Evolution of Identity Politics: A Case Study of the Muhajir Quami Movement in Pakistan

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Abstract

In order to address the sociopolitical issues that the Muhajir community—a group of migrants who moved to urban Sindh following the 1947 partition—faced, the Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM) was established in 1984. After initially concentrating on defending the rights of Muhajirs, the party expanded to become a more comprehensive political organisation that supported urban dwellers, especially in Hyderabad and Karachi. Strong leadership, particularly Altaf Hussain, who was instrumental in mobilising support and advancing the party's agenda, greatly influenced the MQM's development. The party's motto, "Rights for All," embodies its dedication to social welfare and inclusivity, and the kite, which serves as its emblem, stands for freedom, resiliency, and advancement. With significant election participation, the MQM has been a major political force in Pakistan, especially in urban areas. The party grew over time its advocacy for a more inclusive political system by shifting its focus from Muhajir-only issues to urban electorate concerns. This essay looks at the MQM's beginnings, leadership, changing tactics, and electoral involvement in addition to its noteworthy influence on Pakistan's sociopolitical environment. The study sheds light on the party's nuanced influence on Pakistani political discourse and policy.

Keywords: Muhajir Quami Movement, Genesis, leadership, Ethnicity, politics

INTRODUCTION

Since its founding in 1984, the Muhajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) has played a significant role in Pakistani politics, especially in Sindh's cities. The movement began as a movement to support the Muhajirs, Indian immigrants who came to Pakistan after the 1947 partition. MQM developed over time from an ethnic group that supported the Muhajir community's rights to a prominent political party that has an impact on provincial and national politics (Shah, 2011). Identity politics, social integration, and the

call for political empowerment are characteristics of MQM's development that have influenced its place in the political development of the nation.

The MQM was founded by Altaf Hussain in response to the political and social marginalization of the Muhajir community, who felt excluded from political representation, particularly by the dominant political forces in Pakistan such as the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and other regional groups (Shah, 2011). Initially, the MQM focused on advancing the interests of the Muhajir community, advocating for better governance, equal rights, and political representation. But the party's operations grew increasingly intricate and contentious over time. MQM's reputation and political role have been significantly impacted by the accusations of militant activity and violent political tactics that have engulfed the organization (Jamil, 2014). The rise of MQM coincided with Karachi's rapid urbanization, where a significant portion of the Muhajir population had settled. Karachi's transformation into a multi-ethnic urban center created a political battleground, with MQM representing the urban Muhajir population while parties such as the PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) represented rural and provincial interests (Rizvi, 2000). The MQM's political tactics and interactions with Pakistan's political system have frequently been influenced by this urban-rural divide.

There is controversy surrounding MQM's role in Pakistani politics, as the party has been accused of encouraging ethnic violence, extortion, and political intimidation, especially in the 1990s, leading some political analysts to label it a militant organisation (Jamil, 2014). However, MQM's power over Karachi, Pakistan's largest and most economically important city, has remained a crucial political force, and its participation in both provincial and national coalitions shows that it can adapt and influence important national policies, particularly in the areas of ethnic politics and urban governance (Khan, 2008).

Despite its history of violence and political influence, the MQM continues to play a significant role in Pakistan's changing political landscape. The difficulties of striking a balance between ethnic identity and national political structures are demonstrated by the party's influence on national politics and its attempts to represent the Muhajir community within the larger framework of Pakistani governance. With a focus on how it continues to influence political discourse around ethnicity, governance, and power, this study will examine the MQM's ideological development, political tactics, and continued significance within Pakistan's political system.

The Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM), which was founded in 1984, has become a major political force in Pakistan, particularly in Sindh's cities of Hyderabad and Karachi. The movement, which was first started to defend the rights of Urdu-speaking migrants who had moved to the region after India's 1947 partition, has faced numerous challenges and transformations

over time. The research paper examines the historical evolution and socio-political dynamics of the Muhajir Quami Movement within the context of Pakistani society, tackling significant topics such as political representation, identity formation, and the movement's impact on the rights and goals of the Muhajir community. The study intends to investigate the movement's objectives in the framework of national integration and identity politics, assess the elements that contributed to its creation, and assess the opportunities and difficulties it poses.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Although there is a wealth of information about the Muhajir Quami Movement in the literature review, this research article will primarily concentrate on its overview and effects on Pakistan's political landscape.

