

No Shades of Views, No Variation of Opinion: A Case Study of Undivided Punjab's First Premier Sikander Hyat-Khan

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The standard narrative in most literature on the partition of India and Pakistan is to define the affected minority as pro-partition and the majority as anti-. This is not only reductionist and ahistorical, but it represents a sort of 'historical stereotyping' of the worst kind; one which continues to have a lasting impact on politics, society, and diplomacy today. A close examination of Muslim leaders from the pre-partition era shows that many opposed the division on specific grounds and worked actively and publicly to push for an alternative to a two-state solution. Not only did they lose that battle, but unfortunately, their voices, work, and contributions in this regard have gone largely unrecognized, even by historians and scholars. In an effort to address this gap in the literature, this paper provides a categorization of minority leaders who opposed partition, as well as an in-depth examination of one such 'Muslim unionist,' Premier of an undivided Punjab, Sir Sikander Hyat-Khan. The evidence collected is used not only to broaden our collective understanding of the diversity of views amongst Muslim leaders at the time, but also to provide a more in-depth appreciation of the basis of their opposition, how it informs current debates, and why these otherwise well-known and respected figures found themselves on the losing side of history.

Keywords: Partition, Two-state theory, Affected minority leaders, All-India Muslim League, Sikander Hyat-Khan.

Introduction

Most treatments of the 1947 partition ignore the arguments of Muslim leaders who opposed a two-state solution.¹ This is not only problematic from the perspective of good scholarship, but it also reinforces a simplistic, reductionist, and apolitical understanding of debates that were occurring at the time – particularly in the Muslim community. Moreover, it is a type of 'historical stereotyping' of the worst kind because it reduces

the views of an entire population to a monolithic whole. As Harbans Mukhia (Quoted in Islam 2017, 11) writes:

the Partition of India took place because the Muslims wanted a separate homeland and Hindus wanted an undivided Bharat. No shades of views, no variation of opinion.

Mukhia (2015) goes on to note that while historians have given some attention to diversity of opinion among leading members of the majority, the same cannot be said of members of the minority community. "Far less attention," he (2015, 11) writes, "has been paid to such divergences within the leadership of the Muslim community." To this extent, scholars have unwillingly been complicit in promoting an ahistorical narrative that has two components: (a) Mohammed Ali Jinnah was the 'sole voice' of Muslims on the subcontinent, and (b) there was not any diversity of opinion among Muslims regarding the split.

Sole Voice: This aspect of the narrative has its roots almost a century ago when people like Lord Louis Mountbatten began to speak of Jinnah as the sole voice of the All-India Muslim League [AIML] and, by extension, all Muslims on the continent. When Jinnah said he had to check with members of his party before consenting to the partition because he was "not the Muslim League," Mountbatten replied:

You can try and tell the world that but please don't try to kid yourself that I don't know who's who and what's what in the Muslim League (Collins et al 1982).

Later Mountbatten added that Jinnah "was the Muslim League and what he said, they did...the whole thing [i.e., partition] ...depended on which way he was going to shake his head" (Collins 1982).

This narrative is also reflected in key texts about Jinnah, the AIML, and the partition, most notably Stanley Wolpert's (1984) *Jinnah of Pakistan* and Ayesha Jalal's (1994) *The Sole Spokesman*. "Jinnah sought to be recognized as the sole spokesman of Indian Muslims on the all-India stage," Jalal (1994, 4) writes. She (1994, 285) reiterates this when describing the moment that "the Quaid-i-Azam, the spokesman of India's Muslims, the father of a nation about to be born," accepted Mountbatten's decision to divide Bengal and Punjab.

This notion is not just reflected in the academic literature and historical accounts; it has also found its way into the popular conscience. Jinnah is not only referred to as *Quaid-i-Azam* or ‘Supreme Leader,’ but *Baba-i-Qaum*, ‘Father of the Nation’ as well. During the 70th anniversary of Pakistan’s birth in 2017, numerous articles were published around the world and, without exception, almost all listed Jinnah as ‘the founder,’ ‘the father,’ ‘the sole representative,’ or ‘the spokesman’ of the nation (Sheehan 2019, 97-98).

Muslim Homogeneity: The second component of this narrative is that there was not (and, by extension, is not) diversity of opinion among Muslims on the most critical issue of the mid-20th century. Instead, when it comes to the split, Muslims are depicted as an undifferentiated, monolithic *ummah* ‘community’ – uniform in their thoughts and opinions. There is, as Mukhia (2017) argues, little discussion in either the academic or popular literature of diversity of opinion among Muslims on this issue.

This narrative is not without consequence, both historically and in the current environment. Hindu nationalists, far-right thinkers, and other fringe elements have built on this narrative to argue that Muslims are to blame for the violence, mass killings, and widespread displacement that occurred in the aftermath of partition. By extension, it has also been used to justify continuing discrimination, prejudice, and violence. Not long ago, Ajaz Ashraf (2017) tied the increase in lynchings in India to the belief that Muslims were responsible for, and fully supportive of, a two-state solution (Singh 2017).

In addition, it is a narrative that continues to resonate in diplomatic circles around the world. It has impacted relations between Pakistan and its nation/state partners, many of whom have accepted the idea of uniformity and consensus when it comes to the nations’ founding and *raison d’être*. This is reflected in Daniel Markey’s (2013, 143) *No Exit from Pakistan* in which the author writes that Pakistani’s refuse to “suffer the indignity of taking dictation from New Delhi.” This, he (2013, 143) argues is:

a point of national pride and it runs to the core of Pakistan’s myth of itself as a homeland for South Asian Muslims. Pakistan’s founders could not accept the prospect of Hindu political domination within a larger India; their successors have no greater intention of accepting subordination to New Delhi today.

