

The coexistence of religion and politics in Pakistan: an analysis of historical, social, and political factors

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Abstract

In the context of Pakistan, the connection between religion and politics predates its existence. Islam was the faith on which All India Muslim League based its demand for a separate country for India's Muslims. Since independence in 1947, the country's political and constitutional evolution has been significantly influenced by the religion; as political, economic, social, and constitutional debates centred on Islam. Islam has always been a major theme of official ideology in one form or another in practically all political administrations, whether they were under democratic or military authority. In this paper, we have discussed the elements that contributed to the emergence of Islamist political power in the country, using pertinent instances from historical events and political decisions made by successive governments and regimes to illustrate how politics and religion interact. For this purpose, we used secondary technique of data collection i.e., 'Document Analysis' and relied on primary sources such as the Constitutions of Pakistan and secondary sources e.g., books and research articles, etc. The study is an extensive review of the existing literature on the subject. The study's findings show that the state, over the decades, has used the instrument of religion at different times for different purposes.

Keywords: Islamist influence, Islamic state, Ideology of Pakistan, Political Islam, religion and politics, religious ideology, instrument of religion, fundamentalism.

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1. Introduction

During the Pakistan Movement, Islam became politicized for the first time in the country's history (Jeffrelot, 2004). It is interesting that this tool—Islam—was employed both for and against the establishment of Pakistan. On the one hand, there was All India Muslim League, which promoted the idea of the Two-Nation Theory, according to which Muslims and Hindus were two separate nations and could not coexist in the same state. As a result, an independent state was required in which Muslims could follow the teachings of Islam freely. In the end, this argument was effective, and British India was split along religious lines. However, on the other hand, there were traditional Islamist forces (mainly Ulama) opposing the creation of Pakistan and partition of India, stating that this constituted a territorial split of Muslims against the essence of Islam (Ghazali, 1997). They believed that Islam supported “Universalism” and rejected the idea of “Nationalism.” They disregarded the idea of a distinct homeland for Muslims, believing it to be at odds with Islamic doctrine. As a result, an intellectual debate between the Islamist forces and the mainstream Muslim political leadership began (Naazer, 2018).

The notion of a state founded on religion emerged in the latter half of the 1930s and eventually took the form of a movement in the 1940s. This effort, once known as the Pakistan movement, was successful in August 1947 when a new state bearing the name of Islam appeared on the globe. Islam's influence on Pakistan's political discourse began immediately after the country gained its independence in 1947. Ulama made the call for an Islamic constitution. They started competing for a piece of the political power, to put it another way (Weiss, 1987). Jamat-i-Islami (JI), one of many Islamist organisations, was in the lead. It changed into a political party and re-evaluated its objectives and platform. Even before Pakistan was founded, Maulana Maududi, the party's founder, maintained that his main goal was constructing an Islamic state (Nasr, 1994; Ali & Minxing, 2021). He launched a movement to create an Islamic constitution. Jamiat-i-Ulama Islam (JUI) also presented its ideas for an Islamic state in January 1948. It demanded that the government create an office or designation for the Sheikh-ul-Islam and designate a standout Alim to fill it. JUI also suggested setting up a committee of religious experts to create a constitution and present it to the Constituent Assembly (Iqbal, 1986). The famous Objectives Resolution was introduced in the Constituent Assembly in March 1949 by Liaqat Ali Khan, Pakistan's first prime minister, after he had taken into account these and other similar requests and suggestions from the religious leadership (Binder, 1961). According to the Objectives Resolution, the future constitution of Pakistan would be based on the doctrines of Islam.

