

**The Architect-Viziers of Bahawalpur State: Governance, Power, and Intrigue
in the Early Nineteenth Century (1809–1836)**

By

Asif Imran

PhD Scholar, Dept. of History, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Abstract

This study examines the pivotal role of viziers in shaping the political, administrative, and diplomatic foundations of the Bahawalpur State during the early nineteenth century (1809–1836). Existing historiography on Bahawalpur has largely focused on the Abbasi rulers, while the institutional and political influence of viziers has received limited scholarly attention. Employing a qualitative historical methodology, this research is based on primary sources such as Persian chronicles, state records, and British gazetteers, supplemented by relevant secondary literature. The central research questions investigate how viziers functioned as architects of governance, how their authority evolved under shifting regional and colonial pressures, and how personal ambition and intrigue affected state stability. The study argues that viziers were not merely administrative aides but decisive power brokers who managed diplomacy with the Sikh Empire, the Talpur rulers of Sindh, and the British East India Company, while simultaneously overseeing internal administration and military affairs. The careers of Naseer Khan Gurgajj, Fateh Muhammad Ghori, and Muhammad Yaqoob Khan reveal a transition from militarized governance to pragmatic diplomacy, followed by administrative consolidation marred by internal rivalries. The article concludes that although the vizierate played a crucial role in ensuring Bahawalpur's survival as a princely state, its heavy dependence on individual authority also exposed structural vulnerabilities within the state's political system.

Key Words: Vizierate, Governance, Bahawalpur State, Diplomacy, Political Intrigue

Introduction

In this historical backdrop, the Bahawalpur State emerged during the decline of the Mughal Empire. This occurred when the Daudpotra Abbasis, due to conflicts with their kinsmen, the Kalhora Abbasis, were compelled to migrate from

Sindh towards Khanpur, Bate Delhi, Dera Ghazi Khan, and finally Uch.¹ Recognizing their martial potential, the Mughal Governor of Multan, Hayatullah Khan, granted the area of Chaudarri as an estate to the Daudpotra chief, Sadiq Muhammad Khan I (1727–1746 AD).² This grant marked the geographical founding of the Bahawalpur State. Sadiq Muhammad Khan I established the state's first capital at Allahabad, located approximately three kilometers northwest of Chaudarri. Under his leadership, the Daudputra tribes expanded their control over much of what is now the Bahawalpur Division, settling in numerous villages. Returning to their traditional occupation, the Amir developed the region's agriculture by excavating irrigation canals. Following his death, he was succeeded by his son, Muhammad Bahawal Khan I (1746–1749 AD), a Hafiz-e-Quran. It was he who, in 1748 AD, established the city of Bahawalpur on the bank of the Sutlej River.³ Following the death of Bahawal Khan I, Nawab Mubarak Khan (1749–1772 AD) ascended to the throne. A capable ruler, he strengthened the defense of the Bahawalpur state by forging strategic diplomatic relations with the Daudputras and commissioning the construction of several forts.⁴

Meanwhile, in the 19th century, Bahawalpur significantly transformed its governance by merging traditional customs with modern methods. This change was largely engineered by the Nawab's viziers, who were far more than ceremonial advisors. As key architects of the state's administration, they engaged in political maneuvering, shaped policy, devised military strategy, and managed finances. Their diverse contributions were vital as Bahawalpur reformed internally while adapting to colonial influence. Moreover, the viziers played a key role in strengthening the administrative structure by promoting meritocracy and loyalty within the bureaucracy. They implemented policies that emphasised competence and integrity, recruiting skilled officials from local elites and integrating them into

¹ Maulvi Muhammad Azam, *Tazkarah-tul-Khawaneen Al Maroof Jawahir-e-Abbasia* (Bahawalpur: Manuscript, 1838), 53-54.

² Muhammad Anwaar Nabi Qureshi, *Mukhtasar Tareekh-e-Bahawalpur* (Bahawalpur: Sadiq-ul-Anwar Press, 1931), 63. See also Mir Nasir Ali, *Geographia Riasat Bahawalpur* (Dehli: Mutba-e-Rizvi, 1892), 155.