Setting aside the fact that it is hardly surprising that any nation would firmly and soundly reject the idea of 'political domination' by a foreign state, particularly a longstanding adversary, what stands out about this passage is like so many others about the founding it is based on the simplistic, ahistorical notion that (a) the nation's framers were of one mind and (b) there was a dichotomous choice – separation or domination – with no consideration of variations, or the many alternatives proffered by leaders, activists, and thinkers at the time. Those alternatives may not have won the day, but they remain relevant to the extent that no nation can escape the thinking of its Founders, any more than it can or should ignore the views of those on the other side(s) of the debate. It remains our commitment and duty as scholars to help people understand and grapple with both.

While this is important, it is not easy. More than two-hundred and forty years after its creation, America has not fully come to grips with the views of those who opposed its Founding. In the late 1780s, the 'Anti-Federalists' refused to support ratification for several reasons, including the absence of liberty protections and the fact that the nation had not yet addressed the scourge of slavery. While the 'Anti-Federalists' failed to the extent the Constitution did become the Supreme Law of the Land, they did succeed in bringing issues to the forefront that continue to resonate in the modern era. At this writing, for instance, the U.S. is still struggling to come to grips with its history of systemic racism.

The U.S. is not alone in this, any more than is Pakistan. This is why we not only look to and celebrate those who 'won' the day and established our nations, but those who - for often valid reasons – advocated in favor of a different path forward. In the context of Pakistan, while it is true that the demand for partition was driven by Jinnah and the AIML, and they did have the support of a large number of Muslims, the Quaid-i-Azam did not speak for *all* Muslims (as he himself said), nor – as this paper shows - did *all* Mussulman support a two-state solution. In the decade prior to the split, a number of renowned Muslim leaders challenged this idea and argued publicly that partition was neither inevitable nor wise for reasons that deserve serious consideration today, not only in an effort to correct the historical record but because the arguments they made are part of the fabric of the nation itself and should be recognized, discussed, and addressed. To do otherwise is to rob the nation of one of the best aspects of its past, the diversity of thought that accompanied its creation; as well

as what is best able to help it sustain and cope with the numerous challenges it will inevitably face going forward.

Literature Review: The Exceptions

While much of the literature paints Muslims as monolithic in their support of partition – there are a few exceptions, most notably work by Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1946), Mushirul Hasan (2006), and Shamsul Islam (2017).

Just prior to partition, Smith (1946) wrote about several Muslims, including many well-known Congressmen, who were also committed Indian nationalists. He (1946, 212-213) notes, “some of them have been nationalist because they were Muslims... others have been Indian-nationalist in spite of being Muslim: they have heard Muslim League propaganda and despised its communalism.”ⁱⁱ

Hasan (2006) built on this discussion to highlight the roots of Muslim nationalism in the pre-partition period, as well as to examine the philosophical underpinnings of this commitment. They “wanted to be led by persons who would represent not communalism but faith,” Hasan (2006, 164) writes. “They firmly believed that the experience of living together had molded the Hindus and Muslims into a common nationality.”

Islam’s (2017) *Muslims Against Partition of India* is the most recent and comprehensive work to take up this charge. In it Islam (2015, 28-29) argues that “patriotic Muslims” or Muslims who opposed the partition fall into four “categories”: (a) Islamic scholars who also happened to be prominent Congressmen and nationalists who were moved in this direction because of their religion i.e., Hakim Ajmal Khan, M.A. Ansari, etc.; (b) more secular individuals of Muslim descent, such as lawyers and other professionals i.e., Saifuddin Kitchlew, Asaf Ali, etc.; (c) those who adopted a nationalist philosophy in spite of their religion; and (d) anti-religious individuals who were born into a Muslim community i.e., Muslim intellectuals, students, Leninists and Marxists.

What unites these individuals is a shared understanding of Islam as a religion that preaches tolerance and acceptance. They believed that Muhammad was dedicated to the type of inclusion that he and his followers had been denied. As Haroon Moghul (2018) writes, they understood Muhammad to be a leader who “preached and attempted a politics of tolerance.” This sentiment is reflected in the words of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (2010, 32), a leading Islamic theologian and leader of

the Indian Independence movement, who in speaking about the creation of Pakistan said:

A division of territories into pure and impure is un-Islamic and a repudiation of the very spirit of Islam. Islam recognizes no such division and the Prophet says, 'God Has made the whole world a mosque for me.'

While this literature sheds some light on prominent Muslims opposed to partition, scholars have not presented a full accounting of these leaders, who they were, where they were from, the basis of their opposition, what - if anything - they had in common, and why their arguments failed to resonate.

Toward a More Complete Accounting: Pre-Partition Muslim Leaders Opposed to Partition

In an effort to begin to address the gaps in the research, a combination of archival, primary, and secondary research was used to compile the most complete account to date of Muslim leaders opposed to the division. The results, contained in Tables 1-3, include Muslim leaders in the period prior to partition who expressed opposition to a two-state solution i.e., 'Muslim unionists'. The term 'Muslim unionists' is used to refer to Muslim leaders (born or practicing, devout or not) who opposed a two-state solution and favored maintaining the union of greater India after independence from Great Britain. It is used in place of the more common but highly charged 'Muslim and Hindu nationalists' and 'patriotic Muslims' (Islam's 2017, 28-32).

In all cases, the inclusion of an individual in the Tables was based on (a) documentation in the primary or secondary source material of their opposition to a two-state solution in the period prior to 1947, and (b) that they were a 'leader' during this time. Recently the term 'founder' was re-conceptualized as "someone who was known and respected by their contemporaries" (Sheehan 2019, 98-99). According to Dreisbach (2012, 6-8) "in order to be recognized as a founder an individual has had to have been deemed worthy and recognized by his peers." Or as McCloskey (1967, 47) states so eloquently: "The great whom the present recognizes tend to be those who were thought of as great in their time. Tomorrow may enhance or diminish yesterday's reputation; it does not often create

a wholly new one.” In deciding what constitutes a ‘leader’ in the period prior to partition, this definition was adopted, and it is this understanding that guided decisions on inclusion in the catalog.

