, 35 were designated for Muslims, of which an impressive 27 were won by candidates affiliated with various political parties rather than a single, unified entity.

Furthermore, in the early 1930s, amid the movement for Sindh's separation from the Bombay Presidency, the "Sindh Azad Conference" was founded to advocate autonomy. In August 1935, leaders of this conference aimed to transform it into a political party that would operate on non-communal and democratic principles to protect the interests of the Sindhi populace, particularly the agricultural community (Daily Gazette, August 20, 1935)[1]. However, this initiative was undermined by internal disputes among its leaders, notably between Khuhro and Syed. (Jones, 2002)[2]

Though the conference initially succeeded in uniting Sindhi Muslim leaders, the ambition to consolidate into a single political party ultimately failed due to escalating divisions. The power struggles that proliferated from 1937 to 1947 among Sindhi Muslim leaders persisted even after affiliations with the Muslim League. In light of the inability to maintain a unified front, three distinct political parties emerged from the remnants of the Sindh Azad Conference prior to the 1937 elections.[3] This period is crucial for understanding the dynamics of Sindh's political history and the challenges its leaders faced in creating a cohesive political identity.

The Sindh Azad Party: A Non-Communal Initiative

The emergence of the Sindh Azad Party marked a significant turning point in Sindh's political landscape in the 1930s. Formed in September 1935, the party resulted from a coalition of influential organizations, including the Karachi Khilafat Committee, the Sindh branch of Jamiyat-Al-Ulema-i-Hind, and the Sindh Hari Association. This strategic formation was a response to the power dynamics among Sindhi Muslim leaders and aimed at consolidating their political influence. Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi was appointed provincial leader, with Mazhar Alavi serving as secretary.[4] A comprehensive roadmap was outlined at the foundational meeting in Karachi, with the objective of establishing the Sindh Azad Party as the foremost political entity in the region. The party aimed to build a robust organizational structure, with a target of enrolling over 5,000 members by the end of its inaugural year.[5]

The party manifesto addressed critical issues affecting Sindh at the time, including the reconfiguration of the province's administrative framework, land reform initiatives, equitable water distribution among landholders, and improvements in the overall socio-economic

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conditions of Sindhi citizens. The manifesto particularly emphasized the need for enhanced educational and healthcare services for the rural population and marginalized groups, such as the haris.[6] The Prominent and reputable leaders of the party were Hakim Fateh Muhammad Sehwani, Pir Illahi Baksh, Rais Ali Mari, and Rais Ali Muhammad Khero.[7]

The Sindh Azad Party quickly gained traction, establishing 36 branches across various districts by August 1936, with notable strength observed in Karachi, Sukkur, Tharparkar, Nawab Shah, Dadu, and Larkana.[8] Despite this momentum, the party faced challenges in aligning with the broader Muslim political narrative spearheaded by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Sindh Muslim League. Jinnah tried to get Sindh Azad Party leader Abdul Majid Sindhi to merge his party with the Sindh Muslim League, but got a cold response on the basis that Hindu would get annoyed if he joined Jinnah's party, as the League was manifesting politics on communal lines. Jinnah, despite a cold response from the Sindhi leaders, visited Sindh in late 1936 to persuade them to contest the 1937 elections on the League ticket. According to Hatim Alavi, when Jinnah arrived at Karachi, in his honor, he arranged a dinner, so he issued dinner invitations to leading Muslim leaders, but "none of them was willing to allow his name to be included in the list of hosts as they thought it would annoy the Hindus and prejudice their chances of election"[9]

The Sindh Azad Party's rise underscores a pivotal moment in the evolution of political identity and organization within Sindhi Muslim communities, illustrating the intersection of regional aspirations with the broader national narrative of the Indian subcontinent in the lead-up to independence.

The Sindh United Party and the Politics of Collaboration

The Sindh United Party emerged on June 9, 1936, under the leadership of Sir Abdullah Haroon, who had previously headed the Sindh Muslim League. Haroon's resignation from the League in 1934 was motivated by his belief that its political activities were steeped in communalism.[10] The party drew its ideological inspiration from the Unionist Party of Punjab and the Justice Party of Madras. Emphasizing a non-communal agenda, Haroon sought to garner support from both Hindus and Muslims in the forthcoming elections, aiming to elevate all communities regardless of creed, caste, or geographical affiliation.[11]

Key figures in the party included prominent leaders such as Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto and Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, both of whom represented the Bombay Legislative Assembly. Other notable leaders included Gazdar, Hatim Alavi, Ghulam Nabi Shah, Miran Muhammad Shah, Allah Bakhsh Soomro, Yar Muhammad Junejo, and Syed, who played significant roles within the organization's framework. The Sindh United Party's establishment marked a notable attempt to create a politically inclusive platform in a region often marked by communal divides.

