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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the electoral performance of religio-political parties in Pakistan with special reference to the first general elections of 1970 held on the basis of adult franchise. This paper seeks to answer the following questions at length to what extent were religio-political parties able to change their supporters into their voters in the 1970 elections, and to what extent did their election campaign and their manifestos reflect the ideological position of religio-political parties with the aim to make Pakistan an ideal Islamic state according to their political vision and what was the impact of sectarian affiliations of religio-political parties on their election performance. To get the answer to these questions a comprehensive analysis of three leading religio-political parties of Pakistan namely Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) is presented in this paper. Similarly, the political positioning of Shias during the elections of 1970 is also discussed.

Key Words: Elections in Pakistan, Religion and Politics, Jamaat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan, Sunni Shia Politics

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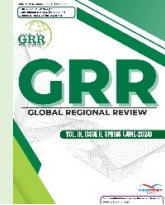
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Title

Electoral Performance of Religio-Political Parties in Pakistan: An Analysis of 1970 Elections

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the electoral performance of religio-political parties in Pakistan with special reference to the first general elections of 1970 held on the basis of adult franchise. This paper seeks to answer the following questions at length to what extent were religio-political parties able to change their supporters into their voters in the 1970 elections, and to what extent did their election campaign and their manifestos reflect the ideological position of religio-political parties with the aim to make Pakistan an ideal Islamic state according to their political vision and what was the impact of sectarian affiliations of religio-political parties on their election performance. To get the answer to these questions a comprehensive analysis of three leading religio-political parties of Pakistan namely Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) is presented in this paper. Similarly, the political positioning of Shias during the elections of 1970 is also discussed.

Keywords: [Elections in Pakistan](#), [Religion and Politics](#), [Jamaat-e-Islami](#), [Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam](#), [Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan](#), [Sunni Shia Politics](#)

Introduction

Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, religio-political parties have endeavored to realize their respective goals. Their primary objective has been the Islamization of the state and the religious socialization of society. Through the 1949 Objectives Resolution, they made early advances on the Islamization front by delineating the state's ideological discourse. These religio-political parties also had a say in the form of a formal constitutional acknowledgment that divine laws would take precedence over parliamentary laws. Concurrently,

they promoted a discourse of religious socialization that was consistent with their political objectives (Rana, 2011, p. 1).

The elections held in Pakistan in December 1970 played a unique role in the nation's history. Prior to the 1970 elections, there had been indirect presidential elections in 1965. But for the first time in 1970 elections were held directly on the basis of adult franchise. However, the anti-Ayub Khan (1907-1974) movement established methods for integrating public requirements into party platforms. All major political parties emphasized the



humanitarian aspects of the national economy and proposed reforms to bring about selective nationalization and control of bureaucracy. In terms of their stated demands and proposed reforms for various aspects of social and political life, there was a clear divide between political parties (Waseem, [1994](#)).

President Yahya Khan (1917-1980) decided to dismantle One-Unit and restore the former provinces of Punjab, NWFP, Sindh, and Baluchistan by utilizing his potent position. These provinces became completely operational in July 1970. The principle of one man, one vote was also adopted bringing an end to parity. Without a mandate from the people, an unrepresentative authority resolved all of these fundamental concerns (Mehmood, [1984](#)). According to Yahya's proposed constitution, the National Assembly would have 313 members, 300 of whom would be elected to general seats and 13 to reserved seats for women. East Pakistan received 162 general seats and 7 reserved seats for women. Punjab received 82 general seats and 3 women's seats. Sindh received 27 general seats and 1 women's seat. NWFP received 18 general seats and one women's seat. Baluchistan received 4 general seats and 1 women's seat. The tribal areas were allocated seven general seats. Each province would have a Provincial Assembly with a certain number of members elected to general seats and a certain number of reserved seats for women. Once again East Pakistan would hold the most seats. The seats were assigned based on general and women categories. East Pakistan 300, Punjab 180, Sindh 60, NWFP 40, and Baluchistan 20 (Mehmood, 1984).

Mr. Justice Abdus Sattar of the Supreme Court had been tasked with organizing and executing elections for the National and Provincial Assemblies as the Chief Election Commissioner. On January 1, 1970, political activity became legitimate and all parties were permitted to campaign. There were approximately twenty-four competing political parties. Due to the unpredictability of voter preferences, each group believed it had a chance. Yahya attempted to persuade some of the lesser factions to unite but his suggestions were rejected (Khan, 2005). However, it was clear that Sheikh Mujib ur Rehman (1920-1975) in East Pakistan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1928-1979) in West Pakistan would emerge as political heavyweights. Each utilized radio and television to promote their respective programs. They both advocated for the

nationalization of essential industries and opposed the consolidation of wealth in the hands of a few. General Elections held in December 1970 revealed that the Awami League (AL) won 167 seats in East Pakistan while the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won 86 seats in West Pakistan to become the majority party (Khan, [2004](#)).

