

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM AND DEMOCRACY IN PAKISTAN

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The founding fathers envisioned Pakistan as a democratic state upholding representative governance, constitutionalism, civil and political rights and equal citizenship for all. They maintained that such a polity would derive its ethical inspirations from Islam.¹

However, the founding fathers' vision could not be fully converted into viable institutions and processes. The political track record is marked by discontinuities, periodic constitutional breakdown, military rule, absence of fair and free elections after regular intervals, a selective enforcement of the rule of law and a poor tradition of accountability of rulers. Pakistan experimented with two interim constitutions (1947, 1972) and three regular constitutions (1965, 1962, and 1973). The current constitution (1973) was thoroughly revised by the military governments in 1985 and 2002. This was in addition to four phases of direct military rule when the constitution was either abrogated or suspended. The military-dominated power elite consciously discouraged the development of autonomous political and societal activity and engaged in constitutional and political engineering to entrench themselves in power.

Several factors explain Pakistan's failure to evolve viable participatory political institutions and processes.² A major contributory factor is the inability of the major political interests to evolve a consensus on the relationship between Islam and the Pakistani state and society in operational terms and the rapid rise of Islamic orthodoxy, fundamentalism and militancy since the early 1980s against the backdrop of Pakistan's active involvement with the Afghan resistance to the presence of the Soviet troops in Afghanistan (December 1979 to February 1989) and the subsequent development.

This paper argues that the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, extremism and militancy (i.e. the jihadi movement) in the 1980s and the subsequent years, constitutes a major obstacle to Pakistan's efforts to promote socio-cultural pluralism and create viable participatory political institutions and processes. The democratic prospects have suffered mainly due to the emphasis on literalist and fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, threat or use of violence by various extremist and fundamentalist groups for pursuing Islam based partisan political agenda and Islamic-sectarian violence. These trends increased socio-cultural intolerance and reduced the space for the autonomous functioning of civilian institutions and process and stifled consensus building on the operational norms of the polity through dialogue and accommodation.

Islamic extremism and militancy flourished in Pakistan mainly with the blessings of the military regimes which used these groups to deflect participatory pressures and to seek legitimacy because they did not always insist on participatory governance and civilian supremacy. Most of them were willing to support any government that allowed them to pursue their partisan Islamic agenda. These Islamic groups also served the foreign policy agendas. At times, some civilian governments also appeased them to win over their support to pressure their political adversaries. Consequently, the rising tide of Islamic extremism and militancy undermined the prospects of democracy.

GROUP TYPOLOGY

Pakistan's Islamic groups and leaders can be divided into three broad categories for this study. First, several Islamic political parties function like other political parties, engaging in political mobilization, contesting elections and working towards assumption of power. A conglomerate of six Islamic parties, labeled as the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), is currently ruling the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and shares power with the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML) in Balochistan. It is also represented in both houses of the federal parliament and the provincial assemblies of Sindh and the Punjab. The MMA supports the Taliban movement, sympathizes with the Al-Qaeda and it is critical of Pakistan's participation in the U.S. led global war against terrorism. However, the MMA acknowledges the instrumental relevance of various facets of the modern state for implementing an Islamic order on orthodox lines. Some Islamic political parties operate independent of the MMA.³

Second, Islamic seminaries⁴ pre-date the establishment of Pakistan. However, these proliferated in Pakistan during the last three decades. As institutions of Islamic learning, Islamic seminaries inculcate extremely conservative and orthodox Islamic orientations among their students who often develop a narrow religious worldview and question the modern notions of state and participatory governance.

There are several Islamic groups who are not directly engaged in politics but pursue literalist and fundamentalist Islamic perspective on societal and state issues. Like Islamic seminaries they are critical of modern state system and participatory governance as being contrary to the basis tenets of Islam. They talk of return to the "ideal Islamic order" as it existed in the earliest period of Islam. A large number of Islamic seminaries are formally linked with Islamic parties and make their students available for street agitation. Similarly, some seminaries have linkages with the militant groups involved in Afghanistan and Indian-administered Kashmir and help their militant agenda. They also provided volunteers to the militant Islamic groups, especially those fighting in Afghanistan. Some of Islamic seminaries in NWFP and Balochistan would send a large number of their students to Afghanistan to fight along with the Taliban against the northern alliance during 1996-2001.