Despite the strong membership in the party, the pace of organizational development was markedly slow, likely due to personality clashes and rivalries among key figures such as Bhutto and Hidayatullah. Internal disputes within the party became evident during the elections. In a meeting held on November 1, 1936, Haroon was elected party leader, while Hidayatullah, Bhutto, and Miran Muhammad Shah were appointed deputy leaders. However, following Shah's election as a third deputy leader, Hidayatullah resigned, citing a violation of the party's previously established pledge to maintain only two deputy leaders.[12] Many analysts contend that Hidayatullah was merely utilizing this incident as a pretext for his exit from the party.

Subsequently, Hidayatullah announced the formation of his own political entity, named the "Sindh Muslim Party." He also claimed that prominent figures such as Khuhro, Noor Muhammad, and Mir Bandeh Ali Khan Talpur were poised to leave the Sindh United Party to join his newly established party.[13] These developments underscore the tensions within the party and the

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shifting allegiances that characterized this period in Sindhi political history.

The Sindh Muslim Political Party and the Quest for Power

On November 3, 1936, Hidayatullah established the Sindh Muslim Political Party, marking its entry into the political landscape. Despite its relatively late formation, the party quickly gained substantial support, particularly in upper Sindh, thanks largely to the influence of prominent families such as Junejo, Jatoi, and Khuhro. The party's aims and objectives closely mirrored those of the existing Sindh United Party, suggesting that the primary distinctions between the two entities were rooted in personal rivalries and ambitions for power rather than ideological differences. This underscores the notion that the various parties' manifestos often served more as strategic tools to attract popular support than as genuine commitments to socio-economic upliftment for the underprivileged. In reality, many of these leaders appeared more focused on consolidating their personal power and securing high office than on addressing the pressing needs of their constituents.[14]

The Muslim League in Sindh: From Peripheral Presence to Provincial Politics (1906–1937)

The historical narrative of Sindh's political evolution between 1847 and 1936 reveals the complexities of its administrative affiliation with the Bombay Presidency. This connection significantly hindered the establishment of a separate branch of the All India Muslim League in Sindh. The geographical and logistical challenges of governance highlighted a pronounced disconnect, as Sindh's remoteness from Bombay impeded effective administration. The formation of the All India Muslim League in 1906 in Dhaka and its inaugural session in Karachi in 1907 established the League's nascent presence in Sindh. However, the lack of systematic organization at the provincial level remained evident. Efforts to establish a structured party presence in Sindh were largely uncoordinated, yielding little success until 1912. A pivotal moment in this struggle was marked by a correspondence from Mir Ayub Khan, a lawyer based in Karachi and the secretary of the Sindh Mohammadan Association, who wrote to the League's honorary secretary. In his letter dated January 20, 1912, Khan articulated the need for the establishment of a provincial branch of the Muslim League in Sindh, seeking formal recognition from the parent organization and requesting the party's rules and regulations for guidance.[15] This correspondence signifies an early effort to formalize the political aspirations of Sindh within the broader framework of the All-India Muslim League.

The importance of these developments lies in their implication for the political mobilization of Muslims in Sindh, as the establishment of a separate League branch would later contribute significantly to the political landscape of the region.

The same year, Agha Khan visited Karachi and expressed his intent to establish a branch of the All India Muslim League (AIML) in Sindh. In response to this initiative, Hafizullah Shahbuddin Baba, the secretary of the Sindhi Muslim Association (SMA), wrote to the AIML secretary on February 4, 1912, requesting essential information regarding the rules, regulations, and objectives of existing branches. Baba stated, "Dear Secretary of AIML, as desired by H.H. Aga Khan while he was recently here, we are now considering forming a branch of All India Muslim League in Karachi for Sindh, and to help us in this respect, we require a reference to the rules and regulations of your branch. Will you please, therefore, oblige us with a copy of the same by return of mail." The AIML secretary acknowledged the efforts of the Sindhi leaders to establish this branch but was unable to implement any practical measures to facilitate its opening at that time.[16] This exchange underscores the proactive engagement of Sindhi leaders in the political landscape of early 20th-century India, as well as the challenges faced in institutionalizing political organization in the region.

