

ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE OF JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI IN PAKISTAN:A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ELECTIONS 2013 AND 2018

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Abstract

Elections serve as democracy's cornerstone, reflecting the will of the populace. In Pakistan, where religious parties wield influence, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) holds a prominent position. This paper explores JI's electoral performance in the elections 2013 and 2018, blending data analysis and qualitative examination. It dissects JI's strategies, strengths, and vulnerabilities amidst evolving Pakistani politics, analyzing campaign messaging, coalition dynamics and grassroots mobilization. Additionally, it scrutinizes JI's ideological alignment with voters among competing narratives, aiming to unveil its adaptability and political relevance. The study deepens understanding of Islamic political movements in Pakistan, shedding light on their role within the democratic framework and offering insights into religion, politics, and governance in Muslim-majority societies. Through systematic comparison and critical evaluation, it contributes to nuanced comprehension and facilitates informed discourse on Pakistan's political landscape. Ultimately, by assessing JI's trajectory, this paper illuminates broader implications for democratic processes and religious-political dynamics in diverse contexts.

Keywords. Elections, Democracy, Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan, Religio-political Party.

Introduction

Pakistan is a Federal Parliamentary state with a predominantly Muslim population. Muslims in Pakistan are divided into Sunni and Shia sects. Among Sunnis, there are four main groups: Barelvis, Deobandis, Ahle Hadith and modernist

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movements like JI. These groups have doctrinal and ideological differences, with Deobandis strongly criticizing Shia, Sufi and Bareilvi branches of Islam. The majority of Sunnis in Pakistan belong to the Bareilvi sect, influenced by Sufi practices. There are approximately thirty-five Islamic political parties in Pakistan, but their success often depends on support from the military rather than electoral outcomes (Rana, 2004).

Religious political parties in Pakistan, despite not performing well in elections, have a significant impact on the government through affiliations with mainstream parties like the PPP and PML-N. They can also form electoral coalitions, as seen with the MMA in 2002. These parties have substantial street power that does not match their electoral support. They have established themselves in Pakistan's political landscape alongside other influential groups like the military and bureaucracy. Their influence is not limited to the Afghan Jihad era; they continue to be active in politics today. Despite having only a few seats in the National Assembly, parties like JUI, JUP and JI have led discussions on topics like Sharia Courts and blasphemy legislation (Kumar, 2001).

JI is one of the earliest Islamic revivalist movements and political parties, based on the ideas of Syed Maududi. It combines both political and reformist elements in its interpretation of Islam. JI was officially founded on August 26, 1941, after Maulana Maududi presented his plan in the monthly publication *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* and received approval from a gathering of 75 attendees in Lahore, following a period of deliberation and the endorsement of the party's constitution (Nasr, 1995). In 1947, the JI operated differently from traditional political parties. It was a small movement focused on reforming Muslim society. Maulana Maududi, its leader, believed that Islam could address the challenges faced by Indian Muslims and took a revivalist approach. The JI had a unique mission: it opposed both the All India Muslim League (AIML) and the Indian National Congress (INC) equally. Their goal was to define the boundaries of Muslim society and Islamic theology.

Maulana Maududi argued that Muslims should not be confined to a specific region; they included all Muslims in India. Initially, the JI's stance was to convert most Hindus to Islam in India to create an Islamic state throughout the country. However, this proved impractical in a short time. When Maulana Maududi realized Hindu-Muslim tensions, he proposed the idea of a separate Islamic state within India under religious leadership. He believed that Pakistan, established to protect Indian Muslims' economic interests under the secular rule of the Muslim League, was pointless and undesirable (Nasr, 1994).

The JI, since its inception, has shown a remarkable ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Initially, it opposed the idea of Pakistan as envisioned by

secular Muslim leaders using the Two Nation Theory. Maulana Maududi, believed that Muslim nationalism should not be confined to a specific region and was skeptical about dividing India's Muslim minority from the non-Muslim majority, fearing that it would lead to an unstable Pakistan.

The JI also criticized the Indian National Congress. It was not a traditional political party before Pakistan's establishment and did not engage in electoral politics. Instead, Maulana Maududi focused on his Islamic Revivalist Philosophy, which prevented him from compromising. However, after Pakistan's creation, he shifted his efforts towards making the concept of Pakistan a reality and fighting for an Islamic constitution.

