

PUNJAB POLITICS AND ELECTIONS OF 1937

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ABSTRACT

In the following pages an attempt has been made to discuss the political scenario in which elections were held. It traces the election campaigns and manifestoes of both the Unionist party and the Muslim League and tries to inquire about those factors which led towards the success of the Unionist party. Understanding the political worldview of Sir Sikandar Hayat and Jinnah is emphasized in order to evaluate their roles in Punjabi politics in their proper context. This study has a multidimensional approach towards analyzing the determinants of electoral politics in Punjab during the 1937 elections.

Key Words:

Punjab, All-India Muslim League, Unionist Party, Sikandar-Jinnah Pact, Indian National Congress.

Introduction

Punjab, often known as the "land of the five rivers," is the region bounded and nourished by the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej rivers.¹ In terms of sectarian geography and economic vitality, Punjab was a crucial province that would play a key role in the last days of the Raj. This meant that British policymakers in India and London, as well as the Congress hierarchy, the Sikh leadership, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the head of the Muslim League (AIML), were all particularly interested in the political ramifications of the Punjabi language. Whereas Jinnah viewed Punjab as the base of his Pakistan plan, Punjab is no longer regarded as such. Punjab had its first general elections in 1937. The Congress won a landslide win in five provinces and Congress was able to create an alliance governments in two additional provinces, a triumph that verified the party's electoral efficiency and potential. It established its claim to be a 'National Party.' The Muslim League, oppositely did poorly, predominantly in the Muslim-majority regions of Punjab and Bengal. While it performed well in non-Muslim areas, this was insufficient to justify the League's right to be the single symbolic body of Muslims. The achievement of regional parties similar the Unionist Party in Punjab and the Krishak Lok Party in Bengal presented that Muslim voters were primarily focused on "local" or "provincial" issues and were unaffected by issues affecting all of India. What was true of the League likewise applied to the Congress in terms of Muslims. The latter, however, was unable to get sufficient Muslim seats to establish its support among Muslims. As a direct consequence of the outcomes of the elections, it is now plainly evident that neither the Muslim League and nor the Congress possesses the credibility to claim the right to represent India's Muslims.

Thus, instantly subsequent 1937, Muslim League and the Congress agreed on themselves the mission of rallying Muslim sustenance and recruiting a higher number of Muslims to their groups. The Congress was driven by the aspiration, as well as the claim, to be the sole representative organization of India's masses, regardless of religion, caste, or creed. Meanwhile, the Muslim League's entire survival was at stake—if it could not establish its right to characterize India's Muslims, it faced annihilation. The only hope was in establishing the authenticity of its right to be a third party in the state, that could only be accomplished by recruiting a sizable number of Muslims. Thus, this 'shared purpose' became the primary cause that ultimately resulted in the 'parting of the means among the League and Congress; for the triumph of one party inevitably meant the disaster of the other.'² Following his arrival to India, Jinnah was nominated president of the Muslim League in 1934, and during the organization's annual assembly held in Bombay in 1936, he amended the party constitution. It was determined that we would take part in the elections that are going to take place, and as a result, the Parliamentary Board was established to coordinate our electioneering. Jinnah decided to travel to Bengal and Punjab, two of the most significant Muslim majority

¹Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial series 'Punjab vol. 1 *The Province; Mountains, Rivers, Canals and historic areas; and the Delhi and Jullundur Divisions* (Lahore: Sang-i-Meel Publications, 1998), 31.

²Deepak Pandey, Congress-Muslim League Relations 1937-39: 'The Parting of the Ways,' *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1978), Published by: Cambridge University Press, 629

provinces, in order to consolidate his political power and garner support from the regional authorities. As a result of his prior association with Sir Mian Fazl I Husain, he traveled to Punjab in April 1936 in an effort to gather sustenance from Unionists as well as other parties. Initially, he spoke with Fazl I Husain with the intention of persuading Unionist Muslims to run for election on the League's ticket. However, Fazal-i-Husain believed that this would be detrimental to the Muslims of Punjab and maintained his position that he would only run for election under the banner of the Unionist Party. Jinnah, instead, reformed the Punjab Muslim League and placed Dr. Allama Mohammad Iqbal in the position of president.

On May 21st, 1936, he announced that the Muslim League Central Parliamentary Board will be established. Eleven of its members were from the Punjab Muslim League, while Majlis-e-Ahrar contributed four and Ithad-i-Milat contributed three. This partnership quickly began to show signs of developing fissures. The leader of the Ithad-i-Milat party, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, along with three of his important supporters, resigned from the Board in June. The reason that they provided for leaving the board was that they thought of complete independence, but the Muslim League had not accepted its doctrine. Batalvi stated that they intended to contest the election using the Shaheed Gunj event as their primary argument. The requirement of a five hundred rupees charges for the contestants who were to be picked for accepting the election was the source of Ahrar's and other members of the Board's displeasure, which ran to the resignation of Ahrar from the Board. The Unionist Party gained a positive reputation as a secular political party as a result of the countless community services it provided to people of all colors, creeds, and religions. It had incorporated Muslim electable and electorally eligible persons in the party, and as a result, the Muslim League had a actual small chance of succeeding in Punjab deprived of the backing of the Unionists. When Mian Fazl I Husain passed away in 1936, the political condition in Punjab changed suddenly, and Sikandar Hayat was appointed as Mian Fazl-i-successor. Husain's Despite this, the overall status of the Unionist Party did not change as a result of this event.³The Unionist party drafted a platform that called for the adult franchise, which would contribute to the abolition of the separate electorate system. In this method, seats intended for community groups were to be automatically suspended. The press slammed the Unionist platform for including this anti-Muslim proposal just to appease the Sikhs.⁴

