

# RELIGIOUS PARTIES AND POLITICS IN PAKISTAN

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## **Abstract**

In October 2002, for the first time in Pakistan's history, a sizeable share of the population voted for religious parties. Some Pakistanis, and most Western analysts, interpret this as signaling the rise of a major fundamentalist religious movement. We suggest, however, that in large part, this phenomenon can be viewed as a protest vote, made as a rebuke to the major political parties, which have failed so far to provide any solutions to Pakistan's poverty and misery. This article examines the viewpoints of various analysts, representing various schools of thought in Pakistan.

Islam has been a strong social force in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent since the 7<sup>th</sup> century, when it Arab traders implanted it in South India along the Malabar Coast. It subsequently spread in wide regions through Islamic conquests during 12<sup>th</sup> century, with Muslim rule lasting for many centuries, until the British occupation of India. Under British rule, the Muslims of this region struggled to attain an independent state until 1947, when Pakistan was born. Although modernization is taking place, religious faith remains vital, with the Islamic faith being part of peoples' daily lives (Ahmad Nevertheless, significant numbers of the Pakistani people have never before supported rule by religious leaders, at any time during Pakistan's 54 years of independence. In all

the elections conducted until the previous ones in 1997, the religious parties only had token representation in the parliament. Only two seats were held by religious parties in the national assembly of 1997.

The founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was a British-educated lawyer. His goal was to create a modern, progressive Islamic state without any element of theocracy. Pakistan was created democratically, and a huge majority voted in favor of an independent Pakistan in 1945, in a referendum before the partition of India. Jinnah argued that only people with an equal awareness of both Western societies and Islamic societies could run the newly created Pakistan properly. He further argued that equal rights for the minorities and for the females, democracy, and tolerance should be the main motives of the new state; and that sectarianism and extremism would not find any place in Pakistan (Wolpert 1989).

Pakistan was achieved through a democratic struggle led by the All India Muslim League, which was created in response to anti-Muslim policies of the Congress Party of India.. Jinnah was a member of Congress in the beginning of his political career but later, left the party and joined the Muslim league. Educated people ran the Muslim League, with a little support from the religious leaders or ulema (Munawar 1998).

During the independence movement, some religious leaders opposed the independence movement in general and Mr. Jinnah in particular. One of their arguments was that Jinnah was Western educated and wears Western dresses so he will not be able to run the newly created country within the framework of religion. This argument was in contradiction with basic Islamic values which emphasis research, the search for knowledge, tolerance for others, respect for other religions and democracy (Nasr 1996).

Furthermore, Jinnah repeatedly rejected rule under 'Mulaism'(Qureshi 1972). But another group of religious leaders like Shabir-ul-Hassan Thanvi, Maulana Ashraf Thanvi, and Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani supported Jinnah and the movement for the independence of Pakistan.

Jinnah worked for a separate homeland for Muslims ruled by educated and enlightened community with western education as well as religious education. He wanted to build Pakistan on modern lines so that it could stand up with the rest of the world shoulder to shoulder. Therefore whenever the Pakistani exercised their right of vote in general elections they always voted parties for such political manifesto. The rule of the country by religious leaders was totally ruled out in the past (Sahab 1989). The solid proof of these political attitudes is exhibited in the various constitutions introduced in various periods of time. The 1<sup>st</sup> constitution in 1956 manifests what Jinnah desired. Similarly all other constitutions which followed the 1<sup>st</sup> one were semi secular based on the British legal system with required amendments introduced in it at various times to adjust it to the changing times (Faridi 2002).

Similarly the system of education is largely the same Western education system that was introduced during British colonial rule and the formation of all universities old or the fresh built on the same conventional system. The administrative or bureaucratic system was also the continuation of the old British system with progressive changes according to the changing times (Faridi 2002).

Although Pakistan was created through a democratic struggle, democracy failed to develop strong roots in Pakistan. One reason was the death of Jinnah only a year after the country's creation. Later in 1950 Prime Minister Liaqat Ali Khan was assassinated. Then a game of musical chairs started in the country politics. The first general elections

in the history of Pakistan were conducted in 1970 when the country was united. These elections resulted in a split mandate in the East and West parts of the country. In the East, the Awami League from Eastern part of the country emerged as the largest party. The delay in the transfer of power to the elected assembly led to civil war in East Pakistan, which ultimately ended in the independence of East Pakistan, as Bangladesh (Sahab 1989).