Dr. Riaz Ahmed Sheikh and Dr. Fouzia Anwar of the University of Karachi's in their article "Ethnic Identity and Political Strategies: A Case Study of Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) in Karachi has talked about the MQM's political strategies and how ethnic identity shaped the organisation. The origins of the party, its mobilisation of the Muhajir identity, and the impact of its strategies on Karachi politics are all covered in this article.

Dr. Adeel Khan of the University of California, Berkeley, in his article titled "Urban Violence in Karachi: Implications of Political Mobilization and the Muhajir "Identity emphasised the link between political activism, particularly that of the MQM, and the persistent urban violence in Karachi. The use of the Muhajir identity in political discourse and its impact on the city's social structure are examined in this article.

Dr. Ayesha Siddiqa of the University of Oxford, her article titled "The Muhajir Quami Movement in Pakistan: From Identity Politics to Ethno-NationalismThis article explores the reasons behind the MQM's transformation from an identity-focused Muhajir movement to a more ethno-nationalist organisation, as well as the implications for the party's political goals.

The article "Media Representation of Muttahida Quami Movement: A Critical Analysis" was written by University of Karachi professor Shehryar Khan. This study examines how the MQM is portrayed in Pakistani media and how that representation affects public opinion. It talks about how the party's reputation has been affected by how the Muhajir community has been portrayed in the media.

The 2013 "Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies" article "Understanding the Muttahida Quami Movement: A Historical Perspective" by Ali Riaz offers a critical examination of the party's beginnings as well as its changing organisational and ideological climate. Riaz's research adds to the body of literature by analysing the party's political mobilisation tactics and their effects on Karachi politics and other fields.

In 2002Jamal Hussain's article "The Muhajir Quami Movement and Its Impact on Pakistani Politics": gives a comprehensive overview of the MQM's impact on Pakistan's political landscape. The author examines the party's origins as a movement that aided immigrants who spoke Urdu and migrated to Pakistan during the 1947 partition from India. This paper discusses the party's electoral successes, connections with other political parties, and the impact of its activism on governance and policy-making in Sindhi and Karachi.

Farhan Hanif Siddiqi's book, "The Politics of Ethnicity in Pakistan: The Baloch, Sindhi, and Muhajir Ethnic Movements. Siddiqi's comparative analysis of Pakistani ethnic movements includes an analysis of the Muhajir Quami Movement's participation in identity politics. The article looks at the party's efforts to voice the grievances of the Urdu-speaking community and defend their sociopolitical rights in a multiethnic state. Siddiqi examines the party's strategies for political mobilisation and the challenges it has faced in holding onto its base of support and influence.

"Violence and the Muhajir Quami Movement in Pakistan: From Ethnic Identity to Political Power" written by Laurent Gayer: Gayer's study investigates the complex relationship between the MQM and political violence in Pakistan. The author looks at the party's militant wing, how it contributed to Karachi's political turmoil, and how employing violent methods affected the party's growth. This article also discusses the state's response to the MQM's activities and the broader impacts of political violence on Pakistan's democratic institutions and governance.

Christophe Jaffrelot's book "The Muhajir Quami Movement in Pakistan: Politics, Economics, and Security": Jaffrelot's comprehensive analysis examines the MQM's numerous aspects, such as its organisational structure, security concerns, and socioeconomic agenda. The party's internal dynamics, relationships with external actors and governmental institutions, and efforts to address the social and economic problems that Sindh's urban population faces are all discussed in the article.