Over the time, the conflict between religious and modernist political groups has been a recurring theme in Pakistan's political history. Secular nationalist parties have enjoyed more electoral success, while religious parties have been less successful in elections but have influenced the inclusion of Islamic provisions in Pakistani constitutions by acting as pressure groups. According to Syed Vali Nasr, an expert on JI, the JI is unique for systematically developing an Islamic philosophy, a modern interpretation of Islam and a social action agenda to achieve its objectives.

Maulana Maududi was a prominent figure in the Islamic revivalism movement and a leader of the JI party. While he made significant contributions through his writings and intellectual work, his attempts to transform Pakistan into an Islamic state through constitutional politics were not as successful as his leadership of the JI itself. He served as the JI's leader for 31 years, from 1941 to 1972. To understand his proposed Islamic Political Model for Pakistan in the context of his political theory, it helps to examine the JI's efforts decade by decade.

Philosophical Orientation

The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) significantly influenced Pakistan's politics, despite not initially engaging in partition campaigns. Its impact grew during the constitution-making phase when religion in politics became contentious. Unlike other movements, JI's relevance endured as it did not mainstream. Rooted in Maulana Maududi's non-sectarian approach, JI envisions an Islamic republic, emphasizing constitutional politics over violence. Maududi refined this vision, prioritizing Islamic principles in governance through education and grassroots engagement. JI seeks public support by promoting an Islamic way of life, striving for Allah's favor through dedication and discipline. In contrast to violent methods, JI advocates societal change via education for an Islamic state in Pakistan (Jalal, A. 2012).

The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) is a Pakistani Islamic political group emphasizing Islam's role in national identity. Stemming from pre-partition debates, it champions Islam's significance in Pakistan's formation and development. Historically, it countered British rule, advocated Hindu-Muslim unity, and protected Muslim

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interests. Compared to counterparts in Egypt and Iran, JI displays political sophistication and engages in constitutional dialogues. Fueled by Indian nationalism, it promotes Islamic values in Pakistan's governance. Constitutional tensions arise over state-religion ties, yet Islamic provisions in Pakistan's constitution are largely symbolic, with minimal impact on legal or socio-political realms. JI mirrors global Islamic revivalist movements, embodying a blend of tradition and modernity (Waseem & Mufti, 2009).

Maududi fervently pursued an Islamic state, contrasting with Marx by advocating non-violence. His vision sought justice and ethical progress through gradual social, cultural, and political change, prioritizing morality over wealth distribution. Stressing spiritual education's role, he viewed the state as responsible for guiding people toward Islam. In his vision, citizens acted as divine representatives, and the state wielded *ijtihad* authority, once exclusive to scholars (Ulama) (Louis, D. Hayes 2014).

Objectives

JI is unique among modern Islamic movements because it has upheld democratic values since 1941. The organization operates within the country's constitution, viewing Islam as a timeless and relevant way of life for everyone. JI adopted Maududi's four-point agenda when Pakistan was established in 1947. This program covered all of its activities, including:

- Reforming each person's life and thinking at a personal level;
- Recruiting, inspiring and educating moral of people;
- Reforming society as a whole; and
- Reforming the political system.

The JI's program emphasizes the creation of a pious community with honest and intelligent leadership. It aims for an Islamic revolution in Pakistan focusing on spiritual education and political power to enable Muslims to practice their faith freely. Maulana Maududi's ideology serves as the foundation for the JI's political ambition. In conclusion, the JI is a multifaceted organization with a complex history and ideology. It has evolved over time, from its role in shaping Pakistan's constitution to its international aspirations for Islamic revivalism. Its founder, Maulana Maududi, envisioned a theodemocracy governed by Islamic principles and the JI continues to strive for an Islamic state while promoting its vision both nationally and globally.

Leadership

The leader of the party is called the Ameer. Maulana Maududi founded the JI and led it for the first 30 years from 1941 to 1972. After him, Mian Tufail Muhammad served as the Ameer until 1987. Qazi Hussain Ahmad became the third Ameer in 1987 and led the party for 22 years until 2009. Munawar Hassan was the

fourth Ameer and served until 2014. Siraj-ul-Haq has served as fifth Ameer till April, 2024. Hafiz Naeem-Ur-Rehman was selected as the sixth Ameer in April 2024 (jamaat.org/news).