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was the largest party in West Pakistan so it formed its government in the remaining Pakistan under the chairmanship of Z.A.Bhutto. PPP was a purely secular political party based on economic approach under the garb of a very vague term “Islamic Socialism”. The main slogan of PPP was bread, clothing and shelter. After Bhutto was hanged in 1979, the chairmanship of PPP was handed over to his daughter Benazir Bhutto who was educated at Oxford and Harvard. PPP has a very solid vote bank and has always done well in the elections (Sahab 1989; Ghani 2002). PPP has a very strong base in the province of Sind. All efforts were made to crush PPP during Zia regime (1977 to 1988). In doing so, a nationalist group named as MQM was raised in the urban Sind. It brought worst effects especially for Karachi and Hyderabad. These two cities became a hot spot for many years and the residents witnessed a long wave of lawlessness (Naqvi 2002).

The Muslim League (ML) was the party under which the Muslims in the sub-continent struggled and achieved Pakistan. In the struggle for Pakistan, ML represented the Muslims of sub-continent while congress represented the Hindus and a minority of the nationalist Muslims such as Abu-al-Kalam Azad. This was also a broad political party with a solid reservoir of votes. Because of its great role during the independence

movement, ML was strongly affected by the thoughts and the ideologies of Jinnah. After independence, ML became a rolling stone. Every ruler and dictator used ML for the accomplishment of personal political agenda. This led to the division of ML into various groups. In the recent October elections, five splinters from the Muslim League were contesting the elections under different names such as PML (N), PML (Q), PML (J), PML (F), PML (Z) (Saeed 2002). The weakening of ML also resulted in the poor performance of democracy. In the united Pakistan, a large number of middle class people joined the ML from the East Pakistan. After the separation of East Pakistan, a series of interruptions in the democracy raised the influence of feudal landlords and big industrialists in the ML (Siddiqui 2002a).

Along with the two major political parties (PPP & PML), the religious political parties constitute another element in Pakistani politics. These parties represent the various religious sects in the society, and they have always tested their luck in the elections but consistently failed to draw people's attention towards them. The percentage of the total votes cast in favor of religious parties in the last four elections is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Percentage of total cast votes.

<b>Election</b>	<b>PPP</b>	<b>PML (Q)</b>	<b>Religious parties</b>
1990	36.83 %	37.37 %	1.76 %
1993	37.85 %	39.46 %	6.75 %
1997	21.90 %	45.95 %	1.83 %
2002	24.81 %	25.01 %	11.23 %

(Warriach 2002)

In the 2002 elections, to the great surprise not only of international observers but also to the Pakistani public, the religious parties increased their percentage of the vote from less than 2 % to over 11 %, in the process winning 46 seats in the national assembly. Currently, they are the third largest group in the national assembly, after PML (Q) with 77 seats and PPP with 63 seats. The two major parties, the PML and PPP, now find themselves dependent on making a coalition with the religious parties in order to win a majority in the house of 272 and form the government. This is a new trend since the creation of Pakistan in 1947. A numbers of observers are asking: is Pakistan going to be a theocratic state in near future? Is religious fundamentalism rising in Pakistan? This article attempts to analyze the situation and the circumstances that have brought unprecedented political power to the religious parties.

The events of 9/11 not only affected American society but also brought far-reaching consequences for Pakistan. The moment America planned its military operations in Afghanistan the government of Pakistan was asked not only to provide logistic support to American forces in Afghanistan but also to seal its borders with Afghanistan to enhance the effectiveness of American operations. It is important to mention here that people of Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province (the Northwest Frontier Province)--Pakistani provinces adjacent to the Afghan border-- have kin in Afghanistan and belong to the same ethnic group. Pakistani media have reported that American operations caused civilian deaths in Afghanistan. They also reported that the 'Northern Alliance' forces that were backed by the Americans, killed a huge majority of the Talibans who surrendered to the Americans. And the media have reported that American

agencies like FBI have made its offices in Pakistan and were directly monitoring its operations in Pakistan. It was also reported that some of the airports had been turned over to American control for a long period of time. These reports created a huge wave of anti-American feelings in Pakistan in general and in the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan in particular<sup>1</sup>.

As mentioned earlier, the religious parties have always tried to get some role in Pakistani politics. Sometimes they formed alliance with other parties like PML and some times they tried their fate independently. They had very limited success in all elections except the most recent ones, when the six major religious parties formed an alliance to contest the elections jointly. The two major religious parties in this alliance were Jamat-e-Islami (JI) and Jamiat-ullema-Pakistan (JUP), and they campaigned under the name “Muthida Majlis Amil (MMA)” which could be translated literally as the “Joint Action Organization;” we will refer to them as the Religious Alliance. The Religious Alliance shattered precedent by winning 46 seats in the national assembly and 80 seats in the four provinces. Furthermore, their strength is concentrated in the more impoverished and less populous Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan to such an extent that they can independently form the government in the former province, and have emerged as the largest party in Baluchistan. In the current international political scenario, these two provinces are the most sensitive places since they border on Afghanistan. Indeed, they are the base camps of all activities launched by the U.S. in collaboration with the Pakistani government. Moreover, their populations are ethnically similar to two of the major groups in Afghanistan.