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The cold reception that Sindhi leaders received from the party can be attributed to factional divisions at the central level. However, a more compelling rationale may be the central leadership's perception that there was no need for a distinct League branch in Sindh, given that the province was administratively integrated into the Bombay Presidency and that a robust party presence already existed in Bombay.[17] Consequently, four additional years elapsed without any viable outcomes emerging. In 1917, renewed endeavors were undertaken to establish a connection with the party secretary for the formation of a provincial branch. During this period, Ghulam Ali Chagla and Syed Wazir Hasan assumed leadership in Sindh, advocating for the establishment of the League branch within the province. Chagla corresponded with the League's secretary on two occasions—once on November 3, 1917, and again on November 7, 1917—seeking approval for the establishment of the branch in Sindh. Ultimately, a public meeting of Muslims convened at the G.H. Khaliqdino Hall in Karachi, leading to the formation of a local party branch on November 1, 1917, without securing prior approval from the All-India Muslim League.[18] The influence of these historical dynamics on both regional and national political landscapes warrants further scholarly examination, particularly in the context of Muslim identity and the subsequent demand for Pakistan.

Ghulam Ali Chagla, in the capacity of the secretary of Sindh Muslim League, wrote to the secretary of All-India Muslim League on November 7, 1917, stating, "In confirming my telegram of the second instant. I have the honor to inform you that at the public meeting of the Musalman community held at the G.H Khaliqdino Hall on the first instant, a Provincial Muslim League for Sindh was formed and named the Sindh Muslim League. I shall be obliged if you take early steps to affiliate the Sindh Muslim League to the central League".[19] The following office bearers were also appointed: Mr, Yousifali Aliboy, President, Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari, Vice President, Ghulam Ali Chagla, Honorary Secretary and Mr. Haji Abdullah Haroon Joint Secretary.[20]

The affiliation of the Sindh Muslim League has been a recurring topic in discussions of its political identity, yet a definitive resolution has remained elusive for an extended period. A notable incident occurred on July 21, 1920, when Syed Zahoor Ahmed, the secretary of the Sindh Muslim League, sent a letter to the secretary of the central League, expressing his frustration over the lack of communication regarding the League's affiliation status. Ahmed expressed that if the Sindh Muslim League did not secure affiliation with the central League, it would be compelled to assert itself as an independent entity.[21]

Ultimately, on July 18, 1920, the Sindh Muslim League achieved formal affiliation with its parent organization, albeit without fully obtaining its constitutional rights.[22] Following this significant step, the leadership of the Sindh Muslim League sought to engage with the party's council, advocating for recognition of the Sindh Muslim League as a distinct entity separate from the Bombay Muslim League Provincial League, thereby striving to secure comprehensive constitutional rights.[23]

Ghulam Hussain Bhurgari, serving as the president of the Sindh Muslim League, undertook the pivotal task of promoting the League's principles in the arid region of Sindh with considerable passion and dedication. His contributions to the party were acknowledged when he was elected president of the League at the annual session held in Lucknow in 1923. However, Bhurgari's untimely passing the following year marked a significant downturn in the League's activities within Sindh, effectively stalling its momentum.

The Khilafat Movement and the struggle for Sindh's separation from the Bombay Presidency significantly impeded the Sindh Muslim League's activities during a critical period in the 1920s. In 1925, Noor Muhammad, then secretary of the Sindh Muslim League, engaged with the secretary of the All-India Muslim League regarding the affiliation question of the Sindh chapter.[24]

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However, the central leadership was unable to effectively organize the party's efforts in Sindh, despite the local leadership pushing for the separation issue. The party officially addressed the separation in a resolution passed in 1925, advocating for Sindhi autonomy from Bombay. This topic re-emerged in the 1927 Delhi proposal and was further emphasized in Muhammad Ali Jinnah's renowned 14 Points. Subsequent to the Round Table Conferences, it became evident that the separation of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency would be realized, prompting Sindhi Muslims to initiate efforts to establish political parties.[25]

In 1934, a council meeting aimed at reviving the Sindh Muslim League was convened, with Abdullah Haroon being urged to lead the revival efforts. However, Haroon resigned, citing disagreements with the party's policies. A subsequent meeting in 1935, held at the residence of Mazhar Alavi in Karachi, attracted over 200 attendees who resolved to reactivate the party's operations in the province. Under Jinnah's leadership, the League convened on April 12, 1936, where it was determined that strengthening the party's base in the provinces was essential for the upcoming elections. Jinnah was empowered to establish both Central and Provincial Election Boards, and key figures from Sindh, including Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi, Hakim Fatteh Mohammad Sehwani, Muhammad Hashim Gazdar, and Moulvi Mohammad Saddiq, were appointed to the Sindhi section of the Parliamentary Board.[26] This historical narrative outlines the complexities of political dynamics in Sindh during the 1920s and 1930s, highlighting the interplay between local and central leadership within the broader nationalist movement in British India.