Party Structure

The JI has a hierarchical structure with an Amir at the top, followed by the Deputy Amirs, the Shura, the Secretary General and the Secretariat. Four leaders have served as Amir, including the current one, Siraj-ul-Haq. To maintain party discipline, they have an organizational framework based on the Party structure. In 1954, they introduced membership categories to assess members' health and assign tasks.

The three participation levels are as follows:

The JI organization consists of three main categories of members:

Arkan

These are the primary members of the JI and have full voting privileges. They are the core voting members.

Muttafiq

These individuals support the party but do not have voting rights. They are affiliated with the JI but are not full members.

Hamdard

These individuals accept the JI's goals but are not considered active members or employees. They are sympathizers of the JI. The Central Consultative Body called the Markazi Majlis-e-Shura, selects at least 50 members from the party's members. The Amir, the leader of the JI, chooses 15 members of the JI Working Committee from the Shura. The Secretary General is selected by the JI's elected Amir after consulting with the Shura. There are over 20,000 Arkan members in the JI and women can apply for membership in a separate organization under the same Amir, though there are not many women in the Arkan category. The JI offers full membership to its most dedicated adherents.

In essence, the JI has three types of members, with Arkan being the core voting members. Leadership positions are determined through a consultative process involving the Shura and there is a separate organization for women's membership (pildat.org).

Electoral History

The adoption of innovative, feasible and result-oriented electoral strategies are quite necessary to win the voting support of the masses. Every political party adopts such electoral policies that suits to its manifesto, the prevalent circumstances and the ground realities.

Pre-partition Phase: 1941-47

Founded in 1941 by Maulana Maududi, JI is considered as the largest Islamic Party in Pakistan in terms of its influence and street power. In pre-partition phase

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(from 1941 to 47), JI was least interested in practical politics and focused on strengthening the organizational structure of the party.

Post-partition Phase: 1947-1970

In 1951, the elections for Punjab Legislative Assembly was the first ever election in which JI participated and supported the candidates of Azad Pakistan Party and secured 200,000 votes and one seat (Jamrez & Kanwal, 2021). In December 1951, the JI participated in elections for KP (the then NWFP) legislative assembly but only nominated three candidates, the lowest number among all parties. Unfortunately, they did not win any of the 85 seats, with 13 independent candidates succeeding instead. This poor performance was due to ineffective campaigning, lack of public interest in the party's policies and dissatisfaction with the government.

In 1954, JI contested provincial legislative elections in East Bengal, focusing on the superiority of Islamic law. However, they did not actively participate and could not perform well. Despite this, JI played an active role in criticizing and contributing to the downfall of various governments, particularly in their opposition to defense pacts like SEATO and CENTO.

In 1958, JI had a significant electoral success in Karachi Municipal Corporation elections, with 19 out of 23 candidates winning seats. However, shortly after, all political parties were banned under martial law. After the ban was lifted, JI gained more popularity due to its welfare activities and ideology. In 1962, JI performed poorly in indirect elections for national and provincial assemblies, with the Republican and Muslim League parties outperforming them. In 1964, JI was banned by the government and Maulana Maududi, along with his associates, was arrested. JI supported Miss Fatima Jinnah in the first presidential elections by joining the Combined Opposition Parties (COP) in 1965, even though it contradicted their theological beliefs. This move faced some opposition within the party, but it aligned with progressive political parties. In the same year, JI supported a boycott policy in indirect elections for national and provincial assemblies, considering the participation futile under the autocratic regime of Ayub Khan. Despite having better prospects in elections since 1951, Maududi saw the electoral efforts as a means to propagate the party's ideology and solidify its social base (Nur, 1985).

Electoral Strategies

Jl's electoral policies can be classified into three phases.

- 1. Solo-Flight Electoral Strategy*
- 2. Boycott Policy*
- 3. Electoral Alliance Participation*
- 4. Solo-flight Strategy*

In the 1970 general election, Pakistan saw 20 parties participating, including JI.

