

# Asian Resonance

## The Muslim Politics in Undivided Punjab: Khizr-Jinnah Tussle

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### Abstract

In the creation of Pakistan, the colonial Punjab was considered to be a key province not only by the Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah but also by the Congress, the Sikhs and the British Government in London and in India. The Unionist Party under the leadership of Khizr Hayat Tiwana played a pivotal role in the increase of Muslim League's influence/interference in the Punjab from 1942 to 1947. He was also acquainted with Muslim League's demands which were based on the hatred of the non-Muslim. Khizr's vision of Punjab most often clashed with the two Nation Theory envisioned by Jinnah. Khizr was sure that partition would threaten the fabric of Punjab society and perish a whole way of life. He brought together the feuding Congress and Akali parties in a final unsuccessful attempt to restore Punjab's Communal harmony, after the 1946 provincial elections. As soon as Khizr was ousted from power in March 1947, the Punjab plunged into the civil war which disfigured Indian independence.

**Keywords:** Unionist Party, Punjab Muslim League, Khizr Hayat Khan, Jinnah, Partition of India.

### Introduction

The present research is prone to Unionist Party's efforts under the leadership of Khizr Hayat Khan to bring communal harmony in the undivided Punjab by averting the danger of partition. But the rise of Muslim League ensured the partition of the Punjab in forming Pakistan. The relations of Jinnah and Khizr Hayat Tiwana troubled resulting in disaffection between the Unionist Party and the Muslim League. No doubt, Khizr made sincere efforts in averting the danger of partition of the Punjab but was helpless in front of non-collaborating Muslim League under the leadership of Jinnah.

### Objective of the Study

This research paper explores mainly the Muslim politics of the undivided Punjab, particularly the relations of Muslim League under Jinnah and the leaders of Punjab under the last Premier of undivided Punjab—Khizr Hayat Tiwana. Substantial consideration has been devoted to the Jinnah Khizr talks from 1942 to 1947 and their political upshot. The objective of this research is to throw light on the Muslim politics of the undivided Punjab highlighting clashes of interests or tussle between Unionist Party leaders and Muslim Leaguers. This paper sheds lights on developments within the Punjab politics during Khizr's regime ultimately resulting in the partition of Punjab.

### Unionist Party and Muslim League

From 1942 to 1947, Punjab politics was dominated by the cross communal Unionist Party under the rule of Malik Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana. He, being the last leader of the Unionists, played a prominent role in limiting the influence of Muslim League in Punjab. In 1936 provincial elections, the Unionist stood as the leading political party and formed a ministry under Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan. The portfolio of Ministry of Public works and local self Government was given to Khizr. The historic Muslim League session was held at Lahore in 1940 in which Khizr played a vital role in the security arrangements. In 1937, the Punjab Muslim League and the Unionist Party joined hands to constitute an alliance called the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact as both needed each other's support desperately. Later on, this agreement helped the Punjab Muslim League's growth in the Punjab. The Congress Party in the Punjab did all it could to damage the Unionist Party with the ultimate aim to through it out of office. Consequently, the Unionists strived to take shelter more and more under the banner of the Punjab Muslim League. Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah, being a shrewd politician, took advantage of the situation and was able to pass Pakistan resolution in

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Punjab's capital, Lahore. The propaganda for and against Pakistan continued. Later on, a shut down between the Punjab Premier, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, and the Muslim League leadership took place in the year 1941. As a result, the Punjab premier surrendered, giving blows to the credibility of his ruling Unionist Party and embracing the image of the Punjab Muslim League.

Unfortunately, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan died on 26 December 1942. So, Khizr was nominated to office the Unionist Party as the Premier. His government was, however, a coalition of Congress, Sikhs and about half a dozen Muslim Unionists. These Muslim Unionists did not command the confidence of the Muslims who formed more than 57% of the provincial population and 90% of the Muslim League members belonged to the Muslim League. So, differences arose within the ranks of Unionists. The result of which was that Khizr had to face an extremely tough period of Punjab politics. Khizr had to share the autonomy of the Unionist pattern of power in Punjab under his predecessor's Pact with Jinnah's Muslim League. Khizr was neither interested to follow congress tactics and clamour for independent India nor abased himself to Jinnah and cried loud for Pakistan. The tussle between Khizr and Jinnah found ground mainly on their attitude towards the war, the working of the Jinnah-Sikander pact and the issue of Pakistan.