³ Muhammad Ali Darvesh, *Tareekh-e-Riyasat-e-Bahawalpur*, Vol. I (Lahore: Zahid Bashir Printer, 1987), 89.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

organized administrative hierarchies. This approach enhanced operational efficiency and reinforced the ruling authority's legitimacy, as capable and loyal officials became associated with the state's stability. Amid sweeping socio-political changes, the viziers ensured the immediate functionality of the state apparatus and helped build an enduring legacy for Bahawalpur as a distinctive and resilient political entity. They served variously as administrators, advisors to the Nawab, mediators between social groups, and policy architects.⁵

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative historical research methodology grounded in textual analysis and contextual interpretation. Primary sources include Persian and Urdu chronicles such as *Muntakhib-ul-Tawareekh* and *Tareekh-ul-Wuzra*, official Bahawalpur State records, and British colonial documents, particularly the Punjab States Gazetteers. These sources are critically analyzed to reconstruct the administrative roles, political actions, and personal networks of the viziers.

Secondary sources, modern historical studies on princely states, colonial diplomacy, and regional politics are used to situate Bahawalpur within broader South Asian political developments. The research applies an institutional and biographical approach, focusing on individual viziers while examining the structural evolution of the vizierate as an office of power. This methodology allows for an assessment of both governance mechanisms and the impact of personal ambition and intrigue on state stability.

Literature Review

The Bahawalpur State has traditionally emphasized the Abbasi Nawabs and their diplomatic relations with the British Empire. Works such as the Punjab States Gazetteers and regional histories provide valuable administrative and political data but offer limited analytical treatment of viziers as independent actors. Muhammad Aziz-ur-Rehman's *Tareekh-ul-Wuzra* remains one of the few

⁵ Talbot, *The Punjab and the Raj: 1849-1947*, 112.
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texts focusing specifically on ministerial figures, though its narrative style lacks critical engagement with power dynamics.

Broader studies on princely states in nineteenth-century India highlight the importance of intermediary's ministers, diwans, and viziers in mediating between rulers and imperial powers. However, Bahawalpur's viziers remain underrepresented in this literature. This article addresses this gap by foregrounding the vizierate as a central institution of governance and by analyzing how individual viziers shaped policy, diplomacy, and internal stability. In doing so, it contributes to the growing historiography on sub-regional political agency within the colonial and pre-colonial South Asian context.

The Foundational Viziers: Governance and Statecraft in Early Bahawalpur (1809-1836)

During the period of the Bahawalpur State (1809-1836 AD), the viziers served as the foundational architects of its governance, acting as primary counselors to the Nawabs and wielding substantial influence over political, economic, and administrative affairs.⁶ They established a sophisticated bureaucratic framework, functioning as vital intermediaries who built intricate networks with local administrators, meticulously managed records for land and taxation, and secured resources and trade routes to ensure economic stability.⁷ Their diplomatic acumen was crucial in negotiating treaties with neighboring states and the British East India Company, safeguarding the state's relative autonomy while leveraging strategic alliances.⁸ Beyond diplomacy, their multifaceted roles encompassed tribal management to ensure internal cohesion, planning military campaigns for territorial expansion, overseeing key

⁶ Khaleeq Ahmad Nizami, *The Indian States: A Historical Perspective* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1995), 112.

⁷ Robert Montgomery, *Memorandum on Bahawalpur* (Lahore: Government Press, 1859), 21-24.