The interaction of politics and religion has persisted in Pakistan throughout its history. Whether it was the establishment of the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal in 1952 and the succeeding Tehreek-i-Khatm-i-Nabuwat (Movement of Finality of Prophethood) or the drafting of the first constitution in 1956, religious groups actively participated in influencing the political discourse of the nation. Ayub Khan, the first military ruler, had a secular bent of mind. He tried to curtail the role of religious leadership in the decision-making process and received profuse resistance from the religiopolitical parties especially the JI. Due to the pressure of these religious forces, he restored the Islamic provisions of the 1956 constitution in the second constitution of 1962. The religiopolitical parties remained opponents of various social and economic policies and legal reforms introduced by Ayub Khan throughout his regime.

The decade of 1970s witnessed even a stronger influence of the religious forces in the political arena. Mufti Mehmood, head of JUI, became the Chief Minister of former NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) in May 1972 by forming a coalition government. It was the first occasion that a religious political party formed a government though for a short period of ten months before it was removed by Prime Minister Bhutto. Nine opposition groups, including religious parties, afterwards established the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA). *Nizam-i-Mustafa* (Order of the Holy Prophet SAW), a platform influenced by Islam, was adopted by this alliance. This was a sign that religious forces had become very well-liked and influential in the politics of the nation. Of these opposition parties, Jamat-i-Islami was at the forefront (Iqbal, 1986). Sensing the growing popularity of the religious forces, Bhutto took several measures towards Islamization e.g., declaring *Ahmadis* as non-Muslims through a constitutional amendment and closing the nightclubs casinos, banning the sale of liquor, etc. In 1977 the second general elections were held in Pakistan by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The PNA immediately criticised the election, calling the results unreliable and unacceptable. The tense situation was made worse by Bhutto's denial of the accusations of vote-rigging and the detention of members of the opposition groups, including Jamat-i-Islami. JI started civil disobedience and staged street protests alongside other parties. The calls for democratic and constitutional reforms evolved as an Islamic social movement – *Nizam-i-Mustafa* (Nasr, 1994). The movement ultimately resulted in the imposition of second Martial Law by Zia-ul-Haq in July 1977.

The intersection of religion and politics during the Zia regime was perhaps more evident and obvious than ever before or after that period. Although Bhutto's efforts to reinforce the place of religion in politics failed to revive his dwindling popularity, they did support Zia-ul-Haq's regime's emphasis on religion. It might be said that Bhutto's policy changes contain the beginnings of a dangerous alliance between military and religious groups (Nasr, 1994). Zia-ul-Haq introduced a comprehensive Islamization process¹ in the country during the 1980s. Although the religious forces in the post Zia period were not dominant as they were during the Zia regime, they remained alive in the political discourse in one way or the other. Whether it was the formation of Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI); the rise of Tehreek-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Muhammadi (TNSM); or the formation of governments by MMA in 2002 in NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Baluchistan, the religious elements consistently showed their presence and proved their relevance in politics of the country.

2. Literature review

While the politicization of religion in Pakistan is widely acknowledged as a reality, the causes of the tendency are up for discussion, disagreement, and dispute. According to Christophe Jeffrelot, the Pakistan Movement, which played a key role in the division of British India, politicized religion. In addition, for the purpose of political unity and integration, it was promoted as the true identity of the communities and groups that make up Pakistan (Jeffrelot, 2004).

According to Robert Hefner, the unity of Pakistan preserved by a shared religion was threatened by East Pakistan's separation. The populations displayed a propensity for distinct racial and linguistic identities to emerge. Therefore, the state had to erode these identities and dispel nationalist and cultural prejudices. It precisely took advantage of the shortcomings of the regional cultures and established social structures. It renewed the religious identities. Extremist religious groups were supported, and religious fanaticism was glorified. In order to

preserve their cultural identity, several nationalist political forces worked very hard. Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, the Pakistani elite implemented a strict assimilation policy toward the nationalist elements in the country. As an illustration, Islam was given a bigger say in defining the “new” Pakhtun identity. Religious education schools were developed, maintained, and safeguarded with more help from some other states (Hefner, 2005).

