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Publicity, Propaganda and Press: All India Muslim League in Propagation of Demand for Pakistan

Abstract *The evolution and growth of press in the Subcontinent revolutionized the flow of information and propagation of political activities. All-India Muslim League went through the process of reorganization in the late 1930's and the new political resolve needed more publicity and propaganda to expand further among the masses. League handled the need of the hour by starting its party-owned newspapers while the provincial Leagues and some of the League organs launched their newspapers to publicize policy and program of the party. The major share in the press came from the Leaguers and pro League newspapers from all over India. The last phase of the freedom movement witnessed the emergence of a more radical and outspoken press in support of the demand for Pakistan. Overseas publicity and press remained weak ground for League due to financial constraints. The Middle East zone was omnipresent in League's activities due to its Islamist stance. England publicity wing started working quite late but it remained successful in making a mark over the minds of the public. The American front was neglected and only a few appearances were available to propagate League and its demand for Pakistan.*

Key Words: Press, League, Propaganda, Demand for Pakistan, Newspapers

Introduction

Media has a long history of evolution through annals of the history of the known and recorded past. The Subcontinent witnessed the growth of the press in 1800's, which gradually became an important source of information for the public and the policymakers. The advent of radio as an electronic medium was the second most important development in the evolution of media in India. But press remained at the top due to accessibility and its readership throughout nooks and corners of the country. In mid 1930's, three news agencies, Orient Press, Associated Press of India and United Press of India, were working in British India to cater needs of All India Radio (Afzal, 2016). These sources were under official surveillance in order to keep them in to limits.

All India Muslim League (AIML) was on the course of restructuring after its defeat in the elections of 1936. Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah revived the party by amending its constitution, hierarchy, rules, and regulations, and on the other side, he reorganized the old dormant provincial Muslim Leagues. Within three years, the League came forward with its demand for autonomous states inside the Indian Union to safeguard rights of the Indian Muslims. The coming years witnessed a transition in demand made during the Lahore Annual Session of AIML in 1940. The transformed demand became the demand for Pakistan while Jinnah was putting every effort to realize the demand with a constitutional solution at the end of World War II.

Jinnah re-invigorated the League with the formation of various new or reshaped organs from working committee, central council, and student bodies to make League a mass party. Along with other activities of the party, the need of press was an important element to carry forward the League's demand for Pakistan and to propagate its activities to the Muslims of the Sub-continent. The Muslim press needed no introduction as it was dynamic and vibrant since the days of World War I when Muhammad Ali Jouhar's Comrade and Zafar Ali Khan's Zamindar got the attention of the masses due

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to their projection of the Muslim demands. But in the context of the last phase of the freedom movement, Hindu press was far more dominant than the Muslim press. Even the official agencies were dominated by pro-Congress Hindu editors and writers. The situation went more complex when All India Radio started airing anti-Muslim *Madha Sira* in the morning transmission while the rest of the contents were also in favor of the Indian National Congress (Payam 1943).

Though AIML initiated press and publicity wings many times since its inception but most often, it failed to manage due to various reasons. The first press and publicity wing was established by Aziz Mirza to circulate pro-League publicity material, but it was closed down after him (Pirzada, Report of the Honorary Secretary of the All India Muslim League for the Year 1910 2008). In 1927, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew intended to start a publicity and propaganda wing of the League but it could not be materialized due to lack of funds and internal factionalism of the League (Pirzada, Report of the Honorary Secretary of the All India Muslim League for the Year 1910 2008). While the situation took a different turn after the 1936 elections and subsequent heated political scene amidst Lahore resolution and anti-League propaganda from the congress sponsored press. Till then League has to reply on either pro-League Muslim press or on the Anglo-Indian press such as Civil & Military Gazette, Statesman, and Times of India (Rao 2018). The then available Muslim press can be categorized into three segments. First was Pro-Congress but Muslim owned newspapers, second, pro-British Muslim politicians sponsored or favored and the third segment was pro-League press. The pro-League press was financially weak with limited resources that hindered their wide scale circulation (Afzal, A History of the All-India Muslim League 1906-1947 2016).

The press and propaganda can be categorized into two segments. One those newspapers which were started on directions of Jinnah from party funding or platform, the other were those which were owned or rolled out from the Leaguers or pro-League journalists to spread the message of League and Pakistan to the Indian Muslims.