⁸ Sydney Owen, *The Fall of the Moghul Empire of Hindustan* (London: J. Murray, 1912), 176-180.

administrative departments, and holding judicial authority to maintain the rule of law.⁹

The Soldier-Viziers: Military Influence in Bahawalpur's Politics

Before British protection, Bahawalpur relied on its own army. Senior military officers often became viziers, reflecting the army's central role in politics. The appointment of specialized commanders by Nawab Bahawal Khan II elevated their political authority. For example, Vizier Naseer Khan had been commander-in-chief, and Muhammad Yaqoob Khan was previously Mir Bakhshi before his promotion in 1826 AD.¹⁰

However, Bahawal Khan II began appointing specialized officers to lead different military campaigns. This practice elevated these commanders, making them eligible for significant political appointments. Consequently, Nawabs frequently selected their ministers from the ranks of senior military officers. For example, the vizier Naseer was previously the commander-in-chief, and his successor, Yaqub, had been the Mir Bakhshi (paymaster-general) under a previous ruler before his promotion in 1826 AD. This system cemented the army's influence within the political and administrative framework of Bahawalpur. As the vizier was the Nawab's most trusted confidant, he wielded considerable influence over state affairs. It was common for these ministers to persuade the Nawab to appoint their own relatives to other key government positions, further entrenching the military's power.¹¹

The Role of Early Vizier's in Bahawalpur State (1809-1825 AD)

The Treaty of Amritsar fundamentally shifted Bahawalpur's political reality. The state's autonomy diminished, placing it under the indirect control of the British. Consequently, the Viziers' capacity to independently direct military expansion and forge external alliances was curtailed. Their role, while still important, became less about territorial acquisition and more about managing the state within the

⁹ Khalid Mehmood, *Bahawalpur: The Last Ruler* (Lahore: A. H. Publishers, 2012), 45.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Khalid, Ahmad and Hashmi, "Organization of Bahawalpur Army During First Half of Nineteenth Century," 29.

constraints imposed by British influence. The period of 1809-1825 AD, therefore, witnessed a notable shift in the Viziers' function, reflecting the altered political dynamics.¹²

Between 1809 and 1825, the viziers of Bahawalpur played a central role in consolidating the state through diplomacy, military organization, and administrative reform. They negotiated with neighboring powers, strengthened fortifications such as Derawar Fort, reorganized revenue systems, and promoted agricultural expansion through irrigation. At the same time, they mediated tribal disputes and patronized religious and intellectual life, reinforcing internal cohesion. This integrated approach enabled Bahawalpur to stabilize its territory and governance during a period of intense regional competition.¹³

The Role of Naseer Khan Gurgaj as Vizier (1809 – 1812 AD)

Nawab Muhammad Bahawal Khan II appointed Naseer Khan Gurgaj as Vizier of Bahawalpur State after sitting on the throne in 1809 and gave him the mansab (title) of 2 Hazari also (Muntakhib-ul- Tawareekh).¹⁴ Before his appointment as vizier, Naseer Khan Gurgaj distinguished himself as a courageous military leader with key victories at Uch, Fort Sahnwala, Fort Newshehra, and Garhi Ikhtiar Khan. Recognizing his exceptional leadership and strategic acumen, Nawab Muhammad Bahawal Khan II appointed him as Vizier. This was a strategic decision to strengthen the state's governance by integrating a formidable Baloch tribal leader into the administration.¹⁵

Naseer Khan Gurgaj ran Vizarat with success and peak for two years. He remained all in all and got a great value in the view of Nawab Bahawal Khan II. Naseer Khan, accompanied by his men who came from Sindh with Sadiq Muhammad Khan I, settled in Tranda Gurgaj and developed the land for habitation and agriculture. The tribe of this army was present in Shikarpur. Along

¹² Stanley Lane Pool, *Mediaeval India under Mohammedan Rule (AD 712-1764)* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1975),110.

¹³ R. C. Majumdar, *The Ruling Princes of India* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1952), 115.

¹⁴ Rehman, *Tareekh-ul-Wuzra*, 04.