In addition to the typically stressed domestic factors, Hassan Abbas contends that developments in neighbouring Afghanistan caused the radicalization and religious fundamentalism in Pakistan. He thinks that Afghanistan's secular nationalist government has always had a claim to the neighbouring Pakhtun regions that are now part of Pakistan. Such components of the Afghan administration were viewed as a potential threat to Pakistan's unity and integrity. It supported the rebel religious groups who had started the insurgency against the Afghan government to weaken it. The Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan's civil war in December 1979 (Abbas, 2005).

According to Ahmed Rashid, although the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan may have been the catalyst for Pakistan's co-optation of militants, it wasn't the pinnacle. In order to further its "strategic depth" doctrine, Pakistan continued to fund these extremist groups after the Soviet soldiers left Afghanistan in 1989. This policy was followed when assistance was given to the Afghan Taliban administration. These groups infiltrated Pakistan when the unpopular Taliban rule was overthrown due to the US invasion of Afghanistan. The claims of a connection between the extremists and the Pakistani establishment, however, continue unchallenged. To flee the Allied forces' control of Afghan territory, the insurgents organized in Pakistan's tribal regions (Rashid, 2008).

The Taliban strengthened their hold on power in Malakand and the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). In addition to attacking the Allied soldiers, they also imposed their brand of Islam in the territories they governed. They regularly violate human rights without consequence. Some popular activities include killing people, torching the homes of the opposition, detonating girls' schools and colleges, and relegating women to domestic work. Similarly, Zahid Hussain asserts that Pakistan's military operations in the former FATA and Malakand, which had the stated goal of destroying the Taliban network, were initiated in response to growing international pressure. However, the activities brought in more chaos throughout the area, especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. People who were already suffering under Taliban rule had to endure almost every kind of hardship, including deaths, wounds, dislocations, mental anguish, and disruptions in social and economic life (Hussain, 2008).

The literature that is currently available on the relationship between politics and religion and on religious fundamentalism in Pakistan focuses mainly on foreign causes. The majority of these theories involve the dynamics of regional and global politics.

3. Theoretical framework

It is necessary to theoretically explain and analyse a number of phenomena, including the rise of political Islam in Pakistan, the intensification of religious extremism, and the rise of religiopolitical parties and leaders in Pakistan. These phenomena are all different aspects of the process of social change in Pakistani society. A few theories and authors have tried to use religion, secularism and the interaction between the two to explain the idea of social change in

general. Taking into account the different aspects of the study we have appraised a few theories to understand the rise of political Islam and the place of religion in Pakistani society.

3.1. Max Weber

“Max Weber's Theory of Charismatic Leadership” is one of the key theories underlying the emergence of a specific type of political leadership and power in a society. According to Max Weber, there are three basic sorts of authority: charismatic, traditional, and bureaucratic (Adair-Toteff, 2005). Religious leadership and charismatic leadership are frequently linked. According to Weber, the idea is primarily connected to warriors and religious authorities. However, there are times when he describes politicians as charismatic if they have certain traits, like the capacity to sway people's hearts, minds, and emotions (Tucker, 1968).

The rise of “new religious movements” around the world and Weber's notion of “charismatic leadership” are two topics that some political scientists and sociologists have attempted to connect in the contemporary era. For instance, according to Eileen Barker, “new religious organizations” frequently include charismatic leaders who wield significant power and influence as well as unique abilities and knowledge (Barker, 1990). He contends that charismatic leaders receive unconditional allegiance from their followers and lack accountability. Barker is challenged by George Chryssides, who asserts that not all religious groups have charismatic leaders (Chryssides, 2001).

In his discussion on charisma, Max Weber emphasizes the traits of creativity and revolution. He contends that the charismatic leader demands change by rejecting the current societal structures encompassing religion, politics, and other factors (Weber, 1958). At first look, Max Weber's thesis appears to be pertinent to the establishment of religious political parties and leaders in Pakistani politics in general and Pakhtun society in particular, as well as the emergence of religious fundamentalism. A contributing cause to the rise of religious political parties in the nation during the democratic era of the 1970s may have been the charismatic religious leadership of Maududi and Mufti Mahmood. In the same way, Osama bin Laden and Mullah Umar's charisma during the 1990s may have fuelled the surge of religious extremism in Pakistan; after all, according to Weber, a charismatic leader may not always be a good person. He asserts that Jesus possessed the same “charisma” as Napoleon and Cleon, two Athenian generals and statesmen of the first century B.C. who were skilled demagogues.