Mr. Jinnah's attempt to unify broad-minded Muslims like the Congress Muslims, the Ahrars, the Leaguers, and the Ithad-e-Millat—showed fruitless. Sir Fazl-i-Hussain, obviously, had previously declined to link this alliance. It should be noted that the Muslim League campaigned on a rather progressive populist platform—its electoral manifesto closely matched the Congress in many ways. Additionally, many prominent Muslim Congressmen, such as Chaudhuri Khaliquzzaman and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, had combined the League's Central Parliamentary Board, and in the provinces (Uttar Pradesh), there was a hidden among the league and congress and to help each other during the election movement. Thus, on his historic electoral journey, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru urged Muslim people to vote for League candidates. With the exception of two or three seats, Congress did not nominate any applicant to face the Muslim League. As a result, the possibility of a Congress-League alliance following the elections was not to be ruled out. As a result, the reactionaries cannot let the Muslim League prevail in Punjab. The Muslim League Parliamentary Election Board in Punjab's several constituencies disbanded soon after its creation. The liberal movement was shattered. The Ahrars, Punjab's main Muslim party at the time, was the target of a severe movement of defamation launched directly by Fazl-i-Hussain. They were blamed for deserting the Muslim cause for failing to join in the satyagraha launched to reclaim Shahidganj from its Sikh community. On the day of election, hundreds of falsified letters purportedly signed by one Ahrar leader to another expressing their aversion to being embroiled in the Shahidganj dispute were disseminated to incite Muslim votes against them. Ahrar and Muslim progressives were defeated, and up to 80 Muslim legislators in Punjab joined the Unionists. The Unionists' election "campaign" and the subsequent founding of the Parliamentary Unionist Party are textbook examples of political opportunism. Unionists did not vote for either of the two running candidates in some constituencies. Both were given the role of "fighting out" the elections until the results were determined. Whoever was elected was to be admitted to the Unionist Party. Several other voters were granted the Unionist ticket. As a consequence of this, a number of successful candidates later combined with the Unionist Party. They lacked a real political agenda upon which to operate in the administration; their objective was to seek their own self-interests and to act as agents of the imperialist administration.⁵

³ Muhammad Iqbal Chawla, "Reimagining the Role of Punjab in the Pakistan Movement: Punjab Perspectives." *Journal of Pakistan Vision*, Vol 19, (2018): 3.

⁴ Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, "The Unionist Party, Some aspects: 1927-1937," *Pakistan Vision*, vol 2 (2006): 49-64.

⁵ Sajjad Zaheer, *Light on League-Unionist Conflict*, (Bombay: People's Publishing House, 1944), 6.

In May 1936, Jinnah announced the establishment of the Muslim League Central Parliamentary Board, which included 11 members from Punjab's Ittehad-e-Millat and Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam parties. These parties tendered their resignations from the Board of Directors of the Muslim League during the month of June in 1936, which rendered the Muslim League unable to field candidates in the various constituencies. Although the Congress was a significant political party created in 1885 with a stronger structure than the Unionist party, it also had a poor role in rural Punjab politics, despite the existence of district and primary offices across Punjab. Although the fact that it was an effective organization representing the popular group, it was unable to have much effect in the province. As election day approached, all political parties appeared to be passionate about the election campaign. There are four separate groups within the League. In response, The Hindu National Party and the Akali Sikhs may count on the support of the Congress. Two leading political parties in the province, League and the Congress, were holding rallies. Jinnah and Nehru were occupied with several processions.

The Unionist party's leaders did not initiate such initiatives, and the party did not publicize candidate lists before to the election.⁶ In several seats, candidates were required to compete against one another, with the winner being declared a Unionist.⁷ Numerous leaders ran for office not on the Unionist party platform, but the strength of their own traditional, common, and spiritual power. Many people of the Unionist party got the votes based on *biradrisim*.⁸ Nomination papers for the 1937 elections were due in November of that year, and voting wasn't slated to begin until the beginning of the new year, in January of 1937. Since there was only one political party, the Unionists announced their candidates; in many cases, the elected official was already a member of the Unionist Party.⁹ Because they were confident in their abilities, the Unionist Party did not run in the elections as a representative party. In the words of Ian Talbot, the party did not hold a public rally to persuade people about the policy's worth. They were under the impression that the government personnel was there to do this task.¹⁰ They did not have to address the whole public because some specified groups were entitled to vote, although the majority of Punjabis were denied this fundamental claim. Moreover, the Unionist Party was operating as a governing elite with no philosophy to adhere to, and as a result, they were not interested in gaining popular sympathy in the first place. The elections were notable in that they were the first to draw a large number of candidates from all political parties. Only a few candidates were returned to the Assembly without opposition, whereas before 1937, most of the contestants had no trouble re-capturing their spaces. All parties participated with full democratic zeal. Together with the Hindus, the Sikhs and other minorities united in contradiction to the Unionist administration, which was regarded as imposing Muslim dominance over the minority. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) ran for election on the platform of preserving Indian independence, anti-Communal Award vow, anti-Shahidganj fight, Sikh rights, Kirpan problem, and other issues, among others.¹¹ Neither public meetings nor events were scheduled by the Unionist Party throughout the election campaign. The major goal of the Unionist party was simply to "hold on to power," as the phrase goes.¹² The Unionists, although they depended less on public gatherings and more on backroom politicking, were deemed by the League to have done more substantial harm to the political unity of Muslims than any other party. "Our major opponent," Jinnah referred to them; he said that they were not a political party at all, but rather "backers of naukarshahi implying a direct relationship between the Unionists and the framework of colonial administration in Pakistan."¹³ Although it was anticipated that Fazl-i-Husain would be able to maintain control of the Unionist party during the 1935 election campaign, this proved to be difficult due to his bad health and a rift within the party that developed during the campaign. As Sir Sikandar Hayat's fame developed, Fazl-i-Husain found himself in a difficult situation. "Punjab Politics," a pamphlet published in 1936 by Fazl-i-Husain, communicated his political

⁶*The Times of India* (Bombay), 13 January 1937.