¹⁵ A. R. Mansoor, *Bahawalpur: A Historical and Cultural Study* (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 2003), 66.

with Naseer Khan his kith and kin included in the royal company and services. So, Gull Muhammad Khan Gurgaij and Mehrab Khan Gurgaij took part in the expedition to cope with the tussle of Machka against Mazaris in 1809 and Usman Khan Gurgaij remained employee. Jaafir Khan and Ahmad Khan were grandsons of Naseer Khan. Nabi Bakhsh Khan Gurgaij s/o Ahmad Khan died had gained the status of Honorary Magistrate.¹⁶

Naseer Khan Gurgaij's legacy within the Bahawalpur State remains indelible. His contributions to military strategy, governance, and regional stability positioned him as one of the most influential figures of his time. The Gurgaij tribe, under his leadership, continued to be a formidable force, securing their place in the annals of history as warriors and administrators of exceptional caliber. His service to Nawab Muhammad Bahawal Khan II was a defining factor in the consolidation of Bahawalpur's sovereignty during a time of great political flux. Through his conquests and administrative reforms, Naseer Khan Gurgaij not only left an enduring imprint on Bahawalpur's history but also cemented his place as a stalwart of Baloch tribal leadership. His vision and strategies played a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of the state, ensuring that it remained resilient against external threats while thriving internally. His legacy, deeply ingrained in the historical consciousness of the region, continues to be a source of inspiration for generations to come.¹⁷

To neutralize the threat posed by the heir to the throne, Naseer Khan assigned Usman Khan, a trusted aide, to handle the situation. Reaching Ramkli Fort, he satisfied Sahibzada Mubarak Khan, the elder brother of Nawab Sahib, by taking an oath on the Holy Quran that his life would be safe. He freed him from there, and was taking him to Derawer Fort, on the way, he martyred him. Instead of success and appraisal, this incident made Nawab Sahib worried and grieved. Nawab Sahib ordered the Qasas (demand of life of a person for taking life of other person) against Usman Khan so he met his fate. In this regard Nawab Sahib warned Naseer Khan properly.

¹⁶ Rehman, *Subh e Sadiq*, 97.

¹⁷ Montgomery, *Memorandum on Bahawalpur*, 21.

After this incident Nawab Sahib seemed agreed on Naseer Khan apparently, but Naseer Khan felt a threat of revenge of this act and remained on increasing. Feeling threatened, he undertook actions that ultimately undermined the stability of the state. He made a plan to abolish Bahawalpur by sending his special secret keeping person Saleh Khan Afghan to Sindh to Meer Ghulam Ali Khan and Jam Hala Khan Talpur.¹⁸

So, this army under the command of Wali Muhammad Khan Laghari entering the boundaries of the State attacked Fort Bhutta. Though Qalaa Daar (the fort keeper) resisted but at the lettering of Naseer Khan, he emptied the fort. In the meantime, Naseer Khan reached the Fort, telling the incidents to Nawab Sahib according to his will and by joining enemy force, he helped them and these people gradually reached Bahawalpur in 1809 AD destroying the state by the conspiracy of Naseer Khan. As a result of dreadful mutiny due to this deep bully and disloyalty, Nawab Sahib had to send Sahibzada Muhammad Rahim Yaar Khan to Sindh as pledge.¹⁹

This battle came to an end with this agreement. At the reversal of the Sindh army, Naseer Khan went to Sindh also. In Moharram 1225 AH (1810 AD), when Sahibzada Rahim Yaar Khan came from Sindh back to the State after performing the duty of vowed, news arrived instantly that the rulers of Sindh were preparing to attack the State again. Nawab Sahib got rid of this menace to make a plan to show ability instead of making it safe zone. In the same way many riots appeared and the peace of the State remained disturbed.²⁰

Activities of Naseer Khan Gurgajj in Sindh

In Sindh, Naseer Khan Gurgajj remained busy in making preparations of attack on Nawab Sahib and the State and sent Bengal Gurgajj to Nawab Sahib to forgive his guilt. He made it public that he sent Bengal Gurgajj to Kot Mitthan in the services of Khwaja Muhammad Aaqil. Bengal Gurgajj could not make success here. Having in mind the idea of feelings of revenge and malice by Naseer Khan,

¹⁸ Mac lagan E.D, *Gazetteer of the Multan District* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Printing Press, 1901-02),89.