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<sup>1</sup> Media was closely monitoring the operations in Afghanistan. People in border areas were not only getting information through media but were also receiving dead bodies and the first hand information from those who were bringing the dead bodies. Families also migrated from Afghanistan and brought with them the stories of what was happening there. For further reference see Arif 2002a; Siddiqui 2002a; Mirza 2002).

The Religious Alliance was not formed in response to the current Afghan situation. During the last few years, Pakistan has been the torn by religious sectarianism and extremism that resulted in various innocent killings. In response to this situation, some of the major religious parties established a council to eliminate the differences among the various religious groups. The various religious groups never had a good record of mutual understanding. In fact most of the time they had been criticizing each other and this may be one of the reasons for their low popularity level in the publics. This council helped reconcile mutual differences. Last year, a meeting of this council was called in and the religious parties announced to form a common body named 'Afghan Defense Council' (ADC) after 9/11 when America started actions against Afghanistan. After its formation, ADC launched a protest campaign against American actions in Afghanistan. After the Taliban surrender, the ADC was renamed as 'Pak-Afghan Defense Council' (PADC). This PADC was later converted to an election alliance for the 2002 elections and was given the name of the Religious Alliance (Warriach 2002). In this sense, the election campaign of the Religious Alliance was a continuation of last year's agitation.

The Religious Alliance launched a nationwide election campaign. Due to the performance of religious parties in the past, the campaign failed to get do well at the national level. But in the Northwest Frontier Province it did very well. The results of the elections were were unexpected even for the Religious Alliance leadership. The number of seats won by the Religious Alliance for the national and the provincial assemblies are given in table 2 below.

Table 2: Religious Alliance seats in national and provincial assemblies

National Assembly	46
the Northwest Frontier Province assembly	48
Baluchistan assembly	14
Sind assembly	10
Punjab assembly	08

(Warriach 2002)

Thus, the Religious Alliance has emerged as the third largest group in the national assembly and holds a key position in the power game. In addition to that, the Religious Alliance dominates the provincial assembly of the Northwest Frontier Province and they will easily form the government there. In past, the religious parties only succeeded once to form a government in the Northwest Frontier Province in 1971 but it was a coalition government in alliance with the ANP (Awami National Party), a semi-secular party. The Religious Alliance has emerged as the largest party in the provincial assembly of Baluchistan. It is also likely that they will be able to form the state government there too with the help of some small parties or the independently elected members (Haqani 2002). Another important implication of the Religious Alliance's victory would be their hold in the upper house of the parliament, the "Senate". All the four provinces have an equal representation in the senate and due to their huge majority in the Northwest Frontier Province assembly, the Religious Alliance will be able to hold more than one third of the seats in the senate, providing them with a decisive role in the law making process of the country. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, religious parties have won massive political power.

Since the events of 9/11, the controversial thesis offered by Samuel P. Huntington about the ‘clash of civilizations’ has been among the most widely discussed issues in the intellectual and academic circles of Pakistan. And since the October, 2002 elections, the most widely discussed issue in Pakistan situation has been the victory of Religious Alliance. All the national newspapers and even such international magazines as The Times, The Economist, and BBC have discussed the Religious Alliance victory. These media express the opinion that the most important driving force behind the victory of Religious Alliance in the provinces of the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan were the anti-American feelings and emotions caused by the American action in Afghanistan in October, 2001 and later in the adjacent tribal areas of Pakistan<sup>2</sup>. ‘Time’ magazine, for example, has reported that president Musharaf’s policies about Afghanistan and his alliance with America created the negative reaction that paved the way for the victory of Religious Alliance. Secondly, Musharaf’s negative attitude towards major political parties and leaders (such as Benazir and Nawaz Sharif<sup>3</sup>) created a gap in the national politics that was partially filled by Religious Alliance. Quite surprisingly, the

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<sup>2</sup> Arif 2002a & b; Economist Oct. 2002; Rashak 2002; Newsweek; Qasmi 2002; Haqani 2002; Kissana 2002; Bhai 2002; Siddiqui 2002; Azeem 2002; Nadeem 2002; Times 2002; Mirza 2002; Athar 2002; Mehmood 2002; Khawaja 2002; Sheikh 2002; Ghani 2002; Hussain 2002;