The fire of envy and protest went violent in Khizr's heart when he saw that Jinnah had been using religion for his own interests. The relations of Jinnah and Khizr troubled and had been disinfecting between the Unionists party and the Muslim League ever since the Delhi Council session of March 1943. Sir Khizr had been giving only oral utterances and did almost nothing practically to put a new life in the Punjab League. The Punjab League celebrated the third anniversary of the Pakistan resolution. Some renowned leaders from other provinces also showed their presence with a view to revive enthusiasm in the Pakistan proposal. Therefore, Sir Khizr had to participate in the Muslim League's session in Delhi; the Muslim League leaders like Jinnah expressed their loyalties to their community. It was explored with regrets that the Punjab had not played the role it was expected to play; Jinnah time and again appealed to the Punjab delegates to do all they could for the health of the Punjab League. Consequently, the Punjab Premier and his associates repeatedly assured to strive hard for popularizing the Muslim League, its programmes and its message. However, Sir Khizr discovered that he was unable to work actively for the growth of Pakistan scheme. On the other hand, Sir Chottu Ram pressurized the Premier insisting that under no circumstances should he accept Jinnah's orders. Nawab Mamdot was also aware of the intentions of the anti-Pakistan elements. So, Nawab decided to challenge Khizr Hayat saying that under the terms of Sikandar-Jinnah Pact, Khizr's Ministry was subject to the Muslim League's discipline. Mamdot also was subject to the Muslim League's discipline. One of Khizr's Ministers, Shaukat

Hayat Khan also orchestrated the same argument and was supported by the Muslim Press. He together with twenty members of the Punjab Assembly threatened the Premier that they would quit the Unionist party if Khizr did not accept the League's point of view. And it had forced Khizr to begin with a dynamic Muslim League Assembly Party even if it jeopardized the running of his ministry.

## **Tussle between Khizr and Jinnah**

Khizr visited Bombay in September 1943 in a desperate attempt to resolve the ambiguities surrounding Sikandar-Jinnah pact. When Khizr urged that he wanted to retain the name for his ministry, Jinnah argued that the Unionist Party had ceased to exist from the time the Pact was signed. When Khizr pointed out that he himself had been returned to the Assembly on the Unionist ticket, Jinnah became so upset that the meeting ended there and then. Jinnah was clearly and directly on the verge of confrontation with the Unionist Ministry. By formally establishing a Muslim League Assembly Party in November 1943, Khizr actually went a little more than halfway to meet the Jinnah's demand. In this way, he strived to give the first blow to the Unionist Party. It was pretty clear that the infant Muslim League Assembly Party was firmly fastened to the strings of its Unionist parent. After four hours of protracted discussions, the provision that the Punjab League Assembly Party should be under the control of the central and provincial Parliamentary boards had been added as an amendment. Apart from it, the aforementioned meeting had also unanimously ratified the Jinnah Sikandar Pact and its incorporation in the Assembly Party's constitution. The way was in fact still clear and opens for the Unionists to claim autonomy in provincial politics. The following two provisions were added in the constitution.

1. The Muslim League Assembly Party shall be subject to the control and discipline of the central and provincial Muslim League Parliamentary Boards.
2. In all matters relating to Muslim interests, the members of the party shall vote in accordance with the decisions arrived at in the party meetings or when no such decision has been arrived at in regard to a matter, in accordance with the directions of the leader given through a whip. (Only) in matters of common interest will the members of the party vote in accordance with the whip issued by the larger combination, namely Unionist Party.