Table 1 contains a list of seven Muslim unionists from provinces that went to India in 1947. Table 2 focuses on Muslim unionists from provinces that went to Pakistan. In both cases, those provinces containing the smallest percentage of Muslims are listed first and the individuals by the year of their birth. Among other things, the Tables demonstrate the diversity of areas from which Muslim unionists hailed. They came from eight (8) or more than half of the fifteen provinces/princely states that made up the subcontinent prior to partition.ⁱⁱⁱ

Table 1: Muslim unionists from Provinces that Become Part of India^{iv}

	Name	Years	Province	% of Population that was Muslim Pre-partition	Position Prior to Partition
1	Shibli Nomani of Azamgarh	1857-1914	UP	15%	Islamic scholar
2	Hasrat Mohani	1875-1971			Islamic scholar and Poet
3	Dr Zakir Hussain	1879-1969			Governor Bihar, VP, President of India post-partition
4	Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari	1880-1936			Physician, President of INC
5	Ashfaqulla Khan	1900-1927			Activist
6	Shaukatullah Shah Ansari	1908-1972			Activist; Writer
7	Maulana Abul Kalam Azad	1888-1958	Delhi	33%	First Minister of Education, 1947-1958

Table 2: Muslim unionists from Provinces that Become Part of Pakistan^v

	Name	Years	Province	% of Population that is Muslim Pre-partition	Position
1	Syed Habibul Rahman	-----	Bengal	55%	-----
2	Syed Mohammad Sharfuddin Quadri	1901-2015			Activist, physician
3	Fazlul Huq	1873-1962			Premier of Bengal, 1937-1943
4	Mohammed Shafi	1869-1932	Punjab	58%	Lawyer, Politician
5	Fazl-i-Husain	1877-1936			Leader of Unionist Party
6	Muhammad Iqbal	1877-1938			Poet
7	Allama Mashriqi	1888-1963			Activist
8	Saifuddin Kitchlew	1888-1963			Politician
9	Sikander Hyat-Khan	1892-1942			Premier, Punjab 1937-1942
10	Khizar Hyat Khan Tiwana	1900-1975			Premier Punjab 1942-1947
11	Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah	1879-1948	Sind	71%	Premier Sind 1937-38; 1942-47
12	Allah Baksh Soomro	1900-1943			Premier Sind. 1938-1940; 1941-42
13	Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai	1907-1973	Baluchistan	88%	Party activist
14	Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan	1890-1988	NWFP	92%	Activist
15	Abdul Qayyum Khan	1901-1981			Chief Minister Khyber; Interior Minister 1947+
16	Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah	1905-1982	Kashmir*	---	Activist, later elected public official

**Note: Kashmir was partitioned in 1947, prior to that it was not a Province but a Princely state. Because the census was only done of British states, so the population of Muslims in the princely state of Kashmir at the time is not known.*

The notion of Pakistan did not gain much traction until the mid-to-late 1930s and even then it was unclear what Pakistan was or might be (Islam 2017, 49-57; Bose 2018, 147-155; Moon 1962, 20).^{vi} Consequently, for the purposes of this discussion, Table 3 focuses solely on those Muslim unionists who lived and worked in the decade prior to partition (roughly mid-1930s-1947) when the notion of Pakistan and a two-state theory entered the popular conscious. As in the previous Tables, these individuals are listed by Province and in order of date of birth.

The mere exposition of these Muslim unionists stands in stark contrast to the standard narrative that all Muslims followed Jinnah and the AIML in supporting a two-state solution.

Table 3: Muslim unionists Who Lived and Worked in the Decade Prior to Partition^{vii}

	Name	Years	Province	% of Population that was Muslim Pre-partition	Position at that time
1	Hasrat Mohani	1875-1971	UP	15%	Islamic scholar and poet
2	Dr Zakir Hussain	1879-1969			Governor Bihar, VP, President of India post-partition
3	Shaukatullah Shah Ansari	1908-1972			Activist
4	Maulana Abul Kalam Azad	1888-1958	Delhi	33%	First Minister of Education, 1947-1958
5	Syed Mohammad Sharfuddin Quadri	1901-2015	Bengal	55%	Activist
6	Fazlul Huq	1873-1962	Punjab	58%	Premier of Bengal, 1937-1943
7	Allama Mashriqi	1888-1963			Activist

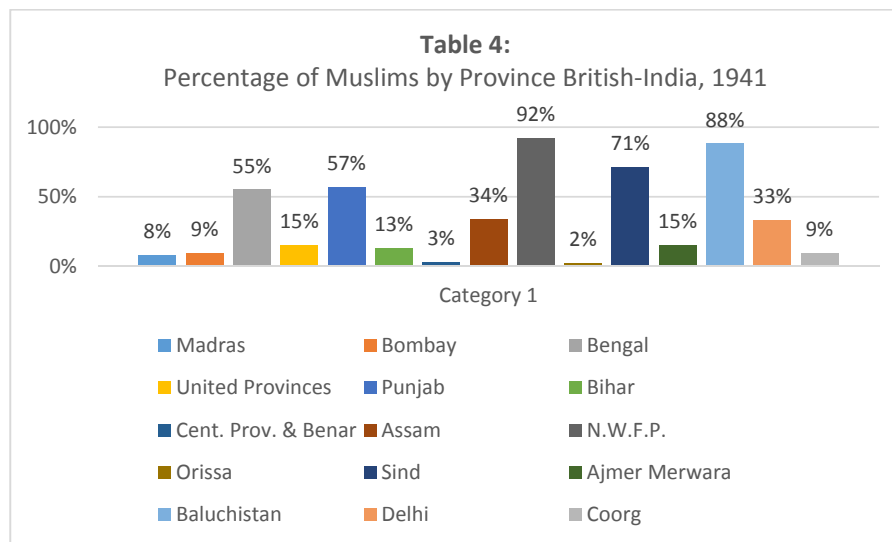
8	Saifuddin Kitchlew	1888-1963			Politician; Activist
9	Sikander Hyat-Khan	1892-1942			Premier, Punjab 1937-1942
10	Khizar Hyat Khan Tiwana	1900-1975			Premier Punjab 1942-1947
11	Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah	1879-1948	Sind	71%	Premier Sind 1937-38; 1942-47
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13	Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai	1907-1973	Baluchistan	88%	Party activist
14	Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan	1890-1988	NWFP	92%	Independence activist
15	Abdul Qayyum Khan	1901-1981			Chief Minister Khyber; Interior Minister 1947+
16	Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah	1905-1982	Kashmir*	----	Activist, later elected public official