<sup>3</sup> Nawaz Sharif was the prime minister in October 1999 when the army took over. At that time, Nawaz Sharif was the head of the ruling party named as PML (N). Nawaz Sharif was sent to the jail with certain allegations and later was allowed to go to Saudi Arabia along with other family members under an agreement with the Musharaf administration, which would not let him come back for ten years. Few weeks before the elections, Nawaz appointed his brother Shahbaz as the president of PML (N) but he was also not allowed to come back and contest elections. In the mean while majority of members of the former assembly (1997) formed their own Muslim League and named it as PML (Q) to contest elections. As a result, PML (N) only won 14 seats in the national assembly in October elections. Nawaz was elected as prime minister in 1990 and then in 1997.

Benazir Bhutto was the leader of opposition in 1997 assembly but went abroad in 1999. In her absence she was prosecuted and found convicted in regard to certain allegations. Currently she is residing in Dubai and her husband is in jail in Pakistan. She was also not in the country at the time of October elections. She was also elected as prime minister in 1988 and then in 1993.

Times has labeled the Religious Alliance an anti-American party. 'Times' has called the 2002 elections as the 'General's election' but has stated that Religious Alliance's recent victory was against Musharaf's expectations. 'The Economist' has reported that the victory of Religious Alliance has made both Musharaf and Bush worried about the future situation of the region and the war against 'Taliban' and Al-Qaeda, arguing that the Religious Alliance's victory may affect efforts against the Taliban and 'Al-Qaeda' in Afghanistan and in Pakistan. The magazine has further reported that whether in government or in opposition, Religious Alliance will be a problem. Zikria (2002) has argued that the American move against Islam may take a dangerous form claiming that Christian fundamentalists such as Jerry Farewell, Pet Robertson, and Franklin Graham have insulted Islamic beliefs. Similarly, News link (2002) reported that vote cast in the Northwest Frontier Province was an anti-American vote, arguing that American action in Afghanistan has angered the Pashtun ethnic group that dominates the Northwest Frontier Province, and they have displayed their anger: for the first time in the history of Pakistan the sensitive border province of the Northwest Frontier Province will be ruled purely by religious parties.

Hussain<sup>4</sup> also described the victory of the Religious Alliance and anti-government parties in the election as a reaction to the American policies in the region, claiming that the Religious Alliance drew its heaviest support in areas that are close to Afghan border and have had the largest demonstrations against the American action in Afghanistan. He was of the opinion that the main pushing force behind Z.A.Bhutto's popularity was his

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<sup>4</sup> Mr. Mushahid Hussain was the information minister in the former Nawaz Sharif government, which was sacked by the army in 1999. Mr. Hussain has eye witnessed the various sociopolitical changes and events that have happened in Pakistan over the last few years.

anti-Indian policy, which continued until the Zia era; but today, the Afghan factor dominates Pakistani politics. Hussain nevertheless has an optimistic view about the Religious Alliance victory in recent elections: he thinks it may eliminate the differences between various religious sects and would also help in reducing the extremist feelings of various religious groups.

Qasmi<sup>5</sup> was of the opinion that Religious Alliance has gained the recent victory because of its anti-government and anti-American slogans. According to Qasmi, the main factors of Religious Alliance victory were: policies of Pakistan government, American's anti-Muslim policies, innocent killings in Afghanistan and the ignorance of Pakistan government on such killings, FBI operations in Pakistan and investigations from the nuclear scientists etc. So in that way president Musharaf has indirectly contributed through his policies to the Religious Alliance victory. Arif<sup>6</sup> has argued that the Northwest Frontier Province province is under heavy influence of Pashtun lords and tribes who are said to be involved in drug and arms business. The Religious Alliance has made a landslide victory (through lower and middle class candidates) in that province; therefore, there had to be a very strong force behind their success. According to Arif, that strong force was the heavy anti-American feelings in the Pashtun masses. On top of that, the government crackdowns in tribal areas in search of Al-Qaeda and Talibans and also the actions against the madrassas infuriated people. The secular and anti-religious policies

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<sup>5</sup> Mr. Atta-ul-Haq Qasmi was Pakistan's ambassador in Norway during the previous Nawaz Sharif government, which was sacked in 1999 by army. By profession, he is a university teacher. He writes frequently for the press.

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Irshad Ahmad Arif is a renowned journalist and free-lancer writer. He is famous for his writings on the current national and international issues.

of Musharaf government have also greatly contributed towards Religious Alliance success.