"Ethnic Politics and State Power in Pakistan: The Case of the Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM)" written by Roger D. Long: An in-depth analysis of the MQM's formation and growth within the context of Pakistan's ethnic politics is provided in this article. Long explores the party's history, its struggle for political representation, and the power-sharing dynamics in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city and a major MQM stronghold. The article also looks at the party's ideology, its mobilisation strategies, and the challenges it has faced in communicating with the central government and other ethnic groups in Sindh.

Dr. Ali Abbas from the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, authored "Muttahida Quami Movement and the Evolution of Political Violence in Urban Sindh". This research paper provides a thorough analysis of the MQM's role in the emergence of political

violence in urban Sindh. It discusses the party's internal organisation, strategies, and impact on the local political landscape.

MANIFESTO OF MUHAJIR QAUMI MOVEMENT

Participation and Representation: In Pakistan's political system, the movement seeks to give the Muhajir community political representation. To ensure that their rights are respected and that their concerns are taken seriously, it has advocated for greater Muhajir participation in national institutions, government agencies, and decision-making processes.

 Social and Economic Justice: The MQM has fought for social and economic justice for the Muhajir OF community in order to address issues like poverty, unemployment, and restricted access to essentials. The movement has sought to provide social and economic advancement to Pakistan's underprivileged communities, including the Muhajirs.

 Rights to Linguistics and Culture: The MQM has been a vocal advocate for the preservation and advancement of Muhajir culture and the Urdu language. It has sought to protect the linguistic and cultural identity of the Muhajir community, emphasising the importance of cultural diversity and the right to respect and maintain one's heritage.

Rule of Law and Security: Upholding the rule of law and ensuring the safety and security of all citizens, especially those who belong to minority groups, have been top priorities for the movement. The MQM has called for vigorous law enforcement as well as measures to combat crime and violence in order to guarantee that the Muhajir community can live in safety and prosperity.

Empowerment and Education: The MQM's vision for the Muhajir community has placed a strong emphasis on empowerment and education. More access to high-quality education and chances for skill development have been promoted by the movement. with the goal of giving Muhajirs the resources they require to excel in a variety of endeavours and advance Pakistan. **Political Empowerment**: The MQM advocates for greater political influence for Pakistan's marginalised communities, including the Muhajir community. This entails working to ensure fair representation in legislatures, government agencies, and other forums where decisions are made. The party aims to give every citizen, regardless of background, the chance to participate in and be represented in politics.

FLAG, SYMBOL AND SLOGAN OF MUHAJIR QAUMI MOVEMENT

The colours and symbols on the Muhajir Quami Movement's (MQM) original flag, which was created in 1984, held great symbolic meaning for the party and its founding members. The flag was designed to symbolise the aspirations, identity, and unity of the Muhajir community in addition to reflecting the principles and values of the MQM as a political organisation. The flag's tricolour scheme consisted of the colours red, white, and green.

Each colour had a special significance that resonated with the Muhajir community and encapsulated the essence of the MQM's aims and purposes. The kite was used as a symbol when the Muhajir Quami Movement was established. It developed into a familiar and iconic emblem for the company over time. The kite, which represents the party's objectives for the Muhajir community and its commitment to their rights and representation in Pakistani politics. It also symbolises freedom, aspiration, and an adventurous spirit. The kite symbol, which also symbolises the idea of reaching great heights, reflects the party's objective of advancement, development, and the empowerment of Muhajir people.

The Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM) selected a catchphrase that would encapsulate the aims, objectives, and ambitions of the Muhajir community in Pakistan when it was founded in 1984. The catchphrase carried a lot of weight and was meant to raise awareness of the party's objectives and causes while also motivating the public to support them. The MQM may have used the exact slogan "Imaan, Etihad, and Tanzeem" (Faith, Unity, and Discipline) at when it was established in 1984. This slogan reflects the fundamental principles and values that the MQM sought to instill in the Muhajir community and its supporters.

