

The All-India Muslim League's Battle for Pakistan in Sindh 1937- 1947: Quaid's Strategies and Policies

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ABSTRACT

The article is a critical analysis of the All-India Muslim League's success in Sindh in the final phase of the struggle for independence. The study highlights the role of Muslim League in Sindh between 1937-1947, making Sindh the strongest advocate for Pakistan during the last phase of struggle for Pakistan. Getting Sindh's vote for Pakistan was not an easy task for Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), the President of the All-India Muslim League, as accommodating different Sindhi politicians with diverse interests on a single platform was a difficult task. In this regard, the strategies and policies of Quaid played a vital role. The Sindh Muslim League started with no support but in 1938 the Sindh Muslim League succeeded in winning seats in the newly-created Sindh Legislative Assembly by reconciling with influential feudal lords and Pirs. The result was that the journey of the Muslim League toward creating Pakistan began in Sindh.

Introduction

The All-India Muslim League under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah achieved Pakistan within a very short span of time. The Lahore Resolution of June 23,

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1940 proved to be the turning point. In order to achieve Pakistan, the League needed strong support in all the Muslim majority provinces—the Punjab, Sindh, Bengal, the North-West Frontier Province, and Balochistan. Although, a number of Muslim politicians in the minority provinces, especially the Central Provinces and the United Provinces, were ardent supporters of the Demand for Pakistan; many in the majority provinces were initially reluctant to support the struggle for a separate Muslim homeland in South Asia. Support for the Muslim League was weak in all the majority provinces except Bengal. Like other Muslim majority provinces, the League had a checkered history in Sindh. In 1906, steps were taken to organize the Muslim League in Sindh, but the real organization of the party was started only after the defeat of the party in the 1937 elections.

The objectives of the Muslim League were made clear in the Lahore Resolution of 1940 and Quaid had organized the Muslim League in those Muslim majority areas where the party had previously been weak or non-existent. Most of the provincial leaders of the Muslim majority provinces were acting independently. Few wanted Pakistan by amalgamating the Muslim majority provinces into one solid bloc. In these circumstances, Quaid demanded Pakistan above and beyond the purview of provincial politics.¹ How Quaid made the party successful in these Muslim majority provinces in a short span of time is a remarkable story.

The League in Search of Loyalists

In Sindh, the increasing popularity of the League was directly propositional to winning over influential religious families and feudal lords.² Sara Ansari writes, “The League’s non-confrontational attitude towards the British meant that it attracted many pro-establishment Pirs who would have been alienated by a defiantly anti-British stance. Pirs quickly assumed the organizational role and

1 Sikandar Hayat, *The Charismatic Leader: Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Creation of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 166.

2 Sara F. D. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sindh, 1843-1947* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 114.

held provincial offices.”³ The entry of Pirs and feudal lords into the League’s activities in Sindh dramatically expanded the League’s influence. Although factionalism and rivalries among Leaguers remained strong throughout the period, yet the strategies and policies of its high command successfully won Sindh’s vote for Pakistan.

Soon after the failure of Muslim League in the 1937 elections, Quaid worked assiduously to bring all Muslim legislators in the Sindh Legislative Assembly into the party.⁴ It soon became the centre of Muslim League politics in the province. Quaid’s early supporters and allies were Abdul Majid Sindhi (1889-1978), the journalist and advocate for Sindh to be separated from Bombay province, which it was in 1936, and Sir Abdullah Haroon (1872-1942), Sindh’s wealthy “Sugar King”, President of the Sindh Muslim League and regional politician.⁵ By June 1938, Allah Bakhsh Soomro (1900-43), the Premier of Sindh, faced problems to keep his government intact due to factional rivalries. In that critical situation, Sindhi and Haroon offered him their support on the condition that he, along with his group, would join the League. They also asked him to follow League policy and its programme inside and outside the assembly.⁶ Soomro immediately rejected the offer but two months later, when his ministry was on the verge of collapse through a no-confidence vote, he accepted their proposal. Haroon optimistically informed Quaid that 27 out of 34 or 35 Muslim members of the provincial assembly were ready to join the League and to sign the party pledge if the party could generate mass support by holding a League conference in Sindh.⁷ Sindhi provided Quaid with a similar analysis and a detailed breakdown of a possible League-led coalition. He wrote that out of 17 Muslim members who were on the

3 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 118.

4 Ian Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement: The Growth of the Muslim League in North-West and North-East India 1937-47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1988), 31.

5 M. Rafique Afzal, *A History of the All-India Muslim League: 1906-1947* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 394.

