

# ***Rise of Sindhi Diaspora in USA: A Comparative Study of SANA, WSC and WSI***

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## **Abstract**

*Scholarly research on Sindhi diaspora has mushroomed in last decade or so but most of this research is about the Hindu (Indian) Sindhi emigrants from Sindh. It covers different streams of Hindu Sindhi migrations from Sindh to all across the world in pre and post-partition phases (in post-partition phase from India to other parts of the world). However, very little research is done about the Sindhi Muslims or Pakistani Sindhi diaspora who migrated in last three to four decades from Sindh to different parts of the world. This study tries to fill that gap in literature on Pakistani Sindhi diaspora. Like Indian Sindhis, during the last three decades, Pakistani Sindhis have also become a global community and they have formed their advocacy groups or diaspora organizations across the world. However, the focus of this research will be on Pakistani Sindhi diaspora organizations in USA only. According to one estimate, around thirty to forty Sindhi diaspora organizations were working in USA by the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Among those the Sindhi Association of North America (SANA), the World Sindhi Congress (WSC) and the World Sindhi Institute (WSI) were the most prominent ones. Instead*

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*of picking one case study, all three are studied here to get an insight into the type of work Sindhi diaspora organizations have been doing as a whole, the political and social interests of the community they serve and the dynamics of internal politics between them. This paper provides a brief history of each group along with its introduction, organizational structure, political affiliation if any, decision-making process and their activities.*

### **Introduction**

There had been a general misperception about ethnic Sindhis in Pakistan that they are homesick people and they do not like the idea of living away from Sindh, their homeland. Therefore, the very idea of research on Sindhi diaspora must come as a surprise for many living in Pakistan. This misperception might be justified for Sindhi Muslims until a few decades back because very few Muslim Sindhis used to travel outside Sindh until 1970s. But the renowned researchers of diaspora studies like Claude Markovits<sup>1</sup> and Mark-Anthony Falzon<sup>2</sup> describe Sindhis (actually Hindu Sindhis) as one of the largest diasporic communities of the world. Markovits and Falzon have documented in their books as how Sindhi merchants from small towns of Hyderabad and Shikarpur were trading with all major port cities of the world and how Sindhi diaspora emerged as an important diasporic community in far off regions like Malta, South Africa, Singapore, Canary Islands, Nigeria, Hong Kong, Manila, Jakarta, Australia, USA, UK and Canada.

To understand the real dynamics of Sindhi diaspora, it is important to differentiate Sindhi diaspora along their nationality lines into Indian (Hindu) Sindhi and Pakistani Sindhi diaspora because both operate along these lines and there is very little mixing between them. Unlike Indian Sindhi

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1 Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants 1750-1947: Traders of Sindh from Bukhara to Panama* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

2 Mark-Anthony Falzon, *Cosmopolitan Connections: The Sindhi Diaspora 1860-2000* (London: Brill Academic Publications, 2004).

diaspora which is exclusively Hindu by faith the Pakistani Sindhi diaspora community includes some of the Hindu Sindhis as well who have migrated after the partition from the southern Sindh province in Pakistan to rest of the world. Although Sindhi nationalists do not recognize this differentiation and claim that Sindhi is a person who is born of a Sindhi blood and there is no distinction on the basis of religion or nationality, still all Sindhi community groups can easily be divided into groups dominated by Pakistani Muslim Sindhis and Indian Hindu Sindhis.

The Indian Hindu Sindhi groups can be recognized even from their Sanskrit names like “Akhil Bharat Sindhi Boli Ain Sahit Sabha” and the usage of Hindu religious rituals in their meetings. The other significant difference between Indian and Pakistani Sindhis is their sensitivity for religion and association with religious or secular political ideology. Indian Sindhis mostly associate themselves with Hindutva ideology as most of them are strong supporters of L. K. Advani and Ramjethmalani’s (the two mainstream Sindhi political leaders in India) Bhartya Janata Party (BJP) whereas Pakistani Sindhis are more secular and left oriented mostly influenced by the political ideologies of Z.A. Bhutto and G.M. Sayed (founder of Sindhi ethno-nationalist party Jiye Sindh).