CHANGING TRENDS IN MANIFESTO

One of the primary issues covered in the MQM's initial manifesto was the political, social, and economic rights of the Muhajir community. The party aimed to resolve the grievances of the Muhajirs, who were regularly the targets of discrimination and marginalisation in a number of settings. The MQM sought to improve Muhajirs' political representation while tackling issues like infrastructure development, unemployment, and access to healthcare and education. But as political conditions and obstacles changed over time, the MQM's platform and strategy also changed. The party's strategy has changed significantly, moving from focussing solely on the Muhajir community to embracing a broader, more inclusive platform that seeks to represent the rights of all Pakistan's marginalised communities.

Additionally, the party has changed its platform to address contemporary issues facing Pakistan, including governance, economic growth, and national security. In addition to transparent and accountable governance, the MQM has emphasised the need for policies to address security concerns, promote economic growth, and advance social development.

In recent years, the MQM has turned its focus to defending the rights of urban dwellers, addressing issues such as the construction of infrastructure, urban planning, and the provision of basic services in metropolitan areas. The growing urbanisation of Pakistan and the need to address the particular problems faced by urban populations are recognised by the party.

The MQM's changing manifesto also reflects a shift in its political stance. To achieve its objectives, the party has forged partnerships. and alliances with other political parties to try to reach more people than its usual base of support. This strategic shift has resulted in a more inclusive and varied set of policy priorities in the party's manifesto.

THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP ROLE

In MQM, leadership has played a variety of roles that have affected the party's internal dynamics as well as its interactions with the larger political and social environment. Altaf Hussain founded the All-Pakistan Muhajir Students Organisation (APMSO), which was an early version of the MQM. His intention was to provide political representation to the Muhajir community, which he felt was increasingly being stigmatised and marginalised in Pakistan. In 1985, the Muhajir Quami Movement was granted political party status.

The best person to lead it is Altaf Hussain. The power of charisma lies in its capacity to energise the core of a society. That is, the many symbols of power that surround the charismatic person. Consequently, a charismatic person receives his appeal from the power symbols that are connected to him. Anthropologist Oskar Verkaaik uses this definition to describe Hussain. The ability "to transform himself into a living symbol of the Muhajir nation" is possessed by Hussain. Hussain's portrayal of himself as a morally bankrupt individual did not make him the primary motivator or leader of the MQM. On the other hand, Hussain largely achieves this by projecting his personal traits. Although Hussain relates to and represents all facets of Muhajir society, his political acumen and skill are what set him apart and make him inextricably linked to them. Hussain's speeches have become crucial to MQM discourse because he uses them as a platform to implement his political beliefs.

Hussain's fundamental political beliefs—social justice and the elimination of corruption—were fully realised in 1989, four years after the MQM was founded. Then, in contrast to these grand claims, Hussain declares, "I am the biggest example," presenting himself as an example to be emulated. I'm not a property owner. You don't have to be from these [landed elite] classes to be a government leader, I'm telling you. I'm not. In an attempt to reach a larger political base, Hussain imprinted his vision on MQM doctrine, and in just one year, his story grew to include speeches to minorities in general rather than just Muhajirs.

Hussain showed that he is able to understand and utilise the political and social context in which he works. In Lahore, at another speech. In 1989–1990, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) launched the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) in an effort to streamline developing countries' economies. Pakistan's poor population was disproportionately impacted by these policies, which cut back on social

services. "MQM firmly believes that this country can be maintained in the way it should," Hussain shouted. Whether or not people agree with what I say doesn't matter to me. That is, when the poor and middle class across the country achieve the same level of poverty as they did under the MQM. Altaf Hussain is also conscious of the recent history of Pakistan, where socialist principles have become more popular. According to Hussain, "all these people talking about Leninism and socialism," The communists in this nation disparage Islam; do you Do you want to see Islam and real socialism? Would you like to talk about the living conditions of our country's poor? Take a look at the MQM and the way we take care of our employees and clients. Such language demonstrates a recurrent theme in Hussain's capacity to identify patterns and unhappiness in Pakistani society and suggest MQM as the remedy. The MQM rose to prominence as an advocate for the rights and issues of the Muhajir community under Altaf Hussain's direction. The party concentrated on tackling problems like prejudice, inequality in the economy, and Muhajirs' lack of political rights. His ability to lead and speak effectively was instrumental in mobilizing the Muhajir community.