The leadership structure of the All-India Muslim League was predominantly composed of the social elite, and the same was true of the Sindh Muslim League. However, it is important to note that the party lacked robust organization within Sindh. Efforts to align the Sindh Muslim League with its parent organization or to establish a coherent party structure were largely driven by individual initiatives rather than collective organizational efforts. The composition of the party in Sindh primarily included individuals from Karachi, such as merchants, businessmen, and traders, notably from communities like the Chaglas, Moosajis, Aliboys, Karimjis, Memons, and Mandviwalas.[27] Consequently, organizing the party in Sindh for the forthcoming elections proved to be a formidable challenge for Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

As previously noted, Jinnah's visit to Sindh at the end of 1936 was motivated by his intention for Sindhi Muslims to participate in the elections under the League's banner. Nonetheless, he encountered significant difficulty in persuading the Sindhi Muslim leadership to embrace this idea. Ultimately, he managed to establish only a tenuous agreement between the Sindh Azad Party and the Sindh Muslim League Parliamentary Board, facilitating a joint candidacy for the imminent elections,[28] albeit lacking in strength and cohesion.

The 1937 Elections: Factionalism and the League's Failure in Sindh

The separation of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency on April 1, 1936, marked a significant change in the political landscape of the region. In accordance with the Government of India Act of 1935, provincial elections were scheduled for 1937. The elections for the Sindh Legislative Assembly took place on January 31, 1937, with a total of sixty seats designated for the assembly, of which thirty-five were allocated for Muslim representatives. It is crucial to note that these elections were conducted under a limited franchise system rather than universal adult suffrage. The right to vote was restricted to specific categories of individuals, including landowners, income tax payers, and individuals who paid a minimum annual rent of thirty rupees, and those deemed educated. This classification resulted in 639,043 eligible voters, of whom 333,589 participated in the electoral process.[29]

This election cycle illustrated the complexities of factionalism within Sindh's political arena, as

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various groups vied for representation and influence, ultimately posing challenges to the All-India Muslim League in the province.

The participation of newly formed political parties, including the Sindh Muslim League, in the 1937 elections reflects a complex interplay of personal influence over ideological commitments in Sindhi Muslim politics. Historians largely agree that the success of candidates was less a result of party manifestos and more a matter of individual power and patronage networks. An illuminating article published in the Daily Gazette on January 27, 1937, titled "Muslim Politics in Sindhi," critiques the socio-political dynamics of the era. The author highlights the impoverished Muslim populace's dependence on influential landlords and notes that most political figures came from elite backgrounds. These politicians, rather than adhering to articulated party principles, relied heavily on personal charisma and connections to secure electoral victories.[30] The article raises critical questions about the sincerity of these leaders in genuinely aiming to improve the conditions of the Muslim community, stating, "Where is the guarantee that these leaders have any sincerity to better the condition of the Muslims community and advance their conditions?"[31]

The electoral results further underscore this observation: out of the 35 Muslim seats, 18 were claimed by feudal lords, while 9 were secured by the Pirs of Sindh. Notably, the Sindh Muslim League failed to win any seats in this election cycle. Those who were elected on party tickets often credited their success more to their personal influence than to adherence to a coherent political agenda. Remarkably, as cited by G.M Syed, only Abdul Majid Sindhi emerged victorious based primarily on public opinion, highlighting a disconnect between party affiliations and actual voter support.[32] This underscores the prevailing narrative that personal influence, rather than formal party platforms, was the critical determinant of electoral success in this period.

Political Party Representation and Electoral Outcomes in Sindh during the 1937 Provincial Elections

Table

Figure 1. Election Results of Muslim Constituencies of Sindh, 1937 (Number of Seats Won by Party).

SindhUnitedParty 22
MuslimPoliticalParty 3
SindhAzad Party..... 3
Independent (Muslims) 7
Sindh Muslim League 0

Despite the Sindh United Party emerging as the single largest party in the assembly, it was unable to form the government because two of its prominent candidates, Sir Abdullah Haroon and Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto, suffered losses. Haroon was defeated by Allah Baksh Gabol in Karachi, while Bhutto faced a setback against Abdul Majid Sindhi in the Larkana constituency.[33] In contrast, Hidayatullah's Sindh Muslim Party, which secured only three seats, employed strategic manoeuvring with the assistance of Khuhro, Mir Bandeh Ali Khan Talpur, and the Governor of Sindh, Sir Lancelot Graham. Through financial inducements and political offers, they secured the support of 33 members of the Sindh Assembly, thereby facilitating the formation of the inaugural ministry. Consequently, Hidayatullah was sworn in as the first premier of Sindh.[34]