⁷*Ibid.* 29, 8 February 1937.

⁸Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj 1849-1947*, (Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1988), 108.

⁹Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, "The Elections of 1936-37 in the Punjab and Political Position of the Muslim League," *Pakistan Vision*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 22.

¹⁰ Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1988), 130.

¹¹ Akhtar Hussain, "The Elections of 1936-37 in the Punjab and Political Position of the Muslim League," 55.

¹² Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of the Punjab* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1972), 14.

¹³David Gilmartin, "A Magnificent Gift: Muslim Nationalism and the Election Process in Colonial Punjab," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1998): 423.

ideals. In it, he claimed that he would join the election movement as long as he did not have to compete against the Muslim League, which he did not have to do. The League of Arab States sent an invitation to Fazl-i-Husain before the 1937 elections when Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah announced that he would run on the League's platform in the forthcoming elections. In response to the invitation, he declined. Because of his dominant place in Punjab politics, he became unpleasant and egoistic, and as a result, he put his interests ahead of the rights of Muslims in the state of Punjab. According to Ashiq Batalvi, Jinnah was annoyed by the Muslim League's refusal to collaborate since the Muslim League lacked support in Punjab and, as a result, need aid. As a result of the disappointment of the dialogues, Jinnah met with Allama Muhammad Iqbal, who guaranteed him that he would be of assistance. Although Ashiq Batalvi's point of view on Jinnah's dissatisfaction at Fazl-i-Husain's rejection is no more rational than Jinnah's own, this is because Fazl-i-Husain, a regional leader, cannot be compared to the Quaid-i-Azam in terms of stature. He essentially wanted to make it feasible for Fazl I Husain to perform a more important part in Muslim politics, but he was hampered by his inability to look beyond his regional interests to grasp the bigger picture. He did not indicate that he was relying on his support to succeed by making this pledge. The debate of Jinnah with politicians was an autonomous and sensible policy for him to use as a politician, while other writers saw it as a critique of Jinnah's political ability. After Fazl-i-Husain passed away just a few months before the elections in 1937, Sikandar Hayat was selected to take over as the lead of the Unionist party. It was decided to hold the elections, and as expected, the Unionists won around 90 percent of the Muslim seats in addition to a considerable number of rural seats of non-Muslims.¹⁴ To frustrate Mr. Jinnah's efforts to breathe fresh life into the Punjab Muslim League, the leaders of the Unionist Party decided to fight the league's revitalization. When it came to Punjab, the Unionist Party owned the corridors of power; its leaders were in command of affairs. In the approaching elections, according to opinion polls published in the top Punjabi media and government estimations, the Unionist candidates will win nearly entirely Muslim seats in the Punjab Assembly, according to the surveys. Papers, letters, and contact amongst Unionist leaders have been examined, and their goals of eliminating the Punjab Muslim League and isolating Punjab Muslims from the organization's operations under its then-leader, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, have been exposed. When Jinnah poked his nose into Punjab politics, the future chief minister, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, was extremely blunt: "and if the meds—Jinnah would burn his fingers." Despite his vile personality, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan rose to the position of chief minister in Punjab. A few journalists in Punjab were also bought off by the Unionist apparatus, and several prominent persons were coerced into supporting the Unionist contestants by frightening them with grave repercussions if they did not provision the Unionist candidates. The followers of the PML were given the sense that their continuous support for the Muslim League would make their life more difficult in the future. Many newspapers, including the daily Inqilab and the Eastern Times, published articles criticizing the Muslim League's central leadership for disrupting the political situation, as well as peace and tranquillity in Punjab. Jinnah later released an announcement declaring that " Punjab is the supreme official-ridden region, and that certain leaders of Punjab were the creations of the British administration," which is understandable given his background. Exactly as had been predicted, the Unionist Party was capable to secure a significant majority of votes among Muslims in Punjab in the 1937 elections. Due to Sir Fazl's death in 1936, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was able to take over as the first Chief Minister of Punjab, a position that had previously been vacant due to the newly established provincial autonomy established by the Act of 1935. Politics is a game in which influence and the influential can exert control over the outcome. Chottu Ram had less influence than Sikandar Hayat Khan, and as a result, he lost his position as party leader to him.¹⁵ Sir Sikandar was India's toughest Chief Minister, commanding the backing of 120 of the Punjab Assembly's 175 members. He created the groundwork for India's most powerful pro-government ministry.¹⁶

Allama Iqbal accepted Jinnah's offer to serve as president of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League and the Provincial Board despite the terrible health problems he was experiencing at the time. Jinnah baptized a meeting of the League in Calcutta during Iqbal's final days, and Unionist Party head Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was there. Iqbal doubted the honesty of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and the other Punjabi rural frontrunners. As a result, even on his deathbed, he was advising Jinnah via various channels to exercise caution before signing the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact.

¹⁴ Syed Noor Ahmed, *Martial Law se Martial Law tak*, (Lahore: Dar-ul- Kitab, 1965),179.