Moreover, the Indian Sindhis believe in the Trans-national concept of Sindh. They say, “Sindh is where Sindhis live”, meaning India or the whole world wherever they live is now Sindh for them<sup>3</sup>. They have their own issues different from Sindhis living in Pakistan. Like much debated issue for Indian Sindhis in 2005 was a case in Indian Supreme Court for the deletion of word Sindh from Indian national anthem<sup>4</sup>

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3 This explanation was shared by one of the Indian Sindhis met by the author in USA.

4 *The Times of India*, January 03, 2005. accessed on Feb.5, 2016.  
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Delete-Sindh-from-National-Anthem/articleshow/979358.cms>

and the then Indian government's plan to name the River Indus flowing in Ladakh as River Singhe.<sup>5</sup>

In 1989, Indian Sindhi organizations of major cities of USA formed an umbrella organization called Alliance of Global Sindhi Association.<sup>6</sup> They started organizing annual International Sindhi Sammelan (conference) in USA and around twenty-five to thirty Indian Sindhi groups participate in those Sammelans. The first such International Sindhi Sammelan was held in 1994 in New Jersey, USA. Since 2005 this International Sindhi Sammelan went global and so far it has been organized in Mumbai, London, Jakarta, Singapore, Indore (India), Ahmedabad (India), and the 21<sup>st</sup> Sammelan held in 2014 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.<sup>7</sup>

Pakistani (Muslim) Sindhis' migration to USA and other parts of the world is a more recent phenomenon. It most probably started in 1970s when Z.A. Bhutto (himself an ethnic Sindhi) became the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the gates of power-corridors were opened for the local Sindhis. This trend specially picked up in early 1980s when many Sindhi political activists fled and took asylum in USA and many other European countries because of the fear of state-sponsored persecution at the hands of the military rule of General Zia-ul-Haq. As those Pakistani Sindhis were already politically aware and had also some experience of political activism, they were successful in launching their own groups as early as 1983-84.

Apart from Markovits<sup>8</sup> and Falzon's<sup>9</sup> exclusive books on Sindhi diaspora, there are several scholarly research articles/chapters written on the Indian Sindhi diaspora. In 2001, Falzon wrote another article on the origin and

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5 For a debate on the name of river Indus see Dial V. Gidwani's article in Indian journal *Sindhi Shaan* 9, no 4, 2010. accessed on Feb.6, 2016. [http://www.sindhishaan.com/article/issues/issu\\_09\\_04a.html](http://www.sindhishaan.com/article/issues/issu_09_04a.html)

6 See their official website accessed on Feb.7, 2016. <http://www.sindhissammelan.com/>

7 Accessed on Feb. 10, 2016. <http://www.sindhissammelan.com/>

8 Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*.

9 Falzon, *Cosmopolitan Connections*.

development of Sindh work (Hindu Sindhi merchants) diaspora in Malta.<sup>10</sup> In 2004, Dieter Haller<sup>11</sup> wrote a chapter in an edited book providing an ethnographic study of Indian Sindhi's celebration event on the eve of India's Independence Day in Gibraltar's Botanical Garden in 1996. Then in 2007, Daniel Gold provided a comparative analysis of Maharashtrian and Sindhi diasporas in Gwalior and Madhya Pradesh in India.<sup>12</sup> In 2012, Saaz Aggarwal<sup>13</sup> and in 2014 Nandita Bhavnani<sup>14</sup> wrote books on stories of exile of Sindhi Hindus from Sindh at the time of partition in 1947. There is also a journal *Bharat Ratna: Life of the Overseas Indians*<sup>15</sup> which gets published from Hong Kong and according to Haller "is a journal for the Sindhi (Indian) communities."<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, no scholarly research is available on the life, issues and organizational institutions of Pakistani Sindhis now living in good numbers in USA, UK, Middle East, Europe and many other parts of the world. Hence, this is a pioneering research on Pakistani Sindhi diaspora as it is the first attempt to fill this gap in the academic literature. This paper focuses only on Pakistani Sindhi advocacy groups organized by Sindhi immigrants in USA coming from Sindh—the southern province of Pakistan. Three groups: the World Sindhi Congress (WSC), the World Sindhi Institute (WSI)

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10 Mark-Anthony Falzon, "Origins and Establishment of the Indian Business Community in Malta," *Bank of Valletta Review* no. 24 (Autumn, 2001).

