THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES IN DEMOCRACY-REASONS FOR THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE PEOPLE OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

In Pakistan's political system, religious political parties do play a significant role. These parties have generally fought for legislation that is in line with Islamic ideals and has the support of conservative, religiously motivated population segments. They have successfully influenced the nation's political discourse and energized citizens around religious themes. Their impact has also been a contentious issue. According to critics, religious political parties foster intolerance and extremism, which can harm societal cohesion and minority rights. This has given rise to challenges such as sectarian conflicts, the persecution of religious minorities, and the demise of some spiritual institutions, but it has also given rise to a framework for governance. National and local political parties must cooperate at the federal and provincial levels to combat Islamic extremism in Pakistan. In order to create policies that support tolerance, diversity, and respect for minority rights while respecting the Islamic principles that are essential to the nation's identity, collaboration is essential. This demands a holistic approach encompassing education, discourse, and efforts to alleviate socioeconomic factors that can contribute to extremism. Furthermore, promoting an atmosphere that supports moderate and forward-thinking readings of Islam and principles of peace, coexistence, and social harmony is critical. This can be done by encouraging a pluralistic understanding of Islam involving religious scholars, local leaders, and civil society organizations. Strengthening democratic institutions and fostering a climate of religious freedom and pluralism are essential for combating religious extremism. The rights of religious minorities must be protected, and their equal participation in political processes must be guaranteed. To maintain Pakistan's political environment as inclusive, tolerant, and respectful of the rights and aspirations of all its residents, it is important to balance Islamic principles and democratic norms.

INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan's politics, religious political parties are significant. Since the early years of independence, their followers have increased. Islamic parties and organizations, except the Jamaat-e-Islami as they claim, are normally associated with a particular religious denomination or sect; some religious parties with the same sect have separate political identities. Along with their adversaries on the same side, these political parties are stacked from both sides. Support for regional, federal, and ethnic/racial political parties can, on the one hand, cut beyond social, religious, and sectarian affiliations (Afzal, 2018). These political parties usually receive higher voter support than Islamist parties. On the other hand, fundamentalist groups exert pressure on Islamic parties by encouraging violence to further their political and religious objectives.

People with strong religious convictions tend to lean in this direction. Several activists switch between jihadi and extreme Islamist parties (Hanif et al., 2021). For Pakistan, all Islamic parties advocate an Islamic sociopolitical and financial system. They discuss an Islamic order in general terms to demonstrate their objectives or discuss its characteristics abstractly. However, they have differing views on translating the arbitrary character of their announcements and proclamations into the administrative structures, religious practices, and codified constitutional and legal framework required to rule a country in the twenty-first century. They have yet to generate a widely circulated legal and constitutional text to replace the present constitution and judicial system.

Politically, Islamic parties could be doing better. In legislative assembly elections held at the federal and provincial levels, Islamic parties have yet to be able to hold onto more than a handful of seats in parliament. They are more effective when they forge regional and national political coalitions or benefit from an army dictatorship. If they create political alliances, their electoral efficacy rises. For a variety of reasons, they have awful electoral efficiency. Islamist groups cannot legitimately claim to be the only ones standing up for religion. The mainstream parties do not oppose religious politics. The Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI), the Pakistan Muslim League (PML), and its various affiliates do not object to the identification of Pakistan as an Islamic nation by the Pakistan People Party (PPP), the Mutihda Qumi Moment (MQM), and other parties (Croissant & Lorenz, 2018). Their perspective on an Islam-centered political system differs from that of Islamist parties. The notion of a secular system in the Marxist sense has never been perceived in Pakistan. The majority of regional and national parties place a strong emphasis on socioeconomic rights, religious tolerance, and the potential for equality.

Significance

This study examines the consequences of religious political parties' use of religious sentiments in Pakistan. Education is important in the nation's building as it fills the gap between information and knowledge. As the majority of the Muslims in Pakistan belong to the Barelvi sect of Islam, the emerging fanaticism on the issue of blasphemy among the supporters of this sect creates more threats to the security of Pakistan. Their slogan, "The blasphemers should be killed" shows this religious group's tough and exceptional narrative. Islam has been adopted as the country's guiding principle for its legal and political systems, and it plays a significant role in Pakistan's social structure. However, it has also created implicit pressure for those structures to continue to advance.