¹⁵ Cesar P. Pobre, PhD thesis *History of Political Parties in Pakistan (1947-1958)*, (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1970), 54

¹⁶ Massarrat Abid and Qalb-i-Abid, "Unionist-Muslim League Relations and the Punjab Administration," *Journal of Research Society of Pakistan*, 45, No.2 (2008): 178.

Iqbal and Jinnah began a contact that lasted until Iqbal's death on 21 April 1938. Jinnah later released this communication, in which he mentions Iqbal as an associate and adviser who stood by him like a pillar in the dimmest days of the Muslim league.¹⁷

Results of the Elections

In the elections that took place in 1937, the Unionist Party was quite successful. Only Raja Ghazanfar Ali and Malik Barkat Ali, both members of the Muslim League, were successful in winning one of the two seats, however, Raja Ghazanfar Ali would later defect from the League and join the Unionist party. Malik Barkat Ali was the only member of the League to serve as a representative in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. Following the conclusion of the elections, the Governor of Punjab extended an invitation to Sikandar Hayat, the front-runner of the Unionist party, to participate in the formation of the new ministry. He declared that Feroz Khan Noon and Ahmed Yar Daultana and Khizar Hayat Tiwana, among other others, would be serving in the government. Malik Barkat Ali harshly condemned the ministry of Sikandar and noted that it was "the poorest probable ministry that could perpetually have been constituted."¹⁸ After the consequences were published, the League vanished its parliamentary majority; the Unionist party successfully convinced the League's winning candidate, Raja Ghazanfar, to accept the position of Parliamentary Secretary, which he joyfully accepted.¹⁹ According to Javed Haider Syed, Jinnah entrusted Raja Ghazanfar with the job of working for the League within the Unionist Party groups.²⁰ The League's entitlement to be the representative party of all Muslims was rejected by Muslim majority provinces, although it secured seats in Muslim minority regions in the most recent provincial elections.²¹

Results in Punjab

Political Party Name	Seats
Unionist party	98
Congress	19
Khalsa National party	13
Muslim League	02
Hindu Mahasabha	12
S. Akali Dal	11
Majlis-i-Ahrrar	02
Ittehad-e-Millat	02
Independents	16

In July 1937, the Congress Party anticipated Cabinet control in seven of eleven provinces, and virtually all political prisoners were released in these regions. Soon afterward, political prisoners in the Andaman Islands staged a hunger attack in protest of their detention, at which point they were transferred to mainland jails. The seven provinces that had Congress Cabinets were: United Provinces, Frontier Province, Bombay Presidency, Bihar, Madras Presidency, Central Provinces, and Orissa. The first Cabinet in Assam was dismissed in September 1938, and the state was governed by a Congress Cabinet at the time. Despite the absence of the Congress Party, a Cabinet has been formed in Sindh with the support of that party. There has been a new Cabinet in Bengal led by members of the Congress Party since December 1941. It's only in Punjab that Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan's Ministry has constantly resisted the Congress. After the Congress entered government in seven provinces, the administrations took on a decidedly nationalist tone, and the Congress's prominence skyrocketed.²² The following is a breakdown of the percentage of seats each party held in the Punjab Legislative Assembly after the elections and the creation of the Ministry, controlled by Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan:-

¹⁷ Liaquat H. Merchant and Sharif Mujahid, *The Jinnah Anthology*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 124.

¹⁸ *The Tribune* (Lahore) 3 March 1937.

¹⁹ *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 4 April 1937.

²⁰ Javed Haider, "Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan-A Political Biography," M.Phil.thesis (Quaid-i-Azam University, 1985)

²¹ Nasreen Afzal, *Role of Sir Abdullah Haroon in the Politics of Sindh (1872-1942)* University of Karachi: 2006, 203.

Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-1942*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), 329.

Unionist	101
Hindu Nationalists	9
Sardar undar Singh Majithia's Party	13
Akali	10
Congress	28
Ahrars	2
League	1
Independent Muslims	3
Total	167

All of these conclusions were almost certainly real for Jinnah in the years before 1937. However, it appeared as though following the 1937 election movement and following years in which Jinnah arose into relatively near interaction with the Muslim crowds, he was profoundly inclined by the eagerness and sense of harmony displayed by the Muslim crowds when he attracted to them to support the Muslim League's program and policy. However, the uncaring logician, as Jinnah famously characterized himself, was affected by the Muslim people's passionate warmth and spiritual passion. What was crucial was that, following Congress's rejection of the Muslim League's request for representation in Congress Cabinets, Jinnah did not adopt an entirely communal approach. He was still debating whether or not to put together a coalition of different minority groups to fight against the dictatorial Congress. Because of this, the resolution that criticised the formation of Congress Ministries without genuine minority representatives referred to "the safeguarding of the interests of the Mussalmans and other significant minorities." It did so by citing the spirit of the Government of India Act, 1935 as well as the instrument of Governors' Instructions. In another resolution, the Muslim League outlined its vision for India: "complete independence in the arrangement of a federation of free independent republics in which the privileges and welfares of Muslims and other sections are fully and efficiently secure."²³