11 Dieter Haller, "Economy, Spirituality and Gender in the Sindhi Network," in *Diaspora, Identity and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research*, ed., Carolin Alfonso, Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tölölyan (London: Routledge, 2004).

12 Daniel Gold, "Internal Diasporas, Caste Organizations, and Community Identities: Maharashtrians and Sindhis in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh", *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 11, no. 2 (August 2007): 171-190.

13 Saaz Aggarwal, *Sindh: Stories from a Vanished Homeland* (Pune: Black-and-White fountain, 2012).

14 Nandita Bhavnani, *The Making of Exile: Sindhi Hindus and the Partition of India* (New Delhi: Westland and Tranquebar Press, 2014).

15 See the journal website accessed on March 1, 2016.  
<http://bharatratna.com/br.html>

16 Haller, *Diaspora, Identity and Religion*, 195.

and the Sindhi Association of North America (SANA) are selected for this purpose. The WSC is basically a UK, USA, and Canada based group but it claims to have its members in Sindh as well. Whereas, the WSI is Washington based and the Sindhi Association of North America (SANA) is divided into five zones comprising the whole of USA and Canada.

Pakistani Sindhis' organizations in USA, Canada and UK are more socially and politically active than their ethno-nationalist counterparts in Sindh. Despite organizing political protests and political events abroad, they do not directly associate themselves with any political party working in Sindh. They proclaim to be non-profit human rights based social and cultural organizations. Their major contribution lies in creating common platforms for Sindhi immigrants living in UK, USA and Canada to meet, dine, talk and discuss political issues of Sindh. Interestingly, despite being part of the Sindhi (Pakistani) diaspora, they rarely discuss the issues and problems of Sindhi diaspora living in those countries, rather they mostly focus on political happenings in Sindh. Except the SANA, which claims it places the community development of Sindhi immigrants living in North America (USA and Canada) as its top priority.<sup>17</sup> From here onwards in this paper the word "Sindhi" should be understood as Pakistani Sindhis.

Data collection and reliability of the data has been a major hindrance in this research. Because of the unavailability of any prior research on SANA, WSC and WSI, this paper relies on data collected from the websites of the those groups and the one to one in-depth qualitative interviews of the people at the helm in these organizations. I cannot claim here hundred percent accuracy of the information. I apologize in advance for any inaccuracy or mistake. However, I have tried my best to verify the claims with the counter claims.

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17 Mazhar Lakho, the former President of SANA, telephonic interview by author, April 27, 2005.

Considering the limits of time and space this paper can merely be termed as a brief introduction of three major Sindhi Advocacy Groups, i.e. the WSC, the WSI and the SANA. However, it is hoped that this would encourage many others to do more detailed research on this topic which is gaining importance with every passing day.

### **Sindhi Association of North America (SANA):**

Sindh was the centre of the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) against dictatorial military rule of General Zia-ul-Haq. Therefore, in retaliation military regime lashed out at the political forces in Sindh and many Sindhi political activists were forced to leave Pakistan in early 1980's. Living from abroad these politically motivated people found a way to connect themselves with their motherland by organizing their advocacy groups.

In 1983, the SANA was established as the first not-for-profit socio-cultural organization of Pakistani Sindhis living abroad. Dr. Feroz Ahmed, a renowned scholar and university professor in Washington D.C.; Javed Leghari, who later became the chairperson of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan; Dr. Nazir Mughal, who became the Vice Chancellor of Sindh University; Khalid Hashmani, Altaf Memon and Irshad Qazi were among the founding members of SANA.<sup>18</sup> They together framed the first constitution of SANA and Khalid Hashmani was made its first president.<sup>19</sup>

The SANA started publishing its quarterly newsletter *Sangat* [Urdu: friendship] since its inception to raise voice against the atrocities of General Zia-ul-Haq in Sindh. *Sangat* carried the stories of resistance by Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) against the military dictatorship of Zia from Sindh. Mr. Altaf Memon was its first editor, but he used to write under his pen name "Adarsh Sindhi."<sup>20</sup> Later, the community newsletter of SANA Canada

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18 Lakho, telephonic interview, April 27, 2005.