6 Afzal, *A History of the All-India Muslim League*.

7 Abdullah Haroon to Jinnah on August 2, 1938, National Archives of Pakistan (NAP), Quaid-i-Azam Papers (QAP), F. 1090, 57.

Opposition benches, 12 of them had signed the party programme and pledge. He stated that the powerful G. M. Syed-led group of five members, along with five other Muslim legislators, were willing to join the party. He further informed him that if the current Soomro administration could be ousted from office, a new Muslim League government would be installed and three more members, including Pir Ilahi Bakhsh (1890-1975), the founder of the Sindh United Front, would join provided he was offered a ministry. He also informed Quaid that a visit by him to his native Sindh might convince Soomro's followers to join the League as well. He lamented that the misfortune of the Muslims in Sindh was that every one of them wanted to be a minister or a ministerial kingmaker.⁸

Quaid duly arranged for a Muslim League conference to be held in Karachi between October 8 and 12, 1938.⁹ He arranged a meeting of all the four major political groupings—those led by Ghulam Murtaza Syed (1904-95), popularly known as G. M. Syed, Mir Bandeh Ali Talpur, the leader of the Talpur Mirs, a well-known Baloch tribe also remained as the premier of Sindh in 1940-41, Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah (1879-1948), who had served as Premier from April 1937 to March 1938, and Soomro—on October 9, 1938. Almost all the legislators attended the meeting. After intense discussions it was finally decided that all four groups would resign from the current ministry and join the party. In a second meeting, three days later on October 12, however, Soomro backed out from his earlier pledge and refused to resign.¹⁰ This astonished everyone. It was later revealed that he secured votes from Congress and independent Hindu members to keep his majority in the Assembly. Twenty-seven other Muslim legislators signed the League's pledge and joined the party. In this way the League secured a following in the Assembly. In a sense this was a great achievement for the Quaid as, in spite of the League defeat in the 1937 elections, by

8 Abdul Majid to Jinnah, August 26, 1938, NAP, QAP, F. 1095, 511-513.

9 National Archives of Pakistan (NAP), F. FMA, Vol. 242, 8.

10 Jinnah's Press Statement, October 13, 1938, in *The Nation's Voice: Towards Consolidation*, ed., Waheed Ahmed (Karachi: Quaid-e-Azam Academy, 1992), 297-299.

October the following year, the Muslim League had just over two dozen legislators identified with the party: within a remarkably short time the League became the largest single grouping in the Assembly.¹¹

It was a great achievement for the League, but the party was driven by personal rivalries, political tussles, and hunger for power. It remained that way all during the 1938 to 1947 period. Ali Muhammad Rashdi (1905-87), the Secretary of the Sindh Muslim League, indicated that after the formation of the Muslim League Assembly Party, it was unanimously decided that all 27 League members would vote to oust the Soomro ministry and install a League one. He was amazed that when the vote of no-confidence was held, Leaguers such as Hidayatullah and Mir Bandeh Ali Khan Talpur switched their loyalties to the treasury benches due to ministerial offers made by Soomro.¹² Thus, old rivalries continued and the struggle for power took precedence over consolidating the League position.

The growing power of Sir Abdullah Haroon as League president threatened Hidayatullah. When Soomro offered him a ministry, he, along with the Mir group, left the League and joined up with Soomro. Overnight, the League once again became a forlorn party in the assembly.¹³ The politics of changing loyalties had become the norm. This was the main reason that in the span of ten years nearly six administrations came and went. Personal power and gains were above party politics. Syed quoted Hayatullah as saying, "The best way of enlisting the support of the members in assembly was to approach them through their stomach."¹⁴

The Masjid Manzilgah incident beginning in March 1939 proved to be the turning point for Muslim Leaguers in their quest for power. The Manzilgah was a piece of property containing several buildings, including a mosque, in Sukkur city on the banks of the River Indus which had been

11 Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement*, 41.

12 NAP, FMA, Vol. 248, 18-19.

13 Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement*, 42.

14 G. M. Syed, *Struggle for New Sindh: A Brief Narrative of the Working of Provincial Autonomy in Sindh During a Decade 1937-1947* (Karachi: Sindh Observer Press, 1949), 6.

taken over by the British and incorporated into their residency. Opposite the land on a lush island, Sadh Belo, was a Hindu temple. Muslims wanted the property returned and the mosque restored. Hindus protested, the issue reached the national press, riots between Hindus and Muslims followed, but ultimately Soomro maintained the *status quo*. As a result, he lost a huge amount of support among the Muslim community and this led to his downfall.¹⁵ Muslim Leaguers won over the Mir Group on the condition that Talpur would be given the premiership of Sindh. He was sworn in as Premier on April 18, 1940. He was the first premier identified as a Muslim League premier.