They opposed renaming East Pakistan and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's six-point movement, advocating for the 1956 constitution. Despite claiming strong presence in both East and West Pakistan, they won only four out of 150 National Assembly seats, two from Sindh and one each from Punjab and NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). At the provincial level, they secured four seats, one from East Pakistan and three from West Pakistan (Baxter, 1971).

In the election, JI emerged as the third-largest party nationally, and the second-largest in West Pakistan. Notable contests included Peshawar-1, where JI's Qazi Hussain Ahmad competed against Abdul Qayum Khan of PML-Q. JI's Nawabzada Amir Khan Hoti also contested against Molana Gohar Rehman in NW-9. However, PPP clinched victory in Peshawar-1. JI won in Dir district with 14,187 votes and secured a provincial seat with 5,404 votes. Yet, despite its efforts, JI faced criticism for failing to address public concerns effectively, leading to a decline in its support. In contrast, Iranian leaders, like Dr. Ali Shariati, stressed the importance of the masses in societal development. Shariati emphasized Quranic references to "al-nas" or the people, highlighting their pivotal role in history. He believed that Islam recognizes the people as the driving force behind societal progress and change (Sharaiti, 1979).

Dr. Ali Shariati, Iranian Revolution thinker, sees Quran's emphasis on "al-nas" (the people) as pivotal. He believes the Quran assigns responsibility to them, influencing societal fate. Shariati asserts Islam perceives people as the prime force molding history and civilization (Sharaiti, 1979). In 1970, JI's electoral loss was attributed to neglecting public issues and relying on propaganda. Despite strong party discipline and nationwide support, they failed. Maulana Maududi then shifted focus to address the needs of the poor. Maududi's wife, Vali Nasr, noted his abandonment of the concept of a holy community post-election. He also changed his stance on political involvement after the Machi Goth incident. By 1972, Maududi expressed disappointment with JI's performance to his wife.

Top of Form Election 1993

In this election, the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) faced a crucial decision: to run independently or join an alliance. Opting for solo participation, they formed the Pakistan Islamic Front (PIF) coalition with similar groups. However, this strategy backfired, garnering only 2.4% of the vote share, a sharp decline from previous elections. Despite their anti-US stance and revolutionary leadership, JI failed to broaden its appeal, and its anti-feudal narrative eroded traditional support. PIF's fourth-place finish paled compared to major parties, with 78% of votes going to the PPP and PML-N. Moreover, anti-JI sentiment was strong, with 90% of votes against them. JI's 3% vote share was lower than their 1970 West Pakistan tally. Conversely, in 2013, JI's solo approach secured three National Assembly seats in KP and a reserved seat for women, reflecting their consistent solo-flight electoral strategy across

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elections (pakpedia.com).

Finally, it can be concluded that JI's participation in 1970, 1993 and 2013 elections demonstrates its solo-flight policy in elections.

Boycott of Elections

Lawrence Ziring's analysis reveals Jamaat-e-Islami's (JI) skepticism towards achieving its goals through elections. JI abstained from voting in 1997, advocating for electoral reforms and accountability. They argued that holding elections without addressing corruption was futile. In 1997, PML-N and PPP won 137 and 80 seats, respectively, but PML-N's claimed mandate was challenged by low voter turnout, with only 16.32% of registered votes cast. JI's boycott significantly reduced turnout compared to 1985. In 2008, amidst the crisis of Chief Justice Chaudhary's removal by President Musharraf, JI again advocated boycotting to improve democracy. They proposed reinstating the judiciary, impartial elections, and a strong election commission to counter Musharraf's grip on power. JI believed boycotting elections, ensuring judicial independence, impartial polls, and preventing foreign intervention were crucial in reforming the democratic system and thwarting Musharraf's agenda (Ahmad, 2008).

However, some within the party were concerned that boycotting the elections would lead to the loss of seats they had previously won in areas like Dir, Bunair, Swat, Chitral and the Malakand agency.

Despite the opportunity to win elections by forming alliances with other parties, JI chose to boycott because they did not trust Musharraf's regime and they were strongly committed to opposing his dictatorship.