The rise to prominence of religio-political parties was quite impressive but had little electoral impact. They condemned socialism and advocated for the implementation of the Islamic system in Pakistan. The most significant were Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP).

Jamaat-e-Islami in 1970 Elections

The JI was the largest and most cohesive party. Due to his severe illness, Amir Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1979) was unable to command the group effectively. Students, government workers, professionals, and urban laborers supported the JI. It had organized bodies in a number of these social categories. It inspired others to oppose socialism because it was inspired by Islamic ideology and fiercely opposed to it. It garnered the support of those whose interests were alarmed by the aggressive tone of socialist slogans (Bahadur, [1977](#)). However, these estimates did not account for its practical exclusion from rural areas where approximately 70% of the population resided. It overextended its organizational resources due to an inaccurate self-perception and excessive confidence.

The JI based its election campaign on the demand that the Constitution of 1956 be reinstated as a new constitution could not be drafted within the LFO's 120-day timeframe. The leaders of the JI targeted the Six Points of the AL and Bhutto's Islamist socialism with their attacks. Maulana Maududi directed their attacks against Islamic socialism in West Pakistan (Nasr, [1994](#)). Maulana Maududi demanded that no one working against Pakistan's ideology be allowed to vie for office. He argued that the establishment of an Islamic order, the preservation of national integrity and unity, and the upholding of democratic principles constituted the center of Pakistan's ideology and that no candidate working against these principles should be allowed to run in these elections. Soon afterward Maulana Maududi demanded that the government take action against supporters of socialism and

Islamic socialism as the implementation of these ideologies would result in the dissolution of the nation (Nasr, 1994).

JI issued its election manifesto for the 1970 elections. This manifesto included the following points: (1) Strengthening Pakistan's ideological foundation; (2) Prohibiting usury, interest, stock exchanges, gambling, illegal sales, and stockpiling. (3) National languages to replace English as the medium of instruction so that the dual system of education in Urdu and English could end; (4) Family planning schemes to be disbanded and the challenge from a growing population to be met by improving the country's resources; (5) Social environment to be shaped according to the tenets of Islam; and opposition to imperialism (Hussain, 1979).

When the JI held its first election rally on the Paltan ground in Dhaka, East Pakistan it turned into violent clashes. The JI blamed the AL for the violent confrontations because Jiye Bangla (Long Live Bangladesh) slogans could be heard on the battlefield. There were two casualties and fifty injuries including twenty-five severe injuries. The party Amir Maulana Maududi who had flown in from Lahore to speak at the meeting was required to return home (Khan, 2005). The JI emerged from the conflict as more than just the victim. It is inexplicable why the martial law administration remained silent and impotent in the face of this dire situation in which one political party employed the most heinous intimidation tactics to expel and demoralize their political opponents (Khan, 2005).

In December 1970 the first elections ever conducted in Pakistan on the basis of adult suffrage were held. The JI ran 147 candidates for 300 available seats in the National Assembly. The JI fielded 183 candidates for the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly and 158 candidates for the West Pakistan Assemblies. The party was decisively defeated in the National Assembly and Provincial Assembly elections. Only four of its candidates for the National Assembly and four more for the West Pakistan Provincial Assemblies were elected. The JI received 6.2% of votes cast for the National Assembly in East Pakistan but none of its candidates were elected (Bahadur, 1977).

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam in 1970 Elections

The JUI which was led by Deobandi ulemas namely

Maulana Mufti Mahmud (1919-1980), Maulana Abdullah Darkhwasti (1887-1994), and Maulana Ghulam Ghaus Hazarvi (1896-1981) was willing to endorse socialism so long as it did not conflict with Islamic principles. Therefore, it had grassroots support in Baluchistan and NWFP and the potential to perform well in elections. The JUI reorganized itself midway through 1968. In July 1969 the JUI partnered with the Pakistan Labor Party (PLP) to improve the plight of the impoverished in accordance with Islamic principles (Afzal, 2001). The JUI issued its manifesto under these conditions on January 20, 1970. Highlights of the manifesto included establishing an Islamic constitution in accordance with the twenty-two points requiring belief in the finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad Peace be Upon Him (PBUH) for the definition of a Muslim, appointing a Sunni Muslim as the head of state, instituting mandatory congregational prayers and closing anti-Islam missionary institutions. It demanded equal housing and employment opportunities, reforming financial institutions to prevent capital concentration, abolition of interest, nationalization of major industries and improvement of working conditions, free administration of justice, separation of judiciary and executive freedom of the press, and a nonaligned independent foreign policy (Pirzada, 2000). In May 1970 the JUI joined Muttahidah Dini Mahaz an alliance of 19 religious parties and minor organizations that also included the PLP. Mufti Mahmud was elected president and Bashir Ahmad Bakhtiar and Maulana Kausar Niazi (1934-1994) served as administrators. Regardless the JUI's election campaign was managed by its own party organization (Pirzada, 2000).