On the opening day of the budget session of the Punjab assembly, the Quid-e-Azam visited Punjab and stayed as usual at Mamdot Villa and showed his presence in the tea party hosted by Raja Ghazanfar Ali at the assembly building on March 20, 1944. He launched a fresh attack by calling the Jinnah-Sikandar Pact a misnomer, declaring that neither he nor Muslim League had been a party to the Pact. The gloves were off to have vengeance. But Khizr met Jinnah privately for over an hour the next day at Nawab of Mamdot's residence. As Umar Hayat Khan died all of sudden on March 29, 1944, Khizr cancelled his

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engagements with Jinnah. Jinnah meanwhile remained cool because a wave of sympathy swept over the province which strengthened Khizr's hand. Jinnah's generous tributes to Umar and his own dignified stance led to Khizr's softened stand towards Jinnah and it played certainly a role in the second round of the negotiations held in April. Jinnah was given a heartening and enthusiastic reception at the railway station when he returned to Lahore on April 19, 1944. Shaukat's incessant and increasingly vocal support also satisfied him a lot. In the first of the renewed round of meetings held by Khizr at Mamdot Villa, Jinnah emphasized that for a Muslim to adhere to the Unionist Party as well as the Muslim League was like keeping a mistress. To this Khizr adroitly responded that being a Muslim himself he was entitled to have two wives. Immediately after the departure of Khizr, Shaukat met Jinnah. In the following days, Khizr engaged in lengthy negotiations with Jinnah so as to draft a new formula to replace the Jinnah Sikandar Pact. Khizr was more impatient and eager for a compromise but Shaukat and Nawab of Mamdot constantly bombarded Jinnah with advice for not letting the Premier off the hook. Jinnah's resolve was also strengthened by the sudden love of communal minded Hindu-Press for the Unionists and its showering immense praises on Khizr. Jinnah thought that it was more important to free Muslim League from the shackles of the Unionist Party determined with the creed of united India than to maintain Muslim led Government in the Punjab. When the breakdown which was imminent as the negotiations proceeded appeared, the Governor Glancy took the controversial step of dismissing Shaukat although he had been long aware of Shaukat's "glaring act of injustice" towards Mrs. Durga Dass, an Indian Christian Inspector of schools. The League duly charged that Shaukat had been dismissed for his political activities. Jinnah gave him a letter on April 27, 1944, which was supposed to be the final ultimatum, formally requesting Khizr to put in writing his reply to the following points:

1. That every member of the Muslim League in the Punjab Assembly should declare that he owes his allegiance solely to the Muslim League in the Assembly and not to the Unionist Party or any other party ;
2. That the present label of his coalition should be dropped, namely, the Unionist party ; and
3. That the name of the proposed coalition should be the Muslim League Coalition Party.

The Premier did not reply by the 9 p.m. deadline and refused to receive the second letter which the Nawab of Mamdot and Main Mumtaz Daultana delivered by hand. Instead, Khizr issued a press statement explaining that the repudiation of the Jinnah-Sikander Pact would amount to a breach of faith and he would not accept a demand involving interference in provincial affairs and the inner working of the (Pact) as it would be contrary to the accepted democratic principle that the wishes of the electorate and the legislature should prevail. He concluded his statement with the warning that the disunity of

different communities could spell disaster, embitter non-Muslims and intensify communal hatred leading to bloodshed and disorder and serious interference with the war effort at a time when the Japanese aggressor was on the soil of India.

Annual session of Punjab Muslim League was held at Sialkot on 28-30 April wherein Jinnah cleared that no assurance of non- interference in the internal affairs of the Punjab had been given in the Pact with Sikander and then thundered "Bury this name Unionist. Perform its funeral ceremony." A series of resolutions followed the onslaught deploring the whole attitude and actions of Khizr and condemned Glancy's dismissal of Shaukat. The Premier and his Muslim colleagues were called upon to resign. Jinnah, while addressing to Sialkot Muslim Student's Federation, turned up the heat still further by referring the Unionists as 'traitors'. He further stressed that charges must be framed against the culprit (Khizr) who was responsible for disuniting the Punjabi Muslims. In such circumstances, Liaquat Ali Khan who was appointed the presiding judge in the Muslim League Council of action set in motion, the Machinery for Khizr's expulsion which was announced on May 27, 1944. Consequently, Khizr's colleagues resigned shortly afterwards to forestall their expulsion. The Punjab Muslim League exclaimed with jubilation on this decision, and its council fully approved the action taken against Sir Khizr. A number of meetings and conferences in the province of Punjab were arranged and held by the Punjab Muslim student Federation. Shaukat Hayat Khan's efforts were very much appreciated and at the same time Khizr's policies were criticized. Many a tall statements implying that Sir Khizr Hayat had damaged the Muslim cause were issued by the League's top leadership. Muslim leaders from other provinces were invited by the Punjab Muslim Student Federation to convince the Punjab Muslims that their salvation laid in supporting the PML and its Pakistan movement. It may also be said that the Lahore Muslim League was extremely active against the Unionist Party's rump led by Sir Khizr Hayat Tiwana. Jinnah also alleged Khizr Hayat saying that the latter had been following the advice of anti- Pakistan elements, especially Sir Chottu Ram and the Governor of Punjab. The Punjab Muslim League also published its manifesto explaining how it would protect Muslim interests. Meanwhile the formation of the Punjab Muslim League took place consisting of twenty six members – Shaukat Hayat Khan was their leader and Mian Mumtaz Daultana as the Deputy leader. Thus, a wide breach and unending differences between the Unionists and the Muslim League were created.

