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The religious-political organizations in Pakistan have been striving to achieve their agendas since the country gained independence in 1947. Their primary focus has been on Islamization¹ of the state and religio-socialization² of society. They made early gains on the Islamization front, by managing to define the ideological discourse of the state through the Objectives Resolution of 1949. These organizations also had their say in the form of a formal constitutional acknowledgment that “divine” laws will have precedence over laws made by parliament and also managed to get *Shariah* laws adopted during the rule of military dictator Gen Ziaul Haq. Despite these significant achievements, the religious parties are still struggling for absolute Islamization of the state.

At the same time, they have been promoting a discourse of religious socialization, which dovetails with their political objectives. On that front also their achievements are significant since the trends of religio-socialization are becoming increasingly visible in society. The ultimate goal of both the religious discourses is to enforce Islam in every sphere of life by blending the following six variables: political Islamization, renewalist movements, Sufism, *Tableegh* and *Da'awa* (preaching and call to Islam), sectarianism and militarization. These variables often overlap and can be found in most major religious organizations or movements in the country.

The complexity of these discourses spawns multiple disagreements among the organizations, based on how each group perceives its role and defines their sphere. It also provokes differences leading to divisions within each group's ranks.

In 2002, as many as 239 religious organizations were operating in Pakistan, pursuing largely similar agendas.³ Many of them may appear to be divided along sectarian lines; but are not averse to working together wherever there is a confluence of interest.

This article is an attempt to chart the commonalities and divergences among religious organizations in Pakistan, which determine the discourses of Islamization and religio-socialization. The article does not deal with the impact or influence of religious organizations. It only seeks to highlight their objectives and focuses on their internal mechanisms, which are usually ignored in such discourse analyses. The manifestos, statements of objectives and literature of various religious organizations have been perused in an effort to provide a comparative perspective on these organizations' agendas and highlight the points of divergence. The article is descriptive in its structure and seeks to expand the analytical framework on the subject.

Religious organizations in Pakistan operate in a diverse landscape. It is important to understand them in order to comprehend their discourses. In 1947, only six religious political parties were active in Pakistan:⁴ the Deobandi Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Jamaat-e-Islami, Tehreek-e-Ahrar, Khaksar Tehreek, Jamat-e-Ahl-e-Hadith of the Salafi sect and the Shia Political Party. In 1948, Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan, representing the Barelvi school of thought, was formed.

The number of religious parties in Pakistan had reached 30 by the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.⁵ These included seven Deobandi and five Barelvi religious parties as well as four each from Shia and Ahl-e-Hadith schools of thought. Three JI groups also surfaced during the same period.⁶ After the 1980s, a sharp increase in the growth of religious parties in Pakistan was observed and the number rose to 239 in 2002. (See Table 1) These figures only take into account organizations on the national, regional and provincial levels. The number runs into thousands if all small, local groups are counted.⁷ Among the 239 organizations, 21 participated in electoral politics, 148 worked purely on sectarian agendas, 24 became associated with militant jihad, 12 were striving for the establishment of renewalist/*Khilafat* movement and shunned democratic dispensations, 18 pursued missionary work, mainly preaching their sectarian ideas, and 10 operated as charities.

Table 1: Religious Parties in Pakistan (2002)⁸

Sect/School of Thought	Political	Sectarian	Militant	Educational/Missionary	Total
Deobandi	4	33	5	3	45
Barelvi	6	22	13	2	43
Ahl-e-Hadith	4	10	3	3	20
Shia	3	16	3	1	23
Ji and its factions	3	-	4	7	17
Others	4	1	76	10	91
Total	24	82	104	26	239

It is important to remember, however, that it is often difficult to categorize religious parties since most of them pursue multiple agendas, either on their own or through affiliated groups. However, a closer look reveals that most of these groups orbit around the major organizations that were active in the country in the 1950s, mainly the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) and Jamiat-e-Ahl-e-Hadith. The All Pakistan Shia Political Parties morphed into Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiq-e-Jafaria in the late 1970s. Most of the other organizations—whether working for missionary, sectarian or educational purposes or engaged in militancy—were either affiliated with or breakaway factions of these five major organizations. Most importantly, all of these groups believe in the agendas set by their parent organizations. However, the parent organization in most cases focuses on Islamization while the affiliated groups or factions work on religio-socialization. The parent parties are part of Pakistan's mainstream politics, believe in the country's constitution and participate in electoral politics and are thus classified as religious-political parties.⁹ The discourse analysis of the so-called parent organization can therefore help understand collective approaches of most of the other groups.