Statement of Problem

Pakistan is a country that has a democratic form of government, but since its independence of Pakistan, its democracy has been derailed by marshal law several times (Afzal, 2018). There are liberal political parties in a system like the Peoples Party, but on the other hand, all other parties including PTI, have often used the Religious sentiment of the peoples of Pakistan. Secondly, there are some major religious political parties like JI-Jamaat e Islami, JUI-Jamiat ulema Islam and, currently TLP-Tehreek e Labbaik Pakistan. In this study, we will learn how Political Parties like Tehreek e Labaik Pakistan (TLP) and JUI (F) use Religion for their purpose.

METHODOLOGY

A thorough literature search is carried out to find pertinent research articles, books, reports, and other sources of information. Academic databases, publications in political science, and other pertinent sources are frequently used in this search. The objective is to provide a wide range of literature that examines how religious political parties function within democratic systems and how they affect Pakistani citizens. Following the collection of the literature, a methodical screening procedure is used. Inclusion and exclusion criteria are defined to choose the most pertinent and top-notch sources. The relevance of the findings to the research question, study design, methodology, and publication date are a few examples of the criteria

that may be included. Only the most relevant and reputable material is included in the review thanks to the screening process.

Information is carefully taken from the chosen literature and analyzed. This entails finding recurring themes, counterarguments, and empirical data about the function of religious political parties in Pakistani democracy. Following extraction, the data is coherently organized and structured. There are various facets to how religious political parties play a role in politics, including their involvement in elections, influence over policy results, interactions with other political players, and influence on public opinion and societal attitudes. The data is provided logically, giving a thorough picture of the factors contributing to religious political parties' effect on Pakistanis in a democratic setting.

Critical examination and interpretation of the results are essential throughout the process. It is checked to see any gaps in the research or other limitations in the reviewed literature. The objective is to present a fair and unbiased assessment of the factors influencing how religious political parties affect Pakistani citizens, considering various viewpoints and academic disputes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History of Pakistan

A significant problem for Pakistan's current human rights situation is religious discrimination. Among other religious minorities, Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Shias, and Ahmadis sometimes endure prejudice and occasionally even violence. The worshipers themselves, as well as Christian churches and Ahmadi mosques, have occasionally come under attack. Pakistan's second prime minister, Khawaja Nazimuddin, said: "I do not accept that religion is a private business of the individual nor do I agree that in an Islamic state, every citizen has same rights, regardless of his caste, creed, or faith be" (Shah et al., 2012).

Reviewing Pakistan's 75-year history to comprehend the genesis of the Taliban-like phenomenon there is necessary. One must start by considering the country's basic foundation, which combines the opposing ideas of Islam and democracy to create the nation's identity (Murphy & Malik, 2009). While democracy reflects liberal norms, which view religion as a private affair rather than a life-essential that dominates politics or other critical aspects, Islam's ideology outlines spiritual and moral foundations. In light of the founding father Mohammad Ali Jinnah's principles, it was crucial to establish the place of religion in the nation's political structure from the beginning.

Without a doubt, the Muslims who lived in an undivided India adopted Islam as their political identity, but after Pakistan became an independent state, democracy was proclaimed to be the system's guiding political principle. It was vital to establish their link and defend the importance of democratic principles in establishing the new nation's political structure. However, in those early years, the leaders combined the two incompatible ideologies and allowed the kind of political ambiguity that the nation still experiences today, and to such a significant degree (Afzal, 2018).

The significance of Islam in the country's constitutional framework was stressed in Objective Resolution 19494, which became known as the nation's constitution-making standard. These rules over-emphasized the importance of Islam in the country's political and constitutional structure, undermining the importance of democratic values that Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had defended in his renowned address on August 11, 1947. By declaring, "You are free to go to your temples; you are free to go to your mosques or any other houses of worship in this state of Pakistan," he had succinctly outlined the fundamental tenets of the new democracy. You can practice any religion, caste, or faith as long as it has nothing to do with the government's business (Abbas, 2015; Afzal, 2018).

Islamic nationalism, animosity against India, and reliance on or cooperation with the West for financial and security support comprised the ideological tripod tabled together throughout the formation phase. The same trio has been maintained by succeeding governments regardless of the military or political

leadership, based on historical experience. Islamist forces could expand their influence and stake out a position due to the interaction between the three elements of state ideology, which eventually propelled them to the forefront (Karamat et al., 2019).