19 Lakho, telephonic interview, April 27, 2005.

20 Altaf Memon, the first general secretary SANA, telephonic interview, April 30, 2005.

chapter named "Malir" also started its publication from April-June 2003.

The SANA had started its youth chapter named Sindhi Youth Association of North America (SYNA) in April 1998. To commemorate the contribution of Dr. Feroz Ahmed, it gives Feroz Ahmed Memorial Educational Fund (FAME Fund) merit-cum-need based scholarships to Sindhi students pursuing their higher education in Pakistan.<sup>21</sup> Besides, the SANA has also started a scholarship scheme for the students of Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Sukkur as well.<sup>22</sup>

The presidential elections in 1989 proved to be a major turning point in the history of SANA. In this election, a relatively new member, Allah Wadhayo Bhatti defeated one of the pioneers of SANA, Javed Laghari in a closely contested election. Mr. Bhatti's victory was a sign of the shifting of balance of power in SANA from the old guards to the new leadership known as 'doctors group' led by the professional medical doctors Dr. Mazhar Lakho and Dr. Abdul Wahab Qazi.<sup>23</sup> This change of guards in SANA convinced the old leadership consisting Altaf Memon, Javed Leghari, Khalid Hashmani and others to become inactive, despite keeping their basic membership intact. Some of them later on joined hands to form the World Sindhi Institute as an advocacy group based in Washington.

The SANA is basically a cultural group which provides a common platform to Sindhi immigrants living in North America particularly USA and Canada. As claimed by its former president Dr. Mazhar Lakho in his interview with the writer, the biggest achievement of SANA is that it has given Sindhi immigrants of North America the identity of 'American Sindhi'.<sup>24</sup> The community development within the Sindhi

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21 Accessed on April 05, 2016. <http://www.sanalist.org/sana/newsite/award-academic-12-13.html>

22 See SANA website for more details accessed on April 05, 2016. <http://www.sanalist.org/sana/newsite/award-academic-12-13.html>

23 Altaf Memon, telephonic interview, April 30, 2005.

24 Lakho, telephonic interview, April 27, 2005.

community of US and Canada is the top priority of SANA. To achieve this end, it arranges different gatherings, creates a network within Sindhi community by keeping a record of Sindhi immigrants living in Canada and USA, Sindhi language preservation by promoting Sindhi language in homes and encouraging inter-marriages. In this regard two other initiatives i.e., Sindhi Radio Program "Mehran Rang" and a web link for teaching Sindhi language were launched by the SANA in 2005. People living anywhere in the world could avail of the two services through Internet.

The SANA regularly holds its Annual Convention in the month of July, which is considered as a mega cultural event of Sindhis. Initially, its conventions were organized in different cities of USA only but later on they went to Canada and recently have organized them in Sindh as well. The SANA conventions every year attract dignitaries from politics, education, media, literature and music from all over Sindh. After attending the 15<sup>th</sup> Convention of SANA in July 1999, a well-known Sindhi writer Amar Jaleel wrote in his weekly article "Mystic notes" in the *Dawn*:

A few among them had sought refuge and political asylum there during the barbaric dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq. He cultivated Kalashnikov, and heroin culture in Pakistan, and destroyed the democratic institutions forever. It was during his rule that we saw unprecedented disappearance of Sindhi youth. They either went into exile, or vanished with eternity, and never surfaced again. It was an emotional reunion with the survivors of the holocaust in a distant land.<sup>25</sup>

The SANA is divided into five zones and several chapters. The affairs of the association are conducted by an executive council, elected and/or approved by the General Body for two years. The executive council officers are to hold offices for two years and for a maximum of only two consecutive terms. The president heads the executive council. The advisory council consists of 20 members. The members of the outgoing executive council automatically become members of the advisory council. There are five

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25 Amar Jaleel, "Sindhis in San Francisco", Daily *Dawn*, July 25, 1999.