The Masjid Manzilgah incident provided to be the path to popularity for the League. They received the support of the masses by exploiting the incident. Muhammad Ayub Khuhro, one of the stalwart leaders of the League, wrote, "due to the volatile Muslim members positions and Congress opposition to the Muslim League, we needed a big issue to rally the Muslims of the province behind the Muslim League; such an issue was providentially provided by the Masjid Manzilgah of Sukkur."¹⁶ Leaguers used religious rhetoric to exploit the masses. With the help of Sindh's religious divines, the party came to be seen as the protector of Muslim rights. It was the Pirs who popularized the demand for the restoration of Masjid Manzilgah and associated the League with the movement. The result was the increasing popularity of the Muslim League among the rural Muslims. Sindh was the only province in India where the League had widespread support among the rural population.

The Pirs had played a vital role in the campaign especially among the Rashandi and Sarhandi clans. A meeting organized under the leadership of Pir Mohammad Umar Jann Sirhandi in Matiari on August 3, 1939, passed a resolution that called upon the government to accede to the Muslims' claim for the restoration of Masjid Manzilgah.

15 Muhammad Qasim Soomro, *Muslim Politics in Sindh :1938-1947* (Jamshoro: Pakistan Study Centre, University of Sindh, 1989), 55.

16 *Reminiscences of the Day of Deliverance* (Karachi: National Book Foundation, 1976), 71.

Similarly, Pir Muhammad Hussain Jaan Sirhandi, held a session on September 15, 1939, in which all the *murids* [Urdu: devotees], friends, and the whole Mujahidiya family, publicly claimed that the Mosque belonged to the Muslims and if it was not be returned to the Muslims, the government would face stiff opposition.¹⁷ A number of Pirs of upper Sindh, such as the Pir of Bharchundi Sharif, arrived at the site with more than five-hundred followers. In addition, Pir Amruti Jamayat and Pir Allah Dino Shah Rashdial arrived with hundreds of their followers to join in the protests.¹⁸

Leaguers had been successful in their strategy of getting support from local *sajadanashins* and *mullas* by arousing the religious sentiments of the Muslims. However, it became violent as religious controversies in India usually did. Communal hatred in and around Sukkur led to massive Hindu-Muslim riots that led to the loss of hundreds of lives, both Hindu and Muslims.¹⁹

Unlike the Punjab, where League support until 1946 was chiefly restricted to cities and towns, the party in Sindh had succeeded in developing a strong link with countryside by late 1939. The comparative strength and populace of the party in Sindh was due to its triumph in winning over many of the province's Pirs and feudal families.²⁰ After the triumph of the party in getting the Soomro ministry dismissed, the new ministry under Talpur did not last long as power politics soon resurfaced. Owing to the shifting of loyalties, Talpur faced great difficulties in running the government. He resigned just less than a year in office on March 7, 1941. With the support of Congress, Soomro once again returned to the driver's seat. The League responded by recruiting even more Pirs and Syeds to the party.

With the death of Abdullah Haroon, the president of the Sindh Muslim League, on April 27, 1942, Syed was

17 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 118.

18 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 119.

19 Hamida Khuhro. "Masjid Manzilgah, 1939-40: Test Case for Hindu-Muslim Relations in Sindh," *Modern Asian Studies* 32, no. 1 (1998): 72.

20 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 120.

selected as the new president of the party. Quaid's decision to choose Syed as the new president drew many new Pirs to the League as the Syed family had personal links with them. Syed spread the party's message to every corner of Sindh as part of the plan to increase League support. He consciously sought to raise the political consciousness of rural Muslims, and urged them to only buy goods from Muslim shops. Accordingly, Syed appealed to Pirs to help Muslim shopkeepers by asking their followers to only trade with Muslims.²¹ Similarly, a number of conferences were organized in villages in order to establish close contact with the people and to make them aware of the party's programme. Syed also arranged public gatherings at important shrines in the province including Bukhera Sharif, Jhok Sharif, Matiari Halla, and Shahpur Chakar.²²

The Muslim League in Search of a Ministry

The year 1942 was significant in the politics of Sindh. It was the year when Sindh faced Martial Law due to the activities of Pir Pagaro (1910-43), massive floods that devastated the province, and the Quit India Movement which led to many Congress leaders returning their titles to the British government. Soomro also relinquished his title of Khan Bahadur in protest. As a result, he was dismissed from the premiership on October 14.²³ Hidayatullah was called on to form the ministry. He appealed to the Sindh Muslim League for support.