Khizr was confronting the tough task of countering Muslim League propaganda campaign and shoring up the Unionist Party strength. When Khizr's talk with Jinnah had collapsed, two senior Unionists- Mir Maqbool Mahmood and Allah Yar Khan Daultana, had resigned as parliamentary secretaries. Khizr controlled and smoothed the situation by appointing two new Ministers- Sir Mohammad Jamal Khan Leghari and Nawab Ashiq Hussain- both of whom

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came from Multan division in which largest number of Muslim constituencies were situated. Both were men of letter and wielded immense authority in their respective districts. Sir Leghari was a Baloch leader and large land holder in Dera Ghazi Khan district whereas Nawab Ashiq Hussain was from a leading Qureshi Pir family of Multan and the son-in-law of Sir Liaquat Ali Khan, elder brother of Sikander.

The fragile bonds which held the rural faction leaders together were being snapped due to wartime dislocations and changes at All-India level. Khizr and his Ministerial colleagues tried to revive the Zamindara League organization during the period from the collapse of his talks with Jinnah and the beginning of the 1946 elections. The activities of the Zamindara League appealed in terms of region's prosperity, lauding of the Golden Acts, communal harmony, and stable Ministry; surprisingly, little attention was paid to the shortcomings of the Muslim League. The local Zamindara activists as directed by Khizr made efforts to cultivate the support of influential *Pirs*. On the other hand, the Punjab Muslim League continuously raised religious appeals and slogans. The league also held frequent meetings in mosques and the Quran was paraded as the League's symbol. Also the pledges were taken on it to support the Pakistan struggle. Students were advised to join in the prayers or lead them like 'Holy warriors'. The *Pirs* also played important role in Muslim League's advance by issuing '*fatwas*'. The League's advance did not solely depend on the use of religious appeals but also rooted in its ability to link the Pakistan idea with the popular aspirations and also in its growing influence elsewhere in India which created a bandwagon effect. The other issue which the Punjab Muslim League crystallized was the dissatisfaction with the war time economic dislocations and government interference with the grain supplies. The League promised a better future, presenting the creation of Pakistan as a panacea for social and economic problems. Muslim League Islamic appeals transcended 'bread and butter' issues. Propagandists were directed when they visited a village to "find out its social problems and difficulties to tell them that the main cause of their problems was the Unionists and give them the solution-Pakistan.

## **Rise of Muslim League and Turning of Tables on Khizr**

The rising stock of All India Muslim League in the political market resulted not only from a genuine British desire to secure communal cooperation, but from the need to secure a counterweight to the non-cooperating congress. Jinnah adroitly exploited these circumstances. In the sunshine of official favour, the League grew with leaps and bounds. Jinnah's emerging prestige and the League's breakthrough elsewhere increased pressure on Khizr. The activities of the Zamindara League were hampered by the support of Masses for Pakistan. As a result of grass-root pressure, Major Farman Ali Raja Fateh Khan, Rajput members from Rawal Pindi (East) and Gujjar Khan Constituencies appeared to have joined the Muslim League. Zamindara workers also faced

protests in some regions which demoralized them and became reluctant to work in Muslim dominated areas. A severe blow approached the Unionist Party and its Premier Sir Khizr Hayat Khan in the form of Sir Chottu Ram's death on a January 1945. Many a problems like resettlement of demobilized soldiers, grievances over racial discrimination in pay and other facilities and the impact of INA issue undermined the Unionists influence among military personnel who formed another traditional support group.