categories of the SANA membership. Life time members and regular members are main sources of its funding.<sup>26</sup>

The SANA claims to be a non-political, non-profit humanitarian organization but as most of its founding members consisted of the people who were forced to leave the country during the MRD movement against General Zia, therefore, their sympathies were clearly with the Pakistan Peoples' Party of Benazir Bhutto who was leading this struggle for democracy in Pakistan. Even among the leadership of SANA, support for the PPP was clearly there at individual members' level, therefore, many critics of the SANA blamed it for having close alliance with the Pakistan Peoples' Party. The leadership of SANA has always rejected such a connection and have maintained their independent identity as a non-profit socio-cultural organization of Sindhi diaspora living in North America.

### **World Sindhi Congress (WSC)**

After five years of the launch of the SANA in USA, in 1988 the World Sindhi Congress was launched by G. M. Bhurgari in UK.<sup>27</sup> Initially, the WSC started as a London-based group as its presence outside the city was limited. From day one, it had aspired to emerge as a leading Sindhi diaspora organization in UK aimed at raising the voice for the rights of people of Sindh on International forums. As the SANA owed its emergence to the MRD movement in Sindh and the resulting political exiles to USA, the WSC rose from the ideology of G.M. Sayed, the nationalist Sindhi leader who demanded a separate homeland named *Sindhu desh* (country of Sindh) for the people of Sindh on the basis national self-determination.

The WSC though initiated in 1988, was organized and registered by Mr. Munawer Halepoto in 1991.<sup>28</sup> But later on

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26 SANA By Laws accessed on April 30, 2005 from the SANA website: [www.sanalist.org](http://www.sanalist.org)

27 Saghir Shaikh, the then Chairman WSC, telephonic interview, February 12, 2005.

28 Rahman Kakepoto, the then Information Secretary WSC, telephonic interview, April 26, 2005.

in 1997 young leadership under Saghir Shaikh, Safdar Sarki and others on the charges of secret links and financial mismanagement replaced Mr. Halepoto. They elected Mr. Safdar Sarki as its new president but Munawer Halepoto was not ready to step down and he kept on working as a president of his own faction.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the WSC was divided into two factions though Halepoto faction later got completely marginalized and gradually almost disappeared from the scene.

The WSC has its chapters in UK, USA, Canada and Sindh, and holds annual General Body Meeting (AGM) by the end of July, which is the biggest event of the year along with an international conference on a Sindh related theme. WSC also runs e-campaigns on water issue and human rights situation in Sindh. The association publishes quarterly newsletter named *The Sindh Parchar* which highlights its activities and Sindh's political issues.<sup>30</sup> The WSC had also launched yahoo group "career abroad 4 Sindhi-Study and Career for Sindhi around the globe" in 2005. This was an initiative for the career counselling of Sindhi students but owing to little interest of WSI members and Sindhi students this programme could not show any meaningful progress.<sup>31</sup>

The administrative structure of the WSC is quite simple as it is run by a thirteen member executive committee which is elected for two years term. The executive committee makes all decisions by the majority vote although the policy decisions require ratification in the AGM.<sup>32</sup> However, day to day operational duties are delegated to the cabinet headed by Chairperson and other office-bearers. Apart from this central administration, there are separate organizing committees for the UK, Europe, USA and Canada

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29 Shaikh, telephonic interview, February 12, 2005

30 Accessed on April 30, 2005. [www.worldsindhicongress.org](http://www.worldsindhicongress.org)

31 Accessed on April 30, 2005. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/careerabroad4sindhi>

32 Accessed on April 30, 2005. [www.worldsindhicongress.org](http://www.worldsindhicongress.org)

chapters.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, now a coordinator is also regularly appointed for Sindh.<sup>34</sup>