Weber's theory has some drawbacks that prevented the authors from using it in my work, even if it initially appears to be pertinent to the emergence of religious fundamentalism and the rise of religious political leadership in Pakistan. Religious leaders and personalities are not the only ones with charisma. It is difficult to say if Mufti Mahmood and Maulana Maududi possessed the traits of charismatic leadership or whether Bhutto's demagoguery during the 1970s transformed him into a genuine charismatic leader. It is also untrue to claim that the charismatic leadership of the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) was a major factor in the party's rise to political dominance in Pakhtun regions in the 2000s.

3.2. Kenneth Medhurst

It has been analysed during our research of the literature on the theoretical framework over the interaction of politics and religion, Kenneth Medhurst's take on the secularization process

caught my interest. It is possible to characterize the struggle for political control in Pakistan between the religious and secular forces as an intellectual conflict and to examine it from the standpoint of a predetermined pattern of interaction between them. In other words, the most significant ideological shift in the process of political growth in developing nations is the secularization of society. Additionally, the current state of social upheaval and political anarchy is a result of the secularization process that has been taking place as politics has evolved.

The religious and political forces untangle from one another through a difficult and multidimensional process known as “secularization.” There are additional difficulties and conflicts as a result of the redefinition of the idea of political power. In due order, the religious forces forge new connections with the government and the general populace. The other stages of development, such the process of politicking the populace through adult franchise, further exacerbate the difficulties and conflicts. Due to these developments, the political and religious forces are now engaged in a conflict over who will rule over whom and how. Religious authorities and governmental institutions both face new issues and challenges, and the already established traditional power structure is under attack (Filali-Ansary, 1996).

In his discussion of the secularization process, Kenneth Medhurst offers three basic secularization models, or sorts, with each model symbolizing a different stage. The “confessional polity” is the first sort or model, in which the political elites continue to justify their control in terms of religion. Despite doing so with a pluralistic perspective, they officially favour just one form of religion. The religious forces are alarmed and make an effort to rally the populace in opposition to the threats to their rule (Medhurst, 1981).

In this context, Medhurst refers to the second type as a “religiously neutral polity.” This paradigm represents the second major stage or phase of the secularization process. Religion no longer serves as the basis for the political system during this phase of secularization, although it still plays a role in politics. Different religious forces are viewed as “one group” that is in competition with other types of organizations for dominance. According to Medhurst, religious organizations operate in a complicated and politically heterogeneous environment where, in contrast to the first model, their religious agenda receives less recognition. In an effort to protect their political interests, religious movements at this point transform into interest and pressure organizations or even political parties (Medhurst, 1981).

The “anti-religious polity” is the third paradigm, according to Medhurst, and it symbolises the third stage of the secularisation process. The state makes a conscious effort throughout this phase to eradicate all religious influence from the political sphere. Even now, the state makes an effort to eradicate all overtly religious elements from society. Without any ideological or religious traditions or symbolism, the state and society are often established on the basis of materialism. In other words, the religious elements in the polity and society are minimised, if not entirely eliminated (Medhurst, 1981).