Third, a number of militant Islamic groups surfaced with reference to Afghan resistance to Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. These groups were patronized by Pakistan, the U.S. and several conservative Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) collaborated with the U.S. intelligence agency, CIA, for training and equipping these groups so that these fought effectively against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan. After the exit of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the U.S. withdrew its support to these militant groups which continued to function in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Some of them devoted their attention to the insurgency in Indian-administered Kashmir. Pakistan's ISI continued to support them because their active involvement in Indian-administered Kashmir served Pakistan's foreign policy agenda. Some of them extended their support to Islamic causes elsewhere. Their involvement in Pakistan's domestic affairs is limited mainly to mobilizing support for their external agenda. Some militant organizations use their organizational skills to propagate their perspective on Islam and periodically use violence against those who subscribe to other perspectives on Islam. This causes Islamic-sectarian violence in Pakistan which escalated as the militant groups gained strength. As religious hardliners, these militants do not subscribe to the modern notion of governance and political management. They advocate "jihad" (holy war) in pursuance of Islamic causes any where in the world and aspire to establish a truly Islamic order as articulated by them.

Islamic parties and groups falling in the first category maintain a favourable disposition towards the electoral process and an elected parliament. They view them as instruments for securing power which they plan to use for implementation of an Islamic order as articulated by them. For them, democracy is not an ideal but has instrumental value to the extent it facilitates the implementation of their religio-political agenda. If they come to the conclusion that they cannot win or share power through the electoral process, they may have a greater tendency to resort to extra constitutional means to pursue their Islamic agendas.

Most groups and organizations, especially the militants, falling in the second and third categories reject the modern notions of participatory governance, the electoral process, assemblies and the existing legal and judicial system. Rather than offering a detailed alternative Islamic political framework, they question the legitimacy of the modern notions of governance and democracy and highlight the abstract Islamic principles or the narratives of the earliest period of Islamic history as the foundations of a model Islamic state.⁵ However, they hardly agree on the ways and means to interpret these principles and historical narratives to build institutions and processes. They question each other's interpretation. Their denominational differences and mutual conflicts often produce violence.

RISE OF ISLAMIC PARTIES

Islamic political parties have been functioning in Pakistan since the early days of independence, although the roots of some of them can be traced back to the pre-independence period. Some of the leading Islamic political parties like the JI, Jamiat-i-Ulema-e-Hind, the Khaksar Movement, and Majlis-i-Ahrar, opposed the political movement for the establishment of Pakistan as a separate Muslim state. In the post independence period some of these parties re-organized themselves and a couple of new Islamic parties entered the political domain. They argued for making Pakistan an Islamic state. The dominant political elite did not question the notion of Islamic state but they diverged from the Islamic parties on its details

There is a lack consensus on the institutions and processes to be set up under the rubric of Islamic state. Most conservative and orthodox elements want to establish a puritanical Islamic state with an emphasis on the punitive, regulative and extractive role of the Islamic state. Others emphasize the egalitarian norms of Islam and underline the principles of equality, socio-economic justice and the modern notions of the state, civil and political rights and participatory governance.⁶ To them, Islam is a source of guidance and provides the ethical foundations of the polity rather than a specific political structure or a legal code for the modern times.⁷

While subscribing to a democratic political order Pakistan's various constitutions created a linkage between the Pakistani state and Islam. However, these constitutions rejected the literalist and classical notion of an Islamic state which the Islamic parties often advocated.

The Islamic parties expressed varying degrees of reservations on the Islamic nature of the constitutions and they continued the advocacy of their notions of Islamic state. Three major factors helped their activism. First, Islam was closely associated with the establishment of Pakistan. The Muslim League invoked Islam in the pre-independence period as a mark of special Muslim identity and an instrument for political mobilization. Second, the Muslim League leadership was convinced that they could combine the modern democracy with the principles and teachings of Islam. This sentiment was reflected in the passing of the Objectives' Resolution in March 1949. Third, the fragmentation of the PML soon after the attainment of independence and the unnecessary delay in constitution-making caused much political

confusion. This enabled the Islamic religious parties to insist on establishing an Islamic political and economic order. However, they played a limited role in the power management during 1947-1970 and performed poorly in the elections.

Islamic parties gained importance and won-over some state patronage during the military government of General A.M. Yahya Khan (1969-1971). It relied on some of these parties, especially the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), to build support for the federal government in East Pakistan. The military government also adopted the oft-repeated slogan of the Islamic parties that the ideology of Pakistan is the ideology of Islam in order to counter Awami League's Six-point political agenda in East Pakistan that aimed at converting Pakistan into a loose federation that granted unprecedented autonomy to the provinces.