¹⁹ Talbot, *The Punjab and the Raj: 1849-1947*, 49.

²⁰ Ibid.

Nawab Sahib wished that Naseer Khan should not try to riot and disturb the peace of the State because he was well aware of the circumstances of the State.²¹

Nawab Sahib acted upon according to his feigns. But the hostility of Naseer Khan was not removed at these assurances and behavior and this delegation returned in failure. At the last time, Nawab Sahib sent Gull Muhammad Khan along with Umar Khan and bestowed a pride dress (Khilaat-e- Fakhira) also. They satisfied Naseer Khan by swear about the fair mindedness of Nawab Sahib. Then Naseer Khan got permission from the court of Sindh making some feign and was revived on his old post (Madar-ul- Mahaam) by producing in the services of Nawab Sahib. In the meantime, Khair Muhammad Khan Gurgaij brother of Naseer Khan died. In the way of sympathy, Nawab Sahib sent Sahibzada Rahim Yaar Khan.²²

The commander (Sipah Saalaar) Muhammad Yaqoob to Tranda Gurgaij for condolence. In this way, he gave the proof of his clearance and sympathy Naseer Khan Gurgaij though was Madar-ul- Maham, but his conscience would always condemn him and frightened him from any important upcoming incident. At last, he tried to settle the matter by giving the clearance by mediating Hazrat Qazi Muhammad Aaqil Sahib, he was the spiritual leader of Nawab Sahib and made a heavy reference of Hazrat Qazi by accompanying him from Kot Mitthan. Nawab Sahib said that he has forgotten that entire episode rather gave valuable attention to Naseer Khan and respect him.²³

Fateh Muhammad Ghori 1812-1825 AD (Acting Vizier)

Although Naseer Khan never formally appointed a minister, his trusted associate, Fateh Muhammad Khan Ghori, effectively performed the role. A shrewd and wise official from the Ghori family, Fateh Muhammad skillfully managed diplomatic relations. His decisions successfully maintained a delicate balance, satisfying the Sikh government in Lahore while simultaneously exerting significant influence over the Talpur government in Sindh. Fateh Muhammad

²¹ Zaidi, *The Evolution of Bahawalpur State*, 99.

²² Nuruzzaman Auj, *Ancient Bahawalpur* (Multan: Caravan Book Centre, 1987), 14.

²³ Rehman, *Tareekh-ul-Wuzra*, 6-7.

Khan Ghori maintained relationships. His approach is a classic example of strategic diplomacy and balancing power.²⁴

Diplomatic Strategy under Fateh Muhammad Khan Ghori: A Delicate Balance of Power

Fateh Muhammad Khan Ghori operated within a highly complex geopolitical environment, positioned between two powerful and often antagonistic neighbors: the Sikh Empire of Lahore and the Talpur Dynasty of Sindh. His diplomatic success lay in carefully balancing relations with both powers without formally aligning Bahawalpur with either.²⁵

Relations with the Sikh Empire were managed through pragmatic appeasement. Recognizing the military superiority and expansionist ambitions of Lahore under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Fateh Muhammad Ghori avoided direct confrontation. He likely pursued formal recognition of Sikh suzerainty and agreed to the payment of periodic tribute (*nazrana*), a common strategy employed by smaller states to preserve internal autonomy while averting invasion. This arrangement allowed Bahawalpur to function as a stable buffer on the southern frontier of the Sikh Empire, reducing administrative and military burdens for Lahore.

In contrast, relations with the Talpur rulers of Sindh were more fluid and consultative. Fateh Muhammad Ghori leveraged his diplomatic engagement with the Sikhs to enhance his influence in Sindh, positioning himself as an intermediary who understood Sikh political priorities. This role granted him considerable prestige and advisory authority within the Talpur court, while simultaneously reinforcing Bahawalpur's strategic relevance in the region.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Mirza Muhammad Ashraf, *Sadiq ul Tawareekh* (Bahawalpur: Sadiq ul Anwar, Bahawalpur, 1889).08

²⁶ Rehman, *Tareekh-ul-Wuzra*, 8.