The Unionist supporters also got demoralized thinking about the widespread belief that Congress and Muslim League would be the new powers in the land. The Shimla conference dealt the Unionists the *coup de grace*. Khizr to his dying day considered Wavell's 'Capitulation' to Jinnah at Shimla as a major British betrayal. After hearing the broadcast of the Viceroy's proposal about the formation of the Executive Council, Khizr was extremely dismayed. He feared and suspected that a Congress Muslim League bargain at the centre would end his ministry in Punjab and thus leading to chaos. In order to put out feelers to Khizr, Jinnah used the lengthy adjournments from his base at the Ceil Hotel. It was especially woeful and heart shattering news for the Punjab Premier that his Kinsman, Malik Sir Feroz Khan Noon gravitated towards the Muslim League and he was touted in some quarters as an independent Muslim League Nominee for the proposed Council. Khizr was further pressurized through the stream of telegrams sent to Viceroy by the Punjab branches of the Leagues endorsing Jinnah's stance. On Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July, meetings were also organized in Badshahi Mosque in which resolution was adopted claiming Muslim League's exclusive reflect to nominate Muslim members. As the first choice, Khizr proposed the names of Muhammad Khan Nawaj Khan of Kot Fateh Khan; the second choices were his Ministerial colleagues Nawab Sir Jamal Khan Feghari, K.B., Sheikh Jai Mohammad Khan and Ghias-ud-din. Wavell named the Unionist representative alongwith the four Muslim leaguers in the absence of a response from Jinnah. Jinnah refused to cooperate unless his following two demands were met:

1. All Muslim members should be drawn from the Muslim League.
2. Any measure to which the Muslim League objected could only be carried by a clear two third majority of the council.

Considering these condition unacceptable and without further ado, Wavell declared that the conference had failed. The chorus of abuse which greeted Khizr following the failure of the conference shocked him very much. The members of the Punjab branch of the Muslim League issued statements denouncing Khizr's role at Shimla. Nazir Ahmad Khan expressed his opinion by saying 'it was in the Malik Sahib's interest that the conference should fail' because its success would 'have had a serious and immediate repercussion on the fate of his Ministry in Punjab'. He further said that 'Unionist Party has no branches, no regular membership and in any case

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has no place in Indian politics. Then the joint statement of the Nawab of Mamdot and Mian Mumtaz Daultana packed the biggest punch. It represented Khizr's action as a clear attack on the rights and solidarity of the rights and solidarity of the Muslim 'Millat'. He was accused of trying to weaken the League case and stultify the 'Principles on which depends the future of the Muslim Nation of India.' Public meetings reiterated the view that Khizr had wrecked the conference. Khizr also issued the skillfully directed rebuttal in his press statement but this was no time for reasonable and rational argument. The swelling of the opposition benches in the Punjab Assembly brought home the new atmosphere. Khizr's Parliamentary Private Secretary Syed Amjad Ali deserted him. Khizr faced opposition from the senior members of both the Tiwana and Noon tribes as his kinsman Major Mohammad Mumtaz Khan Tiwana and Firoz Khan Noon resigned from the Executive Council on 15 September in order to go back to Punjab and help the Muslim League. A great number of Zamindara League workers were also defected. Presidents of the Ludhiana Rawalpindi and Lyallpur branches of the Zamindara League had also been decamped.

Jinnah had a great plan in his mind. The Muslim League from the outset appeared well placed to triumph in a poll which he sought to represent as a referendum on Pakistan. The election results of 1946 rooted out the twenty years dominance of Unionist Party and the Punjabi politics. The Unionist Party was reduced to a rump of 18 members in the 175 members Assembly. The Muslim League with 75 seats was the single largest party in the Assembly. The League had done well enough to demonstrate Punjabi Muslim support for Pakistan demand. The League, however, could not command a majority and form government. The League adopted such slogans and tactics during the campaign that made it debatable whether it would be able to acquire coalition partners. The Muslim League parleyed with the Akalis before Khizr took office, but the negotiations failed. Moreover, Azad was thoroughly prepared to form a coalition government but again an agreement could not be reached. Many a protracted efforts to cobble together a majority were made by the Nawab of Mamdot but all proved futile. Khizr, despite earlier threats to quit politics, still felt a calling to bring stability to the region.