The civilian government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (December 1971 to July 1977) and the Islamic political parties viewed each other as adversaries. The former adopted some Islamic measures to take the wind out of the sails of the Islamic parties. However, these measures proved counter-productive, adversely affecting the liberal credentials of the Bhutto government and strengthening the Islamic parties, which spearheaded anti Bhutto agitation in March-July 1977. The steps undertaken by the Bhutto government included the designation of Islam as a state religion in the 1973 Constitution.⁸ All Pakistani constitutions assign a special place to Islam in the constitutional arrangements but Islam was never declared a state religion until 1973. In 1974, the constitution was amended to accommodate the demand of the Islamic parties and groups to include the definition of a Muslim in the constitution, thereby declaring the Ahmadya Muslim sect as a non-Muslim community. In 1977, the Bhutto government imposed a complete ban on alcohol. These steps emboldened the Islamic parties that were hostile to the Bhutto regime.

Islamic political parties made the maximum gains during the 11 years of General Zia-ul-Haq's military government (1977-1988). General Zia-ul-Haq's domestic power imperatives as well as the international and regional situation contributed to strengthening their role.

General Zia-ul-Haq's military government pampered the Islamic parties and encouraged the orthodox and fundamental groups to enter politics in order to undercut the support of his political adversaries. The JI either openly supported General Zia-ul-Haq or maintained a cooperative interaction with him until the withdrawal of martial law in 1985. His regime's policy of encouraging religious orthodoxy encouraged all types of Islamic parties and groups to get actively involved in the political fray. Several new religious-sectarian and ethnic groups also surfaced, fragmenting the political process.

The regional and international context for rise of Islamic fundamentalism and militancy was provided by the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979. Pakistan willingly joined with the United States and some conservative Arab states to strengthen Afghan-Islamic resistance to Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan. These countries provided financial resources, weapons and training to the Islamic groups fighting against the Soviet troops. The international financial and diplomatic support strengthened the Zia regime in the domestic Pakistani context which increased support to Islamic political parties, seminaries and other orthodox Islamic groups. It gave special attention to strengthening militant Afghan and Pakistani groups that were actively engaged in resistance to the Soviet troops in Afghanistan. This boosted religious orthodoxy in Pakistan and many such groups took advantage of the Afghan war by getting hold of funds and weapons for advancing their partisan agendas.

General Zia-ul-Haq thus tilted the political balance in favour of orthodox and conservative interpretation of Islamic polity. He made several administrative and legal changes reflecting the puritanical Islamic principles as advocated by the orthodox and conservative groups.⁹ The government made more funds available to Islamic seminaries, causing their proliferation. It also encouraged political and social discourse on conservative and orthodox lines and patronized Islamic militancy.

These developments strengthened Islamic extremist forces and increased religious and cultural intolerance in Pakistan. Some of these groups functioned as religious and cultural vigilantes and used or threatened to use coercion against those who did not accept their vision of Islam. The official circles and the religious groups engaged in massive propaganda against participatory governance, constitutionalism, and the rule of law, equal citizenship and civil and political rights describing these as western implants in Pakistan.¹⁰

Commenting on the rise of Islamic extremism and militancy in Pakistan, President General Pervez Musharraf wrote in his autobiography: "The entire decade of the 1980s saw religious extremism rise, encouraged by Zia.... Actually, Zia, for his own personal and political reasons, embraced the hard-line religious lobby as his constituency throughout Pakistan and well beyond, to the exclusion of the huge majority of moderate Pakistanis. Fighting the infidel soviet Army became a holy cause to the jihadis, and countless Pakistani men signed up."¹¹

After the withdrawal of Soviet groups from Afghanistan, Pakistan continued to support some Afghan resistance leaders and their Pakistan supporters to install a pro-Pakistan government in Kabul; the Taliban were the last such group that emerged in Afghanistan in 1994 and enjoyed Pakistan's support. Pakistan also encouraged some Afghan war linked groups and some new Pakistani militant Islamic groups to launch military operations in Indian-administered Kashmir in support of the insurgency that ignited there in 1989-90.

Despite the pro-Islam tilt in the disposition of the Pakistani state, the Islamic parties did not perform well in the elections during the post-Zia period, 1988-1999. Two clear trends emerged from the elections in 1988, 1990, 1993 and 1997. First, Pakistan began to move in the direction of a two major political parties system. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Group (PML-N) emerged as the leading political parties but none could establish a government without winning over some smaller parties. All governments during 1988-1999 were coalitions between one major party (either the PPP or the PML-N) and some regional and smaller parties. Second the Islamic parties performed poorly in these elections except when they entered into an electoral alliance with the mainstream political parties. Some Islamic parties shared power at the federal level in 1990 as part of the political coalition, Islamic Jamboori Ittehad (JI), dominated by the PML-N. However, the partnership with the mainstream political party diluted the role of the Islamic parties. In 1993, the JI launched a massive electoral campaign under the banner of Pakistan Islamic Front in a bid to show that it could alone perform in the elections. The elections results were a major disappointment for the JI.