**Note: Prior to 1947 Kashmir was a Princely state. Since the census was only done of British states only, so the population of Muslims in the princely state of Kashmir at the time is not known.*

In addition to bringing Muslim unionists out of the shadows, other important findings emerge from Table 3. Contrary to expectation, opposition to partition was more prominent among those who came from provinces in the North and West (those that eventually went to Pakistan) versus those from the South and East (those that eventually became part of India). Of the Muslim unionists, almost three quarters came from one of the five Provinces that formed the basis of Pakistan. Of those, one third came from the two most diverse of those provinces – Bengal and Punjab (see Table 4).

Second, most of these figures were either activists or elected officials, with the majority being in the latter camp. Interestingly, a large number of these officials were Premiers elected to serve in majority Muslim provinces following the adoption of the Government of India Act of 1935: Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah –Sind; Allah Baksh Soomro – Sind; Fazlul Huq - Bengal; Sikander Hyat-Khan – Punjab; Khizar Hyat-Khan Tiwana –

Punjab. All five of these premiers served in the three most diverse of the majority Muslim provinces: Sind, Bengal, and the Punjab respectively (see Table 4). Bengal and Punjab were so religiously diverse that they themselves were divided in 1947 –resulting in the creation of East and West Bengal; and East and West Punjab, respectively. East Bengal and West Punjab, along with Sind, Baluchistan, and the North Western Frontier Province [N.W.F.P.], went on to form the basis of Pakistan (see Table 4).



Note: Baluchistan, Bengal (East), N.W.F.P, Punjab (West), and Sind went on to form the basis of Pakistan. The remaining provinces went to India.

One possible explanation regarding why so many of the opposition leaders were elected officials who governed majority (or narrowly majority) Muslim provinces is found in the ‘laboratories of governance’ hypothesis. This builds on the classic “laboratories of democracy” idea first proffered by Justice Louis Brandeis in his dissent in *New State Ice Co. v. Liebmann* 285 U.S. 262 (1932). Referring to the states in the United States, Brandeis wrote that a “state may, if its citizens choose, serve as a *laboratory*; and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.” Since then, states in the United States, as well as other federal systems, have often been called ‘laboratories of democracy’ because their

leaders and governors are in a position to experiment with inventive and pioneering solutions and policies in a way the larger and more cumbersome central government is unable. To that extent they often model potential policy options for future adoption by other states and the federal system as a whole.

In the decade prior to partition, the provinces on the subcontinent were in a similar situation. As a result of the reforms and 1936 elections, provincial leaders such as Hidayatullah, Huq, Hyat-Khan, and others were selected to form governments, administer provinces, and lead their respective legislative assemblies. They were not only in a position to, but out of necessity did try numerous novel 'social and economic experiments' many of which were designed to address the key challenge of their time - communal tension. As a result, their rejection of partition may have stemmed from the fact that they knew firsthand that partition was not the only solution. They understood the idea that religiously diverse communities were ungovernable, and division was the only solution, was without merit. They knew this because at the same time those arguments were being made, these officials were at work in the provinces designing and implementing policies to address and diminish communal strife.

Another interesting finding from Table 3 is that a majority of the pre-partition elected Muslim unionists either disappeared, died, or were forced to resign prior to or during partition: Hidayatullah –died in office, 1948; Baksh Soomro – assassinated, 1943; Huq – forced to resign, 1943; Hyat-Khan – died in office, albeit under mysterious circumstances, 1942; Tiwana –marginalized and forced from Premiership at partition, 1947. Whether this is mere coincidence or the result of something more sinister and macabre, only time will tell; it is something scholars have begun to examine.

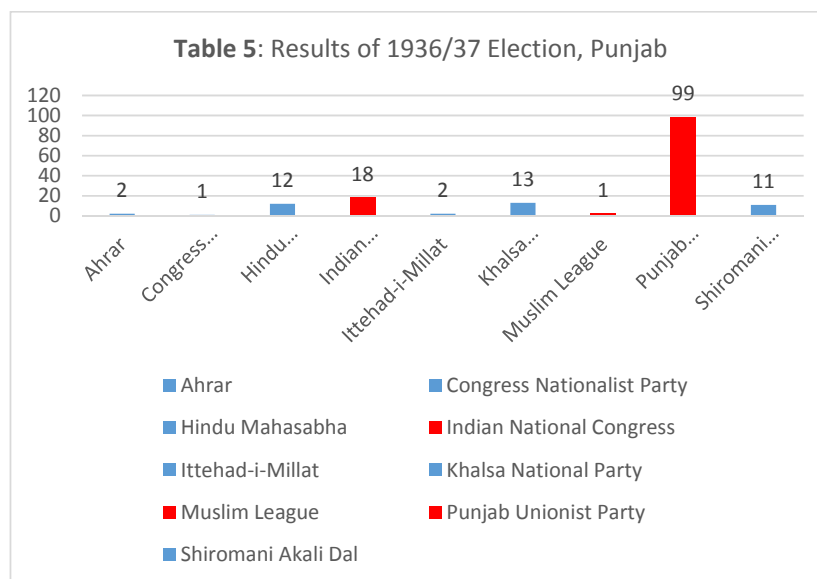
In his case study of Baksh Soomro, for instance, Islam (2017, 195-216) argues that a major reason that Muslim unionists found themselves on the losing side of history is that the AIML were willing to resort to violence to suppress them.^{viii} As Islam (2017, 122-123) writes, Soomro's assassins were members of the AIML. He posits this as evidence that:

Baksh [Soomro] needed to be eliminated because he was able to muster massive support from common Muslims throughout India against the scheme of Pakistan... only his physical removal could silence him and eliminate... [a] formidable Muslim leader of the anti-Pakistan movement.