In these circumstances, Yusuf Haroon (1916-2011), the son of Abdullah Haroon, kept Quaid informed. Quaid forbade the local League party from being part of the Hidayatullah government. Quaid telegraphed Haroon on October 13, 1942 from Delhi, "Muslim League Party cannot join any ministry under leadership of Ghulam Hussain. Coalition between Muslim League and any Muslim individual or group contrary to our fundamental principles

21 Riaz Ahmed, *The Sindh Muslim League 1940-1947: Secret Police Abstracts* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, 2008), 111.

22 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 121.

23 Governor of Sindh to the Viceroy of India on October 22, 1942, National Documentation Wing, Cabinet Division, Islamabad F. 389/ F. R. 1 to 3.

unless governor summons Muslim League Party leader to form ministry you should not proceed further or participate in formation any ministry.”²⁴ However, despite his opposition, local Leaguers could not resist the lure of office and joined Hidayatullah’s ministry.

Both Syed and Khuhro had tried to appease Quaid. Quaid, however, was not ready to listen to them. On October 19, 1942 he reminded local Leaguers about the hierarchy of power within the League. Quaid stated that provincial Leagues and their executives could not take any decision without the approval of the party president i.e., Quaid. He summoned the League leaders to Delhi immediately and strongly denounced their decision. Nonetheless, two Leaguers were sworn in as the ministers in the Hidayatullah ministry: Khuhro, and Muhammad Hashim Ghazdar (1893-1968), an engineer who had been elected to the Bombay Legislative Council, the Sindh Legislative Assembly, and in May 1941 Mayor of Karachi. Quaid was furious, “I have received several telegrams from prominent Muslims against and condemning the action of Khan Bahadur Khuhro and Mr. Gazdar in joining the Ghulam Hussain Ministry and as there is a wrong impression created regarding my views, I wish to state that they have decided to accept office and join the Ghulam Hussain Ministry without my approval and contrary to my advice and instructions.”²⁵ The case of disobedience by League members was sent to the Working Committee of All-India Muslim League to decide about the breaching of its rules and the conduct of local leaders. The Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League, however, supported the Sindh League’s decision as the party’s strength in the Assembly rose to 29 out of 35 Muslim seats when Hidayatullah and Pir Ilhai Bakhsh joined the party.²⁶ As a result, the first full-fledged Muslim League ministry in history was formed. It remained in office until the formation of Pakistan. It was a great victory for the League.

24 Syed, *Struggle for New Sindh*, 90.

25 Jinnah’s Press Interview, October 20, 1942, in *The Nation’s Voice*, Vol. III, 65.

26 Syed, *Struggle for New Sindh*, 93.

The Muslim League in Office

For some time, personal feuds and internal rivalries were put aside and work was done on the organization of the party in the province. New presidential elections were scheduled in June 1943 to choose a successor to Abdullah Haroon. It pitted Syed on one side and Khuhro on other with their supporters all vying for power. The scales between the two groups were balanced and Quaid, in his capacity of the President of the All-India Muslim League, intervened and appointed Syed as the new President of Sindh Muslim League on June 13, 1943.²⁷

Rivalries among Leaguers soon surfaced once again. This time by-elections in Shikarpur constituency caused the rift. Former premier Soomro was murdered on May 14, 1943 and his seat in the Assembly became vacant. Hidayatullah, the premier of Sindh, wanted to give the party ticket to K.B. Nazimuddin but Syed wanted K.B Ahmed Khan Sadhayu. After some to and for, the ticket was given to Syed's candidate after a tough contest he was elected. The rivalry between the two factions of the party increased dramatically. The fear arose that Hidayatullah might form his own party.²⁸

Under Syed's League presidency, the proportion of Syeds and Pirs on League various councils and committees rose considerably. It brought undoubted benefits such as victory in the Shikarpur by-election in a fight against the strong opposition candidate, Moula Bakhsh, the brother of the late-Allah Bakhsh. He successfully exploited the religious factor. During the final days of polling, the Sukkur district League held a meeting in which Makhdoom Murid Hussain Qureshi of Multan was invited to address a public gathering. He pointed out that it was the duty of Muslims to add to the glory of the League by voting for its candidates. His efforts were supported by many *murids* of Syed Ahmed Shah of Ranipur, whose *murids* were living in the area. The manipulation of religious symbolism was

27 G. M. Syed, *Nae Sindh Lae Jitojahad: 1935 Kha 1950 Tae Sindh Ji Siyasat Te Sarsari Nazar* [Sindhi: A Struggle for New Sindh: A Cursory Glance on the Politics of Sindh 1935-1950] (Dadu: G. M. Syed Academy, 1989), 127.