Islamist forces had ample opportunity to raise slogans calling for the introduction of Shariah law and an Islamic system in the country as a substitute for democracy during the country's formative years (1947–58) due to frequent disruptions of the democratic political process and irregularities in the constitution-making process. The system has developed in a fashion that emphasizes Islam more than democracy or a representative government. Islam was recognized as the unifying factor among the numerous nationalities living in the nation and as the solution to the challenging problems of ethnic rights and provincial autonomy. Such beliefs and behaviors gradually radicalized the government and society. The main difference between then and now is that the secular elites were in charge back then and they exploited Islam as a tool to achieve their political goals. The Islamists are currently attacking the secularists; thus the secret is out (Murphy & Malik, 2009).

By the end of his reign, he had entirely caved into the demands of the religious and political groups, designating Friday as a public holiday instead of Sunday and outlawing alcohol consumption at public events. Before being deposed by General Zia-ul Haq's military coup, he was also willing to share power with Islamists. 12 The liberal and tolerant nature of the state and society suffered greatly during Zia-ul Haq's eleven-year administration, which the Islamization of the state justified. Gen. Zia, who leans toward Islam, is interested in Islamizing the economy, government, legal system, and education (Ghumro et al., 2018).

Even though Nawaz Sharif leans to the right, he introduced the Shariat Bill into Parliament during his second tenure as prime minister to carry out the ultimate goal of the Islamic elements in Pakistan. Even though the bill was stalled in the Senate, the Upper House of Parliament did not approve it. However, it soon became apparent that Islam was no longer only a tool for implementing policy; rather, an effort was being made to create a replacement policy.

The first two years of General Musharraf's reign saw some more good days for the Mullah-Military relationship. Despite appearing to have banned militant groups and repressed Jihadi components, many were imprisoned before being released. He found it challenging to continue supporting the former allies after the 9/11 disaster. Due to his history of connections with terrorist elements, the international community still suspects that he is earnest in his fight against these elements. Because of the October 18, 2002 election, where enlightened moderation was the administration's stated goal, Islamists were in charge because they led the opposition and established governments in the two Western countries (Dressel, 2012).

Religious-political groups' radicalism, militancy, and demand for the Islamic system grew rapidly in the post-October political environment. It spread from the tribal agencies, thought to be their primary hiding places, to settled neighborhoods like Tank, Bannu, Kohat, Dera Ismail Khan, and the outskirts of Peshawar (Dara Adam Khail). Surprisingly, during the same period, the militant forces led by Mullah Fazllulah, also known as Maulana Radio, have completely taken control of the Swat region.

The links between extreme Islam and the Pakistani state, as well as the cycle of violence that first appeared in Pakistan's history, enhanced the influence of radical Islam in national politics and reduced the room for discussion of political, cultural, and religious concerns. In reaction to the power of Islamist organizations, the socialist leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto implemented several programs, and the military leader toppled him and implemented an intensive Islamization campaign. The country's political violence increased due to these policies' increased support for radical Islamist organizations and stoking sectarian tensions (Hanif et al., 2021).

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto restored civilian power to Pakistan, but despite his socialist program, he felt obligated to use Islam to win over Islamist organizations. To win the backing of Islamists and the military, he championed "Islamic socialism" and supported several radical measures, such as formally proclaiming Ahmadis non-Muslims (Thames, 2014). This trend persisted under Zia ul-Haq, the army chief of staff who deposed Bhutto in 1977 and had him put to death. Zia implemented Islamist regulations, such as making it mandatory to pay zakat, tightening already-existing anti-blasphemy laws, and passing a bill imposing hudood penalties. Additionally, he granted JI considerable formal authority and promoted the growth of Islamist influence over the legal and educational systems. He expanded Islamism's influence in Pakistan (Afzal, 2018).

Religious political organizations' use of violence increased when limits on freedom of religion were introduced under Bhutto and Zia. Despite his efforts to gain the support of Islamist organizations, Bhutto encountered Islamist demonstrations during his time in power. This lack of support from Islamist organizations helped to prepare the way for Zia's takeover. Zia's Islamization policies exacerbated the country's nascent social tensions. Sunni-Shi'a tensions were inflamed and various violent sectarian organizations were created due to Zia's attempt to incorporate the strict Hanafi school of Islam into the nation's legal system. Furthermore, by supporting Islamist terrorists in Afghanistan and Kashmir, some of these organizations eventually turned on Pakistan itself, which paved the way for subsequent strife in Pakistan(Shah et al., 2012).