Rehman<sup>7</sup> after winning the elections has criticized the Musharaf government and has demanded that Musharaf should resign from the offices of both the president and the army chief. He has further argued that the removal of American camps from Pakistan soil, and a balanced foreign policy is badly required in the country, enabling us to prepare our own economic policies, independent of the international agencies. He claims that the Religious Alliance will not impose strict policies on the public, like those imposed by the Taliban.

(Table 3 about here)

To what extent can the Religious Alliance's emergence as a significant political factor be interpreted as the potential beginning of Pakistan some day becoming dominated by Islamic fundamentalists? Evidence from the World Values Surveys sheds some light on this question. The Pakistani component of the World Values Survey was completed in 2002, constituting a representative national sample of the adult Pakistani public; and it enables us to compare the Pakistani public with those of more than 70 other publics, containing more than 80 percent of the world's population.<sup>8</sup>

There is no question that Pakistani public has a strong sense of Islamic identity, and takes religion seriously. One indicator of this, is the Pakistani public's response to

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<sup>7</sup> Fazal-ur-Rehman is one of the leaders of Religious Alliance. He is head of JUP. He has been nominated by Religious Alliance as the candidate for the prime minister. His party JUP has a very strong influence in the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan and even in Punjab and Sind as well. JUP also running many madressahas in various parts of the country especially in the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan.

<sup>8</sup> The World Values Surveys have interviewed representative national samples of societies on all six inhabited continents since 1981. For more details, see the World Values Survey web sites, <http://wvs.isr.umich.edu> and <http://worldvaluessurvey.com>.

the question, “Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?...Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office.” As Table 3 indicates, the overwhelming majority of the Pakistani public—fully 95 percent of them—believe that politicians who do not believe in God are unacceptable. In fact, the Pakistani public ranks highest of the 68 publics to whom this question was asked. The publics of Islamic societies (shown in bold face type on Table 3) are particularly likely to agree with this statement: eight of the ten publics that agree most strongly that politicians must believe in God, are predominantly Islamic, and the two other highest-ranking societies (Nigeria and the Philippines) have sizeable Islamic minorities. But this belief is by no means limited to Islamic societies. A majority of the public agrees with it in seven non-Islamic societies; and fully 39 percent of the U.S. public also agrees with it— and the American public ranks higher in this respect than the public of any other rich democracy. In this, and many other respects, the U.S. shows a much more religious outlook than do the publics of most rich democracies.

(Table 4 about here)

An overwhelming majority of the Pakistani public believes that political leaders should believe in God. But does this mean that they want to be ruled by religious leaders? Table 4 provides some insight into this question, showing response to the question “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement... Religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections.” As Table 4 indicates, an overwhelming majority of the Pakistani public feels that religious leaders should **not** influence how people vote: politicians should be God-fearing, but they should also be independent. Among the 68 societies for which we have data, in only two—Iran and

Algeria—does a majority disagree with this statement, believing that religious leaders should influence how people vote. In the 66 other societies, a majority of the public rejects the idea that religious leaders should influence how people vote—and this includes nine Islamic societies, including Pakistan. Interestingly enough, the U.S. public is more likely to accept having religious leaders influence the vote, than are the publics of most Islamic societies (though even in the U.S., fully 63 percent of the public reject it). In short: the Pakistani public emphasizes religious values, and believes that their political leaders should believe in God— but does not want religious leaders to dominate political life. It is an important distinction.

It is now 54 years since Pakistan got independence from British colonial rule. In these 54 years, Pakistan has only had 16 years of democracy-- the other 38 years being spent under non- elected or military regimes. The first general elections were conducted in 1970 after 23 years of independence. These elections generated a split mandate in both parts of the country and ultimately resulted in the separation of the country in 1971. From 1977 to 1985 was martial law and from 1985 to 1999 five general elections were conducted. From 1999 to 2002 was the military rule again. All this reflects that democracy was not permitted and whenever was permitted it failed to gain strong roots in the country. On the other side, according to the latest estimates, the population of Pakistan is 142.5 million while it was 133 million (in both East & West Pakistan) in 1950 (NIPS 2001). According to a recent FAO report, 35% of the total population of Pakistan was living below poverty line. This combination of poverty and political instability has introduced a culture of corruption in the country. According to an estimate made by

Transparency International in 1998, Pakistan ranked number two in corruption, lower than only one country, Nigeria.