Overall Results of the Elections of 1937

AIML did well in Muslim-majority provinces like Madras, Bombay, United Provinces, CP and Berar, and Assani. AIML was only successful in winning 12 seats out of a total of 56 that were reserved for Muslims in the Councils. Each and every one of these seats was located in one of three provinces (Bombay, Madras, and Bengal). Analyzing the consequences would show that neither Congress nor Muslim League was very widespread with Muslim voters. Nearly half of the Muslim seats in the Assemblies, or 243, were secured by provincial parties. Independent candidates won 23.5% of the remaining Muslim seats. 31 of the 56 seats in the Councils were won by Independent candidates, which is more than 55%. The other 13 seats were split between the diverse provincial parties. Muslim voters chose local parties like the Unionists in Punjab, the Khudà'i Khidrnatgr Party in NWFP, Muslim Political Party and United Party in Sindh, and the Krishak Proj Party in Bengal.²⁴ AIML was successful in securing 108 seats in the legislative bodies that are reserved for Muslims, out of a total of 493 Muslim members. Of the 121 seats up for election in Bengal, AIML won 39. The situation in Punjab was dire. In the election for the Punjab Legislative Assembly, only one AIML candidate was successful. Emerson detailed the outcomes of the various parties in a letter to Linlithgow dated February 22nd, 1937. He also shed insight on the Unionist Party's electoral triumph. Its ultimate strength is unknown at the moment due to ongoing discussions with independent members, although it is expected to be closer to 100 than 90, giving it a vibrant majority over all other political parties collective in a House of 175 members. It conducted a meeting a week ago at which several organizations and people pledged their allegiance to the party, and Sir Sikandar's leadership was reaffirmed without opposition. Thus, the party appears to be in a good position.²⁵

²³ Khalid bin Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase, 1857-1948*, 2nd edition, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 89.

²⁴ Uma Kaura, *Muslims and Indian Nationalism: The Emergence of the Demand for India's Partition, 1928-40* (Lahore: Book Traders, n.d.), 108-109.

²⁵ Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics, 1936-1939: The Start of Provincial Autonomy, Governors' Fortnightly Reports and other Key Documents*, (New Delhi Manohar Publishers, 2004), 76.

After 1937, the important event in Punjab politics that would have the greatest impact on religious leaders' political allegiances was the formation of the Muslim League as a political party that transcended the rural-urban divide that had hitherto led the politics of Punjab. Jinnah's all-India reputation as head of the Muslim League enabled him to create an autonomous place of power in Punjab Muslim politics following 1937, sovereignty of the provincial political parties that controlled Punjab matters. However, establishing such prominence in Punjab politics did not happen overnight, nor was it a calm feat for Jinnah. Jinnah formed a contract with the new Unionist premier of Punjab less than a year after the Unionists won the 1937 election, in which Jinnah accepted the Unionists' power in Punjab politics in exchange for their linking the Muslim League and supportive it at the national level.²⁶

However, this defeat did not discredit the League or its headship, since many had predicted that the League would gain just a little Muslim seats in the next elections. Jinnah's importance persisted as significant and powerful as interminably. He was the solitary Muslim politician who could compete on an equal footing with the Congress leadership. The findings did not diminish his standing among Muslims. His cordial contacts with notable Muslim families around the country aided in the effectiveness of his political stance. Ahmad Yar Daultana, the Muslim Unionist, admired Jinnah much. Occasionally, notable leaders' family members shared their interests with Jinnah. Ahmad Yar Daultana penned to Jinnah. "During the 1936-37 Punjab Elections, I regarded you to be my leader for the previous 25 years and have always been faithful to you." He contributed to the establishment of a hospitable atmosphere for Jinnah and Sir Sikandar Hayat, who eventually signed a treaty in Lucknow in 1937. He (Jinnah) was optimistic about the League's future political success; hence, he addressed the party's inadequacies and "guaranteed...that inside a short period, the Muslim League would converted a powerful party skilled of challenging any other party in the nation." His prediction was fulfilled, and the Muslims of Punjab united under the banner of the League. Even the Punjab Premier was forced to align himself with Jinnah due to the unique circumstances. The Pioneer lauded the League's performance, noting that Jinnah had a solid foothold in Punjab "surrounded by approximately a year after commencing the project."²⁷ Muslim intellectuals like Dr. Muhammad Iqbal saw from the results of the 1937 election that "a political organization" that didn't promise to help the average Muslim couldn't win over "our [Muslim] masses." Moreover, the INC's resounding success in many provinces demonstrated to the leaders of the Muslim mainstream provinces that the INC would be the strongest party if it chose to adopt the federal portion of the Government of India Act of 1935. Since it was started in 1906, it let any adult Muslim join. It also talked about improving the living conditions of workers and raising their pay. It was decided "to make a plan for an economic, social, and educational program and put it into action." As time went on, AIML shifted its focus from "fully responsible government" to "complete autonomy." Large numbers of people from all three major political parties in India were present at the Lucknow session: Unionist Party leader Sir Sikandar Hayat, Krishak Proja Party leader A.K. Fazl-ul-Haq, and Muslim Party leader Sir Muhammad Sa'adullah. AIML's most important accomplishment at this time was getting the support of the Unionist Party. Under the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact, Muslim followers of the Unionist Party joined AIML, and AIML got the Unionists' support on general matters that affected the Muslim public.

From the election results, INC learned that it didn't have much support among Muslims. It then started a movement called "Muslim mass contact" to spread its dispatch among Muslims.

AIML didn't like the campaign, so it told people about the bad things that were happening to Muslims in provinces where INC was in charge. AIML was able to convince the typical Muslim, that INC would never care about preserving Muslim culture. The use of Vande Mataram as the national anthem, the education programs Vidy Handir and Wrdhá, the promotion of the Devangri script, and the ongoing riots between Hindus and Muslims all seemed to show that. When the INC asked all of its ministries to resign on October 22, 1939, saying that India had been drawn into World War II without its leaders' permission, Jinnah told Muslims to celebrate December 22, 1939, as Deliverance Day. The resolution that was passed at different meetings that day said that the Congress Ministry had done its best to ignore Muslim opinion and destroy Muslim culture. It also said that the Congress Ministry had messed with Muslims' social and religious lives and stepped on their political and economic rights. R. Coupland, who is known for his work as a constitutional historian of (British) India, asserts that Indian observers concurred with British officials that relations between Hindus and Muslims had never been more tense than in 1939.²⁸

Sikandar-Jinnah Pact 1937:

²⁶ David Gilmartin, *Religious Leadership and the Pakistan movement in the Punjab*, 505.