Politics of Religious Extremism

According to Haqqani, the political commitment to an ideological nation evolved into a strategic commitment to the jihadist ideology, both for reasons that had an influence locally and for internal motivations. As an illustration, the Pakistani army employed Islamist idioms and enlisted the aid of religious organizations to depose the chosen secular government leadership, which was supported by the majority Bengali-speaking populace. Following the Bengali people's uprising, the army subjected the Bengalis to severe violence. After the anti-Soviet Afghan War, religion's influence on Pakistani politics and its violent expression increased significantly. How the conflict in Kashmir transformed from a territorial/political dispute into a struggle of Islam speaks volumes about the impact of religious fanaticism. The influence of religious extremism in Pakistan on the state's condition policies must be understood in the context of the relationship between religious extremism and assault by non-state actors. Particularly, religious extremism has the propensity to encourage acts of terrorism and violence against religious targets and, due to its persistence and intensity, produce "reaction" acts of terrorism and violence against religious targets and even militant formations (Murphy, 2012).

This illustrates how important it is to think about how religious fanaticism impacts democracy. We have direct experience of the destructive effects of religious extremism's promotion of illiberal, majoritarian concepts of democracy on the civil and political rights of religious minorities. In other words, it is essential to understand the vital role religion, especially its radical manifestations, plays in Pakistan's governance, particularly in democratic politics. This includes how these ideologies get political support, exercise influence outside their core supporters, and effectively sway national policy. One may contend that religious fundamentalism endangers democracy. Interestingly, it has been observed that, at least in one instance in Pakistan, democracy supported religious extremism in the shape of the MMA's government in the NWFP and Baluchistan in 2002 by holding legitimate elections. It is another matter, though, how the MMA members went about their electoral tactic of asking voters if they wanted to support America or the Quran.

The role of religious political parties in Pakistani politics is considerable. Since the beginning of their independence, their population has grown. Except for the Jamaat-e-Islami, Islamic parties and organizations are frequently associated with a particular religious' sect; several parties may have the same religious sectarian identity. These political parties have opponents on both sides and are being filled by

both. Local, national, and ethnic/ethnic political parties, on the one hand, foster support that transcends sectarian, social, and religious affiliations. These political parties are frequently preferred by voters over Islamic parties. On the other hand, fundamentalist organizations that support violence to advance their political and religious goals put pressure on Islamic parties (S. S. H. Shah, 2018).

Those with strong religious convictions tend to lean in this direction. Some activists switch between jihadi and extreme Islamic parties. For Pakistan, all Islamic parties want an Islamic sociopolitical and financial system. They discuss an Islamic order in general terms to demonstrate their objectives or discuss its characteristics abstractly. They have differing views on translating the arbitrary character of their announcements and proclamations into the institutional structures, religious practices, and codified constitutional and judicial framework required to govern a country in the twenty-first century. They have yet to be able to create a widely circulated legal and constitutional text to replace the existing legal and constitutional framework.

By its very nature, religious extremism is seen to function more on the periphery of society than at the forefront of political activity at the national level. The Pakistani community must deal with the social effects of a worldwide urban commercial culture, except for some of the tribal regions in KPK and Baluchistan, which remain relatively isolated (Abbas, 2015). The Khyber Pakhtoon government claims that the Taliban's recent agreement to handle Swat's law enforcement and purchase situation. On the other hand, Chief Executive Zardari would need to reassess the accord if the Taliban resorted to violence and went beyond what was permitted. Sufism condemns all forms of religious fundamentalism, which is what draws many South Asians to Islam. Due to its anachronisms, Zia-ul-Haq put his questionable Hudood ordnance into action.

The religious institutions connected to mosques and madrassas are gaining political influence. Few political parties attend government colleges and universities to attract young people for their campaigns. As funding poured into certain extremist and Islamic organizations during this period, the Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamic political parties who participated in the first Afghan "war" or benefitted from the army regime experienced increased popularity. After the first Afghan "war" ended, some of these political parties kept in touch with terrorist groups and continued to help al Qaeda and Taliban fighters as they crossed the border into Pakistan from Afghanistan after the US bombardment on Afghanistan in October 2001 (T. S. Shah et al., 2012).

Pakistan's religious political class does not accept the Wahabi-Deobandi school of Islam. This brand of Islam is dogmatic, virulently illiberal of diversity, misogynist, and fervently committed to jihad, in contrast to the religion and religious practices of the common people in Pakistan, which are syncretism, resistance, and devotional and combined in the mystical religion of the Indus Valley and its languages. This traditional religious practice includes music and dancing as an important components. Collaboration over conflict is essential, especially on the policymakers' side, to guarantee a positive environment where "fundamental components of democracy will be communicated in the veins of new religious governments." It is essential to recognize the difference between religious dogmatism, which must be rejected, and Islam's higher moral values, which flourished in the hallowed land of the Indus Valley.