The following account of one of Soomro's contemporaries, Sikander Hyat-Khan, is designed to delve more deeply into questions that arose after the data on Muslim Unionist leaders was compiled, categorized, and examined. The key questions include (a) whether the provincial leaders were more inclined to oppose partition because they saw firsthand that despite tension, people of diverse religious faiths could live and work together i.e., the laboratories of governance hypothesis, and (b) what impact the opposition they were facing from groups such as the AIML had on their ability to make their case?

The Life & Death of One Muslim Unionist: Punjab Premier Sikander Hyat-Khan

Following the death of Fazl-i-Husain in 1936, Sikander Hyat-Khan was selected to lead the Unionist Party in the Punjab and in the elections at the end of the year, the party won an overwhelming number of seats in the Legislative Assembly. The size and the scope of the Unionist's victory was impressive. As Table 5 shows, they captured 99 seats to Congress' 18, and the AIML's 1 (Yadaav 1981, 15-19, 133-134). In short order, Hyat-Khan was elected by the majority in the legislature to serve as the first Premier of an undivided Punjab.



No minority leader was more vocal in their opposition to a two-state solution than Hyat-Khan. This was clear throughout his life in politics, even before his election as Premier. The Government of India Act of 1919 not only established a new constitution but directed that after ten years a commission would be appointed to evaluate how it was operating and make suggestions for future reforms. Set up by the conservative British government in 1927, the Indian Statutory Commission, more commonly known as the Simon Commission after its Chair Sir John Simon, was composed of seven members, not one of whom was Indian. The absence of an Indian representative on the Commission resulted in a firestorm of conflict and controversy. Many parties, including the AIML and the Indian National Congress boycotted the Commission. A different scenario played out in Hyat-Khan's native Punjab, however, where the Punjab Muslim League led by Mian Mohammad Shafi and Fazl-i-Husain's Unionist Party decided to work with the Commission. To this end, the Punjab Legislative Council appointed a seven member Reforms Committee led by the thirty-five-year-old Hyat-Khan. Despite the tumult of the period, Hyat-Khan led the Committee in calling for seven major constitutional reforms.^x While still early in his political career, Hyat-Khan's work on the Committee not only underscored his commitment to independence, but his belief in a united India post-independence.

Almost a decade later, Hyat-Khan became just the second Muslim leader of "standing" to take "a public part in the constitutional discussion" (Coupland 1943, 204). R. Coupland (1943, 204) describes Hyat-Khan's 1939 *The Outlines of a Scheme of Indian Federation*, as a "sober," "concise" analysis of the existing problem." In contrast to other Muslim publications at the time, it contained no "reference to Hindu atrocities, no emotional appeals to Moslem sentiment, nothing about the Islamic world at large, no attacks on British imperialism" (Coupland 1943, 204). Instead he treated the constitutional problem "as a purely Indian problem which Indians can and must solve themselves" (Coupland 1943, 204).

The *Scheme*, or proposal, was designed to offer a framework for transitional governance on the subcontinent. It reflected Hyat-Khan's belief that "a Federation" was "not only desirable but indispensable for the ordered and peaceful progress of the county as a whole," as well as his commitment to India achieving administrative control over its own affairs as quickly as possible following the War. According to his Zonal Scheme, an Indian Federation was to be comprised of seven zones with

separate legislatures. These would then make up the unicameral Federal Assembly of 375 (Hyat-Khan 1939).

The Scheme was widely publicized in the press and in July 1939, Hyat-Khan and Gandhi met to discuss it. In response, the latter said: “[d]ominion status is a bitter pill for Congressmen to swallow and although the scheme is too complicated to form an opinion, yours is the ONLY solution of a constructive character...I am glad that you have decided to publish it in full. I must thank you for taking me into confidence and asking me to give my opinion on it. (Pirzada 1995, 179-180; Sheehan 2019, 102)”

The following March, the AIML held its annual meeting in Lahore, the heart of the Punjab, with Hyat-Khan serving as host. At the meeting, Hyat-Khan and Jinnah were nominated to write the first draft of what came to be known as the ‘Lahore Resolution,’ later known as The Pakistan Resolution and the nation’s founding document. Since Jinnah was busy, he was unable to participate in authoring the draft and Hyat-Khan was left to compose it single-handedly and in just one night. The draft, which is on file in the Muslim League’s Archives, is in many ways a reiteration of the proposal Hyat-Khan made the previous year. It envisions a confederation in which the provinces are granted dominion status; a United Dominions of India, with autonomy at the dominion level and responsibilities of currency, foreign affairs, and defense falling to the center.

The draft was presented to the Working Committee of the AIML on March 22, 1940 and ultimately revised to such an extent that the following year, speaking before the PLA, Hyat-Khan (Punjab Legislative Assembly Debate, 1941, 343) said:

It has been said that I am the author of the Lahore resolution. I have no hesitation in admitting that I was responsible for drafting the original resolution. But let me make it clear that the resolution which I drafted was radically amended by the Working Committee, and there is a wide divergence in the resolution I drafted and the one that was finally passed. The main difference between the two resolutions is that the latter part of my resolution, which related to the centre and co-ordination of the activities of the various units, was eliminated. It is, therefore, a travesty of fact to describe

the League resolution as it was finally passed as my resolution. It must be taken as the official resolution of the Muslim League which was ratified by the Muslim League.

From his early work on the Reforms Committee, to the publication of his *Scheme*, and his drafting of The Lahore Resolution, Hyat-Khan repeatedly voiced his opposition to a two-state solution and pushed both publicly and privately for an independent, inter-communal, and united India. In *Divide and Quit*, Penderel Moon recounts a conversation he had with Hyat-Khan in 1938. "I began talking to him rather enthusiastically about the merits of the Pakistan idea," Moon (1962, 20) writes "and suggested it might after all be the best way of dealing with the communal problem." According to Moon (1962, 20) the normally "calm" and "suave" Hyat-Khan responded "with blazing eyes":

How can you talk like this? You've been long enough in western Punjab to know the Muslims there. Surely you can see that Pakistan would be an invitation to them to cut the throat of every Hindu bania. [money lender] ...I do hope... I won't hear you talk like this again.