In the last two decades, another breed of religious organizations has surfaced in the country. These too are agents of Islamization and religio-socialization, but they believe that it is impossible to bring about a change while working within the current political system of the country. They deem democracy and democratic processes inadequate for change. Some of them consider democracy a notion opposed to Islamic and want to replace it with their own version of *Shariah*. Such groups include Jamatud Dawaa, Khilafat movement, Hizbut Tehrir and Al-Muhajiroon, among other. Many of these groups, such as Tanzeemul Akhwan and Tanzeem-e-Islami, believe that complete *Shariah* cannot be enforced through the electoral process and consider the use of force or toppling of the government as justified alternatives. Although these organizations have sectarian and militant tendencies but their dominant approach is renewalist in nature. They want a complete change of system. This is contrary to the approach of the religious-political parties, who tend to focus on gradual change while working within the system.

A Review of the Agendas: Commonalities and Differences

The “enforcement of divine law” is the common agenda in the manifestos of all religious-political organizations. (See Table 2) Their primary objectives also include plans for economic, political, constitutional and foreign policy reforms. But their emphasis is on complete Islamization of the state and society. Many of these parties recommend reforms but remain silent on how those would be translated into policy. Many of their recommendations have tremendous commonalities and at times it would be difficult to tell one organization’s manifesto apart from that of another if the organization’s name was not mentioned in the document.

Mainstream political parties in the country also share many objectives of the religious-political parties.¹⁰ The Pakistan Muslim League promised in its manifesto that it would turn the country into “a modern ideological Islamic State”.¹¹ Tehrik-e-Insaf’s statement of objectives focused on ways of making Pakistan an ideal Islamic state.¹² The Pakistan People’s Party says “Islam is our way”. But if all political parties, excluding those who represent left-wing ideology, share the same vision, where is the point of divergence?

First, religious organizations engage in multipurpose activities, including the religio-socialization process. They believe that political parties are not capable of bringing about the desired change since they only follow political norms and are accommodative towards global, political, strategic and economic trends. On the other hand, religious parties distinguish themselves on the basis of religion and consider themselves to be saviors of Pakistan’s Islamic ideology. They are generally suspicious of the country’s political leadership, and think that it wants to turn Pakistan into a secular state.

Table 2: Objectives of Religious-Political Parties

Religious Party	Objective
Jamaat-e-Islami	Complete enforcement of divine law and making human beings follow the righteous path by creating fear of divine accountability.
Jamiat Ulema-e-	The basic law of the country will be in agreement with Quran and <i>Sunnah</i> , and will transgress these sources of

Islam (Fazl)	law through any legislative act or executive order.
Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan	Implementation of <i>Nizam-e-Mustafa</i> in Pakistan that is based on the pattern of <i>Khilafat-e-Rashida</i> .
Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith	Dominance of Quran and Hadith.
Tehrik-e-Islami (Tehrik-e-Jafaria)	Divine rule on God's land.
Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)	To legislate in the light of the recommendations by the Council of Islamic Ideology in order to make Quran and <i>Sunnah</i> the supreme law of the country and to bring every sphere of life under <i>Shariah</i> rule.

The proliferation of religious organizations usually occurs on account of different interpretations of religious ordains along sectarian lines. For instance, when the JUI says that no law could be made against Quran and *Sunnah*, it seeks to confine legislation within the Hanafi framework. The JUI claims that the state must follow the majority's faith in its legislative function.¹³ Other sects want political protection and endorsement of their respective religious ideas. Most of these religious parties believe that parliament should only identify the areas where *Shariah* legislation is required. They do not envisage a role for parliament beyond that nor are they clear on what role it will play after Islamization of constitution and legislation is accomplished.

The commonalities in the agendas of religious-political parties enable them to join hands to strive for their common goals. In 1952, in an early demonstration of joint action to pursue common objectives, religious scholars from all sects developed a consensus on an Islamic constitutional framework consisting of 22 points. The framework later provided the fundamental principles to all religious organizations in Pakistan and their manifestos centered on the same 22 points. The framework emphasized supremacy of 'divine' laws and declared that the state must not make laws contrary to *Shariah*. Later, many of the clauses from the same framework were included in the Constitution of 1973. The second major consensus among religious-political parties emerged in 1976, when all of them joined hands to form an alliance with the opposition parties in order to topple the government of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and enforce *Nizam-e-Mustafa* in the country. The movement resulted in martial law in the country and paved the way for Gen Ziaul Haq's Islamization drive. The third major unison occurred in 2000 when religious-political parties formed an electoral alliance, called the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). In 2002, the MMA won 65 seats in the National Assembly, formed its government in the North West Frontier Province (now renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and was part of the ruling coalition in Balochistan.