Table 1: Summary of the Relationship Dynamics

Relationships	Primary Goal	Method of Maintenance	Outcome
Sikh Empire (Lahore)	Avoid conquest and maintain peace	Pragmatic Appeasement: Formal recognition, tribute, and acting as a stable buffer state.	Satisfaction for the Sikh government
Talpur Dynasty (Sindh)	Retain autonomy and exert influence	Strategic Intermediary: Leveraging his relationship with Lahore to position himself as a key player and advisor.	Great Influence on the Talpur government

Source: Muhammad Aziz ur Rehman, *Tareekh ul Wuzra*. (Bahawalpur: Burki Press, 1927), 8.

He navigated a dangerous geopolitical landscape by making calculated concessions to the stronger power (Lahore) while using that very relationship to enhance his status and influence with the weaker neighbor (Sindh).²⁷

The Period of Muhammad Yaqoob Khan (1825 – 1836 AD)

Following Fateh Muhammad Khan Ghori's tenure, the vizierate continued to evolve under Muhammad Yaqoob Khan (1825–1836), whose leadership combined administrative reform with military assertiveness. After the death of Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan II, his eldest son, Muhammad Rahim Yar Khan (also known as Bahawal Khan III), ascended to the throne. His succession marked the beginning of significant development in the Bahawalpur State. Nawab Bahawal Khan III assumed control over both internal administration and foreign affairs, initiating several developmental reforms.

²⁷ Mohan Lal, *Life of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan of Kabul: With His Political Proceedings Towards the English, Russian, and Persian Governments* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846), 45.

Table 2: The Administration of Nawab Bahawal Khan III

Sr. No	Personality	Designation
1	Muhammad Yaqoob Khan	Vizier
2	Moti Ram	Bakshi of Army
3	Mul Ram	Mir Munshi
4	Shaikh Maqbool Muhammad	Principal Officer
5	Shaikh Noor Muhammad	Principal Officer
6	Muhammad Qaim	Governor of Dera Ghazi Khan
7	Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah	Ambassador in Foreign Court
8	Girdhari Lal	Ambassador in Foreign Court
9	Chamman Lal	Ambassador in Foreign Court
10	Izzat Rai	Ambassador in Foreign Court
11	Ghulam Hassan	Ambassador in Foreign Court
12	Salamat rai	In charge of Taushakhana
13	Diwan Sultan Ahmad	Musahib
14	Khawaja Zain-ul-Abidin	Musahib

Source: The Punjab Government, *States Gazetteers: Bahawalpur State with Maps 1904* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazetteer Press, 1908), 67.

The above table shows the personalities who were performed as an administration under the patronage of Nawab and the Vizier was the significant role in this administration.²⁸

Muhammad Yaqoob Khan served as the second Vizier of the Bahawalpur State from 1825 AD to 1836 AD. His tenure was marked by political activities, administrative reforms, and military efforts. He was known by the title “Khaas Khaili.” He had been involved in state affairs for a long time and lived on its resources. Before becoming Vizier, he held the position of Bakhshi Fauj. This role showed his military skill and leadership. His promotion to Vizier reflected his loyalty and important role in the state’s defense and management.²⁹

One of the most significant and controversial events during his rule was the execution of Sheikh Maqbool Muhammad and Sheikh Noor Muhammad. Both

²⁸ Ashraf, *Sadiq ul Tawareekh*, 207.

²⁹ Charles Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, and the Punjab* (London: Richard Bentley, 1842), 89.

men held the position of *Mustaufi* (Principal Officers) in the state administration. They had a long-standing rivalry with Muhammad Yaqoob Khan. This conflict eventually led to their elimination. The decision was driven by both political strategy and personal motives. The root of this action lay in deep administrative tensions and personal enmity. Yaqoob Khan viewed them as major threats to his power. He believed their actions were disrupting the governance of the state.