²⁷ Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, *The Elections of 1936-37 in the Punjab and Political Position of the Muslim League*, 59.

²⁸ Safir Akhtar, *Pakistan Since Independence: The Political Role of the 'Ulama'* (2 Vol) Vol 2, Thesis. Uni of York. 1989. 156

After the elections in 1937, the Congress on the go a Mass Contact Campaign in provinces where most of the people were Muslims. The Unionist Ministry thought it would be hard to go up against the Congress deprived of the help of alternative National party with a lot of power in the Subcontinent. So, Sikandar Hayat and the rest of the Muslim Unionists decided to ask the Muslim League for help. They wanted to use the All India Muslim League against the Indian National Congress to stop it from doing politics in Punjab. Only two of the seats in the Provincial Legislative Assembly went to the Muslim League. Soon after the election results were announced, it took a turn for the worse. Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, who was one of its winning candidates, left the party and joined the Unionist Party. He was offered a job as a Parliamentary Secretary in the Punjab Government by the Unionist Party. Therefore, the leaders of the Muslim League came to the conclusion that actionable actions were required to establish political equilibrium in the state of Punjab. They came to the conclusion that they would cooperate with Sikandar Hayat and the Unionist Party on religious matters. Therefore, the All India Muslim League desired to form an alliance with the Unionist Party in order to combat the actions of the Indian National Congress's Mass Contact Movement in Punjab, increase the scope of its political engagement, and guarantee the region's political cohesion. Muslim Unionists went to the Muslim League meeting in Lucknow with a lot of enthusiasm. During the meeting, they spoke out against Congress leadership, Jawahar Lal Nehru. Still, the most significant thing that came out of the Lucknow meeting was that both sides signed what is well-known as the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact. In October 1937, the pact was signed finally.²⁹ It was called as the Unionist Party, and it was a multi-communal, rurally-based organisation that had sway over the provinces bordering the Punjab. It was also a landowners' party.³⁰ Its directors regularly functioned as advisers and ministers to the kings. The Muslim League condemned the party for cooperating with Congress. Additionally, Congress was tough on it since its program was blatantly reactive. Also, it was a voice for Punjabi causes that were not represented by the League or the Congress.³¹ Jinnah is revered as a great Indian leader since he championed both India's and his muslims people's causes. When it came to negotiating and constitutional scholarship, no one in India was on par with Jinnah. Even as early as 1917, Mr. Montagu, India's Secretary of State, wrote: 'Jinnah is an extremely intelligent man, and it is, obviously, an atrocity that such a man ought be incapable of leading his own nation. However, notwithstanding his personal heroism, Jinnah lacked the vigor and forcefulness necessary for a spearhead of the Muslim masses. 'There was as much difference between him and the Indian hamlet with its mud cottages,' Pandit Nehru commented cynically.³² An All-India Muslim League Council member, perhaps enraged by his removal from the council, attacked Jinnah's strategic aloofness from previous political movements. Nothing, not even the most colossal national or religious crises, can shake him. He is unaffected by Jallianwala Bagh. He is unmoved by Khilafat's epic showdown and the heartbreaking breakup of the Islamic brotherhood.

To a large extent, these findings applied to Jinnah in the years leading up to 1937. It appears that Jinnah was strongly impressed by the Muslim masses' enthusiasm and sense of solidarity when he called on them to adopt the Muslim League's program and policy following the 1937 election campaign and in future years when he was in regular contact with Muslim masses. Perhaps no other community had a more enthusiastic response to the call of leadership than this one. However, the emotional warmth and religious passion of the Muslim people impacted even Jinnah, the cold-blooded logician he once defined himself as. The League, the Congress, and the Government were all considered to be in a three-way tug-of-war for freedom by the League's leadership. When it came to negotiating with Congress and the government, the League believed that the more ministries it controlled, the more sway it had. People's consciousness and organization provide political organizations their strength and raise their profile, yet this basic democratic truth was overlooked: power does not come from ministers, but from the people.

*The Muslim League tolerated the Unionist Ministry so that it could be exploited as a pawn in Indian politics. the Muslim League suffered a crushing defeat and a national embarrassment.*³³

The Muslim League conducted its annual session in Lucknow in October 1937. The primary consequence of this sitting was the Jinnah-Sikandar Pact, which had a significant political impact. One of the highlights of this

²⁹Manzoor Abbas Maken and Maqbool Ahmad Awan, "Political Scenario of Colonial Punjab 1923-1947: Role of Landed Elite of the Shahpur District," *Punjab University Historical Society*, Volume: 34, No. 01, January – June (2021): 87.

³⁰Satya M. Rai, *Partition of the Punjab: A study of its effects on the Politics and administration of the Punjab 1947-56*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965), 34.

³¹Wayne Ayres Wilcox, *Pakistan: The Consolidation of a Nation*, (Columbia University Press, 1963) 41.

³²Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, (1936) 68.

³³Sajjad Zaheer, *Light on League-Unionist Conflict*, 21

meeting was the admission of three Muslim Head of state from India's Bengal, Punjab, and Assam states. To discuss matters before the Muslim League Council meeting, Jinnah, Malik Barkat Ali, Sikandar Hayat, and Mir Maqbool Mahmood met in a private room. Mir Maqbool Mahmood drafted the statement, which Sikandar Hayat recited in his address after minor revisions.³⁴ Sir Sikandar rejected the original draught submitted by Malik Barkat Ali because of a few concerns.