4. Main factors for the religious influence in politics

The above brief account of Pakistan’s political history shows that religion and religious forces have always remained an indispensable part of the country’s political, constitutional and legal discourses. There are a number of historical, political, social and other factors responsible for religion's active role in Pakistan's politics. Some of the main factors are discussed as under:

4.1. Pakistan is a state with an ideology

Pakistan is seen as a nation with a particular ideology, which is religio-nationalism. As Islam was a key component of the Muslim population of India's political fight for a separate country prior to partition in 1947, the growth of political Islam in Pakistan predates the state itself. The All India Muslim League's leaders called for the creation of a separate state where Muslims may freely exercise their faith in both their individual and communal capacities and live their lives in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This was true, if not in terms of the actual goal that the Muslim leaders were trying to advance politically, then at least in terms of their rhetoric. Muslim leaders made a good effort to frame their demands a way that would be based on the contemporary idea of nationalism. They aimed to establish the Muslim nation's distinction from Hinduism and its justification for having its own nation-state (Cohen, 2004). Their attempt was very effective, and a state based on religio-nationalism was established. Pakhtuns (of the then-NWFP) had a special situation at the time. In a referendum, the province was offered the option of joining either Pakistan or India. It appears that the Pakhtuns' choice to join Pakistan was an endorsement of the Pakistani philosophy of religious identity. However, taking into account the fact that the major Islamist parties opposed India's partition and the establishment of Pakistan (both of which, in their opinion, were detrimental to the concept of the Muslim Ummah), one might conclude that the Pakhtuns were more pragmatists in their approach than supporters of the religio-nationalist ideology.

4.2. Islam as a tool for legitimization of rule/authority

The rulers saw Islam from the very beginning as a key weapon for validating and legitimizing their power after succeeding in creating a state based on Islamic doctrine. This is particularly relevant given the fact that many tyrants obtained their political power through forceful measures rather than through public support. Since most of the regimes came to power through military coups, Islam became their main source of legitimacy (Haqqani, 2010). They were able to readily utilize this source to maintain their otherwise unlawful power. Whether it was the flimsy early parliamentary system, authoritarian rule under Ayub Khan, socialist democracy under Bhutto, dictatorship under Zia, or the disorganized democratic era of the 1990s, all rulers employed Islamic theology to differing degrees and with different emphasis to justify their reign. Zia turned to the notion of a "revivalist Islam," Ayub Khan to the concept of a "developmentalist Islam," General Yahya Khan to the concept of a "nationalist Islam" in the context of East Pakistan, Bhutto to the concept of a "socialist Islam," and so on. In contrast, a "liberal moderate Islam" was practiced and supported by the early chaotic rule.

4.3. Religion and the opposition

According to the statement above, Pakistan's rulers have utilized Islam as a tool to strengthen and legitimize their position of power. However, it is not just the rulers that utilize Islam for their own purposes. There are numerous instances in the Muslim world where Islamic forces and groups have posed a danger to and opposed the ruling political elite of their own countries. A well-known instance of this is the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 when Islam was used by Islamist parties to overthrow a strong ruler and spark political and social unrest. A notable example of this in Pakistan is *Tehreek-i-Nizam-i-Mustafa* as an opposition against Bhutto's rule in 1977. The alliance of religious parties overthrew Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's regime. During and during the 1977 general elections, this movement gave Muslims a level of religious fervour

never before seen (Haqqani, 2010). Using Islamic slogans, the opposition sparked a societal uprising against Bhutto's autocratic regime.

Although Z. A. Bhutto resorted to taking specific measures to demonstrate his commitment and sincerity with the Islamic philosophy in an effort to appease the *Nizam-i-Mustafa* movement and save his power, his endeavour did not succeed. On the other hand, the *Nizam-i-Mustafa* movement succeeded in achieving its goals, suggesting that using religion for political purposes alone is insufficient and that effectiveness in using religion as a weapon for political mobilization is also crucial. This was a tool that the opposition employed better than Bhutto did.