The Islamic parties performed exceptionally well in the October 2002 general elections organized by the military government of General Pervez Musharraf. This can be attributed to the peculiar political and ethnic context in NWFP and the Pakhtun areas in Balochistan in the aftermath of the U.S. military action in Afghanistan and the overthrow of the Taliban government in Kabul. The Islamic parties also benefited from the policy of the military government of General Pervez Musharraf to encourage them emerge as a political force to counterbalance the mainstream political parties that openly challenge his rule.

ISLAMIC PARTIES SINCE 2002

The Islamic political parties had the best-ever electoral performance in the October 2002 general elections in Pakistan. The Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), a conglomerate of six Islam-oriented parties,¹² won a clear majority in the NWFP Provincial Assembly and formed the provincial government. In the Balochistan Provincial Assembly, The MMA emerged as the 2nd largest party after the pro-Musharraf Pakistan Muslim League (PML). Both joined together to set up a coalition government in Balochistan. It also won some seats in the provincial assemblies of the Punjab (11 seats) and Sindh (8 seats), assuming a nation-wide character.

At the federal level, the MMA came third in terms of seats in the National Assembly. It won 45 general seats. It also got 18 seats in the indirectly elected upper house, the Senate. This was for the first time that the Islamic parties got such a high representation at the federal level and won seats in all provincial assemblies. Their performance was outstanding in NWFP, followed by their performance in Balochistan. Most of their representation in the National Assembly and the Senate came from these two provinces.¹³

The MMA has now more members in the two houses of the parliament than ever before and its Secretary General, Maulana Fazlur Rahman, is the leader of opposition in the National Assembly.

The MMA supporters interpreted their electoral performance as the ascendancy of the Islamic forces in Pakistan and that it would soon sweep the whole country. The MMA success was also described as a mandate for implementing the Islamic alternative in Pakistan.

The 2002 electoral performance of the Islamic parties can be attributed to a host of factors. Some of these factors were peculiar to the political situation in NWFP and the Pakhtun areas of Balochistan in the aftermath of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and the removal of the Taliban government in Kabul. The two major MMA parties, the Jamiat-i-Ulema Islam (JUI-F) and the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) cashed on the widespread anti-U.S. sentiments that pervaded NWFP and Balochistan in the aftermath of U.S. military action in Afghanistan (October-November 2001) and the subsequent joint efforts of the U.S. FBI and Pakistan's security agencies to round up the remnants of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Pakistan. The MMA argued that Islam and Pakistan were under siege by the West in general and the U.S. in particular.

Some these parties and other Islamic elements established an Afghanistan Defence Council in October 2001 and launched street agitation against Pakistan's support to U.S. attack on Afghanistan. This agitation did not take off because the mainstream political parties did not join them. However, it provided a good opportunity to the Islamic parties to engage in popular mobilization on an anti-U.S. plank. They established the MMA for contesting the October 2002 elections and returned to the twin themes of anti-Americanism and Islam under siege for the election campaign.

Ethnic and cultural factors also contributed to the MMA's electoral success. The shared Pakhtun ethnicity with the Taliban created sympathy for them on account of their sufferings due to U.S. attack on Afghanistan (October-November 2001). When the dead bodies and injured people reached NWFP and Balochistan it caused much resentment against the U.S. A good number of those killed or injured in Afghanistan were Pakistanis (Pakhtuns and others) who had gone to Afghanistan to fight along with the Taliban. Some of them were arrested by the Northern Alliance after it captured Kabul with the support of U.S. troops. This caused resentment in the

Pakistani Pakhtun areas. The MMA successfully articulated these situational variables to muster support in the elections.¹⁴

The decision of the six Islamic parties to join together to set up an electoral alliance, the MMA, helped them to perform better in the elections. In the past, they often fielded candidates against each other. But, in the case of the 2002 elections, they worked in harmony with each other and fielded joint candidates.

The MMA also benefited from the decision of the military government of General Pervez Musharraf to contain the role of the mainstream political parties – the PPP led by Benazir Bhutto and the PML-N led by Nawaz Sharif. These mainstream political parties were viewed by the military government as its main adversaries and it used the state apparatus to discourage them from popular mobilization in the run up to the general elections. The constraints on these political parties and the sympathetic disposition of the military government towards the Islamic parties also contributed to the MMA's success.