League Owned Newspapers

Jinnah realized the need of Pro-League or party own press just after Lahore Session 1940. The Hindu press had launched a media trial of Jinnah and League and branded Lahore resolution as the demand of separation. As president of the party, Jinnah wanted to publish two newspapers, one in vernacular Gujrati and the other in the English language. But no proper staff was available to launch the English paper, which compelled Jinnah to launch Gujrati newspaper "weekly Vatan" (Z. H. Zaidi, Jinnah Papers 2007). The funding for this newspaper was collected by a committee of Press and Propaganda of Bombay Presidency Muslim League, which contained enough amount to finance the newspaper for coming years (Z. H. Zaidi, Jinnah Papers 2007). This newspaper (Vatan) was converted into a daily in 1945 and remained wide circulation among the local Muslim readers. Another newspaper in the Urdu language was started from the platform of AIML to acter wider circulation of League's message. AIML started weekly "Mansoor" with seasoned journalist Hasan Riaz as its editor. This paper used publish League' activities, its organizational chart and news about the Muslims for its readers. It was converted into a daily newspaper in 1944 to propagate more about the League's election campaign and its stance over the national level politic (Hasan 1976) s. Jinnah launched the English weekly "Dawn" to cater to a wide range of needs for publicity of the League's activities to defend it against a hostile pro-Congress press campaign. Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan was assigned the task to supervise the operational issues of this paper (Z. H. Zaidi, Jinnah Papers 2007). Jinnah approved an amount of Rs.2000 per month for Liaquat Ali Khan and its editorial staff was selected meticulously to meet professional requirements (Pirzada, Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1047 2008). Weekly Dawn published its first issue on 26 October 1941 with a special message from Jinnah, which elaborated that it was meant to safeguard Muslim rights, advocate Muslims politically and promote policy and program of AIML and educate the masses (Afzal, Speeches and Statements of of Quaid-i-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan (1941-51) 1967). This newspaper was not only League's achievement rather, it was also a commercial success. By 1943, weekly Dawn

achieved unprecedented circulation and it was generating Rs.10,000 per month as profit after deduction expenditures_(Z. H. Zaidi, [Jinnah Papers 2007](#)).

Jinnah wanted to launch another newspaper in English language as the mouthpiece of the League. Initial scrutiny was started to acquire the existing newspapers such as "Star of India" or taking over "Statesman" from Lady Yule. Even M.A.H.Ispahani also suggested launching of another newspaper, "Star of Asia", but both ideas did not mature due to certain reasons. Finally, in 1943, Jinnah authorized Liaquat to supervise both newspapers, "Dawn" and "Mansoor" and keep them aligned to the promotion of League's manifesto and political activities_([Pirzada, Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1047 2008](#)). Keeping in view of increasing political activities and the need for more publications, Jinnah decided to convert "Dawn: into a daily newspaper for a more updated flow of publicity material for the Indian Muslims.

League established a proper publicity and propaganda organ with expanded purview in 1946. Jinnah authorized a separate department of Publicity and Information which was headed by Qazi Isa to publish pamphlets, publicity material, advertisements, and articles to the newspapers_([Pirzada, Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1047 2008](#)). The department issued some famous booklets/ pamphlets such as "It Shall Never Happen Again", "Why I Joined Muslim League" and "A Nation Betrayed"_([Hasan 1976](#)). But the League could not launch any other party owned newspaper for further expanded circulation of the Muslim cause. Only pro-League journalists tried to establish other platforms to bring the Muslim press at single line of action for the propagation of the demand for Pakistan.

Pro-League Newspapers

Pro- League journalists endeavored to form a proper platform to unite and publish newspapers with acute efficacy. In 1939, the All-India Muslim League journalists association was formed with Moulana Zafar Ali Khan as president of the body. But it could not function for long due closure of newspapers and certain other issues_([Shahzad 2019, vol. 56, issue no.2](#)). Two more Journalists associations emerged to manage a united stance for the propagation of the League. Muslim Journalists Federation with S.A. Sabri as president and Gujrati Muslim Journalists Association with Nizamuddin Qureshi as president, but both were short lived due to closure of their newspapers and the government strict policies to allow such activities during WW II. They demanded representation in the Press Advisory Board and News Print Advisory Committee_(Z. H. Zaidi, [Quaid-i-Azam Papers 2004](#)).

Moulana Akram Khan convened another body with permission from Jinnah. It was the All India Muslim Journalists Association with Moulana Akram as president and Z.A. Sulehri as secretary of the association. It aimed to work for the welfare of the Muslim Journalists, newspapers and to keep them aligned with League's message regardless of newspaper policies of the government. The body remained in effect till 1947 and till then 54 newspapers were associated with it which were working to promote the cause of the League and the demand for Pakistan_([Afzal, A History of the All-India Muslim League 1906-1947 2016](#)). On May 9, 1947, the editors of these 54 newspapers gathered at Anglo-Arabic Hall at Delhi and formed the All India Muslim Newspaper Editors' Association with Altaf Hussain as president and Hamid Nizami as secretary of the association_([Dawn 1947](#)). This association remained active till independence and kept all the Muslim newspapers on the line of the policy and program of the the League.