Religious-political parties set aside their sectarian differences on all of these occasions but their partnership never survived for long. The alliances were short-lived not because of any sectarian difference or disagreements over agenda, but on account of power struggles and varying political strategies of the groups forming the alliance.

There are two major divergences among religious-political organizations: on the ideological and tactical levels.

Ideological Level: The ideological framework of religious organizations not only has a bearing on their worldview, it also defines the boundaries of their political activism. For instance, the JI is connected with the Muslim Brotherhood movements across the world and represents the global Islamist agenda in Pakistan. Sohail Mehmud argues that that is the reason why most JI members are more interested in matters affecting Muslims in other countries than in the affairs of their local communities.¹⁴ This approach has also created greater space for orthodox religious-political organizations, like the JUI and JUP. Results of recent elections in Pakistan demonstrate that.

Similarly, the Movement of Jamat-e-Ahl-e-Hadith (MJAH), Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith and Tehreek-e-Jafaria Pakistan (TJP) seek their inspiration from Saudi Arabia and Iran; former two from Saudi Arabia and the latter from Iran. Nevertheless, foreign engagements of Pakistan's religious organizations make little difference to their Islamization discourse in the country and they mainly depend on three major religious organizations cited above. However, their role in religio-socialization is quite important in their sectarian domains.

Tactical Level: This refers to the religious parties' potential to maneuver and to mobilize their support base to gain maximum benefits and defines their political discourse. In the last two decades, the orthodox religious-political organizations, especially the JUI, have gained more from the electoral process and influenced the masses than the JI has. Joshua T White notes that the Deobandi JUI-F has generally taken a less direct approach than the JI in its pursuit of Islamization.¹⁵

The JUI, JUP and MJAH are conservatives in this regard and focus on local issues. This despite the fact that the JUI had links with the Taliban in Afghanistan and groups affiliated with it engaged in Indian-administered Kashmir. On the national level, these organizations share common agendas, but their distinct worldviews make a huge difference to their approach. After 9/11, for instance, the JI mainly focused on global issues to express solidarity with the Muslim *Ummah*. The party continued to protest against the US even as Pakistan was passing through severe political and economic crises. More importantly, the JI mobilized its supporters among the urban middle class since they were more attracted to such causes, although their strength has rarely helped the party on the national level. This creates the space for the conservative religious parties, which are more connected with the people at the grassroots level through their mosque-madrassa networks. This observation is also substantiated by election results.

Conclusion

Despite the divergences among the stances of religious-political parties, the commonalities play an important role in shaping the religious-political discourse in the country. All religious parties are part of a single discourse and, on the political level, share common objectives. Their discourse encourages Islamization and religiosity in society. However, further inquiries are needed for in-depth exploration of the issue, especially to understand the internal dynamics of various political, militant, sectarian, renewalist, reformist and missionary religious organizations. The impact of their religious discourse on the state-society relations is another dimension which needs to be explored. It is also important to

determine how their fundamental objectives are in conflict with the state's own goals and how their increasing sway over the masses has come to impact the state-society relations in Pakistan.

Notes:

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- ¹ The term "Islamization" is borrowed from Olivier Roy, who refers to it as political mobilization.
- ² The term denotes a process of education through which one can learn to see the world as a world of religious significance.
- ³ Muhammad Amir Rana, *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (Lahore: Mashal Publications, 2002).
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ There is a trend in Pakistan that almost every big mosque or madrassa has its own religious organization. These organizations are mainly set up to gain influence in the area, collect donations and organize religious congregations. These organizations often formally or informally merge in or support the mainstream parties—in line with their schools of thought—on the regional or national level.
- ⁸ Muhammad Amir Rana, *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan*.
- ⁹ Joshua White, a US scholar, described these parties as 'democratic Islamist', which is a vague term considering the different narratives and understanding of democracy among religious parties. The adjective 'political' fulfills the purpose to distinguish them from other religious parties.
- ¹⁰ See manifestos of all political and religious parties in Prof. Muhammad Usman and Masood Ash'ar, *Pakistan ki Siyassi Jamatein* (Urdu) (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1986) which compiles the manifestos of all political and religious parties.
- ¹¹ Prof. Muhammad Usman and Masood Ash'ar, *Pakistan ki Siyassi Jamatein* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1986), p. 55.
- ¹² Ibid, p. 711.
- ¹³ Ibid, p. 418.
- ¹⁴ Sohail Mehmud, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Pakistan, Egypt and Iran* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1995).
- ¹⁵ Joshua T. White, *Pakistan's Islamist Frontier* (Center on Faith & International Affairs, 2008).

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