Hidayatullah's political journey began with the establishment of the Sindh Muslim Party, which was initially formed along communal lines. However, as the prospect of his premiership grew, he shifted his stance and ultimately formed the Sindh Democratic Party. This new party aimed to bring together both Muslim and Hindu legislators. Despite this noble intention, the coalition struggled to maintain unity, and within a year, internal dissent led to significant divisions among its members. Hidayatullah's administration faced its first setback on March 18, 1938, when it suffered a defeat stemming from defections within the ranks of the Democratic Coalition Party he had formed.[35] Consequently, his government was succeeded by a cabinet led by Allah Baksh Soomro

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of the Sindh United Party on March 23, 1938.[36] Unfortunately, Soomro's tenure was similarly short-lived, primarily due to an increasing alignment with the Indian National Congress, which alienated Muslim legislators who gradually withdrew their support. As a result, Soomro's government became increasingly dependent on Congress for its political survival, further escalating rivalries and tensions within Sindh's political landscape.[37] These events underline the complex dynamics of political allegiance in pre-partition Sindh, reflecting the intricate interplay between communal identities and political aspirations during this tumultuous period.

The 1937 elections in Sindh marked a significant moment for the Muslim League as it sought to establish its organizational presence in the province. The political landscape was heavily influenced by Sindhi Muslim leaders, who were ready to compromise their fundamental principles in exchange for power. These leaders held considerable sway within their localities, necessitating the League's accommodation of Sindh's feudal lords and Pirs to ensure its survival in this political environment. Economic dependency, kinship ties, and religious affiliations emerged as the primary determinants of electoral outcomes, complicating the League's efforts to gain traction.

By early 1940, the League, despite its earlier organizational shortcomings—which resulted in its failure to secure representation in the Sindh Legislative Assembly—was on the cusp of assuming ministerial powers. Ian Talbot notes, "Jinnah appeared to have secured a major triumph in Sindh. Unfortunately, for Jinnah, it was a hollow achievement. The League's revival was not based on solid organizational development but on the shifting sands of factional rivalries in the struggle for office."[38] This analysis underscores the precarious nature of the League's political advancements, highlighting the necessity of stronger organizational foundations to ensure enduring success in Sindhi politics.

4. Reorganization and Revival: The League's Consolidation (1938–1942)

The All India Muslim League, established in 1906 in Dhaka, emerged with the primary objective of safeguarding the rights and interests of Muslims in India. Historical analysis indicates that, despite its ambitions, the League's efforts to secure substantial benefits for the Muslim community did not bear fruit until the late 1930s. Initially, the Muslim League operated primarily as a political entity with limited outreach, characterized as a "drawing room party," which did not engage effectively with the broader Muslim population. This lack of grassroots organization hindered its ability to establish a robust presence among the Muslim masses. The electoral outcomes of 1937 vividly illustrated this deficiency, as the League's performance in Muslim-majority regions, which correspond to present-day Pakistan, was notably poor. These results underscored the urgent need for the Muslim League to undergo reorganization in order to enhance its political efficacy and representation.

4.1 Jinnah's Leadership and the Reorientation of League Politics (1936–1938)

The period marking Muhammad Ali Jinnah's leadership of the All-India Muslim League was a transformative phase for the organization, as he undertook a comprehensive reorganization of the party across all Muslim-majority provinces. Notably, Sindh emerged as a focal point for these efforts, being the second most significant province after Punjab in terms of both economic strength and population. Securing a strong foothold in Sindh was imperative for the League to substantiate its claim as the sole representative of Muslims in India. On April 27, 1936, Jinnah articulated a strategic vision for the Muslim community, emphasizing the importance of self-organization and preparedness. He stated,

"My advice to Muslims was that they should first organize themselves and deserve before they desired. We Muslims are engaged in the task of organizing electorates and training 80 million Muslims to the higher level of political

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understanding so that they might be soldiers ultimately for the national struggle. I have always felt that if Muslims would speak with one voice a settlement between Hindus and Muslims would come quickly. Muslims are making a mistake if they lean either on the Government or the Congress."[39]

Jinnah therefore recognized the necessity of elevating the political awareness of the Muslims in India, with the aim of fostering an engaged electorate capable of participating actively in the national struggle. Jinnah further emphasized the urgency of unity among Muslims, suggesting that a consolidated voice would expedite a resolution between Hindus and Muslims. He cautioned against reliance on either the British Government or the Indian National Congress, advocating instead for a self-reliant and organized Muslim community. This statement encapsulates Jinnah's strategic approach to political mobilization and highlights the pivotal role of organizational integrity in advancing the interests of Muslims during a critical juncture in India's history.