Muslim Owned Press

The press owned by the Leaguers indeed did a great service in the promotion and propagation of the demand for Pakistan. In Punjab, Zamindar remained at the forefront for the Muslim cause and face closures and fines frequently. Moulana Zafar Ali Khan always supported Muslim cause and his words became more firebrand during the last phase of the freedom movement. Another initiative by Hamid Nizami was launched immediately after Lahore Resolution. It was "Nawa-i-Waqat", a fortnightly converted into weekly in 1942 and later on became eminent daily with large circulation_([Gazette](#)

1947). S.M. Sohail's daily "Ihsan" was prominent among those papers whose policy and the program was completely in line with the League. Jinnah admired the stance of "Ihsan" and its dedication to the Muslim League's stance and its publicity and propagation. Even during his visit to Lahore, Jinnah visited the office of "Ihsan" as a gesture of appreciation (Z. H. Zaidi, *Jinnah Papers Vol. XII 2005*). There were three other newspapers, "Shahbaz", "Paisa Akhbar" and "Inqilab," which remained with League but opted for mild content support to carry on their circulation. In the English language, *The Eastern Times* was more sympathetic towards League since 1931. It published regular updates of the League's activities without any interruption (Saeed 1983). Another English paper came into publication in the last phase was *Pakistan Times*. It was initiative of Mian Iftikharuddin who established Progressive Papers Limited and hired Faiz Ahmad Faiz as editor of the paper (Z. H. Zaidi, *Jinnah Papers Vol. XIV 2006*). The Punjab Provincial Muslim League brought its newspaper "Muslim League" in Urdu language to cater needs of propaganda work in 1944. This newspaper along with others pave the way for the League to penetrate into the minds of people to spread its manifesto and demand for Pakistan.

In Sindh, "Al-Wahid" was the most prominent and influential daily which has broader circulation. Many Leaguers were part of its board of directors that controlled its content and policy and kept it aligned with the League's promotion in the province. In 1941, it was converted into a limited company under the scions of Haji Abdullah Haroon, Yusuf, and Mehmood, while Ayub Khufu, G.M. Syed, Hasan Bakhsh, and Abdul Majid Sindhi were major stakeholders into that venture (Z. H. Zaidi, *Jinnah Papers Vol. XIV 2006*). Another bilingual weekly was launched by Sayyid Sarwar Shah Gilani to promote the Islamic values and system of future Pakistan. The paper catered needs of the League among the locals due to its Sindhi edition and served well till independence. In the English language, Sindh Times, Sindh Observer were prominent among others to propagate demand for Pakistan. The Sindh Muslim Students' Federation a monthly "Moslem Voice" to publicize activities of their organization and promote League's message.

NWFP witnessed emergence of six Urdu newspapers and one in English that espoused the cause of League. "Shard", "Millat", and "Sada e Pakistan" carry forward the League's manifesto, policy, and program in the province. Khaber Mail was the only English newspaper here which supported League and its demands at the national level. In Balochistan, Qazi Isa founded a weekly "Al Islam" long before his appointment for publicity and propaganda in 1939. Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali launched "Tanzeem" with Naseem Hijazi as editor to champion the cause of Muslim nationalism. Balochistan Muslim Students' Federation came up with their *Khursheed* and weekly *Jamhoor* to propagate demand for Pakistan.

Bengal's first pro-League newspaper "Mussalman" was launched in 1906, which propagated the Muslim cause as long as it remained in circulation. After Lahore Resolution, Dakka University students launched fortnightly "Pakistan" to propagate the cause and demands of the Indian Muslims from the League's platform. In the last phase of the freedom movement, Bengal Provincial Muslim League launched its weekly "Millat" in 1945 with Abul Hashim as its editor. This newspaper propagated League's manifesto and program for the elections. Three more dailies, "Azad", *Muhammadi*, and *Ittihad* served the needs of the Muslims well. The weeklies, *Aman*, *Madina*, and *Asr e Jadeed* were also protagonists of the League which highlight activities of provincial and central League. The most prominent English daily, *Star of India* with Pothen Joseph as editor was the most influential among its readers due to seasoned journalistic tone of its editor (Shaheedi 2009).