Although family history and political logic pointed out to accommodation with the Muslim League, Khizr remained the dutiful Zamindar and loyal in serviceman. Daultana and Mamdot, in fact, provided him with one last opportunity to do so by offering him to head the Ministry, even if he remained aloof from the Muslim League. No longer did Jinnah get the wind of the proposal than he vetoed it. But the episode reveals that Punjabi Muslims still possessed an independent outlook which jarred with Jinnah's All-India strategy. However, the final breach between Khizr and the Punjab League occurred only after the formation of coalition government which excluded the Muslim League from office in the 'cornerstone of

Pakistan'. Khizr's coalition government consisted of Unionists, Akalis and the Congress. But the thus formed government remained highly controversial. Khizr had also been condemned for entering into the coalition at the behest of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and for shattering all hopes of a united Punjab by forestalling an agreement between the Muslim League and the non-Muslims.

There is no doubt that Khizr had a very tuff challenge before him. He faced two immediate tasks (i) to survive the budget session of the Assembly and (ii) to represent the Punjab's views to the Cabinet Mission. But the Muslim League members interrupted it frequently. In fact, the Muslim League had set the tone for the sitting by organizing a province-wide hartal on 7 March and, observed 'Traitors day' two days later. Chaudhri Mohammad Hassan addressed the Premier as Malik Sir Gaddar Hayat Khan and Shaukat called him a 'quisling' during the course of debate on the budget. Mock funerals were held outside his official residence and during the last weeks of his Premiership he was greeted everywhere with black flag protest demonstration. On 8<sup>th</sup> April, Sir Evan Jenkins replaced Glancy and he too was nevertheless displeased with Khizr's 'ingenuity' in this respect. In order that the Khizr Ministry was dismissed and Pakistan could be formed, the Muslim League was hell bent on fomenting trouble. By the beginning of 1947, they started their agitation in a violent manner and beating dogs in the streets of Rawalpindi, Lahore, etc., started raising the cries, "*Khizroo Kutta, Hai Hai*" (Down with Khizr dog). And consequently and eventually it was almost impossible to govern Punjab with the result that Sir Khizr Hayat Tiwana had to resign in March 1947, and thus leaving the way to the creation of Pakistan.

## Concepts and Hypothesis

The present research is a historical research in which historical evidences from pretty authentic history books have discussed/analyzed carefully. In this paper the Punjab politics, especially the Muslim politics of the pre-Independence period during Khizr's regime has been discussed keenly. The Unionist party under the leadership of Sir Khizr Hayat Khan strived to unite Punjab and avert the danger of Pakistan, but the Muslim League deeply influenced by Jinnah posed the danger of partition of Punjab and thereby the partition of India. The Muslim politics leading the roots of separatism in the undivided Punjab has been brought into light.

## Findings

The findings of the paper are as follows:

1. The petty politics to remain in power was not only prevalent among Hindu politicians but also among the Muslim leaders.
2. The Unionists under the leadership of Khizr Tiwana made desperate attempts to save Punjab from partition and communal riots.
3. On the other hand, Jinnah adroitly exploited the then circumstances and turned the table on Khizr. Jinnah's emerging prestige and the League's breakthrough elsewhere increased pressure on Khizr.

4. Finally the formation of Pakistan took place due to changed political scene at the national level not because of the local government in Punjab under Khizr.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, Khizr had to face an extremely tough period of Punjab politics. The Muslim members of the Unionist party found that the best method of maintaining their local power in the changed national political scenario was to seek accommodation within Muslim League. Khizr was neither interested to follow congress tactics and clamour for independent India nor abased himself to Jinnah and cried loud for Pakistan. Khizr played a dominant role in uniting the Punjab under the banner of the Unionist Party. The efforts of Jinnah were also not less but they were directed to divide Punjab for creating Pakistan. The communal harmony among the Muslims themselves was at stake. The time Khizr was ousted from power in March 1947, the Punjab plunged into civil war which disfigured Indian Independence.

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