28 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 123.

not only witnessed on the League side but Moula Bakhsh also used religious rhetoric in an attempt to win support. Commenting on the election campaign by both parties, Sir Hugh Dow (1886-1978, Governor 1941-46), the Governor of Sindh, commented, "Religion was pitiful commentary on the state of democracy in that both sides enlisted support less by political arguments than by bands of Pirs and Molivis who went around threatening hellfire to all who dared to vote against their candidates."²⁹ Syed was again elected as the President of Sindh Muslim League on May 14, 1944.³⁰ The party was split; on one side was Hidayatullah and on the other was Syed.

Quaid remained in touch with the local leadership. Both groups tried to inform Quaid of their version of events. Both groups lodged complaint against the other. The premier Hidayatullah wrote to Quaid on July 7, 1944 that there was a rift amongst the prominent Leaguers and if it continued it would lead to chaos within the party.³¹ Khuhro and Hidayatullah time and again charged Syed with disrupting the cause of the Muslim League with the aid of the Hindu leader Nihchaldas.³² Syed blamed Hidayatullah and his group for maligning the League. He charged the ministerial group led by Hidayatullah with corruption and moved resolutions and no-confidence votes against them.³³

Towards the end of August 1944, Khuhro was arrested for the murder of Soomro and the League's Assembly member from Shikarpur, K. B Ahmed Sadhayu passed away. Once again competition between the two groups broke out over the nomination for the vacant seat. It pitted Syed against Khuhro and Hidayatullah. After the charge of murder was made against Khuhro, tension between Syed and Hidayatullah heightened and reached its peak at the end of 1944. The rivalry continued prompting Hidayatullah to write to Quaid that Syed was in the process of

29 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 122.

30 NAP, QAP, F. 1102, 227-229.

31 Waheed Ahmed, ed., *The Sindh Story, 1940-1947: Towards Pakistan, Opposition, Infighting and Victory* (Islamabad: National Documentation Wing, Cabinet Division, Government of Pakistan, 2011), 79.

32 Ahmed, ed., *The Sindh Story, 1940-1947*, 84.

33 Ahmed, ed., *The Sindh Story, 1940-1947*, 81-82.

establishing a Syed raj in Sindh. He blamed Syed for expelling his supporters from the party and appointing his own people.³⁴ He argued that the party was not only for Syed but was for all the Leaguers.³⁵

Syed wanted to award a League ticket to Agha Ghulam Nabi Pathan, the Vice-President of the Provincial Muslim League while Hidayatullah wanted to give it to his son, Anwar Hidayatullah. The Provincial Parliamentary Board, as anticipated, decided to award the ticket to Pathan. Hidayatullah was annoyed and not ready to accept the decision. The issue again went before Quaid who finally gave the green light to Pathan to contest the elections. Hidayatullah was even more annoyed and the power struggle enmity grew between the two. Syed wrote, "Hidayatullah turned his entire governmental ministry to defeat the party candidate and supported the opponent candidate K. B. Moula Bakhsh, brother of the late Allah Bakhsh."³⁶ The party position seemed to be weak, however, and, in a compromise, it was decided that Pathan would step down and the party ticket would instead be given to K. B. Nizamuddin, the cousin of Hidayatullah. Both parties agreed but as the election approached K. B. Nizamuddin withdrew his nomination providing Moula Bakhsh with an easy victory. The incident showed once again that personal rivalries were more important than the party programme, party discipline, and party solidarity. It is not wrong to say that personal and group rivalries in Sindh weakened the Muslim League.

The same kind of incident also took place during the by-elections in Tando Muhammad Khan constituency in 1945. The constituency was the stronghold of the Mir group. It received the party ticket and Hidayatullah also gave his support. Syed opposed the candidate.³⁷ The rivalry was weakening the League. The events of the previous few months had become a major scandal and caused huge damage to the reputation and prestige of the party. The

34 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 123.

35 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 124.

36 Syed, *Struggle for New Sindh*, 117.

37 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 124.

central command instead of taking any stance against the two groups tried to play the role of the mediator. Quaid called Syed to Bombay and tried to persuade him to act in the larger cause of Muslim solidarity in India. This was followed by a visit by Liaquat Ali Khan, the All-India Muslim League General-Secretary, and Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman (1889-1973) and Muhammad Ismail (1896-1972), both League officials, but there was reconciliation between the two groups. On February 12, 1945 Quaid again appealed to both leaders, "To end all differences at this critical juncture." He further stated, "I make this appeal in the name of our cause and for the sake of our carrying on our struggle which is a matter of life and death and which lies in front of us to achieve and realize our cherished goal of Pakistan."³⁸

Syed and Hidayatullah were not always at loggerheads. It was alleged that Syed and Hidayatullah in a joint campaign caused Khuhro to be jailed for the murder of Soomro.³⁹ Syed, in *Struggle for New Sindh*, acknowledged that it was he who had persuaded Quaid to accept Hidayatullah as the League Premier in 1942 and it was Hidayatullah who supported him for the League presidentship in 1943. Their conflict was not personal but was all about power.