4.2 Expansion of League Activities in Sindh (1938)

During a significant period of growth, the party underwent a transformation from a primarily drawing-room organization to a mass-based political entity. This shift was marked by the adoption of a new constitution, a more radical organizational structure, and an overall revitalization of its operations.[40] The party's increasing activities in Sindh prompted the chief secretary of Sindh, H.K. Kirpali, to communicate with the secretary of the Government of India, J.A. Throne, on May 18, 1938. In his correspondence, Kirpali noted that the propaganda efforts of the Sindh Provincial Muslim League against the Congress ministry had not garnered substantial success, particularly regarding the slogan "Islam in Danger have met with very little success."[41] The political landscape in Sindh was closely monitored by the governor and various secretaries, with British officers routinely reporting daily political developments to their superiors. M.D. Bhat, the secretary of Sindh, informed J.A. Throne about the burgeoning activities of Muslims in the region. He reported the establishment of Muslim League branches in several locations, including Thatta, Karachi, Ghotki, Sukkur, Mohbat Tunio, Matiari, and Hyderabad,[42] which aimed to counter the growing influence of the Congress among the Muslim populace. These developments reflect a strategic maneuvering by the Muslim League to fortify its presence and counterbalance the Congress party's initiatives within the Muslim community, signifying a critical moment in the political dynamics of the time.

4.3 The 1938 Karachi Conference: A Turning Point

In April 1938, Abdul Majid Sindhi, serving as the leader of the League branch of the Sindh chapter, travelled to Delhi to persuade Muhammad Ali Jinnah to visit Sindh. This initiative aimed to foster unity and solidify the Muslim legislators on the platform of the Muslim League. The significant Sindh Provincial Muslim League Conference convened in Karachi from October 8 to 12, 1938, under the presidency of Jinnah.[43] This conference emerged as a pivotal moment in the Muslim struggle for independence, with its primary resolution laying the groundwork for the Lahore Resolution of 1940.

Therefore, the Karachi conference proved to be a turning point not only in the political history of Sindh but in that of all Muslims of India. Almost all the prominent Muslims from across India attended and delivered speeches. The essence of these speeches was:

If the Congress, which was wholly and solely a Hindu organization, was not prepared to agree to the Muslims occupying an equal position in the scheme of Indian constitutional reform merely because it aimed at the establishment of Hindu rule in India, somewhat similar to that which is now found in the eight Congress-ruled provinces, let us tell the Congress and the Hindu community that India shall have to be divided into two Indias—the Hindu India and the Muslim India, each governing separately.[44]

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In short, the 1938 Conference proved a landmark in the Muslim struggle for freedom; its main resolution, No. 5, was the prelude to the Lahore Resolution of 1940. The 1938 Conference of the Sindh Provincial Muslim League held a unique position in the evolution of the idea of a separate Muslim state in the subcontinent.

4.4 The Pact Among Sindhi Muslim Legislators in Joining of the League and Its Collapse

The decisions made during the Karachi Conference in 1938, particularly regarding the party's formation in the Sindh Assembly, were significantly influenced by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. At this pivotal conference, Jinnah convened all Muslim legislators from the Sindh Assembly for comprehensive political discussions. Notably, representatives from four distinct groups of Muslim legislators—identified as the Syed, Soomro, Hidayatullah, and Mir groups—consistently expressed their willingness to adhere to the party's policies and follow the directives of its president.

In his summary of the proceedings, Jinnah recounted a meeting held on the afternoon of October 9, 1938, at which he, along with the premiers of Bengal and Punjab, and the aforementioned representatives from Sindh, discussed and reached a consensus on policy matters. This agreement was formally documented and endorsed by key figures, including Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh, Pir Ilhai Baksh, Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, Mir Bundeh Ali Khan, G.M. Syed, and Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi.[45]

Two important points of the terms of the agreement were:

"One Solid party of Muslim members of the Sindh Assembly should be formed as the Muslim League Party within the Legislature, and all members who join the Party will become members of the Muslim League and sign the creed and accept the policy and program of the Muslim League and sign the usual pledge."