4.4. Religion as a source of national integration

Different linguistic, cultural, and ethnic groups plague Pakistan's varied and eclectic society. The single characteristic that the vast majority of people have in common is their faith, Islam. Islam played a significant role in promoting national unity in Pakistan after independence because the country was founded solely on religious grounds. The decision-makers believed that officially recognising Islam by the state and basing public policy on Islamic principles in a variety of areas, such as education, culture, and the media would help the country's diverse population come together and weaken localised nationalism based on linguistic or ethnic considerations (Maniruzzaman, 1967). When separatist groups based on ethnicity and regionalism emerged in the late 1960s, the emphasis on Islam as a significant factor in national integration increased noticeably. As a result of the growth of such fissiparous tendencies, Islam was further promoted as a foundation for national unity.

After East Pakistan's separation in 1971, it was imperative that decision-makers re-evaluate their strategy of advancing Islamic philosophy as the only foundation for fostering national unity and unification. Many individuals believed that religion alone was unable to maintain the socially and economically diverse people, groups and regions integrated because of the policy's apparent failure (Qadeer, 2006). Additionally, the state had to place equal emphasis on socioeconomic development as well as the fair distribution of the nation's wealth and resources among the populace in order to lessen their sense of deprivation and alienation. However, this has little impact on the government's declared strategy of using Islam to advance national unity. Islam was adopted by the state as a strategy before East Pakistan's separation out of fear of collapse, however this approach backfired. The belief in the value of Islam as a source of unification for the remaining Pakistan has, however, grown even stronger after the country's dissolution in 1971 (Qadeer, 2006). This framework can be used to explain Bhutto's Islamic policies as well as Zia's later Islamization efforts. The division of East Pakistan was perceived as a result of un-Islamic policies of the succeeding administrations rather than a failure of Islam. In order to prevent a repeat of this sad tragedy elsewhere in the nation and to encourage a fresh feeling of Islamic reconstruction of identity, policymakers turned once again to Islamic ideology.

4.5. Islam a tool for social harmony

Ulama and Jamat-i-Islami in the nation praised and welcomed Zia-ul-Islamization Haq's measures. They saw the Islamization process as a way to get closer to their ultimate objective of a real Islamic state. For stronger social cohesion in Pakistani society, the military

government's actions in this area were deemed crucial. However, they were persuaded by Zia's sincerity and commitment to the cause of the Islamic state, even though they had doubts about the bureaucracy and the country's administrative apparatus's commitment in this regard. However, Zia's detractors interpreted these measures as a way to continue the illegitimate rule of a military dictatorship while also abusing the illiterate and underprivileged population. Nevertheless, despite this criticism, the early stages of the Islamization process sparked a tremendous amount of fervour and curiosity among the populace. And this process was considered as a force which could keep the class-based society united.

However, this enthusiasm and hope over the expanding place of Islam in society could not persist for very long. The military regime's so-called Islamic economic policies fell short of creating a system for equitable wealth distribution. The introduction of the *zakat*, *ushr*, and other economic reforms by Zia had little discernible impact on the system of economic and social exploitation. During and after the Zia era, corruption and financial mismanagement grew. Since the advent of so-called Islamic rules in the 1980s, crimes and other social ills have increased in society (Ahmad, 1986). The nation's rising sectarianism and conflicts between the many doctrinal schools are also linked to the process of Islamization. Conflict between the country's two largest Muslim sects continues to be mostly fueled by the issue of which version of the shariah should serve as the foundation for governmental legislation. Pakhtun society, particularly 'Kurram District'², also underwent the wave of sectarianism prompted by the politicization of Islam.

The Zia military administration took advantage of the people's religious sensibilities and attempted to excuse all he did in the name of Islam. As a result, Islam came to be associated with the policies that were essentially designed to keep Zia in power longer. In other words, it can be argued that rather than uniting the country's various social strata, the state's and the Islamist forces' emphasis on the legalistic aspects of Islam has led to increased disagreements, disputes, and controversies between the country's various socio-economic classes and religious groups. Instead of this, a focus on social justice, political inclusion, and economic equality would have undoubtedly led to the country's social integration and peace (Haqqani, 2010).