These issues have been highlighted by some of the analysts analyzing the recent elections. Athar (2002) for example has argued that Pakistani politics is moving in a vicious circle of foreign debt, poverty and resources controlled by an elite group. All these factors may have made a section of the public alienated from the major politicians and the political parties and they were looking towards other parties of which the Religious Alliance could be a choice. Athar, however, has argued that people may have reservations about the models of Islamization that the various religious parties have with them. Hafiz Idress<sup>9</sup> has also described the victory of Religious Alliance in the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan as a reaction to the feudalism, secularism, liberalism and the corruption made by politicians and the political parties in the past. He was of the opinion that these factors have created problems in the grooming of democracy in the country in the past and it has led people to support Religious Alliance.

Azeem<sup>10</sup> describes the victory of Religious Alliance as a reaction to the feudal landlords, and to the landed and industrial aristocracy. He was of the opinion that those who have been contesting elections from the inherited family seats are now gradually loosing hold on these seats and that Religious Alliance slogans and manifesto is making paths in the publics. He has further described that the head of JI<sup>11</sup> is not just a religious

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<sup>9</sup> Hafiz Idress is the provincial president of Religious Alliance in Punjab.

<sup>10</sup> Ammer-ul-Azeem is one of the leading figures of Jamat-e-Islami (JI). He is a very senior party member from Punjab. He has been a very active student leader from the plate form of Islami-Jamiate-Tulaba, which is student wing of JI.

<sup>11</sup> Jamat-e-Islami (JI) is the largest religious party in Pakistan. This party was formed by the famous scholar Mawdoodi before the formation of Pakistan. The party also has a very strong student wing, which is known

leader but is an MSc degree holder and has a very good command over other languages such as English, Pushto, Persian and Arabic. Nadeem (2002) has described the Religious Alliance vote bank as an anti-establishment vote.

Siddiqui (2002a) points out that in the united Pakistan, the politicians from East Pakistan were predominately from the middle classes and after the separation of East Pakistan, politics became the game of feudal, lords, industrialists and those with black money. So there was a gap that has now been filled by the middle class Religious Alliance elected members. He has also argued that the nationalist parties have also been defeated by Religious Alliance. All this shows that Religious Alliance's success was not just a reaction to American policies but was also a reaction against the socioeconomic and political deprivations prevailing in the country. He has emphasized the point that Religious Alliance has to show a balanced behavior now and should not exhibit extremist policies while in power.

Some additional factors also contributed to the Religious Alliance's accomplishment. Kissana<sup>12</sup> (2002) for example, argues that the Religious Alliance won mainly because the religious parties joined forces, and pooled their votes. Bhai<sup>13</sup> has stated that in addition to the American factor, there were some other factors. One of them was the reduction in voter age from 21 to 18 years. It led the students of Madressahas that are being run by religious parties to come out and cast their votes in favor of Religious

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as Islami-Jamiat-e-Tulaba. Currently, Qazi Hussain Ahmad is the president of JI. He is a highly educated man. It is said that he was the mastermind behind the formation of Religious Alliance.

<sup>12</sup> Israr Ahmad Kissana is a free-lancer writer. He frequently publishes his articles in the national newspapers and journals on the current national and international issues. He is New York based so provides good comparative analysis.

<sup>13</sup> Munno Bhai is a senior leading writer and journalist. He is highly respected in the intellectual circles of Pakistan. He has also written scripts of various dramas that have been presented on the TV. He has a long list of articles and books in his credit.

Alliance. Naheed<sup>14</sup> (2002) has described that Religious Alliance's victory was mainly because of reduction in voter age. It led madressaha students to vote for Religious Alliance considering it as a religious duty and a contribution to help Afghans. On the other hand, younger people in the cities of Punjab and Sind had low rates of voting, being relatively uninterested in current issues.

Regardless of the reasons for the Religious Alliance's success, it is an established factor now, and it has opened a debate on the possible consequences. President Musharaf while addressing to a public gathering in Peshawar (capital of the Northwest Frontier Province) in April, 2002 with regard to his referendum campaign said that the religious parties and leaders have always deceived the people of Pakistan. He further argued that people of Pakistan are wise and will never be impressed by the religious parties and their leaders. Musharaf may have his own opinion but a realistic look over the history indicates that the people of Pakistan have never supported the religious parties to come into power and play a political role (Nawa-I-Waqat 2002b; The News 2002; The Nation 2002b; Dawn 2002b).