Impacts:

Jinnah effectively acknowledged the Unionists' power in Punjab politics in exchange for their linking and supporting the Muslim League at the national level. While this did not give Jinnah any more power in Punjab (where the Unionist Party continued to operate independently), it did establish the League as a demonstrative Muslim body to which rural and urban Muslim influential in Punjab observed for an outlet for Muslim political aspirations on a national level.³⁵ The Eastern Times editorialized against the so-called Sikandar-Jinnah contract, emphasizing that it was not a compact between Punjabi Muslims and the Quaid, and that these Punjabi Muslims were not referred.³⁶

According to David Gilmartin, "The Sikandar-Jinnah Pact later caused a lot of trouble in Punjab because it didn't stop the fights between Muslims in cities and Muslims in the countryside. This led to considerable controversy in Punjab. Instead, the effect of the Pact was to concentrate these kinds of conflicts within the League itself to a significant degree. Some urban Muslims, like the Ahrar, became increasingly antagonistic to the League after Jinnah's deal with the Unionists in 1937, although the League still had the support of a sizable minority of urban Muslims. However, they were extremely critical of the role that the Unionists played in the League, and they attempted to thwart any attempts by the Unionists to obtain administrative control of the Muslim League Punjab after the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact was signed. Even though some urban Muslims, most notably the Ahrar, were increasingly radical, this Jinnah received numerous grievances from Urban League members living in Punjab in the years following 1937. These individuals claimed that Unionists were taking control of the provincial Muslim League organization to restrict its growth. The Unionists, who supported Jinnah on a National level, did not want an active Muslim political organisation in Punjab, thus they wanted to dominate the League provincially to keep it dormant. Despite supporting Jinnah across India, Unionists weren't interested in a Muslim political organisation in Punjab. Jinnah, even though he understood the validity of this accusation, refrained from taking action as long as the Unionists maintained their position as the preeminent political force in rural Punjab. Whenever possible, he put pressure on the Unionists to support League policy and bolster League organization. However, he was powerless to stop the Unionists from seizing control of the Punjab League, as doing so would have violated his policy of neutrality by publicly aligning himself with the views of urban Muslims. Jinnah may have succeeded in the short term in putting the League above the urban-rural strife in Punjab, but this came at the expense of building an efficient League organization in the province. It ended up becoming the reason for the expansion of the Muslim League into Punjab.³⁷ Certain Unionist officials chastised Sikandar Hayat Khan for consenting to the deal, claiming that it boosted the League's status in Punjab. According to Sikandar, 'the agreement will not affect the parties' position concerning Punjab.³⁸ According to some historians, he joined the Muslim League solely to bolster his administration in the face of the Congress's April 1937 'Mass Contact Movement' in Punjab.³⁹ While the pact was simply symbolic, it angered Punjabi Hindus and raised misgivings about Hindu involvement with the Unionists. Neither the Unionist Party's Haryana Hindus nor the Nationalist Progressives resigned. According to Sir Chhotu Ram, the leader of the Haryana Hindu Jats, the agreement maintained the integrity of the Unionist Party in its totality. Raja Narendra Nath asserted that the participation of Punjabi Hindus in the assembly was necessary regardless of how Muslim politics evolved, and he made this assertion in a speech.⁴⁰ In exchange for Jinnah's much-

³⁴ M. Rafique Afzal, *Malik Barkat Ali: His Life and Writings* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1969), 38-40.

³⁵ Dr S. M. Ikram, *Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970) 237-51.

³⁶ The Eastern Times on Quaid-i-Azam by Ahmad Saeed Review by: Ghulam Sarwar Pakistan Horizon, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Fourth Quarter 1985), Published by: Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, 90.

³⁷ Yasmin Roofi & Khawaja Alqama, "Ethnic Dilemma in Pakistan and Division of Punjab: End or Beginning of the New Era of Conflict," *Journal of Politics and Law*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2013): 158.

³⁸ I.A. Talbot, "The 1946 Punjab Elections." *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 14, no. 1 (1980): 69.

³⁹ M.A.H. Ispahani, *Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah: As I knew Him* (Karachi: Forward Publications Trust, 1966), 54.

⁴⁰ Gerald A. Heeger, "The Growth of the Congress Movement in Punjab, 1920-1940." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1972): 47.

needed assistance in national politics, Sikandar Hayat was offered the position of head of the Punjab Muslim League within the Pact. Jinnah accepted this offer. The fact was that the Premier's Sikandar-Jinnah Pact was not a political blunder. Because both sides benefited from the agreement's benefits and drawbacks. The Muslim League acquired a reputation by associating with Punjab's governing elite and recruiting influential members of prominent Unionist families like Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan, Mian Mumtaz Daultana, and Nawab of Mamdot. Quaid lauded Sikandar's contributions and referred to him as a stalwart of the Muslim League. Sikandar was also aware of the Muslim League's attitude and national solidarity following his electoral victory. Although the Muslim League did not do well in these elections, it was ultimately the victory of a great politician. In summary, the 1937 elections served as a springboard for the League's involvement in regional politics and subsequent elections, it prospered day by day. It retained its foundation, ideology, methods of operation, pace, and confidence, even though it won two seats in the first round. The passage of the Lahore Resolution just over two years later, in 1940, when it proclaimed a political fight against the united India idea, whereby all the British, Hindus, Sikhs, and other notable factions of Muslims who were nationalists believed in. A defeated party cannot possibly be as forceful as the League was in the political realm. If the British are backing the Unionists, then the Unionists and British should not have expressed their opposition to the Lahore Resolution and the League's leadership.