Therefore, he chose to act decisively against them. A key factor in this event was a land dispute. The land involved belonged to Muhammad Qaim Khan, the maternal uncle of Yaqoob Khan. It was located in the region of Dera Ghazi Khan. This area was known for its fertile soil and strategic value. Muhammad Qaim Khan regularly paid revenue for the land. However, conflicting ownership claims created political tension. The *Mustaufis* used their administrative authority to challenge Yaqoob Khan's position. They allegedly altered revenue records and imposed unfair taxes. These actions were intended to weaken his control over state affairs.³⁰

The power struggle eventually turned into a serious conflict. In response, Muhammad Yaqoob Khan took firm action. Using his political skills and military support, he removed the *Mustaufis* from power. This action helped him strengthen his control over the administration. It also showed other rivals that his position in the government was strong and secure. After securing power, Yaqoob Khan focused on improving the state's administration. His policies aimed at financial stability, military strength, and good relations with neighboring states. He understood the region's political situation and worked to make Bahawalpur self-sufficient in food and trade. He also invested in building infrastructure. Improving irrigation systems was one of his main goals. This helped increase agricultural production and government revenue.³¹

Muhammad Yaqoob Khan's rule included military efforts to protect the borders of Bahawalpur. His experience as Bakhshi Fauj gave him a strong understanding of military needs. He knew the value of a disciplined and well-

³⁰ Ali, *The History of Bahawalpur*, 145.

³¹ R. N. Kawish, *Bahawalpur Main Urdu Zuban Ka Aghaz o Irtaqa* (Multan: Bazm-e-Saqafat Printing Press, 2008), 114.

equipped army. During his rule, military units were reorganized. Fortifications were also improved. He formed strategic alliances with local power holders. These actions helped Bahawalpur stay secure from both external attacks and internal unrest.³²

Yaqoob Khan was a strong administrator and military leader. However, his rule faced many challenges. There was dissent within the royal court. Rival factions tried to weaken his authority. He also had to deal with ongoing negotiations with British envoys. Managing these issues required great political skill. His success in handling such complexities was a key aspect of his leadership. By 1836 AD, Muhammad Yaqoob Khan's rule in Bahawalpur had come to an end. During his tenure, he made significant changes to the state's administration. He also reformed the military and improved economic policies. These efforts helped Bahawalpur prosper despite political instability in the region. Although his rule included political purges, his legacy reflects strong leadership and strategic thinking.³³

In 1828 AD, the revenue from Dera Ghazi Khan was not delivered to Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. This led to a tense situation and strong demands. In the following year, 1829 AD, the salaries of the Rohela army were not distributed. As a result, the army became restless and attempted to revolt. In response to both issues, Nawab Sahib wrote a brief letter to Muhammad Yaqoob Khan. During this time, complaints were made to Nawab Sahib that Muhammad Yaqoob Khan was neglecting state affairs. It was said that he spent most of his time in unusual religious practices and spiritual recitations (*wazaif*), rather than attending to administrative responsibilities. As a result, Nawab Sahib personally wrote another letter to the Vizier (Muhammad Yaqoob Khan), advising him to pay attention to his duties. However, these pieces of advice had no effect on the Vizier.³⁴

The army of the Rohelas became anxious due to the non-payment of their salaries. As a result, they rebelled and marched to occupy Uch. In response, Nawab Sahib deployed his forces to suppress the rebellion. The rebels were

³²Ashraf, *Sadiq ul Tawareekh*, 145.

³³ Ali, *The History of Bahawalpur*, 146.

³⁴ Rose, *Bahawalpur: A Historical Sketch*, 90.

defeated. Meanwhile, the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not receive the expected revenue. Using this as a pretext, Maharaja Ranjit Singh launched an attack on Bahawalpur.