The JUI fielded 90 candidates for the National Assembly in West Pakistan and 15 in East Pakistan; however, only seven candidates from West Pakistan were elected and none from the East wing. The JUI scored a significant victory with Mufti Mahmud's victory over PPP Chairman Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the Dera Ismail Khan Constituency of the National Assembly. It nominated 72 candidates for the Punjab provincial assembly, 23 for Sindh, 35 for NWFP, 14 from Baluchistan, and 23 for East Pakistan. JUI won two seats in Punjab, four in NWFP, and three in Baluchistan (Pirzada, 2000).

Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan in 1970 Elections

The Barelvīs who claimed to represent the grand majority of Muslims in Pakistan, but were divided into several organizations united on the JUP platform for the elections under the leadership of Khwaja Qamruddin Sialvi (1906-1981) and Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani (1926-2003) the head of the party's parliamentary board. Motivated by a desire to thwart the rise of socialism in Pakistan they became directly involved in politics. They were similarly critical of JUI, JI, and regionalists (Afzal, 2001). To garner support for *Nizam-i-Mustafa* or the Islamic system the JUP organized Sunni conferences across Pakistan. To counter the effects of the socialist conference held in Toba Tek Singh in March 1970 the most spectacular Sunni Conference was convened there in June 1970. However, its leaders were unaware of the dynamics of contemporary politics and had no ambition to implement their program through electoral means.

If anyone including the Martial Law regime instituted the *Nizam-i Mustafa* the majority were willing to retreat into religious and spiritual isolation (Afzal, 2001).

Maulana Muhammad Sharif Noori and Abu'l Barakat Qadiri proposed a large gathering of ulama to unite Sunnis on March 1, 1970. Maulana Qadiri welcomed the proposal and announced that a meeting of this nature would be convened on April 4, 1970, in Lahore. On the meeting's agenda were the formation of a Sunni Board and the reorganization of JUP. This meeting took place under the direction of Maulana Noorani. The Sunni Ulama's differences were resolved and a 25-member Sunni Board was appointed. The meeting demanded the urgent implementation of *Shari'ah* and Sunni representation in the armed forces at a rate of 90 percent. It pledged to oppose Socialism, Communism, Capitalism, and all other non-Islamic isms. The delegates solicited ballots for candidates who believed in Pakistan's ideology and in a unified Islamic and welfare state (Ahmad, 1993).

In its manifesto, the JUP demanded that Islam be declared the official religion and that Pakistan be renamed the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The foundation of the constitution would be the provisions of the Quran, Sunnah, and Fiqh-i-Hanafī. The state's leader would always be a devoutly Muslim male. The chief of state would govern in consultation with the elected representatives of the

people and other government officials and the government would not be dictatorial. In addition, it stated that the JUP would repeal all laws that are in conflict with the Islamic values articulated in the Quran and Sunnah. It was proclaimed that the federal government would be in charge of defense, foreign affairs, currency, foreign exchange, and international commerce and communication while the provinces would retain all other powers (Ahmad, 1993).

On August 8-9, 1970 the JUP organized the second All-Pakistan Sunni Conference in Karachi's Nishtar Park. The second All Pakistan Sunni Conference was attended by more than 2,500 delegates throughout Pakistan. In addition, there were about 900 ulemas and shaikh with over 700 ulemas from the region. The JUP Karachi commanded by Maulana Noorani and his associates displayed an impressive display of force. They exerted tremendous effort to ensure the success of the conference because the other religious parties especially JI were extremely active, well-organized, and had a firm grip on Karachi's politics (Ahmed, 2018, p. 291). In his speech, Maulana Noorani made it clear that the Muslims of India obtained the country through countless sacrifices and that they would be required to make similar sacrifices in order to preserve it. Criticizing socialism, he asserted that they had not encountered as many obstacles when migrating to Pakistan under ideologies other than Islam. Maulana Noorani stated that ulama and masha'ikh went into the field to save Pakistan because political jugglers had done nothing for the enforcement of Islam over the past 23 years (Ahmed, 2018, p. 291). In reference to the Chairman of the PPP, Maulana Noorani stated that despite his claims to be the leader advocating socialism Bhutto was in fact a staunch capitalist. He advised commoners who were influenced by leaders who believed socialism was the solution to their problems to avoid falling for such deceptive traps. Although Maulana Noorani visited other regions of Pakistan for his party's election campaign he focused predominantly on Sindh and in particular Karachi and Hyderabad (Ahmed, 2018, p. 291).