The success of the Religious Alliance is important because of the sensitive geopolitical situation of the region. The events of 9/11 were strongly condemned by Pakistan, as no religion or moral code allows the killings of civilians. Pakistan not only joined hands with the international alliance to fight against terrorism but also became a front line state, since Pakistan has a long border with Afghanistan. Pakistan provided every possible support and assistance to the allied forces. On the other hand people in Pakistan were receiving the first hand information and news from Afghanistan about the

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<sup>14</sup> Kishwar Naheed is a famous writer and poetess. She is among the voices that are asking more rights for women in Pakistan. She has reservations about religious parties and their leaders.

operation there. The media in Pakistan, too, was focusing heavily on the Afghan situation and bringing reports of innocent killings there. Being a Muslim country, people in Pakistan were also emotionally involved with the Afghan people. All this created a wave of anti-government and anti-American emotions in the people of Pakistan in general and the people of the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan in particular.

In this heated sociopolitical environment, the Religious Alliance launched its election campaign and started criticizing the Afghan situation. This strategy proved its worth and provided the Religious Alliance with a position in the new political scenario. Since this is entirely a new pattern of the Pakistani politics, it has brought many questions with it. The issue is so big and important that one has to consider both the negative and the positive aspects to deal it fairly. Dr Iqbal<sup>15</sup> raised the question about the slogan of 'Islamization' raised by the religious leaders. He argued that Pakistan is already an Islamic country and people are religious so what else do the ulema want? The constitutions of 1956, 1962 and the 1973 were very much Islamic in their spirit, so what new things do the ulema want to introduce? They have to decide that whether they would play a creative or a destructive role in the country. By acting positively, the ulema can bring betterment both for people and for the country while their negative role can bring misery for the country.

Pakistan is at the crossroads, having already done a lot regarding the war in Afghanistan and is still doing a lot. Although the Taliban government was successful in

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<sup>15</sup> Dr Javed Iqbal is a famous writer and intellectual. He has the honor of being the son of great poet Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal who is also known as the poet of the East. Allama Muhammad Iqbal was the one who presented for the first time, the idea of Pakistan in 1930. Dr. Javed himself is a retired chief justice of Lahore (Punjab) high court. He used to be a member of the senate.

controlling the war lords, they were not very balanced in their relations with other nations and groups. Forcing the public to perform religious obligations, imposing strict limits on women and requiring men to have beards did not create a good image of Islam in outside non-Islamic world. So much so, that a significant segment of the people in Pakistan have many reservations about the Taliban type of Islam. Since it is said that Taliban were the product of madressahas and many of the Religious Alliance parties are running their own madressahas in Pakistan, people may think that the 'Islamization' model of Religious Alliance would be similar to that of Taliban. Another free-lancer writer Tayyaba Zia (2002) who is America based has raised the similar questions about Religious Alliance. She has particularly talked about the Pakistani women who are settled in America and were having many doubts after the Religious Alliance's success. She has argued that the Religious Alliance's leadership must not restrict the women and should let them contribute productively in the national building process; acting like this will be in line with the true Islamic teachings, which emphasize to learn, act and be good for others and not just performing religious obligations.

A combination of a reaction against American actions in Afghanistan and people's annoyance with the other political parties seem to have resulted in the Religious Alliance success. The Religious Alliance have to consider that their mandate is not so large and is restricted to a certain area that is under a very sensitive geo-political situation. This situation can change in near future and resultantly can again change the political orientation of the people. It would also be important to note that along with the major political parties like PML and PPP, the Religious Alliance has defeated the nationalist parties which is also an important sign. It can be argued that the current

circumstances at least have provided a very good platform to the religious parties to act upon and prove of what they have been saying from the time when Muslims of sub-continent started their struggle for Pakistan.

It is also important that the people of Punjab and Sind, the two most populous provinces, have not given a positive response to the Religious Alliance, which won only a few seats in major cities but it is generally understood that this victory is mainly because of Religious Alliance adjustment with some other parties like PML (N). This low response may be due to the reservations that people have in their minds about Religious Alliance. Now it is a very good opportunity for Religious Alliance to present a good model of governance for the people. It should not be a theocratic one. But it should be based on the real Islamic spirit that emphasizes action and not just prayers.

Religious sectarianism and extremism have claimed many lives in Pakistan over the years. It has not only deteriorated the law and order situation of the country but has decreased the credibility of religious parties in the publics. Now this is the time to eliminate this from the society. By doing so, the Religious Alliance can not only make its vote base strong and wide but can also extend it to the other parts of the country as well. Acting and behaving otherwise will not only cause problems for Religious Alliance but for the whole country. Now we are living in a global village where it would be very hard to ignore the outside world. Pakistan has to live with others. Living in a nutshell can create many problems. The Taliban has experienced it. Having a good level of communication and mutual understanding is important in the global village. Merely criticizing others has proved to be a failed technique.