Alliance Politics

JI's electoral strategy involves forming alliances with other parties, a tactic initiated in the 1977 general elections with the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), promoting Nizam-a-Mustafa. In 1988, JI joined the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) alliance, standing out as the most organized. JI's influence shaped the IJI's pro-Islamic stance in the 1990s, leading to electoral success. In 2002, JI collaborated with JUI-F to form the Muttahida Majlis-a-Amal (MMA), where JI's leader Qazi Hussain Ahmad served as president. The MMA united various religious parties with differing beliefs, showcasing Pakistan's complex religious politics. JI's involvement in these alliances reflects its adaptability and influence in shaping political landscapes, as seen in its performance in various elections, securing significant seats both independently and within alliances. These strategic partnerships underscore the importance of coalition-building in Pakistan's political arena, where parties with diverse ideologies come together for shared objectives, highlighting the dynamic nature of the country's political landscape (Ullah, 2013).

Electoral Performance of Religio-Political Parties in the 2013 Elections

In the 2013 elections, religious political parties received a total of 3,035,893 votes, which accounted for 6.75percent of the total votes cast. The major religious groups involved included the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), Pakistan Sunni Tehreek (PST), Islami Tehreek Pakistan and Markazi Jamiat Mushaikh Pakistan (Bashir and Khalid, 2019).

Table: 1 Electoral Performance of JI in 2013 Elections--(Vote-Bank of JI)

National Assembly	Balochistan	KP	Punjab	Sindh
963909	3627	404895	489772	131141

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website.

Voter Turnout in General Elections 2013

ECP declared overall voter turnout 55.02 percent in the 2013 general elections which was higher than elections since the 80s.

Table: 2 Voter Turnout in General Elections Since 1980's.

Years of Election	1988	1990	1993	1997	2002	2008	2013
Voter Turnout (in percent)	43.07	45.46	40.28	35.42	41.08	44.23	55.02

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website.

The lowest voter turnout during the 2013 elections was 11.57 percent in South Waziristan, while the highest turnout was 84.77 percent in NA-191 Bahawalnagar. In a 46.2 million voter turnout, the PML-N received 14.8 million votes, followed by the PTI with 7.5 million, the PPP with 6.8 million, and the MQM with 2.4 million and independents with 5.8 million.

Electoral Performance of JI in National Assembly 2013

The JI won three seats in the National Assembly in the 2013 general elections by using the scale as its symbol. The NA-28 Bunair, NA-33 Upper Dir-cum-Lower Dir, and NA-34 Lower Dir all provided these seats. JI was represented by Sher Akbar Khan in NA 28, Sahibzada Muhammad Yaqoob in NA 33, and Tariq Ullah in NA 28. Swat native Aisha Syeda was chosen to represent JI in the designated seat for women (na.gov.pk).

Table: 3 Electoral Results of JI in National Assembly 2013

Muslim Seats						Reserved Seats		Total
Punjab	Sindh	NWP	Balochistan	Federal	FATA	Women	Minorities	04
00	00	03	00	00	00	01	00	

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website

Table: 4 Constituency-wise Electoral Results of JI in 2013 Elections

Sr. No.	Constituencies	Names of Candidates	Votes Polled
1	NA-28 Bunair	Sher Akbar Khan	29170

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2	NA-33 Upper Dir-cum-Lower Dir	Sahibzada Tariq Ullah Khan	42582
3	NA-34 Lower Dir	Sahibzada Muhammad Yaqoob	49475
4	Reserved Seat (Women)	Aisha Syed (swat)	---

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website

Electoral Performance of Religious Parties in 2018 Elections

In the 2018 elections, 12 religious parties collectively received 5.21 million votes, which accounted for 9.8percent of the total votes cast. Their strongest support came from the KP region, where they received 19.4percent of the vote and Balochistan where they received 16.7percent of the vote. In Sindh, they received 1.1 million votes, constituting 11percent of the total votes.

Table: 5 Electoral Outcome of Religious Parties in 2018 Elections

	Political Parties	Votes Secured
Total Votes Polled		54321031
	Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)	2573939
	Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan	2224316
	Allah-ho-Akbar Tehreek	172120
	Tehreek-e-Labbaik Islam	55155
	Jamiat Ulma-e-Islam Nazryyati(Pakistan)	34247
	Jamiat Ulma-e-Islam Pakistan(S)	24582
	Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen Pakistan	19615
	Pakistan Sunni Tehreek	5943
	Sunni Ittehad Council	5939
Total Votes Won by Religious Parties		5148001
percentage of Total votes Polled		9.48 percent

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website

The National Assembly consists of 342 members who are elected through two different methods across three categories: First-past-the-post voting in single-member constituencies is used to select 272 members. There are 60 seats reserved for women and 10 for religious minority groups. These seats are filled through proportional representation with a 5percent electoral threshold.