(A) The Roots of Hyat-Khan's Opposition: Laboratories of Governance in Action

One of the major outcomes of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 was to refocus the attention of Indians away from the center to the provinces. The reforms "provincialized" Indian politics and as a result, drove a "wedge between the interests of the provincial politicians... and the interests of all-India politicians who wanted to push for advance at the centre" (Jalal 1994,10). It was a division that would leave Jinnah and the League politically weakened and isolated for almost two decades and well after the next set of constitutional reforms.^x While the 1935 Government of India Act created an All-India Federation, expanded the franchise, and gave the provinces even more independence, it did little to break Britain's power over the center, give Muslims a voice at the all-India level, or raise Jinnah and the League's stature (Bose 2018, 114-115; Jalal 1994, 15-16).

As a result of these combined sets of reforms, by the mid-1930s the League was “considered to be a weak party” (Sandhu 2009, 50). This was evidenced by how poorly it performed in the 1936-1937 elections (Jalal 1994, 33):

In the Muslim provinces, Sikander Hyat-Khan brought the Unionists back to office, with a single Leaguer keeping Jinnah’s flag afloat in the Punjab assembly. In Sind and the N.W.F.P., the League did not win a single seat. In Bengal, Fazlul Huq’s ministry was a coalition, and this was in a Muslim province where the League could claim to have done best.

For Jinnah, who had long hoped to establish himself and his party as the spokesman for Muslims across the continent, the 1937 elections were yet another in a long line of major defeats. In their wake, in provinces like the Punjab (Hyat-Khan), Bengal (Huq), and Sind (Soomro), Muslim leaders who might one day challenge him for this mantle, had been elected and begun governing.

Ironically, Jinnah and the AIML might have been relegated to political obscurity if it had not been for Hyat-Khan who, in response to the former’s request, became the first and most prominent Muslim leader to agree to attend a League conference in Lucknow in October of 1937. Except for the Aga Khan III, few other Muslim leaders were inclined to attend the meeting, let alone support a now weakened Jinnah. Hyat-Khan’s decision was not, however, altruistic. At Lucknow, he negotiated with Jinnah what became the ‘Sikander-Jinnah Pact.’ The pact stipulated, among other things, that on his return to the Punjab, Hyat-Khan would “convene a special meeting of his party and advise all Muslim members of the Party who are not members of the Muslim League already, to sign its creed and join it.” The pact has long been interpreted as the first step on the road to the creation of a Muslim ‘homeland.’ As Stanley Wolpert (1984) wrote, the Sikander-Jinnah pact ultimately “made Pakistan possible.” This sentiment was echoed by Syed Amjad Ali (1981):

Thanks to the agreement reached between Jinnah and Sir Sikandar [*sic*] in Lucknow, the dream of Pakistan became real. All Pakistanis today should be thankful to these two great Muslim leaders and their wisdom.

What is not often understood about the pact, however, is that by allowing Jinnah and the AIML to speak for Punjabi Muslims at the center, Hyat-Khan shored up his own power and that of the Unionists in the province and at the same time fatally wounded the local League. As Jalal (1994, 39) writes, Jinnah and the League paid “a heavy price for the privilege” of speaking for Muslims at the center:

By agreeing to bring their followers nominally into the Punjab League, the Unionists were in fact ensuring the obliteration of an independent League in their province. Moreover, Sikander instituted in return for this limited mandate to represent their interests at the centre, the A.I.M.L. was to have no say in Punjabi affairs.

The pact underscores just how weak Jinnah and the League were in the Punjab and just how much of a stronghold Hyat-Khan’s Unionist party had. In a private letter to Jinnah written just after the Lucknow conference, Iqbal spoke about the “terrible decline... suffered [by] the AIML” in the Punjab (Mas’ūd 1968, 47-54):

Sir Sikandar (*sic.*) and some of his friends are creating the impression that the Muslim League has come under the control of the existing Unionist party... Such an impression is deemed fatal to the reputation of the All India Muslim League and if permitted to continue will completely alienate the sympathies of the Muslim public in the Province.

Almost a year later Shaikh Zafar Ali (1938, 479-480) reinforced this in a letter to Jinnah, “honest genuine [L]eaguers’,” he wrote, “predicted that the Punjab League, is now simply a Unionist creature, a bogus organization, existing only on paper, would soon be ‘absolutely dead.’” While talk of the League’s demise was exaggerated, there is no question that both Iqbal and Zafar Ali were correct to the extent that as a result of the reforms, election, and finally the pact, the League had little if any organization in the Punjab. It would remain this way until at least a year or more after Hyat-Khan’s death (Jalal 1994, 39).

With the AIML relegated to the center, Hyat-Khan pursued his long-standing interest in promoting intercommunal harmony among the many religious and ethnic groups that made up the province. The many efforts

that the Premier led in this regard are notable, and stretch from early in his administration until his untimely death in office; they include his early decision to form the first multi-religious cabinet on the subcontinent and his efforts several years later which resulted in the adoption of the all-important Sikander-Baldev Pact.

A Multi-Religious Cabinet: In a move that was both unusual and widely praised, immediately upon assuming office, Hyat-Khan formed a coalition government composed of representatives from the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Christian communities. This act epitomized what would become one of his most important contributions: he worked longer and harder than almost any other Muslim leader at the time to promote a united, inter-communal future for India. He did so in the tradition of the Muslim unionists who came before him and believed profoundly in Islam as a unifying faith, minority rights, independence, and collective self-rule for a united India. This includes individuals like Syed Ahmad Khan, Aga Khan III, Fazl-i-Husain, and others. The notion that Islam would be at odds with collective self-rule for a united India was anathema to their way of thinking; and it was at odds with the philosophical commitments of the Unionist party that Hyat-Khan was now leading. As he (Punjab Cabinet Program, 1937) said in an announcement to the press shortly after being elected:

The Cabinet is resolved to deal with a firm hand
with all those who, on one pretext or another, indulge
in pouring vials of communal poison through the Press
or from the platform... each one of us is pledged—
and will do his utmost—to watch vigilantly and to protect
scrupulously the legitimate interests of all communities
equally with those of his own.