The JUP only ran candidates for the National Assembly in NWFP, Punjab, Sindh, and for the Provincial Assemblies in Punjab and Sindh. It presented fifty candidates for National assembly seats, seventy-three candidates for Punjab assembly seats, and eighteen candidates for Sindh assembly

seats. There were only seven JUP candidates elected to the National Assembly, four from Punjab and three from Sindh. Four candidates were elected to the Punjab assembly while seven were elected to the Sindh assembly (Ahmad, 1993). The JUP which claimed to represent Pakistan's Sunni majority entered electoral politics for the first time as an independent party in 1970. Its leadership had repeatedly asserted that 80 percent of Pakistan's population consisted of Sunnis and that they were their sole representative. However, the party's election performance was abysmal. Some of the organization's most prominent members were unable to keep their security deposits (Ahmad, 1993).

Political Positioning of Shias in 1970 Elections

On October 12, 1969, Shahid Ali Naqvi and four other Lahore-based advocates announced the formation of the Shia Political Party (SPP) with the following appeal published in the fortnightly *al-Muntazar* (excerpts): "The millat-e-jafariya faces a number of religious, economic and social problems. Since Pakistan's inception and up until the present day the majority of religious organizations have

labored to find a solution within their specific scope of action. Due to their limited scope of action, they were unable to accomplish much in social welfare initiatives. It is a great tragedy that the Shia *qaum* has not yet been socially organized on a solid foundation (Rieck, 2015)." "Since the founding of Pakistan, it is still unclear whether we have attained group status. We have always viewed politics as a forbidden tree and this is the primary reason why. We have never participated in national affairs as a community and we have not fulfilled our duty to instill political consciousness within our ranks. A Shia Political Party has emerged and we need your assistance immediately (Rieck, 2015)."

While the SPP failed to unify a significant number of Shias behind a unified political platform many Shias were concerned about the aggressive campaigning of Sunni religious parties that began in early 1970. In the end, SPP had all but vanished, save for a media presence; consequently, it did not participate in elections. In a press conference on November 23, 1970, Ghulam Rabbani Mirza who had meanwhile proclaimed himself chairman of the SPP, stirred controversy by declaring his support for the PPP in coming elections (Rieck, 2015).

Table 1

1970 Elections Result of Religio- Political Parties

Party	Total Votes Polled	Percentage	Number of Seats
Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP)	1,322,525	8	7
Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI)	1,134,346	7	7
Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	945,324	6	4

(Gilani, 2013).

Conclusion

To conclude we can say that the electoral performance of religio-political parties in the elections of 1970 was not impressive. The three leading parties JI, JUI, and JUP were only able to win 18 national assembly seats together out of 300 which was only 6%. There were a number of factors that resulted in the weak electoral performance of these parties. Firstly, the sectarian affiliations of JUI and JUP divided their vote bank because JUI was predominately a Deobandi party while JUP represented the Bareilvi populace. So due to these sectarian differences, both parties had a restricted

vote bank. Secondly, the specific regional support base of JUI and JUP impacted their election performance heavily. For example, JUI had a great support base in the provinces of NWFP and Baluchistan while in Sindh, Punjab, and East Pakistan it had a very limited presence. On the other hand, JUP was much better placed in Sindh and Punjab and in the few pockets of NWFP. That's why JUP contested elections only in these three provinces while in Baluchistan and East Pakistan, it was not able to contest any seat. Thirdly, in the case of JI, the lack of any specific political stronghold greatly impacted the performance of JI. Although JI

had its voters present in almost all the constituencies across Pakistan they were quite few in numbers in every constituency to create an impact. That's why JI only won 4 seats from West Pakistan while in East Pakistan it was able to get 6.2% votes but could not win any seats. Fourthly, the Shia Political Party (SPP) was not contesting the elections and the Shia community was not ready to cast their votes to the Sunni-dominated religio-political parties. Therefore, they supported the PPP in the elections of 1970. Fifthly, the lack of unity among religio-political parties was another factor that caused their dismal electoral performance in

the 1970 elections. The religio-political parties were not able to form a coalition to contest the elections from one platform and many other small religio-political parties for example Nizam-e-Islam party, Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith and All Pakistan Central Jamiat Ulema Islam except JI, JUI and JUP also contested the elections which divided the religio-political vote bank. Due to above mentioned causes religio-political parties were not able to create a great impact in the electoral politics of Pakistan and almost similar trends have continued till today except for the 2002 elections.

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