Open Cracks in the Muslim League Organization

The political situation worsened. The internal feud and power politics so blinded the Leaguers that they defeated their own government by tabling a vote of no-confidence against their own premier Hidayatullah. On February 24, 1945, the Hidayatullah ministry was defeated by 25 votes to 19.⁴⁰ Leaguers had defeated their own administration. Dow, however, called Hidayatullah in and gave him some time to consolidate his position by revamping his Cabinet. In this tense and desperate situation, Hidayatullah approached Moula Bakhsh, an opponent of the League, for help in the formation of a ministry. He offered him a ministry of his own. This brought Hidayatullah the support

38 Jinnah-Syed talks, February 12, 1945, in *The Nation's Voice*, Vol. IV, 67-68.

39 M. Rafique Afzal, *A History of the All-India Muslim League: 1906-1947* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 408.

40 Syed, *Struggle for New Sindh*, 123

of Moulā Bakhsh and his supporters. Syed responded by sending two telegrams to Quaid on February 24 and February 27 making him aware of developments. In his first telegram, he tried to justify his stance of removing the Hidayatullah ministry: "Fifteen out of 28 members of Muslim League Assembly Party made an urgent written demand to throw out the present ministry."⁴¹

Quaid was furious. He replied, "Your telegrams of the 24th and 27th February Regret to say that on your admission, you have adopted unconstitutional methods and lent yourself to unworthy intrigues, playing into the hands of enemies, have let down your leader and your party which you belonged, thereby you have already damaged our cause and the prestige of Muslim League, you have precipitated a crisis have broken party discipline, caused a split, shaken the solidarity of Sindh Muslims."⁴² He added, "You have wrongly resorted to methods which are calculated to undermine the basic structure of the league organization, its aims and objects. This course of action on your part is highly improper, detrimental to Muslims interests and to Muslim League, it is futile to give advice and instructions anymore."⁴³ Quaid's angry response to Syed was justified on the grounds that 1945 was a crucial year because general elections were forthcoming and the party had to perform well in all the Muslim majority areas in order to prove its claim that the League was the only party that could represent and speak for Muslims in South Asia.

The high command was, nevertheless, reluctant to take strong action against Leaguers in Sindh for the sake of Muslim solidarity. It wanted to keep the Muslim League government in Sindh in office. Hidayatullah once declared that he would rather quit the League himself rather ask the new minister, a non-leaguer, to quit the cabinet. On the other hand, the high command constantly tried to persuade Syed to change his stance. Syed agreed and his group voted once again for Hidayatullah. After securing their vote

41 Syed, *Struggle for New Sindh*, 125.

42 Syed, *Struggle for New Sindh*, 125-26.

43 Syed, *Struggle for New Sindh*.

for the premiership, Hidayatullah then ousted Moula Bakhsh.

Unity was once again restored in the League, but it was a temporary settlement. On the question of the distribution of tickets for the 1946 elections, the groups splintered once and forever. This time there was no reconciliation. This time the split in the Sindh League elicited strong action by the high command. M. H. Gazdar informed Quaid in a letter to him on August 21, 1945 that in connection with the upcoming elections, the Leaguers had busied themselves in awarding as many seats as they could to their own groups. He warned Quaid that all four groups—Khuhro, Mir, Syed and Hidayatullah—were busy in solidifying their groups in the assembly in order to capture the premiership. He further asserted that if the party was defeated in Sindh, it would be defeated in all the Muslim majority provinces in India.⁴⁴

Quaid attempted to create a balance among the groups by a balanced distribution of the party tickets. He created a new parliamentary board consisting of seven members; two members from Mir group, two from the Hidayatullah group, one from the Khuhro group, and the remaining two from the Syed group.⁴⁵ The Syed group, as expected, vehemently opposed this formation as their position would be weakened. Their grip on the League's Parliamentary Board was threatened. At the last moment, Jinnah assuaged him by selecting him as the president of this new board. The remaining members of the board were Hidayatullah, Mir Ghulam Hussain Talpur, Pir Illahi Bakhsh, Ayub Khuhro, Syed Khairshah, and Agha Ghulam Nabi Pathan.⁴⁶

As the elections of 1945-6 approached, the election board had started its work on October 1, 1945. A meeting was called at Syed's residence to award tickets. Once again differences of opinion erupted among the different groups. When they failed to reach a compromise, Syed, being the

44 M. H. Gazdar to Jinnah, August 21, 1945, in *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah Papers* (Jinnah Papers), ed., Z. H. Zaidi Vol. XII, 44-46.