The Sikander-Baldev Pact: One of his final acts to combat communalism was the adoption of the Sikander-Baldev pact. It was the culmination of years of effort on the part of Hyat-Khan's administration to peacefully address the tension between the Muslim and Sikh communities. The terms of the Pact between Hyat-Khan and Sardar Baldev Singh, leader of the United Punjab Party, were announced by the Premier at a press conference held in Lahore in June 1942. As Hyat-Khan said during that announcement (Carter 2005, 417-418; Mitra 1942, 344-345):

I was gratified to learn during the course of our recent conversations that you fully appreciated the importance of, and the imperative need, for, promoting, strengthening inter-communal harmony in the province. At this critical juncture it is the duty of every patriotic citizen to do his utmost, both by word and deed, to establish and maintain cordial relations with the members of other communities and thus assist in the maintenance of public peace and tranquility. Intercommunal goodwill is even more essential today in the interests of our province and safety of our country.

Among other things, the pact allowed Jhatka meat in government institutions, the inclusion of Gurmukhi as a second language in schools and increased the representation of Sikhs in government which had fallen below 20 percent. It was a final and important act by Hyat-Khan which not only demonstrated his commitment to intercommunal harmony, but more importantly, gave lie to the notion that diverse communities could not live together peacefully.

These were not the only steps Hyat-Khan took to promote inter-communalism, others included the: Unity Conference (1937), Communalism address in the PLAD (July 22, 1937), and his efforts to diminish tension regarding the fate of the Shahidganj Mosque (1938). While Hyat-Khan's attempts to ease communal tension were not always successful, there is no question they both reinforced and reflected his belief that Punjabis – and indeed all inhabitants of the subcontinent - could thrive regardless of religious difference. They also help explain why he saw partition as not only undesirable, but unnecessary. As Premier of a diverse province for more than seven years he knew first-hand that with proper administration people of all faiths could co-exist peacefully and prosper.

(B) A Foothold in the Punjab

Islam (2017) is not the first to suggest that as the head of the AIML, Jinnah saw other renowned Muslim leaders as his primary rivals. In *India's Partition*, D.N. Panigrahi (2004, 36) argues that Jinnah saw these Muslim leaders as more of "a threat to his supremacy in Muslim politics" than he did Hindu leaders such as Gandhi and other Congress members. "Fortunately for Jinnah," Panigrahi (2004, 36) adds:

most of the Muslim leaders like Fazl-i-Husain, Sir Mohammed Shafi and Sir Sikander Hyat-Khan either disappeared or soon died. Those who opposed Jinnah's leadership and the demand for Pakistan as an essential plank of the Muslim League policy were outmaneuvered or forced to resign – Fazlul Huq in Bengal, Allah Baksh [Soomro] in Sind and Khizir Hyat Khan Tiwana of Punjab.^{xi}

In the case of Hyat-Khan, there is no question that several facts support at least part of the contention regarding Islam's theory. First, it is well documented that throughout Hyat-Khan's life neither Jinnah, nor the AIML could gain much of a foothold in the Punjab; a province that was widely known to be "the biggest prize for the Muslim League," as well as one of "the most elusive (Jalal 1994, 21, 84)." If the "key to the League's future lay in the Punjab" it was one that Jinnah and the AIML could not unlock until Hyat-Khan was safely out of the picture. As Jalal (1994, 21, 84) writes, it was not until Hyat-Khan's untimely death in office that "one of the main obstacles to Jinnah's plan" was suddenly and irrevocably "removed."

Second, there is also strong documentation that in the last several years of his premiership a multitude of threats were made on Hyat-Khan's life. In a March 1940 letter, Sir Henry Craik, Governor of Punjab, wrote to Viceroy Linlithgow regarding the arrest of Inayatullah Mashriqi, a leader of the Khaksar Movement, a rogue paramilitary organization akin to Adolf Hitler's Schutzstaffel or Brown Shirts, which had long been advocating for Hyat-Khan's death. Inayatullah published incendiary materials and articles encouraging his young supporters to "surround the cot of Sikander with a bed of corpses" (Carter 2005, 89). During the AIML meeting in Lahore, just after one of the most violent clashes between Punjabi police and the Khaksars, the press reported that Hyat-Khan was frequently met with demonstrators who shouted "Sikander Murdabad" or 'Death to Sikander' (Carter 2005, 91, 97).

In March 1941, Hyat-Khan was the subject of an attempted assassination. Authorities arrested two men, Mushtaq Ahmed and Abdul Aziz, for plotting to murder Hyat-Khan on the evening of March 7th during a visit to the Lahore Regal Cinema (Carter 2005, 236-237). In a letter to Linlithgow several days later, Craik notes that as a result "special precautions" had been "taken for the Premier's personal safety, viz., an

armed guard on his house and gunmen to accompany him everywhere (Carter 2005, 237).” While Craik admits “the full facts of the conspiracy” are not known, he attributes the attempt to the “fanatical character of the Khaksar movement (Carter 2005, 237).”

The facts regarding this attempt, or the numerous others, as well as who was responsible for them, are not fully known. What we do know is that a year later, on the evening of the wedding celebration of three of his children, Hyat-Khan was found dead. He was fifty years old, in apparently good spirits and health at the time of his passing. His death was a shock and major blow to the community. What had been a day of grand celebration, quickly turned into one of tragedy as thousands descended to mourn the young Premier’s life and work. Winston Churchill was just one of many dignitaries from around the world who expressed his sympathy with the people of the Punjab and Greater-India: “My sincere sympathy with the great loss they have sustained by the premature death of their wise and valiant leader, Sir Sikander Hyat-Khan... [he was] loyal to his province, loyal to India and to the common cause of Freedom (Quoted in Obituary 1942, 4).”