A concentrated public technology innovation effort is necessary for a post-colonial religious majority country like Pakistan to deal with the government's policies of traditional religion while keeping the objective of a moderate and modern nation (Bales, 2012). Despite severe barriers to understanding, examining, and interpreting modernity and progress, Pakistan's civil society is made up of a sizable number of average urban citizens who possess the intellectual capacity, managerial skills, and public activism experience necessary to challenge orthodoxy in religion and play a useful part in a growing country.

The Linkage between Religious Organizations in Pakistan and the Poor

Religious organizations have a history of helping the less fortunate and offering social services in Pakistan. During the Soviet-Afghan War, the state marginalized other sects by supporting one particular group. ROs' behavior changed considerably due to this action, and they began striving to make the most of societal influence. The cases of JI and JUD are instructive since the ROs participated in social activities to broaden their influence. All around the nation, JI and JUD have extensive welfare networks. In places where the government has been unable to offer social and welfare services, they have been able to do so. As a result, these ROs have kept ties to the underprivileged. They have the clout to persuade the state to give them resources and concessions due to their influence over people experiencing poverty (Aziz, 1958). To enhance their influence over groups of people in the lowest and lower-middle classes of society, the ROs continue to participate in competing welfare operations. To better appreciate how the state relies on religion to mobilize the poor, it is critical to comprehend the relationship between religious organizations and the impoverished. Since the state cannot provide for the poor's most fundamental social requirements, people experiencing poverty have lost their sense of governmental legitimacy and are now under the sway of religious institutions (Baqai, 2011). Religious institutions can haggle with the state for compensation, which is advantageous. The state can create policies to serve the socioeconomic needs of people experiencing poverty to diminish the power base of religious groups by understanding the connection between the poor and religious organizations. Because they continue to exert influence over society through socio-welfare networks and some of these ROs have extremist views, they encourage extremism.

Politico-Religious Mobilization

There was no unexpected "opening up" in Pakistan due to the fall of the USSR. With Muslim countries, primarily Saudi Arabia and Iran on opposing sides, it was already undergoing "Islamic globalization" in the form of a brotherhood. Between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the US acted as a mediator. Pakistan experienced spiritual extremism quite soon after gaining independence from the rest of the world. Including the Islamic regime in the objective resolution of 1949 gave the Mullahs in the legislative assembly an edge, even if Pakistan had not seen its militant manifestation. Later, in the 1970s, when a moderate liberal like Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto bowed to pressure from Islamic organizations and proclaimed Ahmadi non-Muslim, the groundwork for spiritual extremism was formed. Before the Jihad against communism, the neighborhood was a moderately Islamic society, but Zia's tolerance of the spiritual right caused it to become one that had been taken over by the Taliban's Wahabi/Deobandi ideology. "Extremist" versions have considerably advanced politico-religious nationalisms. According to the Pakistani viewpoint, these versions differ from their predecessors in several ways.

First, they see the majority's spiritual identity as not just a crucial aspect of the state's identity but as the primary one. As a result, they see the Deobandi/Sunni monopoly on declaring a very shaky majority as the result of fear and compulsion. Second, they perceive cultural or spiritual identity as different from that of the majority and believe it to be untrue, which led to the creation of a two-tiered citizenship system. Lastly, organizations that promote extreme spiritual movements usually believe that public and even violent attack is a serious and "normal" approach to advance their cause and maintain the status quo for the spiritually and culturally poor.

The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) have the same political philosophy as the Sipah-e-Sahaba, which is based on the principle of "survival of the fittest," with the "fittest" being their own group's supporters. Last but not least—and maybe most concerning—spiritual extremism fosters fierce rivalries with other nations that uphold their spiritual integrity. After all, the military rulers were not religious believers (with the exemption of Zia). In reality, Ayub presented several modern norms in opposition to the influence of the traditional Ulama. Yahya Khan did not use spiritual orthodoxy to support his rule either. Nonetheless, governments from Bhutto to Musharraf and Zardari have been more tolerant of Islamic orthodoxy (Cheema, 2008). The Taliban movement was a logical outcome of previous administrations' practices and every season, a large number of "Taliban" are produced by the

madrasas that were established in the North Waziristan Area. They do not immediately become "ready-to-kill" lovers but do not interact with the anti-Islamic movement. As a result, developing a jihadist mindset is given more attention than providing true spiritual harmony.