The allocation of seats for these categories is based on the number of seats won by each party rather than the total number of votes cast. To achieve a simple majority in the National Assembly, a party needs to win 137 seats.

As a result of Pakistan's 2017 Census, new constituency boundaries were

used for the 2018 General Elections (Mallick and Razi, 2018). In accordance with a constitutional amendment passed by Pakistan's parliament, redrawing constituency boundaries using the findings of the 2017 provisional census is now permitted. According to the announcement published on March 5, 2018, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) currently have 12 National Assembly seats, Punjab 141, Sindh 61, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 39, Balochistan 16 and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) three (ecp.com.pk).

On July 25, 2018, Pakistan held elections for the National Assembly and provincial assemblies, with 106 million people eligible to vote. The country is divided into constituencies, with Punjab having 297, Sindh 130, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 99 and Balochistan 51. The previous government, led by the PML-N, ended its term on May 31, 2018, leading to the dissolution of the parliament and the conclusion of Shahid Khaqan Abbasi's term as prime minister. According to The New York Times, the caretaker government, took over to administer free and fair elections. Nasir-ul Mulk, a former chief justice of Pakistan, was appointed interim Prime Minister by the National Assembly's leader, Prime Minister Abbasi and the leader of the opposition, Khursheed Shah. Nasir-ul Mulk served until the July 25, 2018 (Former CJP Nasirul Mulk named as caretaker PM, 2018)

In October 2017, the PML-N made changes to the Constitution through the Elections Act 2017, allowing Nawaz Sharif to remain the party's leader after he was removed as prime minister in July 2017. The PML-N has been accusing political motives and alleged interference by the military in Sharif's removal, as well as claiming that the judiciary has been unfairly targeting their party since then. According to a Gallup survey published in April 2018 by The Wall Street Journal, the PML-N remained popular in Pakistan, mainly due to its strong presence in Punjab, the country's most populous province while PTI and the PPP ranked third and fourth, respectively (The Wall Street Journal, 25 April 2018).

Origin of MMA

After Nawaz Sharif's ousting in 1999, Pakistan's military, led by General Pervez Musharraf, sought new political allies. Initially opposing the return of exiled leaders, they found support from Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), whose leader, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, presented a moderate image in the US. However, after 9/11, Musharraf was pressured by the US to crack down on militants and cooperate with their coalition. This led to internal strife among religious groups, culminating in the formation of the Difa-i-Afghanistan Pakistan Council (DAPC) to protest Pakistan's involvement in the War on Terror. The DAPC, comprising various religious organizations, united against US intervention, despite differing views on the Afghan Taliban. The MMA emerged from this alliance, bringing together disparate factions opposed to US policies and Musharraf's governance ahead of the 2002 elections. In essence, the MMA

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evolved from a complex mix of political and religious entities united against external interference and domestic policies (Arqam, 2018).

Restoration of MMA

On December 14, 2017, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) was officially reinstated in Karachi. This revival came after a conference on November 9, 2017, in Lahore, where five Islamic parties (Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, JI, Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith, Islami Tehreek and Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan) and other religious organizations came together to make this announcement (Hamid, H. K., 2017).

In December 2017, Fazal-ur-Rehman was named the leader of a political coalition consisting of five religious groups. In March 2018, these five parties in the alliance decided to use a single election symbol, one election flag and one election campaign platform (Ghori and Habib Khan, March 21, 2018). However, MMA and JI officially split on March 11, 2019 (Azad, 2019). The JI Central Executive Council (Shoora) announced that the JI would no longer participate in any future programs under the banner of the MMA (Alam, 2019).