As a result of this expedition, 435 maozas (villages) from the districts of Multan, Muzaffargarh, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Montgomery were taken from Nawab Bahawal Khan. These villages had an annual income of approximately 800,000 rupees. Following this loss, the northern boundary of the Bahawalpur State was reduced to the River Ghara. Despite these significant territorial and economic losses, and efforts by Nawab Sahib to resolve the situation peacefully, Vizier Muhammad Yaqoob Khan's attitude remained unchanged. However, due to the strategic foresight of Nawab Sahib, a formal alliance was eventually established between the State of Bahawalpur and the British Government.³⁵

After this union, peace was achieved and the threat of destruction by the Sikhs was removed. However, the daily routine and living conditions of Vizier Muhammad Yaqoob Khan remained unchanged. In 1835 AD, Muhammad Yaqoob Khan organized a celebration for the circumcision (Khatna) of his two sons, Muhammad Murad and Ghulam Muhammad. He invited Nawab Sahib to attend the event, which was celebrated with the customs of a marriage ceremony. During the event, Nawab Sahib participated in the washing ritual, using a golden pot. While doing so, he noticed a golden spoon and other items that he recognized as his own. These objects had been stolen from the Tosha Khana (royal treasury) of Bahawalpur. Their presence at the event suggested an act of dishonesty and misuse of state property.³⁶

During the events surrounding the marriage, Nawab Sahib personally witnessed valuable golden items being stolen from the Tosha Khana. This incident provided clear evidence of the misuse of state property. As a result, it became evident to Nawab Sahib that Muhammad Yaqoob Khan had failed to fulfill his official duties and had acted with negligence and disloyalty. Furthermore, it was

³⁵ Ashraf, *Sadiq ul Tawareekh*, 96. See also Arthur Conolly, *Journey to North of India, Overland from England through Russia, Persia and Afghanistan*, Vol. II (London: Richerd Bently, 1838), 283-85.

³⁶ Maj. Gen. M. R. Haig. *The Indus Delta Country* (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1972), 120.

confirmed that employees had not received their salaries. These findings led Nawab Sahib to conclude that the revenue from District Dera Ghazi Khan had been illegally consumed by Muhammad Daim Khan, the maternal uncle of Muhammad Yaqoob Khan.³⁷

Following a decline in revenue and financial losses in Taaluqa Kachi, which were attributed to the negligence of Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, Nawab Sahib summoned him, his uncle Muhammad Daim, and a relative, Muhammad Qaim, to his residence. All three were detained at Murad Bagh and had their properties confiscated. In 1836, Muhammad Yaqoob Khan was poisoned and killed by Shah Muhammad Khaas Khaili. Subsequently, Muhammad Daim was imprisoned in Fort Islamgarh, and Muhammad Qaim was confined in Fort Dingarh Tirhara, where he later died.³⁸ Muhammad Yaqoob Khan's vizierate was a paradox. His administrative and military reforms modernized the state, showcasing strategic acumen. However, his rule was marred by personal vendetta, as seen in the brutal execution of his rivals, the Sheikhs. This act sowed dissent and undermined stability. His later neglect of duty and the treasury theft scandal revealed profound administrative failure, leading to territorial losses and his eventual downfall. His legacy is thus a complex mix of foundational development and corrosive personal ambition.

Conclusion

This study establishes that the vizierate played a decisive role in the political consolidation and survival of the Bahawalpur State between 1809 and 1836. In the context of post-Mughal decline and expanding Sikh and British influence, viziers functioned as the principal agents of administration, diplomacy, and policy execution.

The transition from militarized authority to pragmatic diplomacy reflects the state's adaptive response to changing regional realities. While individual ambition and administrative failures exposed structural weaknesses, the vizierate as an institution ensured continuity of governance and preserved Bahawalpur's autonomy during a critical phase of its history.

³⁷ Darvesh, *Tareekh e Riyast e Bahawlapur*, 129.

³⁸ Rehman, *Tareekh ul Wuzra*, 25.

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