MUHAJIR QAUMI MOVEMENT PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The local elections marked the beginning of the MQM's political career. During the Zia era, this group made its first local government run in 1987 under the slogan "Jia Muhajir," and it garnered a significant majority in Hyderabad and Karachi. In support of Muhajirs, the MQM leaders declared it to be a referendum. Because they think that the best representation should be ensured, they have always supported local government politics. The MQM claimed to be the only authentic representatives of the Muhajirs after the Muhajirs assisted them in winning the elections. But Altaf Hussain, who was then being held in Karachi's Central Jail, instructed the elected consuls to ignore what had occurred in the past and offered the public services without displaying any bias. He said it didn't matter if there were any Sindhis, Punjabis, or Pakistanis living in Muhajirs.

In the 1988 and 1990 national elections, the MQM defeated the Jamaat-i-Islami and its allies, the IJI. Motivated by its achievements, the MQM came to the conclusion that the Muhajirs and Sindhis needed to form an alliance in order to overcome the alleged Punjabi presence in the federal government. PPP and MQM came to an agreement. However, it was unable to proceed due to the involvement of the intelligence agencies, and the accord fell apart in October 1989. Conflicts erupted violently in Sindh's cities. because of this malfunction. Many people think that the intelligence services helped create the subsequent ethnic division by using the MQM to overthrow Benazir Bhutto's government and install Nawaz Sharif as prime minister of Pakistan.

In 1992, the army launched its persecution campaign against the MQM. The leader of the MQM, Altaf Hussain, left the country and moved to London, where he is now living in self-exile. The army employed a duelling strategy during the operation. A public campaign against the MQM was started after its leaders and militants were arrested. The organization's torture cells were made public, though, and other tactics were used to mislead its supporters. Additionally, during the second phase, the army supported a rebellion against the Afaq Ahmed is the leader of the MQM-Haqiqi, a breakaway faction of the MQM. However, the MQM Haqiqi lost public trust as a result of accepting military assistance. After winning the 1993 elections, the PPP and MQM came to power. But as it implemented the policies of the previous administration and used coercion to crush the opposition, the Bhutto administration frequently violated human rights.

Nawaz Sharif formed a partnership with the Muhajir Quami Movement following his election to a second term in 1997. However, the peace in Karachi was not also restored by this alliance. Following their release from prison, MQM activists became enraged and a string of tit-for-tat shootings broke out. The government gave the security forces broad new authority in response to the violence that had been rising in Karachi. This included the power to speed up court proceedings and execute suspected terrorists as soon as they were found.

The Jamaat-i-Islami won power in 2001 as a result of the MQM's boycott of the 2001 municipal elections, but in the 2005 local elections, the MQM took back control of the local government apparatus. In the general elections of 2002, the MQM won most of the urban seats in Sindh. The MQM's elected members were appointed to high-ranking ministries at both the federal and provincial levels after they joined the coalition government.

Table; 1
ELECTION RESULTS
SOURCE: http://www.ecp.gov.pk

Electoral history and performance of MQM					
Voting percentile %	**Voting turnout**	**Seating graph**	**Presiding Convener of the party**	**Parliamentary position**	**General elections**
1988	5.37%	1,068,868	13 / 207	Imran Farooq	
1990	7%	1,172,525	15 / 207	Altaf Hussain	In alliance with PML-N/In Opposition
1993	Non-participant	–	0 / 207	Altaf Hussain	See: Operation Blue Fox
1997	4.0%	764,207	12 / 207	Farooq Sattar	In alliance with PML-NIn Opposition

2002	3.1%	–	13 / 272	Farooq Sattar	In alliance with PML-Q
2008	7.4%	2,507,813	25 / 272	Babar Ghauri	In alliance with PPP
2013	5.41%	2,456,153	24 / 272	Faisal Sabzwari	In Opposition
2018	Non-participant	–	0 / 272	Altaf Hussain	