Electoral Performance of MMA in the 2018 Elections

In the election, twelve religious parties received 5.2 million votes, making up 9.58 percent of the total votes. However, this was a decline from their performance in the 2002 elections when the religious coalition, MMA, received more than 11 percent of the vote. In the 2018 elections, they were unable to win a provincial government in KP and their overall seat count was low. The main religious coalition, MMA, is led by Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman and includes organizations like Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), JI (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith and Tehreek-e-Jafaria. These parties represent different sects, including Deobandi, Ahl-e-Hadith, Barelvi and Shia (Shah and Sareen, 2018).

In the elections, they fielded 595 candidates, with 191 running for the National Assembly and the rest for provincial assemblies. They secured 12 National Assembly seats with 2.2 million votes and the newly created Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) won two seats in Sindh. Overall, the religious parties did not perform well in terms of seats won in the 2018 elections.

Table: 6 Voter Turnout for MMA in the 2018 Elections

<i>Nominated Candidates</i>	<i>National Assembly</i>	<i>Provincial Assemblies</i>	<i>Seats won</i>	<i>Votes (Millions)</i>	<i>Percentage Votes</i>
595	191	404	12	2.2	9.58

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website

Before the 2002 general election during Pervez Musharraf's rule, the MMA alliance was formed. However, it fell apart in 2008 due to the JI's election boycott and the Maulana's coalition with the PPP government. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK),

the emerging PTI party reduced support for religious groups in the 2013 elections. In 2018, religious parties reconnected out of fear of further marginalization. But in KPK, where both Sirajul Haq and Maulana lost, the coalition faced strong opposition. PTI and TLP lost ground in Punjab and Karachi. MMA members might have performed even worse if they had run separately. This suggests voter disappointment with major Islamic parties and the defeat of MMA leaders reflects this. The rise of hardline parties like TLP may also indicate voters leaning toward more extreme views.

Table: 7 Vote Bank of MMA in 2018 Elections

National Assembly	Punjab	KPK	Sindh	Balochistan	Total
2573939	433960	1128026	611871	271498	5019294

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website

Table: 8 Constituency-wise Electoral Performance of MMA in 2018 Elections

Sr. No	Constituency	Candidates	Votes Polled
1	NA-1 Chitral	Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali	49035
2	NA-11 Kohistan-cum-Lower Kolai Pallas Kohistan	Afreen Khan	16480
3	NA-36 Lakki Marwat	Muhammad Anwar	91396
4	NA-37 Tank	Asad Mehmood	28563
5	NA-45 Tribal Area-VI	Munir Khan Orakzai	16255
6	NA-49 Tribal Area-X	Muhammad Jamal Ud Din	7778
7	NA-51 Tribal Area-XII	Abdul Shakoor	21962
8	NA-257 Killa Saifullah-cum-Zhob-Sherani	Abdul Wasay	44505
9	NA-262 Pishin	Kamal Uddin	50497
10	NA-263 Killa Abdullah	Salahuddin	38097
11	NA-264 Quetta-I	Asmatullah	14888
12	NA-267 Mastung-cum-ShaheedSikandarabad/Kalat	Syed Mehmood Shah	26711

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website

Table: 9 Province-wise Electoral Performance of MMA in 2018 Elections

Punjab	Sindh	KPK	Balochistan	Total Seats
00	01	10	07	18

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website

Table: 10 Constituency-wise Electoral Performance of MMA in Sindh Assembly 2018

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Sr. No.	Constituency	Candidate(s)	Votes Polled
1	PS-108 Karachi South-II	Syed Abdul Rasheed	16821

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website

Table: 11 Constituency-wise Electoral Performance of MMA in KPK in 2018

Sr. No.	Constituency	Candidate(s)	Party	Votes Polled
1	PK-1 Chitral	Hidayat Ur Rehman	MMA	46050
2	PK-12 Upper Dir-III	Inayat Ullah	Jl	27599
3	PK-81 Kohat-II	Shah Dad Khan	MMA	17631
4	PK-85 Karak-I	Mian Nisar Gul	JUI-F	30253
5	PK-86 Karak-II	Zafar Azam	MMA	35846
6	PK-90 Bannu-IV	Akram Khan Durrani	JUI-F	32795
7	PK-91 Lakki Marwat-I	Munawar Khan	JUI-F	25242
8	PK-93 Lakki Marwat-III	Anwar Hayat Khan	JUI-F	16781
9	PK-94 Tank	Mehmood Ahmad	JUI-F	27911
10	PK-98 D.I.Khan-IV	Lutaf Ur Rehman	JUI-F	20010