Islam documents that in the case of Soomro, two local Muslim Leaguers from his province were arrested for his assassination. No such evidence exists as it pertains to Hyat-Khan; nor is there any evidence that he was murdered. What we do know is that at the age of fifty he passed away suddenly and his death opened the possibility for the AIML to finally gain a foothold in the Punjab – something they were able to accomplish in fairly short order.

Conclusion

An extensive archival study of primary and secondary sources shows that in the decade prior to partition many prominent Muslim leaders opposed a two-state solution. The fact that Muslim leaders had differing opinions on the most pressing issue of the day is hardly unexpected. What is surprising is that the literature has been largely silent on this. In an effort to address this gap, an accounting of Muslim unionist leaders from the pre-partition period is provided. Amongst other things, the research shows that of the Muslim unionists identified, almost three quarters came from one of the five Provinces that eventually formed the basis of Pakistan and one third came from the two most diverse of those provinces – Bengal and Punjab. More importantly, a large number of these were Premiers

elected to serve in the most diverse narrowly majority Muslim provinces (Sind, Bengal, and Punjab).

These findings gave rise to the “laboratories of governance” hypothesis which suggests that the minority leaders’ opposition to partition may be rooted in their experience working to promote inter-communal harmony at the provincial level. As a result, they were less inclined to see partition as either inevitable or necessary. In the case of Hyat-Khan, for instance, he worked tirelessly to ensure that people of all faiths and ethnicities could co-exist peacefully in the Punjab and he was largely successful in that endeavor. Given his work in that area, it is not surprising that he found arguments concerning the need for a Hindu and Muslim Raj unconvincing. His work as Premier may not have been the sole or only reason for his opposition. It did, however, solidify his belief that division was not the answer and inter-communal harmony was achievable.

Given the number of Muslim unionist leaders active at the time, as well as their prominence and the type of respect they enjoyed in the community, one key question that arises is why their arguments did not ultimately resonate? Islam and others argue that one reason is that these individuals were seen as a political threat to the power base of leading organizations such as the AIML and, as a result, the party was willing to resort to violence to quash them. In the case of Hyat-Khan, despite some speculation to the contrary, there is no evidence to suggest he was silenced by the AIML. The most we can demonstrate is that during his premiership he and the Unionist party made it difficult for Jinnah and the AIML to get a foothold in the Punjab; something that changed fairly quickly after his death.

In the decade prior to partition, Muslims were not any more in agreement on the major issue of the day than Pakistani’s are today. Muslim leaders of great prominence publicly opposed the division of India for a variety of reasons. And while their divergent views may not have won the day, it is critical that they be recognized and acknowledged. This is not only the essence of good scholarship, but important because it is in their reservations and concerns, as well as their conversations and dialogue with opponents, that the principles, values, and foundations of the state can be uncovered. The discourse this type of reckoning engenders is vital for all nations, but particularly one that more than seventy years after its birth continues to be described as “an enigma curled in a conundrum” (Engelhardt 2010; Shaikh 2018, 1, 9).

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Notes

ⁱ The partition of India was four separate partitions, including the partitions of Bengal, Kashmir, Punjab, and India from Pakistan. Nevertheless, going forward I will refer to these events as the partition of India.

ⁱⁱ In the Western world communalism is referred to as a “theory or system of government in which virtually autonomous local communities are loosely in federation’... [it] is a political philosophy, which proposes that market and money be abolished and that land and enterprises to be placed in the custody of community. But in the Indian subcontinent context, communalism has come to be associated with tensions and clashes between different religious communities in various regions.” (Communalism, 2014).

ⁱⁱⁱ Kashmir is the sole ‘princely state’ represented on the list, see Table 2.

^{iv} The term ‘Pakistan’ is widely credited to Chaudhry Rehmat Ali (1933) who, while a student studying in England, published a pamphlet entitled “Now or Never, Are We to Live or Perish Forever?” The pamphlet, also known as the ‘Pakistan Declaration,’ includes the first documented use of the term. In a subsequent book, Ali (1947) explained the roots of the term: “‘Pakistan’ is both a Persian and an Urdu word. It is composed of letters taken from the names of all our South Asia homelands; that is, Pnjab, Afghania [N.W.F.P.], Kashmir, Sindh and Balochistan. It means the land of the Paks – the spiritually pure and clean.” The underscores were added for clarification, and it was later learned that an ‘I’ was added to the term ‘Pakistan’ to ease pronunciation.

^v The three other reasons Islam (2017) posits Muslim opposition to partition was not widely embraced, include: (1) the fact that it was opposed by the British because it was not in accordance with their divide and quit strategy; (2) Congress nationalists were unwilling to negotiate in good faith to provide the minority Muslims with protection; and (3) Congress was “complicit” because it negotiated with the League as if it was the sole representatives of Muslims on the subcontinent.

^{vi} The proposed reforms included: ‘(i) All powers of the Provincial Government should be vested with the Cabinet, and the Government should only act as a constitutional head. (ii) The Centre should have a federal system with limited powers, and the remaining powers should be allocated to the federating units. (iii) The Centre should deal with the matters of security, stability, and defence. (iv) Separate electorates should be retained. (v) Muslims should be given one-third representation in the Central Legislative Council.’ (Malik, 1985, 44).

^{vii} In the winter of 1936/37 provincial elections were held in - Madras, Central Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, United Provinces, Bombay Presidency, Assam, NWFP, Bengal, Punjab and Sind. Delhi and Baluchistan are the only two provinces from which patriotic Muslims hailed that did not hold elections that winter.

^{viii} Of the others mentioned by Panigrahi, Fazl-i-Husain and Sir Mohammed Shafi passed away in the early-mid 1930s.

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