Despite the peculiar political situation in NWFP and Balochistan and the favourable disposition of the military regime towards the MMA, it got about 11.10 percent of the votes cast and came third in terms of seats in the National Assembly. However, as its votes were concentrated in NWFP and Balochistan, it emerged as the major political force in NWFP and the Pakhtun areas of Balochistan. It may be pointed out here that despite the pressures of the military government, the PPP obtained the highest number of votes in the National Assembly and got second place in terms of seats in the National Assembly. In Sindh, the PPP emerged as the single largest party.

The MMA faces the dilemma of maintaining a balance between the imperatives of sustaining power and the need to pursue an Islamic-ideological approach to politics. Its decision in December 2003 to accommodate the Musharraf government on the Legal Framework Order (LFO) by supporting the 17th constitutional amendment served its power interests in NWFP and Balochistan. This was equally rewarding for the government because the latter got the parliamentary approval for the changes in the constitution and Musharraf's election to the Presidency through an uncontested referendum (April 2002). In return for this gesture, the federal government did not contest the MMA's monopoly of power in NWFP and power sharing with the pro-Musharraf PML in Balochistan. However, this exposed the MMA to criticism that it had diluted its ideological Islamic character to stay in power.

The MMA faces another dilemma. The smaller political parties in the alliance are complaining about the domination of the alliance by its two major components, i.e. the JI and the JUI-F, at the expense of smaller political parties, i.e. the Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam Samiul Haq group (JUI-S), Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP) and Jamiat-i-Ahle Hadith (JAH). These smaller parties have lost interest in the MMA. The JUI-S and the JUP virtually dropped out of the alliance and the JAH maintains a discreet distance from the two major parties in the alliance. Another constituent party, Tehrik-e-Jafaria Pakistan (TJP) maintains a low profile to avoid conflict. Internal disharmony has weakened the MMA, although it continues to be the leading political power in NWFP and the Pakhtuns areas of Balochistan.

The MMA leaders often criticize the pro-U.S. policies of the Musharraf government and threaten to launch street agitation. Similarly, the Musharraf government criticizes the MMA as a group of hard line and extremist Islamic elements. However, both sides avoid a head-on collision in order to ensure the continuation of the political arrangements which enables them to stay in power.¹⁵ This relationship faces new challenges because the MMA opposes the federal

government's military operations against the Islamic extremists and militants in the Tribal areas, adjacent to Afghanistan.

The MMA's Islamization has focused more on regulative and punitive aspects which includes gender segregation in education, denial of permission to female patients to consult male doctors, projection of Islamic culture in mass media, and removal of postures and hoardings with female faces. Some of the MMA activists assumed the role of Islamic vigilantes to enforce Islamic moral codes on the people. The issues of socio-economic justice and alleviation of poverty have received less attention.

ISLAMIC EXTREMISM AND MILITANCY

A major set back to democracy was the steady growth of Islamic extremism and militancy and Islamic-sectarian movements since the early 1980s. As discussed in the earlier section the Pakistani state encouraged these trends by extending support to the hard line Afghan-Islamic resistance, especially the pro-Pakistan groups.

The close relationship between the Pakistani state, especially its intelligence agencies, and the extremist and militant Islamic groups persisted after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Pakistani military authorities launched these militant Islamic groups in Indian-administered Kashmir to bolster the on-going insurgency. The continued state patronage of Islamic militancy boosted their fortune in Pakistan and encouraged more and more people to join such organizations. This caused the proliferation of militant groups in Pakistan.¹⁶

Pakistan based Islamic militancy is sectarian in character. Most activists belong to Whabi/Salafi, Deobandi and Ahle-Hadith traditions of Islam, known for their hard line on socio-political and cultural issues. The Brelvi or the Shia elements played nominal role in militancy in Afghanistan and Kashmir.¹⁷ They learnt to use violent means, especially modern weapons, mainly in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Some of them took to violence to pursue their religious agenda within Pakistan and attacked and killed those who did not share their perspective on Islam. This stepped up Islamic-sectarian violence in Pakistan.¹⁸

Several Islamic-sectarian organizations engaged in targeted killing of the prominent personalities of the opposite sect.¹⁹ This type of violence was also caused by factionalism in the militant Islamic movement. Each major group produced breakaway factions that functioned independent of the parent organization and often resorted to violence against other sects in order to make their presence felt.²⁰ A good number of Islamic-sectarian activists got military training in Afghanistan during the Taliban days or they took refuge there when Pakistan's security authorities decided to round them up.