4.6. Islam and the structural/institutional crises

It is necessary to remember that the state's genuine introduction and rebirth of fundamentalist Islamic ideology in Pakistan took place at a moment that was extremely significant. Strong demands for greater people participation in politics, more regional and provincial autonomy, and socioeconomic justice in the nation were able to flourish because of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's rhetoric and policies. The privileged civil and military bureaucracy's status was put to the test by this political atmosphere and the pressures that followed. Additionally, Bhutto contributed to the introduction of political radicalism and activism among the populace, which endangered the status quo of the civil-military establishment.

Following the Bhutto era, the military dictatorship employed Islamic rhetoric and policies to repress the political activism of the groups organized during Bhutto's reign. Additionally, it aided the military dictator in reinforcing political power inside the enormous state apparatus and bringing about institutional changes through religious validation. On the basis of their claimed anti-Islamic tendencies, the ruling coalition of the military and Islamists also tried to discredit the political goals of the radical groups that were not in power. In order to gain support

from some political organizations, the lower middle class, and *ulama* and challenge the radical forces and groups opposed to the military rule by supporting the government's power and programs, the military establishment adopted the fundamentalist worldview. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's attempt to alter the power structure in the post-colonial society led to a structural crisis, which was addressed by this action. Ayub and Zia's military administrations were identical in terms of the larger structural framework, with just a little variation in how they articulated authority and connected economic prosperity to Islamic philosophy (Ahmad, 1986).

5. Conclusion

Regarding the interaction between religion and politics, the instance of Pakistani society is distinct and intriguing. This relationship was already present when Pakistan was founded, and it was crucial to the partition of India in 1947. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that the emergence of political Islam in Pakistan was not the consequence of any hostility between the state and Islamist groups but rather a result of cooperation between them. Additionally, the distinction between “the official Islam” and “the popular Islam” is not clearly defined in Pakistan, in contrast to many other Islamic states in the Middle East. The two aspects of Islam appear to be the same, notwithstanding the sectarian conflicts and disagreements within the Islamic sects. It is also noteworthy that a military coup, rather than a socio-political revolution, caused political Islam to flourish in Pakistan in the 1980s (Ahmad, 1986). Each regime's deliberate and strategic actions in the name of Islam contributed to the continuity and stability of the existing institutional and structural frameworks for the division of political authority. In order to alter the institutional and legal trajectory linked to a few chosen sectors of social life, the state frequently introduced Islamic policies. In addition, the state's Islamization of politics and society was an effort to avoid any socioeconomic demands from the populace. As a result of the state's Islamization measures, it is also interesting to know that the moderate and liberal sectors of society did not considerably oppose the conservative revival of social life.

The spread of political Islam in Pakistan in general and among Pakhtuns in particular has been substantially encouraged by both external and domestic factors. Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the latter's irredentist claims to the country's northwest and the cold war politics that followed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 were the main external factors that fuelled the promotion of Islamic ideology as a source of identity and the radicalization of Pakistani society, mainly the Pakhtun region. Given that the Pakhtun region was adjacent to Afghanistan and shared an ethnic and religious identity with Afghanistan, these external factors were particularly important for the Pakhtun region. According to a historical analysis of Pakistan's political culture, the country's subsequent civil and military regimes incorporated Islamic policies and measures into legal, political, and constitutional discourses in response to popular demand and to win the support of the nation's religious organizations and political parties. Interestingly, these religiopolitical groups have traditionally had a relatively small electoral impact. Except for the general elections of 1970, when JUI became the lone largest party in the provincial assemblies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (then NWFP) and Baluchistan, and in 2002, when MMA formed governments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (then NWFP) and Baluchistan, none of the religiopolitical parties ever gained power.

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Notes:

¹ Islamization process is the name given to various legal, political, economic and social reforms introduced by Zia-ul-Haq including the Hudood Ordinance, Shariah Court, Qazi courts, etc.

² Kurram is one of the seven tribal districts recently merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Unlike other tribal districts, the majority of the population of Kurram is Shii Muslim.