Since they are supervised and guided by Islamic parties, most of these madrasas have promoted the interests of religious parties. Very few are independent and receive financial support from various sources, including several Muslim nations, most notably Saudi Arabia.

Reasons of Religious Political Parties' Influence on the People of Pakistan

Religious political parties in Pakistan have a significant political role in the country's democracy. There are several reasons for their influence on the people of Pakistan as given in Table 1.

Table 1. Reasons of religious political parties' influence on the people of Pakistan.

Religion is a fundamental part of the Pakistani society	Lack of trust in liberal political Parties
Social services	Religious authority
Emotional appeal	Charismatic Leaders
Anti-Western Sentiment	Grassroots Support
Opposition to Secularism	Popular Issues
Support from Madrassas	Influence on Judiciary
Electoral Strategy	Social Conservatism
Anti-India Sentiment	Support from the Military
Political Violence	Influence on Education
International Connections	-

Religion is a Fundamental Part of Pakistani Society

Pakistan was founded on the principles of Islam, and most of the population is Muslim. Religion plays a central role in the lives of people in Pakistan, and religious political parties often use this to their advantage by appealing to people's religious sentiments. Religion, particularly Islam, is a fundamental part of Pakistani society. Pakistan was created as a Muslim state in 1947, and most of the population is Muslim. Islam is important in many aspects of Pakistani society, including politics, culture, and daily life. Mosques and other religious institutions are ubiquitous throughout the country, and many people see religion as a central part of their identity. The influence of religion can be seen in everything from the legal system to the media to the education system. Religious leaders and organizations also have significant political influence, as they can often mobilize many supporters and shape public opinion on key issues (Lanka & Politics, 2011).

Lack of Trust in Secular Political Parties

Many people in Pakistan feel disillusioned with secular political parties, which they view as corrupt and ineffective. Religious political parties, on the other hand, are often seen as more honest and trustworthy. Lack of trust in secular political parties is a common phenomenon in Pakistan. Despite being in the political landscape for decades, these parties have struggled to build a strong support base and establish themselves as credible political alternatives. There are several reasons for this lack of trust. One major reason is corruption (Riaz, 2010). Secular political parties in Pakistan have been associated with corruption and mismanagement, which has eroded public trust in these parties and their ability to govern effectively. The inability of these parties to address the country's problems and deliver on their promises has also contributed to a perception of incompetence.

Social Services

Religious political parties in Pakistan provide social services to their communities, such as healthcare and education. This creates a sense of loyalty and gratitude among their supporters. Religious political parties in Pakistan often provide social services to their followers and local communities. These services can

include education, healthcare, housing, and charitable activities. Many religious political parties operate their schools and madrasas, providing religious and basic education to children from impoverished backgrounds. They also set up free medical camps, hospitals, and clinics in remote areas where government health facilities are inadequate. These parties also distribute food, clothing, and financial assistance to the poor and needy (Ysseldyk et al., 2010). However, some critics argue that these services are often used to gain political support and create a dependency on the party rather than addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality.

Religious Authority

Religious political parties in Pakistan have ties to influential religious leaders who can lend their authority and legitimacy to the political party's agenda. Religious political parties in Pakistan derive their religious authority from their interpretation of Islam, which they use to justify their political positions and policies. They often present themselves as defenders of Islamic values and traditions and promote a conservative and traditionalist interpretation of Islam. These parties often have close ties with religious scholars and institutions, and their leaders are often religious scholars or have a background in religious education. However, their religious authority is not universally recognized, and other religious scholars and institutions may hold different interpretations of Islam and disagree with the positions and policies of these parties (Usher, 2008). Additionally, some critics argue that the religious authority of these parties is often used to justify authoritarian and discriminatory practices, such as the suppression of women's rights and minority religious beliefs.

Emotional Appeal

Religious political parties use emotional appeals to sway voters. They frame political issues in religious terms, tapping into people's sense of identity and belonging. However, the influence of religious political parties in Pakistan's democracy is not without controversy. Some critics argue that their focus on religious issues and lack of attention to other important issues, such as economic development, human rights, and social justice, can harm the country's progress (Huang, 2016).