Cultural and religious intolerance also increased as Islamic seminaries proliferated in the 1980s and the 1990s. Most seminaries had sectarian-denominational character and inculcated a narrow straight-jacketed worldview among the students marked by religious extremism and intolerance towards other perspectives on Islam. Some of these young people joined militant Islamic groups that were fighting in Kashmir and Afghanistan. In other words, Islamic seminaries created a state of mind among its students, making them vulnerable to the appeals for fighting a "holy war" to foil "Christian-Jewish conspiracies" against Islam. Some of these young people were recruited by Islamic-sectarian organization to pursue their sectarian agenda within Pakistan.

The rise of religious extremism and militancy undermined social and cultural pluralism, political tolerance and respect for dissent. Such a political and cultural environment is not conducive to growth of democracy, constitutionalism, the rule of law and gender equality.

Most extremist and militant Islamic groups had no faith in modern democratic institutions and processes and often described them as western implants in Muslim societies which must be totally discarded. However, the Islamic political parties were committed to democracy to the extent its processes enabled them to win the elections so that they can argue that they have the popular mandate to create a fundamentalist Islamic political order.

The government of Pakistan has taken stern action against extremist, sectarian and militant Islamic groups from time to time. It banned such groups in August 2001, almost a month before the terrorist attacks in the United States. New restrictions were imposed on other groups in January 2002 and November 2003. It also arrested about 600 Al-Qaeda activists from the Pakistani territory. Some Islamic extremist elements were involved in two attacks on President General Pervez Musharraf in December 2003, and an attack on the convey of the Army Corps Commander, Karachi, a three star general, in June 2004. There were several other incidents of sectarian and religion oriented violence,²¹ including suicide attacks on mosques and other religious places. The religious places all over Pakistan are now closely guarded by the police or paramilitary forces when some religious ceremony takes place.

The government does not pursue its counter-terrorism policy in a consistent manner. Rather, it adopts a go slow policy after taking some stern action against extremist and militant groups. Such a slowing-down saves the government-MMA relationship from a total breakdown. The MMA would like to reverse Pakistan's counter terrorism policies. However, as an alternate, the MMA seeks flexibility in the government policy in order to protect its support base which comprises mainly religious hardliners, conservatives and Islamic seminaries. The slowing-down also enables Islamic extremists, militant and sectarian groups to resurface and carry on their agenda after some time. Several sectarian and extremists groups banned by the government in 2001 and 2002 resurfaced under new names in 2002-2003. Other extremist elements that had voluntarily reduced their activities returned to the political stage.

The inconsistency in counter-terrorism policy has helped the new crop of the Taliban fighters to shape up partly in Pakistani territories as a credible resistance to the tottering Karzai government in Kabul. Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai is extremely critical of Pakistan's policy of ignoring the Taliban activity in Balochistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan.²² However, he hardly admits that his government's failure to establish its control over most rural areas and the failure to pursue economic rehabilitation and reconstruction of war ravaged Afghanistan have caused much alienation in Afghanistan. A large number of these alienated people are willing to join hands with anti-Karzai militant Pakhtuns, commonly described as the Taliban.

Further, the government does not extend the support base of its counter-terrorism policies by cultivating the mainstream political parties and leaders. The liberal and centralist political forces like the PPP and the PML-N are favourably disposed towards the government's counter terrorism policy. However, the government does not want to bring them on board because they question General Pervez Musharraf's domineering role in the political process and demand that fair and free elections should be held to establish a genuinely representative political order in Pakistan. Musharraf is reluctant to accept their demands and finds the MMA more accommodating if his administration shows some flexibility towards Islamic political parties, Islamic seminaries and extremist and militant Islamic entities.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The linkage between Islam and the establishment of Pakistan created a space for the political role of Islamic political parties, Islamic scholars and seminaries. They often took exception to the modern notions of constitutionalism, participatory governance, the electoral process, civil and political rights and equal citizenship. They advocated the notion of Islamic state without putting forward the details of institutions and processes of such a state.

Initially their role could be described as a lobby for implementation of their visions of the Islamic state. They exercised a restraining influence on policy making by emphasizing Islamic principles and teachings. This did not cause a serious problem for the state because the dominant civil or military elite accommodated Islam in the constitutional and legal arrangements, although they did not accept the literalist and puritanical notion of an Islamic order as advocated by the religious elements. At times, the civilian elite adopted part of their Islamic agenda to deflect their political pressure and win them over to their side.