The WSC does not hide its political affiliation with G.M. Sayed's ideology of Sindhi nationalism and his programme. For example, every year a special programme is arranged to commemorate Sayed's role which is widely reported on their website and in quarterly *The Sindh Parchar*. Moreover, G.M. Sayed Memorial Award is annually granted to political activists or scholars for their contribution in research or activism on issues of Sindh.<sup>35</sup> Mr. Rahman Kakepoto, Information Secretary of the WSC had told the author back in 2005 that they enjoyed a good working relationship with the Jiye Sindh Qaumi Mahaz (JSQM) led by late Bashir Khan Qureshi and the Jiye Sindh Mahaz (JSM) of Abdul Khaliq Junejo back in Sindh.<sup>36</sup>

### **World Sindhi Institute (WSI)**

The roots of World Sindhi Institute were laid down in the electoral *coup* against the old leadership of SANA in 1989. After maintaining low profile for almost a decade the old leaders of SANA Mr. Altaf Memon and Khalid Hashmani along with Munawar Leghari, launched World Sindhi Institute on March 14, 1997. The WSI did not meant to be a full-fledged member based organization, rather it was a think-tank or lobbying institution for Sindhis in the hub of international political activities in Washington D.C., just to carry the Sindh related issues to the corridors of power in Washington D.C. According to Munawar Leghari, the basic idea behind this think-tank was borrowed from Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI) and with some minor necessary changes WSI structure was formed on same lines.<sup>37</sup>

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33 Accessed on 07/01/2016. <http://www.worldsindhicongress.org/team/>

34 Accessed on 07/01/2016. <http://www.worldsindhicongress.org/team/>

35 Accessed on May 1, 2005, <http://gmsyed.org/>

36 Rahman Kakepoto, the then Information Secretary WSC, telephonic interview, April 26, 2005.

37 Munawar Leghari, the then WSI President, telephonic interview, April 29, 2005.

Unlike the SANA, which is a member-based community organization, the WSI is purely an advocacy group lobbying with the UN agencies, human rights groups, and US State Department to sensitize them regularly about the political situation and human rights violations in Sindh.<sup>38</sup> In a way, the WSI avoided entering into the territory of SANA (community grouping), and therefore tried to find a different avenue for its activities.

The WSI back in 2005 was the only worldwide Sindhi organization which had a proper head office owned by the institute in Washington D.C. and the executive director of WSI, Mr. Munawer Leghari and three member personal staff under him were its full time paid servants of the WSI. Mr. Leghari considered this as one of the major achievements of WSI.<sup>39</sup>

Among Sindhi advocacy groups, the WSI was known for its financial strength and lobbying power among UN agencies, Human Rights organizations and INGO's. In 1997, the WSI launched quarterly *Sindh Watch* to report their activities in UN and other INGOs. One of the important contributions of WSI in the field of Sufi literature was their compilation of a series of musical albums containing all of the poetry of famous Sindhi *Sufi* poet Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. Bhittai's *Shah Jo Risalo*, the book on collection of his poetry is compiled in CD's in the voice of famous local singers.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the WSI gave Khair-ul-Nissa Jafri award for writings on Sindhi women's rights.<sup>41</sup> It held its annual international conference on issues confronted by Sindh and Pakistan at large e.g. the theme of 5<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference 2004 was "Military Rule in Pakistan: Challenges to Democracy, Human Rights, and Peace in Sindh".<sup>42</sup> Internships on Sindh related issues were

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38 Accessed on April 2, 2005. [www.worldsindhi.org](http://www.worldsindhi.org)

39 Leghari, April 29, 2005.

40 Leghari, telephonic interview, April 29, 2005.

41 Accessed on April 2, 2005. [www.worldsindhi.org](http://www.worldsindhi.org)

42 Accessed on April 3, 2005. [www.worldsindhi.org](http://www.worldsindhi.org)

also part of its activities. By 2005, about six students of different nationalities had worked as an intern with it. The WSI had won the UNA-NCA Blue Ribbon Award, consecutively for three years from 1999-2001 for its different activities.<sup>43</sup>

A board of directors, which consists of president, general secretary, treasurer and four members, who serve in a voluntary capacity in fixed terms, govern the WSI. Whereas the operational responsibilities and objectives are assumed by the executive director, staff and volunteers.<sup>44</sup> But strangely there is no mention of elections and the explanation of fixed term is also not available. In his interview with the writer Mr. Munawer Leghari explained that they avoided elections because it could create frictions, and unity of WSI was of great value to them, which must be preserved.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps the 1989 SANA electoral *coup* was behind the reluctance of WSI leadership's avoiding any elections in the association.