Charismatic Leaders

Pakistan's religious political parties have charismatic leaders skilled at rallying their supporters and inspiring loyalty. These leaders are often seen as spiritual guides and role models, and their influence can be very strong. Religious political parties in Pakistan often have charismatic leaders who use their personal appeal and religious authority to mobilize support and shape the party's ideology and policies. These leaders are often religious scholars or have a background in religious education, and they present themselves as defenders of Islamic values and traditions. They use their religious authority to legitimize their political positions and policies, and their charisma and personal appeal can effectively mobilize support among their followers and the wider public (Basedau et al., 2016). However, their appeal can also lead to a cult of personality and undermine democratic principles and institutions. Some religious political parties in Pakistan have faced criticism for their lack of internal democracy and transparency, which can make them vulnerable to manipulation by their leaders.

Anti-Western Sentiment

Religious political parties in Pakistan are critical of Western countries and their policies. They frame their political agenda as a defense of Islamic values against Western influence, which can appeal to some population segments. Religious political parties in Pakistan often express anti-Western sentiment rooted in a combination of historical, political, and religious factors. Many people in Pakistan feel a sense of resentment towards the West, partly due to the country's colonial history and the legacy of British rule. This resentment is often compounded by perceptions of Western interference in Pakistani affairs, such as the US-led war on terror, drone strikes, and economic policies that are seen as exploitative (Ward, 2009).

Grassroots Support

Religious political parties in Pakistan have strong grassroots support, particularly in rural areas. This support can be difficult for secular political parties to overcome, as they often need more grassroots organization and support. Religious political parties in Pakistan often enjoy grassroots support, particularly among Pakistan's large and diverse Muslim population. Their extensive outreach activities have built strong support networks, including religious education, charity work, and social welfare programs. Religious political parties have also successfully mobilized support through their ability to tap into the emotional and religious sentiments of the people, and their charismatic leaders often have a personal connection with their followers (Osman, 2010).

Opposition to Secularism

Religious political parties in Pakistan are often opposed to secularism and see it as a threat to their religious values. They frame their political agenda as a defense of Islam against secularism, which can appeal to some population segments. Religious political parties in Pakistan often oppose secularism, which they see as a threat to the country's Islamic identity and values. They believe that Pakistan should be governed according to Islamic law and principles and that secularism represents a departure from the country's Islamic roots. Many religious political parties consider secularism a Western import incompatible with Pakistan's traditional values and culture (Shah et al., 2012; Sultana, 2008).

Popular Issues

Religious political parties in Pakistan often focus on popular issues such as poverty, corruption, and social inequality. They can mobilize support and gain political influence by addressing these issues in a religious context. Religious political parties in Pakistan often focus on popular issues that resonate with their supporters, including social welfare and development, anti-corruption, and opposition to government policies that are seen as unjust or anti-Islamic. They also often advocate for implementing Islamic law and values in all aspects of society, including education, healthcare, and the justice system. Religious political parties in Pakistan also often have a strong stance on foreign policy, particularly issues related to India and the United States, and are often critical of Western interference in Pakistani affairs. Additionally, some religious political parties in Pakistan are associated with extremist or militant groups and have been involved in violence and terrorism, particularly against religious minorities and government targets (Shah et al., 2012).

Support from Madrassas

Religious political parties in Pakistan enjoy support from Madrassas, or Islamic religious schools, which are an important part of the country's education system. Madrassas provide religious education to students, many of whom come from poor and marginalized backgrounds and are often associated with religious political parties. Madrassas are seen as a source of social and political influence for religious political parties in Pakistan, and they are often used as a platform for political mobilization and recruitment (Bari, 2009).

Electoral Strategy

Religious political parties in Pakistan often use a targeted electoral strategy to gain influence. They focus on winning seats in areas where they have strong support rather than trying to win a nationwide majority. Religious political parties in Pakistan often employ various electoral strategies to gain political power and influence. One key strategy is to mobilize their support base through extensive outreach activities, such as religious education, charity work, and social welfare programs. They also often rely on charismatic leaders who can appeal to their followers' emotions and religious sentiments (Afzal, 2018).

Social Conservatism

Religious political parties in Pakistan are often socially conservative and promote traditional values such as gender segregation and strict dress codes. This can appeal to some population segments, particularly in rural areas. Social conservatism is a defining characteristic of religious political parties in Pakistan and a central element of their political ideology. They often promote traditional gender roles and oppose the liberalization of social and cultural norms. Religious political parties in Pakistan also often advocate for implementing Islamic law in areas such as family law, education, and the justice system.