Their political clout increased when different military governments sought their cooperation for pursuing domestic and foreign policy agendas. The Yahya military regime mobilized some of these elements to pursue the federal government's agenda for countering the Awami League's autonomy demand in the pre-1971 East Pakistan.

The position and role of the Islamic elements strengthened in the 1980s because they became relevant to General Zia-ul-Haq's military government's domestic and foreign policy agendas. In the domestic context, Zia's military government mobilized conservative and orthodox Islamic leaders and organizations to demonstrate its public support and to neutralize the liberal political forces that questioned the legitimacy of the military rule. It was a marriage of convenience between the military rulers and the Islamic elements for serving their diverse agendas. Zia wanted to establish his popular credentials and the conservative and orthodox elements wanted to use the state for implementation of their visions of the state and the society.

For the first time General Zia-ul-Haq's military government began to function as the main instrument of enforcement of Islamic tenets in governance and political management as articulated by these Islamic groups. This was a major shift in the role of the Pakistani state and the government. In the past, the state played the role of an enabler and facilitator for the Muslims to lead their lives in accordance with the principles and teachings of Islam.²³ With General Zia in power, the state became the enforcer of Islam, which tilted the political balance in favour of the religious elements.

The developments in the regional and international context also strengthened the Islamic elements in Pakistan and reinforced General Zia's efforts to pamper them. Pakistan's direct involvement in the U.S. backed efforts to strengthen Afghan-Islamic resistance to Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan helped the military regime to gain international acceptability, secure international economic support and work closely with orthodox and conservative Islamic elements. The Afghan war strengthened religious orthodoxy and extremism in Pakistan. Later, these Islamic groups served Pakistan's political agenda in Indian-administered Kashmir. Their relevance to the foreign policy agenda buttressed their position within Pakistan.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism, extremism and militancy since the 1980s is a major obstacle to Pakistan's return to democracy. These are not the only factors that undermine the

prospects of democracy in Pakistan. However, their resurgence has strengthened the worldview and political ethos that are not conducive to growth of political and cultural pluralism, religious tolerance, equal citizenship irrespective of religious differences, and participatory governance.

Some of these groups are ideologically opposed to the modern notions of the state, governance and political management as well as the electoral process and a parliament elected through such processes. Others invoke some democratic principles and processes as instruments for obtaining power for enforcing an Islamic political and economic order as articulated by them. There is hardly any commitment to democracy as a desired political framework. They talk of the need of implementing an ideal Islamic order but do not offer a detailed plan of action for setting up such a political order.

The hard line and extremist Islamic elements continued to wield political clout during 1988-1999 when civilian governments functioned in Pakistan for two major reasons. First, the military continued to wield influence on policy making, especially on foreign policy and security affairs. The military was the key player in shaping Pakistan's policy on Afghanistan, India including Kashmir, and the nuclear issue. This made it possible for the military to sustain its relationship with the Islamic militant groups. Second, the political governments were too weak to assert their primacy and often sought the cooperation of the military to stay in power and projected themselves as the champions of Pakistan's interests in Kashmir and Afghanistan. They also sought to win over some of the Islamic elements. The return of the military to power in October 1999 under General Pervez Musharraf reinforced this relationship. Had there been no terrorist attacks in the U.S. on September 11, 2001, Pakistan would have continued with its Islamic militancy card in foreign policy for an indefinite period.

The hard line, extremist and militant Islamic parties and other entities have performed poorly in a relatively open and competitive political environment where different political discourses are allowed to compete with each other. Their clout and role is likely to be attenuated if the political system becomes relatively open, allowing a fair opportunity to liberal and centralist political forces to engage in political mobilization. The military governments of Generals Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf have consciously undermined liberal and centralist political forces in order to protect their power interests.

Consequently, Islamic hard line and extremist groups and militant organizations are well-entrenched. Their perspectives on social, political and foreign policies issues dominate the political discourse, stressing the hostility of the West towards Islam and a militant course of action to cope with external "conspiracies" against Pakistan and Islam. These groups also practice religious and cultural intolerance. The government discourages the alternate discourse by the mainstream liberal and centralist political parties and societal groups.

The political clout of Islamic hardliners can be contained by allowing liberal and centralist political forces to freely engage in political mobilization. These trends can be strengthened by holding fair and free elections that offer equal opportunity to all competing political parties and interest. Pakistan's experience suggests that a democratic framework and an open and competitive political environment discourage the Islamic extremist and hard line elements. Above all, the Pakistani state and its security agencies should not prop up extremism and militancy for pursuing their domestic or foreign policy agendas.