Jinnah chose the province of Punjab, and more specifically the city of Lahore, as the location for an important meeting of the Muslim League, which was to be held to approve the demand for Pakistan. The initial "P" in the Allahabad Address and later under the presidency of Ch Rahmat Ali signifies Punjab. This is due to Punjab's status as a pivotal province throughout India's development. Without Punjab, the Muslim claim for a separate homeland had no substance. Following the signing of the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact, the leadership of the Muslim League was able to exert indirect control over the Unionist coalition government. During the Second World War, the British war effort was primarily supported by the province of Punjab in the Indian subcontinent. Lahore, in the geographic center of Punjab, would have been an ideal location for the annual session of the Muslim League, but Sikandar Hayat refused to cooperate with the plan. It is said that Lahore, Punjab's capital, is the very center of the province. Perspectives from Punjab on the Matter of Reimagining the Role of Punjab in the Pakistan Movement Instead of coming up with the partition plan that was supposed to be used to draught the Lahore Resolution, Sikandar came up with the 7-zones scheme of confederation instead. In addition, it is said that Sikandar Hayat was the mastermind behind the killing that took place on March 21st, 1940 in Lahore. On that day, a British magistrate was responsible for the deaths of several Khaksar workers. Sikandar Hayat did not demonstrate a very high level of enthusiasm when organizing the gathering of the All India Muslim League for its annual session to be held in Lahore from March 22-24. Jinnah displayed resiliency in the face of all of these challenges, and the meeting went ahead as planned from 22-24 March 1940. On the other hand, the annual session took place in Lahore, and during it, the Muslim League demanded that the Indian Muslims be given their own separate homeland based on the two-nation theory. The Lahore Resolution was hailed as a "demand for Pakistan" by Hindu media the next day, and this interpretation was echoed by the Muslim League and the Muslims of India.⁴¹ After the Muslim League established a well-defined program and agenda, the Punjab branch of the organization worked nonstop to increase support for the establishment of Pakistan. The leaders of Sikandar Hayat's own party, particularly Sir Chhotu Ram, were very unhappy with the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact, which left Sikandar Hayat feeling down and out. Furthermore, now that Pakistan was being demanded, the leaders of Sikandar's party sought Sikandar to take a clear stance either in favor of or in contradiction of the Lahore Resolution. But Khizar Hayat didn't say whether he was for or against the demand for Pakistan, and it was because of these things that the demand for Pakistan was so popular. The demand for Pakistan was skyrocketing due to Jinnah's popularity and the allure of establishing a Muslim state in India. This disagreement and debate between Khizar and Mamdot, the Muslim League's demonstrative in Punjab, began in June of 1943 and centered on the meaning of the Jinnah-Sikandar Pact. Jinnah made the trip to Punjab to mediate the situation there. The conflict began when Khizar Hayat Khan voiced his opposition to the establishment of a Muslim League party in the Punjab Assembly during a meeting of the League's council held on March 7th, 1943 in Delhi. The meeting was called to discuss the possibility of forming a Muslim League party in the Punjab Assembly. He stated that it violated the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact, but he undertook to reorganize the party on a more proletarian level. In March of 1944, talks between Jinnah and Khizar took place, but they were unsuccessful. As a direct result of this, Khizar was kicked out of the Muslim League. It was also Lord Wavell's fault that the talks between Jinnah and Khizar broke down. Wavell wanted to keep the Unionist Party's secular identity, and he didn't want Jinnah to get involved in a local dispute. Both of these factors contributed to the talks' failure. After the failure of talks between Khizar and Jinnah, the

⁴¹ Muhammad Iqbal Chawla, Reimagining the Role of Punjab in the Pakistan Movement: Punjab Perspectives, 4.

Muslim League stepped up its propaganda in rural areas.⁴² As the League as an associated party (as the Premier would have done), re-established the League at the behest of the British) the Sikhs and Hindus and Unionist Muslims should have bolstered Jinnah. However, all of them, besides the British conspired to obscure the League's genuine status. This confirms the League's independence from the British. Despite widespread popularity, it was a demonstrative party of the Indian Muslims who have never made a concession on Muslim-related issues rights.⁴³

Conclusion

The Punjab Unionist Party was founded as a political organization that supported the British. The entry of the Muslim League into regional politics caused a significant upheaval, and the Unionist party quickly began to lose its support in the political landscape of the province as a result. The political landscape of 1937 is dominated by Unionists who were committed to serving their communities to the best of their abilities. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was a seasoned politician from Punjab who aspired the expansion of his home region in every imaginable way. He hoped to see Punjab prosper. The Premier did not make a strategic error in signing the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact, which, was the truth of the matter. Because after signing the pact, both parties were subject to the terms and conditions, including the advantages and disadvantages. The Muslim League was able to increase its prestige by becoming associated with the group that was in power in Punjab. Additionally, the Muslim League was able to find influential supporters even among the most prominent Unionist families, such as Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan. Quaid lauded Sikandar's contributions to the Muslim League and referred to him as a sturdy pillar of the organization. Sikandar Hayat was forced to respond to harsh criticism from members of the Congress, the Unionist Party, and the Muslim League. Despite this, it turned out to be advantageous for Sikandar in the short term, but in the extensive run, it was the triumph of a great statesman.

⁴² Ibid, 6.

⁴³ Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, "The Elections of 1936-37 in the Punjab and Political Position of the Muslim League," 63.