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website

Table: 12 Electoral Performance of MMA in Balochistan Assembly 2018

Sr. No.	Constituency	Candidates	Votes Polled
1	PB-III Killa Saifullah	Mullana Noor Ullah	22486
2	PB-18 Pishin-I	Abdul Wahid Siddiqe	22924
3	PB-19 Pishin-II	Asghar Ali Tareen	14582
4	PB-20 Pishin-III	Muhammad Fazal Agha	18076
5	PB-22 Killa Abdullah-II	Muhammad Nawaz	11270
6	PB-25 Quetta-II	Malik Sikandar Khan	4762
7	PB-39 Khuzar-II	Mir Younas Aziz Zehri	13646

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the data from ECP website

In the 2018 election in Pakistan, religio-political parties played a significant role, garnering around 10percent of the total votes cast for the National Assembly. This was a notable improvement from the 2013 election when religious parties received only 5percent of the votes. The Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), representing the Bareilvi school of thought, emerged as the fifth-largest party nationally.

TLP gained prominence after the execution of Mumtaz Qadri, who had killed Punjab Governor Salman Taseer in 2011. TLP portrayed Qadri as a hero, attracting a large following. It became the largest religious political party in Pakistan, surpassing JUIF and Jl. TLP focused on damaging the PMLN's support base in Punjab during the campaign, with 46percent of its 2018 voters claiming to have supported PMLN in

2013. PMLN lost 9percent of its national vote base, with a portion going to TLP instead of PTI. TLP became the third-largest party in Punjab, even outperforming PPP in votes. They also secured more votes than PMLN in 14 NA constituencies. In Sindh, TLP capitalized on a political vacuum left by Altaf Hussain's controversial speech, gaining success. TLP used mosques as a platform to promote its political message.

Notably, TLP outperformed PMLN and PSP in Karachi, garnering 12percent of the total votes. This resurgence of Barelvi sectarian politics marked a shift from the dominance of Deobandi and Wahabi factions, which had enjoyed official support since the 1980s. The success of TLP is significant as it represents a revival of Barelvi influence and assertion, which had waned over the years. Other Barelvi groups like Sunni Tehrik, JI, Ahle Sunnat and Sunni Ittehad Council were less effective in the elections. TLP's use of language, communication and assertiveness resonated with Barelvis who had long felt marginalized by Deobandi and Wahabi factions, giving them a stronger voice in Pakistani politics.

The TLP, known for its extreme religious stance, pressured candidates from other parties, including PMLN, to withdraw their candidacy. Imran Khan's third wife, Bushra Maneka (Pinky Pirni), advised him against appeasing the TLP due to their strong influence. The TLP's electoral success highlights the effectiveness of extreme religious rhetoric in Pakistani politics, raising concerns that other mainstream religious parties like JUI-F and JI may adopt similar tactics to retain their voters. However, religious parties overall did not perform exceptionally well, with only two provincial assembly seats won by the TLP in Sindh. The MMA, a coalition of religious groups, secured twelve National Assembly seats in KP and Balochistan, indicating a shift towards more extreme religious parties. Traditional parties like JI and JUIF received notable support in KP and Balochistan, while the TLP performed well in Punjab and Sindh, where religious parties received 20-28percent of the votes. The MMA's concentration of votes in KP and Balochistan likely contributed to its success in those regions.

Conclusion

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) is Pakistan's oldest religious political party, rooted in the ideology of Maulana Maududi. Conducting internal elections, it commands a significant following in the religious community. JI's core agenda revolves around promoting Islam and its teachings. Strategically, JI adopts a three-pronged approach in elections: forming alliances, contesting independently, or boycotting. Despite participating in several elections, including 1970, 1993, and 2013, they boycotted in 1997 and 2008. JI has engaged in various electoral coalitions such as PNA (1977) and MMA (2002, 2018). While they never led the federal government, they briefly governed KP and Baluchistan in the wake of 2002 election as part of MMA. In 2018,

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religious parties collectively garnered 10% of the vote, with JI declining to join the reinvigorated MMA in 2012. In both 2013 and 2018, JI's electoral performance remained modest within the alliance.



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