45 NAP, QAP, F. 1104, 285-286, 335-336.

46 NAP, QAP, F. 1104, 285-286, 335-336.

president of board, adjourned the meeting and suspended the working of the board. Syed wrote the same day to Quaid, informed him about the adjournment of the session, and asked him to send the Central Parliamentary Board to Sindh immediately to adjudicate as some members (he indirectly referred to Hidayatullah and his group) were holding private meetings and issuing League tickets.⁴⁷ Hidayatullah along with Khuhro, Pir Ilhai Bakhsh, and Mir Ghulam Ali also wrote to Quaid on the same day. Hidayatullah alleged that Syed wanted to issue tickets to his group's members in Tharparkar and Hyderabad districts.⁴⁸ Syed wrote another telegram to Quaid on October 3, 1945 justifying his decision to adjourn the meeting by writing that he had received communications from 25 members of the Provincial Council that the board should be suspended due to the high handedness of some Leaguers who were also ministers.⁴⁹

The high command was furious. Quaid sent a telegram to Khuhro on October 13, 1945 in which he expressed his hope that the current impasse could be resolved by the Central Parliamentary Board. He warned that at that time the major issue was, "Pakistan versus Akhand Hindustan and if Sindh fails, God help you."⁵⁰ Liaquat Ali Khan, along with Nawab Ismail Khan and Mir Hussain Imam, arrived in Karachi as members of the Central Parliamentary Board to adjudicate. After intense negotiations in several meetings, they made Syed responsible for the upheaval.⁵¹ Quaid also arrived from Quetta and held intense negotiations with all stakeholders especially Syed. He took disciplinary action against him by expelling him from the party in January 1946. The Vice-President Gazdar was made the new President of the party.⁵² A local Committee of Action was formed and immediately took charge. The Committee consisted of Khuhro, Gazdar, Ghulam Nabi Pathan, Hatim

47 Syed, *Struggle for New Sindh*, 142,143.

48 Hidayatullah to Jinnah, October 1, 1945, in *Jinnah Papers*, Vol. XII, 195-196.

49 Syed to Jinnah, October 3, 1945, in *Jinnah Papers*, 215.

50 Jinnah to Khuhro, October 13, 1945, in *Jinnah Papers*, Vol. XII, 248.

51 Syed, *Struggle for New Sindh*, 143.

52 *Daily Gazette*, January 3, 1946. 1.

Alavi, Mir Ghulam Ali Talpur, and Yousif Abdullah Haroon.⁵³

Syed was furious about this action and was angry at the high command's decision. In these circumstances, he announced that his Progressive League would act as a separate party from the Sindh League and nominated his own candidates separate from the candidates of the Sindh Muslim League. Thus, Syed who was known as the real organizer of the League in Sindh parted ways with the Muslim League. He never returned. It was he who had taken League to the masses and had introduced them to the name and programme of the party. This time both the Muslim League high command as well as Syed dug their heels in and refused to meet each other half way. Syed was annoyed with Quaid. He wrote extensively in his books on the parting of the ways with the League. He kept complaining about Quaid through his writing by arguing that Quaid had listened to those people who had entered the party merely to exercise power and influence. He further wrote that Quaid did not understand him and his principled stand. After being expelled from the League Syed became furious and openly challenged it. After the 1946 elections, he joined hands with the Congress and with the Nationalist Muslims in order to oppose the League in the Sindh Legislative Assembly.

League at the Polls

Sindh went to the polls on January 21, 1946 nine years after the previous election.⁵⁴ This time the Sindh Muslim League performed well. The Muslim League captured 28 seats while Syed's group and the Nationalist Muslims won four and three seats respectively. While Congress received 21 general seats, the Europeans received 3 and Labor received 1 seat.⁵⁵ Sardar Vallabhi Patel and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad of the Congress visited soon after the election results, perturbing the Leaguers. Although the League emerged as the single largest party in the assembly, Congress, in a coalition with Syed and the

53 *Daily Gazette*, January 3, 1946. 1.

54 *Daily Gazette*, January 22, 1946. 1.