The real motive behind the adoption of the strategy of avoiding membership initially might be because of their realization that in the presence of the SANA and the WSC it would be very difficult for them to attract majority of Sindhi immigrants. But from November 2004, the WSI had launched its membership campaign.<sup>46</sup> However, Mr. Altaf Memon explained to the author that these members were actually subscribers only and they did not have any vote in decision-making of the WSI.<sup>47</sup>

The WSI had a huge budget as compared to the other Sindhi groups which was about \$100,000 per year back in 2005.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the worst criticism of WSI came from their counterparts in the SANA and the WSC on their financial

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43 Accessed on April 3, 2005. [www.worldsindhi.org](http://www.worldsindhi.org)

44 Accessed on May 1, 2005. [www.worldsindhi.org](http://www.worldsindhi.org)

45 Leghari, telephonic interview, April 29, 2005.

46 Accessed on May 2, 2005. [www.worldsindhi.org](http://www.worldsindhi.org)

47 Altaf Memon, telephonic interview, April 30, 2005.

48 Leghari, telephonic interview, April 29, 2005.

matters. The WSI was blamed for being funded by the Bhartya Janata Party (BJP) top leadership L.K. Advani and Ram Jethmalani in India as both had ancestral connection with Sindh. However, critics were not able to substantiate their blame with any proof. They would only question where this money come from and why they did not get similar donations though they had been working for a much longer time with better dedication (they claim).

Mr. Leghari and Mr. Memon in their interviews had explained that the WSI was a 501(c) 3-certified non-profit organization; therefore, they got tax exemption and basic source of their money were subscriptions, fund raising campaigns, members contribution, well-wishers donations and sponsorship for quarterly *Sindh Watch*. They also said they were willing to accept any donations from any quarters provided those donors do not try to influence their policies. They further said if anyone had any doubt he/she could check their accounts, which were available with Internal Revenue Service (IRA) of USA. They had argued that if they were involved in any financial fraud US agencies would have screwed them by then.<sup>49</sup>

Hence, until 2007, when the doors of UN were closed on the WSI, on the complaint of the government of Pakistan, it had enjoyed an effective presence in the UN and other international agencies. In January 2007, the United Nations panel had rejected an application by the WSI for a consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on the ground that it (the institute) was “working against the territorial integrity of Pakistan.”<sup>50</sup> The WSI had rejected this blame and clarified that they only demanded maximum provincial autonomy within the federal framework of Pakistan. But this point of view was not accepted as Turkish, Sudanese, Chinese and Cuban representatives supported the stance of Pakistani representative Mr. Bilal Hayee.<sup>51</sup> This proved to be a lethal blow for the WSI as after

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49 Leghari, the then WSI President, telephonic interview, April 29, 2005.

50 *Daily Times*, January 28, 2007.

51 *Daily Times*, January 28, 2007.

this it had lost all its previous importance and became irrelevant in the power corridors of Washington and its website also became dysfunctional.

### **Conclusion**

A bird's eye view of the WSI, the WSC and the SANA reveals that the SANA is basically a member-based community organization with a large backing in Sindhi immigrants from Pakistan and its political agenda is very limited just to raise the political issues confronted by Sindh. On the other hand, the WSI is more a think tank or a lobby with no or less emphasis on popular backing with no clear cut political agenda except raising the issues of Sindh. Both of these two were blamed for having links with the Pakistan Peoples' Party then led by Benazir Bhutto that the SANA leadership denied vehemently in their interviews. The WSI leadership also denied any direct link but they accepted that they had cooperated with the PPP on certain issues on the principle of mutual benefit.

Politically the influence of these advocacy groups on over all Sindh based politics might not be very significant but they have played a very important role in bringing Sindhi immigrants living in different parts of the world together and keeping them in some sort of touch with their traditions, customs and political issues in their homeland. For settling personal difference clean democratic process is key, which is somehow there in the SANA, but it is required to be consolidated more with more direct involvement of members.