"In order to facilitate the formation of a new ministry, the present Muslim ministers agree to tender their resignations and these resignations will be tendered to the Governor simultaneously with the proposal of the leader of the Muslim League Party to continue the new ministry."[46]

The subsequent meeting was convened on October 12, 1938. During this meeting, Muhammad Ali Jinnah remarked that Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh Soomro, despite having previously signed the agreement, had withdrawn his commitment prior to the meeting. Jinnah expressed his astonishment, noting, "when we convened on October 12, to the surprise of all, Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh reneged on the agreement, asserting that he and his supporters would only align with the League Party if prior assurances were given regarding his election as leader and his continued position as Chief Minister." [47]This stance was met with considerable objection from the majority of members present, who contended that it fundamentally contradicted the principles of party formation, whereby no individual member or faction should exert coercive conditions for entry into the Party. It is also important to note that the remaining 27 Sindhi Muslim Legislators officially endorsed the League by signing the pledge to join the party.[48]

4.5 Strengthening the Organizational Structure (Late 1938–1939)

In the wake of its unsuccessful bid to secure Muslim votes during the 1937 elections, Congress initiated a campaign aimed at engaging the Muslim electorate. Consequently, the All India Muslim League ramped up its efforts to assert its position as the sole representative of Indian Muslims. In this context, Abdul Majid Sindhi emerged as a pivotal figure in Sindh, taking on a leadership role to strengthen the party's organization within the province. On November 30, 1938, as the Secretary of the Sindh Muslim League, Sindhi addressed a letter to the Secretary of the All-India Muslim League, once again raising the critical question of affiliation between the two bodies.[49]

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In his letter, Sindhi informed the All-India Secretary about the appointment of an organizing committee by Muhammad Ali Jinnah during the Sindh Conference and detailed the formation of the League's seven district branches out of a total of nine districts in Sindh. Furthermore, he reported that a meeting of the district representatives from these seven districts took place on November 27, resulting in the election of their office bearers. Notably, Sindhi also indicated the establishment of a total of 138 primary branches of the party throughout Sindh, illustrating the significant organizational developments being made by the Muslim League in the region. This correspondence not only reflects the strategic manoeuvres of the Muslim League during this crucial period but also underscores the pivotal role played by local leaders such as Abdul Majid Sindhi in reinforcing the party's presence in various provinces.

Name of The District	No of Branches
"Larkana District	24
Hyderabad District	16
Tharparkar District	20
Nawab shah District	16
Sukkur District	13
Jacobabad District	9
Karachi District	7
Dadu District	16
Karachi City	17
Total	138"[50]

By early 1939, local leadership within the party initiated a robust propaganda campaign aimed at increasing awareness and support for the party across all districts of Sindh. This strategic outreach included the establishment of a "Public Grievance Bureau," which served as a mechanism to address corruption and cases of oppression, thereby providing justice to the Muslim community. The effectiveness of these efforts was evident in the formation of over 42 League branches within a mere three months, from December 1938 to February 1939.[51] Moreover, the party vehemently condemned the actions of the Congress party, which it viewed as oppressive towards the Muslim minority provinces. Following directives from Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the party observed the Day of Deliverance on December 22, 1939, commemorating the resignations of Congress ministries, a significant event signifying their stance against the prevailing political circumstances.

The Muslim League gradually began to gain traction among the masses; however, significant efforts were still required to establish the League as a genuine representative body for the Muslim community. On August 17, 1940, Sir Abdullah Haroon, serving as the President of the Sindh Muslim League, urged his party leaders to remain vigilant and proactive, stating, "For God's sake, awake! The time to work has come."[52] He further encouraged League members to effectively disseminate the party's propaganda throughout the province. In December 1940, Muhammad Ali Jinnah visited Sindh and reinforced the call for Muslim unity under the League's banner. He asserted, "Pakistan Scheme was the only solution to attain Hindu-Muslim unity."[53]

The Role of G. M. Syed in League's Organization in Sindh (1940–1941)

G.M. Syed is recognized by numerous historians as a pivotal figure in the organizational development of the Muslim League in Sindh. Following his resignation from Mir Bandeh Ali Khan's ministry in 1941, he received directives from Muhammad Ali Jinnah to enhance the efficiency and reach of

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the party in the region. Consequently, the Muslim League Organization Committee was established, with Syed appointed as its chairman. Notable members included Agha Ghulam Nabi Pathan, Syed Hassan Bakhsh Shah Gazdar, Sahibzada Abdul Sataar Jann Sarhandi, and Faqir Muhammad Maghriu. Syed undertook extensive travels throughout Sindh, actively promoting the Muslim League's agenda at various events, including rallies and corner meetings. His efforts were remarkably effective, resulting in a surge in membership from approximately six thousand to three hundred thousand within a single year, alongside the establishment of four hundred and fifty branches across the province.[54] Additionally, to further energize the party's initiatives, Syed visited numerous villages and towns, ensuring the party's message reached a broad audience. Posters were also printed which were the reflection of Muslim League demand. In fact, the posters reflects the aspirations and demands outlined by the Muslim League regarding the vision for Pakistan. The emphasis is placed on establishing an Islamic government founded on the principles derived from the Quran. This vision includes the following key components:

1. Equality: A commitment to social, political, and economic equality for all citizens, regardless of their background.
2. Integrity in Leadership: The establishment of a government led by honest and pious Muslims, ensuring that leaders embody the values espoused by the Islamic faith.
3. Protection of Minority Rights: An assurance that the rights of non-Muslims would be adequately safeguarded, promoting an inclusive society.
4. Social Welfare: A primary focus on addressing vital social issues such as poverty, cruelty, illiteracy, and the exploitation of the vulnerable, indicating a strong commitment to social justice.
5. Prohibition of Harmful Practices: Legal prohibitions against gambling, alcohol consumption, fornication, and usury, reflecting a desire to uphold moral and ethical standards in society.
6. Access to Justice: Ensuring that justice is accessible and provided free of cost, reinforcing the principle that all individuals deserve fair treatment under the law.
7. Merit-Based Respect: The vision advocates for a society where respect and dignity are predicated on one's good deeds rather than wealth or power, promoting a culture of community and virtue.[55]

This articulation not only captures the religious and ethical underpinnings intended for governance in Pakistan but also highlights a progressive approach to social issues, aiming to foster a just and equitable society. The Muslim League's demands encapsulate a holistic vision that reflects both spiritual and pragmatic dynamics of governance.

Besides, The Chairman of the Organization Committee, in collaboration with the Sindh Provincial Muslim League, published a significant work titled "Hindustan Ja Musalman ae Pakistan" (Indian Muslims and Pakistan). This publication was distributed free of charge throughout the Sindh region, indicating a strategic effort to disseminate ideological perspectives. The book contains translated essays originally published in the Punjab newspaper "Eastern Times" on January 5, February 16, April 12, and April 26 of 1940. [56] These translations serve to contextualize the political discourse surrounding the status and aspirations of Indian Muslims in relation to the emerging narrative of Pakistan during this critical historical juncture. The decision to distribute the book freely underscores a commitment to reach a broader audience and foster a unified understanding among the Muslim community in Sindh.

Political Developments and the Consolidation of League Power (1942)

The year 1942 holds significant historical importance for the province of Sindh. This period was marked by the imposition of martial law by the British government in response to the activities of the Hur movement. Additionally, catastrophic

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ISSN (Online): 3006-2071 | ISSN (Print): 3006-2063
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floods affected the region, displacing approximately five hundred thousand individuals and resulting in substantial economic losses amounting to crores for the local populace.

In the same year, the Indian National Congress launched the Quit India Movement, a pivotal event in the struggle for independence. In light of this movement, prominent political figure Khan Allah Bakhsh Soomro renounced his Khan Bahadur title, a gesture of solidarity that led to his unconstitutional dismissal by the British authorities. Subsequently, Hidayatullah was invited to form a new government. Hidayatullah formed his ministry with the backing of the Muslim League, and influential leaders such as Khuhro and Syed played a crucial role in persuading him to align with the League. Consequently, in a bid to secure the support of the League and stabilize his governance, Hidayatullah officially integrated the League into his administration and pledged adherence to its rules and regulations.[57] This marked the establishment of the first full-fledged Muslim League ministry in the Sindh Legislative Assembly, which remained in place until the creation of Pakistan on August 14, 1947.

Conclusion

The 1937 elections marked a pivotal moment in Sindh's political landscape. It illuminated the fragmented nature of Muslim leadership within the region. While the separation from the Bombay Presidency was celebrated as a triumph for Sindhi identity, it concurrently underscored the lack of a unified political vision among the Muslim elite. The prevailing influence of pirs and feudal landlords transformed electoral contests into venues for personal rivalries, overshadowing ideological discourse.

The Muslim League's failure in the 1937 elections can therefore be understood not only as the League's weakness and unpopularity, but also as a consequence of the deeply entrenched patron-client relationships that characterized Sindhi politics. It was only post-1938, through strategic alliances and the gradual incorporation of influential families, that Jinnah's League began to establish its political presence in the province. Consequently, the League's emergence in Sindh rested on precarious foundations—rooted not in widespread popular support, but in shifting allegiances, opportunism, and a calculated pursuit of political power.

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