Provincial Muslim Leagues and Press

The other provincial Leagues were also working on press coverage of the League's policy and program. A prominent leaguer from Assam, Abdul Matin Choudhry launched an English weekly *Assam Herald* and a Bengali weekly *Jugabheri* for the projection League's program and policies. Assam's Muslim Students' Federation, like others, brought their newspaper *Provati* from Sylhet. In UP, Urdu newspapers dominated local press as there were *Pakistan*, *Mashriq*, *Haqiqat*, *Hamdam*, and

Haque efficaciously projected League, Jinnah, and demand for Pakistan throughout the last phase of the freedom movement. Some other provincial pro-League papers emerged on the scene in late 1930's and just after Lahore Resolution. Madras launched two English weeklies *Deccan Times* and *Musalman* and *Sunday Observer*. Coimbatore city Muslim League launched weekly *Pakistan* on Jinnah's birthday in 1942_(Saeed 1983). Madras Muslim League started weekly *Muslim* and *Muslim Youth* for projection of party program in the province. Haji Abdus Sattar Essak Saith mobilized Muslim Moplas in favor of League. He also started Malayan daily *Chadrika* to promote League's message in the area. Bangalore Muslim League started daily *Azad* and Bombay Muslims launched *Star*, *Morning Herald*, and *Muslim* for promotion of Muslim cause. Surat MSF boys started an English newspaper *Crescent* truly from their personal resources_(Afzal, [Speeches and Statements of of Quaid-I-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan \(1941-51\) 1967](#)). In Delhi, Moulana Mazheruddin edited *Wahdat* and *Al Aman* during revival phase of the Central League. Delhi MSF started their monthly *Pakistan Herald* to project League's activities at the center and propagate demand for Pakistan.

League's Publicity Wing Abroad

All-India Muslim League constructed its stance over the plight of the overseas Muslims back in the second decade of the century. Over the years, various issues ranging from entry of Ottomans into war to Khilafat Movement and Palestine issue remained at its agenda list in each annual session_(Pirzada, [Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1047 2008](#)). Jinnah remained supportive to the Palestine cause from the early 1930's and always kept it alive in all the annual meetings of the League's working committee or the central council_(Malik 1990). This generated two way effect for League; at domestic front the Indian Muslims got more aligned towards League due to its support to the cause, and at the international front Arabs felt brotherhood and good will gestures from League and its leadership_(Qaisar 2019). Moreover, League celebrated Palestine Day in 1938 to protest against inhuman policies towards Arabs. It also tried to get representation for Cairo Conference, which was turned down by the government. Jinnah directed Leaguers to observe All-India Palestine Day in 1939. Resultantly, League was allowed to present a memorandum to the British Prime Minister Office_(Qaisar 2019). This element remained an integral part of all meetings, conferences, and gatherings of the League till independence.

But Jinnah felt the need of external publicity for the League's cause and its demand for Pakistan. But unfortunately, League has limited financial resources to sponsor an international media campaign. It happened in 1944 when Jinnah proposed to send Qazi Isa and other leaders to the United States and England to campaign for League but the government was negative to their request for travel and visa_(Ahmad 2000). Subsequently, the establishment of a Muslim Information Center was delayed or ignored for the next year and a half due to elections and other activities. In 1946, Khawaja Nazimuddin proposed a propaganda and publicity campaign in England to promote and justify League's demand for Pakistan, but again it could not be materialized_(Z. H. Zaidi, [Jinnah Papers Vol. XII 2005](#)). The Muslim students in London organized themselves and established a Muslim League Branch in November 1944. They started a monthly newspaper *Rahnuma* to explain and propagate demand for Pakistan to the Muslim expatriates. That monthly converted into a daily *Pakistan* with Z.A. Sulehri, a foreign correspondent for Dawn, was hired as its editor_(Afzal, [A History of the All-India Muslim League 1906-1947 2016](#)).

In 1946, League withdrew from the Cabinet Mission arrangement and Jinnah felt the dire need of the Muslim India Information Centre in London for projection of their stance, demands, and reservations. Suleri was given extra responsibility to lead the project and Jinnah remitted 1000 to the agents of MM Ispahani Wilcox and the company for expenditures. After a month, this centre was shifted into an apartment and directed to launch activities to propagate demand for Pakistan_(Z. H. Zaidi, M.A. [Jinnah Ispahani Correspondence 1936-1948 1976](#)). In September 1946, Jinnah sent Altaf Hussain with propaganda material for distribution and publication. The print material was comprised of *India The Last Ten Years*, *Why Pakistan* and *Fifty Facts about Pakistan* which explained the

background, current facts and leading factors behind the demand for a separate state_(Long 2005). The center rolled out a monthly *Muslim Media Information Bulletin* and printed the first issue in January 1947. This issue remained in printing till the day of independence_(Times 1947).