PARTY POSITION IN SINDH ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS OF PAKISTAN 1988-2013
Table; 2

Party	Number of Party Seats Won In 1988	Number of Party Seats Won In 1990	Number of Party Seats Won In 1993	Number of Party Seats Won In 1997	Number of Party Seats Won In 2002	Number of Party Seats Won In 2008	Number of Party Seats Won In 2013
MQM	31	28	Boycott	28	42	51	37

SOURCE: http://www.ecp.gov.pk

MUHAJIR QAUMI MOVEMENT'S IMPACT ON PAKISTANI POLITICS

The MQM has had a major influence on Pakistani politics at both the national and local levels. The following are some of the main effects of the MQM on Pakistani politics:

Muhajir Identity and Representation: The MQM has been the primary political organisation for the Muhajir community in Pakistan, giving a voice to a historically marginalised and discriminated community. The party has addressed issues related to the political, economic, and social inclusion of Muhajirs as well as their rights.

Urban Politics: The MQM has become a major political force in urban areas, particularly in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city have been significantly impacted by the local party's influence. Due to its solid presence in local government institutions and ability to rally support from urban communities, the MQM has been able to have an impact on policies and decision-making in urbancentres.

Coalition Politics: The MQM has assumed a prominent role in the nation's coalition politics. The MQM is a part of ruling coalitions in several national governments and has influenced federal policymaking. Because it is able to form coalitions and negotiate with other political parties, the party has a stake in and influence over national governance.

The MQM has been connected to conflicts and allegations of violence, including allegations that it uses coercive tactics to maintain onto power in Karachi. The party's history has been marked by violent and contentious episodes that have harmed the party's image and attracted the attention of the media and other political players.

Election Performance: The MQM has been a powerful electoral force in Karachi and other cities, successfully mobilising its supporters and winning a significant number of seats in local and national legislatures. The party's election results have affected the allocation of power and representation in Pakistan's political institutions.

Shifts in Political Alliances: The MQM's political allies have changed over time to reflect the country's changing political circumstances has an impact on the negotiation of political interests and power dynamics.

In summary, the Muhajir Quami Movement has had a significant impact on Pakistani politics, particularly in major cities like Hyderabad and Karachi. Its advocacy for Muhajir rights, participation in national coalitions, and influence over urban governance have all influenced Pakistan's political landscape, and its internal dynamics and controversies have further increased the complexity and diversity of the country's political landscape.

CONCLUSION

MQM's catchphrase when it first started out was Jia Muhajir, which refers only to Urdu speakers who have migrated to Pakistan from India; it has shown that it is a party exclusively for Urdu speakers between 1984 and 2011; it has refused to recognise the existence of Pashtoon and Punjabi in Urdu-speaking regions, claiming to speak for Pakistan's poor, but this hasn't been able to destroy the idea of Jia Muhajir; members of the Urdu-speaking community also elected the party's leadership; no Pashtoon or Punjabi can be a MQM leader; its linguistic and regional differences from other political parties have widened over time. Their main demand was for the return of those who had travelled to Karachi from other provinces to their home provinces.

This is also a class conflict. most Muhajirs who join MQM are from lower-class or lower-middle-class backgrounds, and they believe that only 2% of the population controls all of the country's resources, and they are confident that if they band together and engage in political activism, they can tip the scales in their favour. This is the real reason why people continue to support MQM despite its consistent folly and flagging non serious attitudes support any party that has members from the privileged or feudal classes in its leadership. It was established in 1984, and within two years it became the official Muhajir group

This paper has provided a historical overview of the Muhajir community since 1947. The MQM leader Altaf Hussain, who created a political identity for the Muhajir community in Pakistan, was discussed in this paper. The party's journey over the past thirty-three years from a position of political, social, and cultural marginalisation to its current position as an essential component of the state apparatus has been greatly aided by Hussain's speech.

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