They are often critical of Western influence and globalization, which they see as promoting immoral and un-Islamic values. This includes opposition to music, dance, and other forms of entertainment that are seen as promoting decadence and moral decay. Additionally, religious political parties in Pakistan often oppose the rights and freedoms of women and other minority groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community (Mereu et al., 2018; Sultana, 2008). Their stance on social conservatism is a key part of their appeal to their conservative base, but it is also a source of controversy and criticism from those who advocate for greater social and cultural liberalization in Pakistan.

Anti-India Sentiment

Religious political parties in Pakistan are often critical of India and its policies. They frame their political agenda to defend Pakistan's interests against Indian aggression, which can appeal to some population segments. The anti-India sentiment is a common feature of religious political parties in Pakistan and is often used for political mobilization and propaganda (Shah et al., 2012). The two countries have a long-standing history of conflict and tension, particularly over the disputed region of Kashmir, and religious political parties in Pakistan often use this as a rallying point to appeal to nationalist sentiment.

Support from the Military: Religious political parties in Pakistan have often had close ties to the military. This support can be very helpful in gaining political influence and winning elections.

The relationship between religious political parties in Pakistan and the military is complex and often contentious. On the one hand, religious political parties have historically enjoyed support from some factions within the military, particularly those sympathetic to their anti-India stance and their emphasis on Islamic values (Murphy & Malik, 2009).

Political Violence

Some religious political parties in Pakistan have been associated with political violence, particularly against minority groups such as Christians and Shia Muslims. This has led to concerns about their commitment to democratic values and human rights. Some religious political parties in Pakistan have been associated with political violence, including terrorism, targeted killings, and mob violence. While not all religious political parties engage in violent tactics, those that do often justify their actions to defend Islam and promote their political agenda. In some cases, religious political parties in Pakistan have been linked to extremist groups, such as the Taliban or other militant organizations, and have been accused of providing them with support and shelter (Ferguson & McAuley, 2020). Additionally, religious political parties have used violent tactics to intimidate their political opponents, silence dissent, and enforce their version of morality and law.

Influence on Education

Religious political parties in Pakistan have been known to influence education policy and curriculum. This has led to concerns about promoting religious extremism and intolerance in Pakistani schools. Religious political parties in Pakistan have significantly influenced the country's education system, particularly in the realm of religious education. They have played a major role in establishing and operating madrassas, or Islamic seminaries, which are a key part of the country's education system (Ferguson & McAuley, 2020).

International Connections

Some religious political parties in Pakistan have connections to international Islamist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood. This can give them access to funding and support from abroad, which can be very helpful in gaining political influence. Some religious political parties in Pakistan have developed international connections and have been known to maintain close ties with foreign religious and political organizations. These connections are often based on shared religious or ideological values and strategic and geopolitical considerations. For example, some religious political parties in Pakistan have established links with Islamist groups and political parties in other countries, particularly in the Middle East and South Asia. They have also been accused of receiving financial and material support from foreign sources, including individuals and organizations in the Gulf region.

FINDING AND CONCLUSIONS

All political parties in Pakistan view the constitution as the nation's fundamental legislation, providing both the conceptual and institutional underpinnings for the tight linkages between the Pakistani state system and Islam. Most Islamic political parties are highly religiously and sectorial aligned, which limits the political parties to individuals who share these ideas. Some avoid it since they do not believe in the same religion as the parties. Islamic political parties compete with one another based on the political ideas, sectarian identities, and spiritual philosophies of their leaders. The electoral conflict is more narrowly concentrated when multiple political parties exist, even within one sect. Islamist political groups face challenges with public perception. Few people, particularly educated young people, believe that Islamic leadership has the required political understanding and awareness of aspects of national and international state policy. They frequently participate in a substantial number of local or national events. With a few notable exceptions, most Islamist parties either back terrorist groups or have a problematic relationship with them. Islamic political parties need street-smart, motivated activists and madrasa students to be successful.

By promoting tolerance, strengthening civil society, encouraging moderate voices, and addressing root causes like poverty, unemployment, and inequality, a comprehensive strategy can be used to lessen the influence of religious political parties in Pakistan. This strategy would necessitate the dedication of citizens, civil society organizations, and government officials equally. Additionally, it can entail carrying out initiatives like campaign finance reform, enhancing media literacy and education, and fostering interfaith understanding and communication. For the sake of advancing democracy, human rights, and social justice as well as combating extremism and intolerance, it is imperative that religious political parties in Pakistan lose some of their influence.

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