League was a financially weak political organization with limited annual funding and larger expenditure. Jinnah focused more on engaging foreign correspondents based in India to communicate and explain League's policy and program. League made no serious attempt to open its information offices in America and Europe. Though Jinnah wanted to write a book to explain the policy and program of the League and its demand for Pakistan it could not be materialized_(Ahmad 2000). In America, there were the India League of America and India Welfare League to represent Indian expatriates. But both were not clearly pro-League rather, lectures and meetings were not favorable to League's demand for Pakistan. Syed Muzaffar Ahmad was pro-League Muslim who intended to open a branch of League in America and requested from Jinnah. But at that time Jinnah ignored due to a lack of sufficient funds to run such a project_(Long 2005). Muzaffar wrote to Abdullah Haroon for assistance while the later sent the given copies of the American newspapers to Jinnah and asked for opinion. But Jinnah did not encourage such move at that stage_(Siddiqui 1988).

In 1942, Begum Jahan Ara Shahnawaz visited America on behalf of the Indian government. Besides her visit engagements, she delivered comprehensive lectures over the League and its demand for Pakistan to dispel anti-League propaganda. Sir Zafarullah Khan was also with her and both took part in Herald Tribune Forum in New York over "Islam and Democracy". On their return, Jahan Ara informed Jinnah about the situation and requested through Mian Bashir Ahmad to send a deputation for party propaganda and publicity purpose_(Jahan Ara Shahnawaz 2002). Jinnah did not launch any proper information and propaganda program for the Americans, which was expressed to by an American professor J. Clark in a letter which deplored that most of information work was done by Congress, not the League_(Z. H. Zaidi, *Jinnah Papers Vol. XIII* 2006). During a deadlock in post Cabinet Mission plan, Jinnah received an invitation from New York Herald Tribune Forum to visit and explain the demand for Pakistan to the American polity. Jinnah sent Begum Shahnawaz and Ispahani to attend the invitation and explain League's stance over demand for Pakistan_(Jahan Ara Shahnawaz 2002). After the forum meetings, Jahan Ara and Ispahani toured America for the next two weeks and spoke a a number of forums to elaborate Muslim League, the case of the Indian Muslims and their demand for Pakistan_(Z. H. Zaidi, *M.A. Jinnah Ispahani Correspondence 1936-1948* 1976).

The Muslim students of various institutions contributed significantly in the propagation League in the last days of United India. They wrote in the press about the Indian situation and Muslim reservations about the constitutional settlement of the Indian problem along with their demand for Pakistan. Muhammad Amin Khan Tarin went a step ahead and started *Muslims News Bulletin* to support the cause of the Indian Muslims. The Bulletin issued a special edition on Pakistan in July 1947_(Z. H. Zaidi, *Jinnah Papers Vol. XIII* 2006). The other countries such as China, Russia, and African states were not paid much heed perhaps due to their role in the world political chart.

Conclusion

Print media played a key role during the last phase of the freedom movement to carry the forward message of Pakistan to the masses. Despite the financial constraint of the League it managed to handle information service through a three-pronged approach. League launched its party owned newspapers which became a profitable source of revenue generation in the later years. The provincial Leagues started their newspapers to spread the policy and program of the Central League. Even some organs of the League at the primary level managed to launch their papers to keep people informed about their activities and organize the masses for the demand for Pakistan. Muslim Students' Federations launched their monthlies or weeklies at provincial and at someplace at the district level.

The prominent Leaguers launched their funded or owned newspapers to propagate and publicize demand for Pakistan and League's manifesto before the general elections of 1946. Hamid Nizami,

Ispahani, Haji Abudusattar, and many others launched their press after Lahore Resolution and during the last phase of the freedom movement. The Pro-League press was another stakeholder which promoted League's cause, directly or indirectly, through out that phase. Though they faced government-imposed restrictions, closures, imposition of fines, and sometimes more than that, they remained dedicated to their support for the demand of Pakistan. League was not a financially stable party throughout its history due to a huge number of Muslim middle class and lack industrialist support base like its rival Congress. Therefore, Jinnah always remained cautious about spending funds over overseas publicity branches. Despite less funding for foreign publicity, League managed to propagate itself in England and in the USA through other sources. The foreign public opinion could do little for League at the home front, but it could pave the way for a better policy approach from the higher circles of the polity.

Although, League entered into a publicity and propaganda campaign quite late from its rival Congress yet, it managed to appeal to a large number of Muslims not only in India but also abroad and turned their mindsets in favor of its demand for Pakistan. The election results of 1946 testify the success of publicity, propaganda and the role of the press in the propagation of the demand for Pakistan.

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