ENDNOTES

¹ Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the movement for the establishment of Pakistan and the first Governor-General, talked of combining the notions of modern state and democracy with Islamic principles. He said that Pakistan would be a democratic state but “with Islam as its underlying ethical principle.” See Sharif al Mujahid, Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah: Studies in Interpretation (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1981), pp.143-144.

² For a review of the factors and political conditions that undermined democracy in Pakistan, see Lawrence Ziring, Pakistan in the Twentieth Century (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.146-199; Mohammad Waseem, Politics and the State in Pakistan (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical & Cultural Research, 1994), pp. 88-131.

³ Hasan Askari Rizvi, “Islamic Parties and Power Politics.” Dawn (Karachi), 14 August 2004.

⁴ The data released by the government of Pakistan in October 2006 showed that up to 1,549,242 students were enrolled in 12,153 Islamic seminaries in Pakistan. In addition to 12,153 Islamic seminaries, 826 other seminaries did not provide information about their students. There could be some more Islamic seminaries functioning without the knowledge of the government. See Daily Times (Lahore), 7 October 2006.

⁵ Some religious leaders and organizations openly talk of establishing a Caliphate system in the Muslim world on the lines of the Islamic Caliphate of the earliest period of Islamic history. They maintain that this would promote internal consolidation amongst the Muslims and enable them to withstand external pressures. An Islamic-militant organization, Hizb ut Tharir, banned in Pakistan and Great Britain, distribute pamphlets or sends e-mail messages in Pakistan in favour of establishing the Caliphate system in place of democracy in the Muslim world, including Pakistan.

⁶ Khalid B. Sayeed, The Political System of Pakistan (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.160-184.

⁷ For a discussion of the issue of relationship between Islam and the state, see Inamur Rehman, Public Opinion and Political Development in Pakistan (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 3-40.

⁸ Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1973), Article 2.

⁹ See Shaukat Ali, Pakistan: A Religio-Political Study (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical & Cultural Research, 1997), pp.195-285.

¹⁰ Stephen P. Cohen, The Idea of Pakistan (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2005), pp.170-172.

¹¹ Pervez Musharraf, In the Line of Fire: A Memoir (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), p.275.

¹² The MMA comprises the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) led by Qazi Hussain Ahmad, Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam-Maulana Fazlur Rahman group (JUI-F), Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam- Maulana Sami ul Haq group (JUI-S), Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Pakistan led by Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani (JUP), Jamiat Ahle Hadith of Professor Sajid Mir (JAH), and the Tehrik-i-Jafria Pakistan headed by Maulana Syed Sajid Naqvi (TJP).

¹³ State of Democracy Report: First Year of Democracy, 2002-2003 (Lahore: Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2003), pp.14, 29, 49,105-107.

¹⁴ Hasan Askari Rizvi, “Dynamics of MMA’s Ascendancy,” Dawn (Karachi), 24 October 2002.

¹⁵ Hasan Askari Rizvi, “The MMA Dilemma.” Daily Times, 26 January 2004.

¹⁶ For a detailed study of relationship between the Pakistan state, especially the Army, and the Islamic extremist and militant groups, see Husain Haqqani, Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military (Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment, 2005), pp.159-197, 261-309; see also Amir Mir, The True Face of Jihadis (Lahore: Mashal Books, 2004, pp.19-25.

¹⁷ Hasan Askari Rizvi, "The Terrorism Debate," Daily Times, 31 July 2005.

¹⁸ S.V.R. Nasr, "Islam, the State and the Rise of Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan," in Christophe Jaffrelot (ed), Pakistan: Nationalism Without a Nation? (London: Zed Books, 2002), pp.85-114.

¹⁹ Mariam Abou Zahab, "The Regional Dimension of Sectarian Conflicts in Pakistan," in Christofe Jaffrelot, ibid., pp.115-128.

²⁰ Hassan Abbas, Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army and America's War on Terror (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005),pp178-216.

²¹ For the details of the leading terrorist attacks in Pakistan in the first half of 2004, see State of Democracy Report, 1 January -31 March 2004 and 1 April-30 June 2004 (Lahore: Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2004).

²² Seth G. Jones, "Averting Failure in Afghanistan," Survival (Vol. 48 No. 1, Spring 2006), pp.111-128; see also Amin Saikal, "Securing Afghanistan's Border," ibid., pp.129-141.

²³ Article 31 of the 1973 Constitution says: "Islamic way of life (1) steps shall be taken to ENABLE the Muslims of Pakistan, individually and collectively, to order their lives in accordance with the fundamental principles and basic concepts of Islam and to provide facilities whereby they may be ENABLED to understand the meaning of life according to the Holy Quran and Sunnah."