55 Syed, *Struggle for New Sindh*, 161.

Nationalist groups, and with one labour vote, garnered the same number of votes as the League.⁵⁶ The Congress party unanimously elected Syed as the leader of the coalition. Syed tried to form a coalition government but, in the end, the newly-appointed Governor of Sindh, Sir Francis Mudie (1890-1976, Governor 1946-47), called on Hidayatullah to form his Cabinet.⁵⁷ Syed led the opposition party in the Assembly and within few days he tabled a vote of no confidence.⁵⁸ It was defeated by one vote, 30 to 29, with the help of three seats held by the European members of the Assembly.⁵⁹ Mir Bande Ali Khan Talpur, who was elected on the League's ticket, switched parties and sat with the opposition coalition but again joined the League when he was offered a ministry by Hidayatullah.⁶⁰

A virtual deadlock occurred in the Assembly and so Mudie, Governor of Sindh, dissolved the Assembly and announced new elections for December 9, 1946. Sindh became the only province in all of India where elections were held twice. This time the League pulled out all the stops to capture all the seats in Muslim constituencies in order to demonstrate that it was the real representative of the Muslims. The Pirs and the League joined hands as the elections drew near. Pir Ali Shah of Badin re-entered the League fold in October when he was given a ticket for the Karachi East constituency where he had many followers and was sure to win. This was done in spite of the opposition to his nominations because of his open campaigning against the party in the previous elections. More importantly, he was not a member of the League for long enough to qualify as one of its candidates. The decision in his favour, however, was regarded as necessary in the interest of the League. The level to which Pirs were ready to re-think their alliance once circumstances changed, and the readiness of the League to accommodate them within their ranks, was an indication

56 Daily Gazette, February 2, 3, 1946. 1.

57 Daily Gazette, February 9, 1946. 1.

58 Daily Gazette, February 12, 1946. 1.

59 Khadim Hussain Soomro, *The British in Sindh: Immoral Entry and Exist* (Sehwan Sharif: Sain Publishers, 2008), 165.

60 Daily Gazette, March 29, 1946. 1.

of their willingness to compromise. A number of Pirs were with Syed but when they saw that he had been defeated they switched sides and joined the League. The League happily took them back. The glaring example was the selection of Makhdoom Ghulam Haider of Hala as the League's official candidate for a Muslim rural constituency, Hyderabad North, when the League ignored the fact that he previously backed out of supporting their candidate at the last movement and directed his *murids* to support the candidate of the Syed group.⁶¹

Candidates switched their loyalties from one party to another for the sake of their personal interests. An account of what happened in Sindh from 1937 to 47 makes dismal reading of the League's politics in the province. Powerful and influential figures had no loyalty to the party programme and no respect for party discipline; their personal interests were paramount. The predicament of the League did not end with the expulsion of the Syed group. Hidayatullah, Khuhro, and Mir Bandeh Ali Khan Talpur also abused the League position to further personal rivalries and in a quest for power. Hidayatullah informed Quaid on November 17, 1946 that Khuhro was working against the League spirit.⁶² Despite all the odds, however, the Muslim League emerged as the most successful party by securing 33 seats out of 35. While the remaining two seats were won by the Nationalist Muslims, they also soon joined the party. Thus, in this way, the League took all the 35 Muslim seats and emerged as the sole representative of the Muslims in Sindh. On January 3, 1947 Hidayatullah was once again sworn in as the premier of the province while Khuhro, Pir Ilhai Bakhsh, Abdul Sattar Pirzada, Ghulam Ali Khan Talpur, and Pir Bandeh Ali Khan took the oath as ministers in his Cabinet.⁶³ In this way, after a long struggle, the Muslim League was able to fully win Sindh for Pakistan. Quaid as the head of Muslim League played its cards well and tried its utmost struggle to take all the

61 Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 127.

62 Hidayatullah to Jinnah, November 17, 1946, in *Jinnah Papers*, Vol. XV, 421.

63 D. A. Pirzada, *Growth of Muslim Nationalism in Sindh: Parting of Ways to Pakistan* (Karachi: Mehran Publishers, 1995), 197.

factions together. Finally, under his superb leadership and tactics Muslim League won all the Muslim seats and emerged as undisputed party of Sindh's Muslims.

Conclusion

Muslim League after failing, tumbling and infighting, finally achieved its cherished goal, Pakistan. Sindh played its due share in this regard. At the final stage of the Pakistan Movement, it not only shared its responsibility being a Muslim majority province but led the movement from the front. While reaching its target, Muslim League experienced great difficulties and faced many hurdles to win over Sindh for Pakistan. The journey continued and finally reached its conclusion. The disunity, rivalries and factionalism remained the hallmark in the politics of Muslim Leaguers in Sindh. However, Quaid's superb strategies and policies greatly succeeded in winning over Sindh for the larger cause of Pakistan. Indeed, Sindh not only joined the League's camp but at several occasions led the Pakistan Movement. On many occasions the leaders of Sindh due to their personal hatred and struggle for power damaged the reputation of the League in Sindh but on the question of Pakistan they unanimously stood firm like a rock.