Another important aspect of the Religious Alliance's success is its victory in Karachi, where the Religious Alliance won five national assembly seats. Karachi is known as mini Pakistan and was a hot spot since Zia era when military rulers raised MQM<sup>16</sup> against PPP in urban areas of Sind. Now Religious Alliance can prove it's worth to the people of Karachi. By doing well their, they can easily make paths in other urban centers of Pakistan.

Since the recent elections, the outside world is worried about the expected orthodox Islamic rule of religious parties. At this stage only the implementation of the claimed promises of the Religious Alliance would prove their wisdom. They would have to present a scientifically progressing, economically prospering and socially secure and a

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<sup>16</sup> MQM is nationalist party, which got roots during Zia's martial law. It was mainly to restrict PPP, which was considered to be the No 1 enemy of Zia. Since then Karachi has been a hot spot. Violence, firing, strikes, agitation, and killings became a routine of life. It was felt that Karachi has been cut off from the mainstream politics.

strong Pakistan. None of their policies should exhibit religious extremism. The unIslamic distribution of power in the hands of feudal lords and industrialists should be halted and the rights of the general public should be protected.

The outside world should also realize the fragile circumstances in the region. Use of power everywhere may not bring the same result every time. The chronic regional issues such as Kashmir can spoil the whole region. This is the time to solve such issues on permanent grounds to bring peace and stability for the region in particular and for the rest of the world in general.

Should the success of the Religious Alliance in becoming a significant political factor be interpreted as the first step toward Pakistani political life becoming dominated by religious leaders? We think not. First, the extent of the breakthrough should not be overstated: the Religious Alliance won only 11 percent of the national vote. And evidence from the World Values Surveys indicates that the Pakistani public attaches strong importance to religion and believes that its political leaders should believe in God. But a strong majority—fully 74 percent—reject the idea that religious leaders should influence how people vote in elections. The Pakistanis are Islamic—but they do not want to be ruled by religious leaders.

**Table 3. MUST POLITICAL LEADERS BELIEVE IN GOD?**  
**(percent agreeing that “Politicians who do not believe in God  
are unfit for public office”)**

<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>95</b>	Croatia	25
<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>89</b>	Latvia	22
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>88</b>	Russia	22
<b>Morocco</b>	<b>86</b>	Slovakia	22
<b>Iran</b>	<b>83</b>	<i>Canada</i>	21
Nigeria	82	Montenegro	21
<b>Jordan</b>	<b>81</b>	Lithuania	20
<b>Algeria</b>	<b>78</b>	Vietnam	19
Philippines	71	<i>W Germany</i>	18
<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>71</b>	<i>Ireland</i>	16
Tanzania	66	Poland	16
Puerto Rico	65	Bosnia	16
Uganda	60	<i>Italy</i>	15
S Africa	57	<i>N Ireland</i>	15
<b>Turkey</b>	<b>57</b>	<i>Austria</i>	15
Zimbabwe	53	Estonia	14
Romania	52	<i>Luxemburg</i>	13
Venezuela	52	<i>Spain</i>	12
Moldova	44	Hungary	12
<b>Albania</b>	<b>44</b>	<i>Finland</i>	12
India	42	<i>Slovenia</i>	11
Malta	42	<i>Britain</i>	10
<i>U.S.</i>	39	S Korea	10
Mexico	39	<i>France</i>	9
<i>Greece</i>	37	<i>Belgium</i>	9
Argentina	35	<i>Iceland</i>	9
Chile	35	<i>Japan</i>	8
Macedonia	35	<i>E Germany</i>	8
Ukraine	34	Czech Rep	6
Serbia	27	<i>Denmark</i>	4
Belarus	26	<i>Sweden</i>	4
Bulgaria	25	<i>Netherlands</i>	2

Note: Countries with an Islamic majority are shown in bold face type; high-income countries (as defined by World Bank in 20) are in italics.

Source: World Values Surveys.

**Table 4. SHOULD RELIGIOUS LEADERS INFLUENCE ELECTIONS?**  
**(Percentage agreeing that**  
**“Religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections”)**

<b>Iran</b>	<b>22</b>	<i>Belgium</i>	<i>80</i>
<b>Algeria</b>	<b>38</b>	Czech Rep	80
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>52</b>	Macedonia	80
Venezuela	56	<b>Morocco</b>	<b>80</b>
<i>Spain</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>Iceland</i>	<i>81</i>
Zimbabwe	62	Belarus	82
U.S.	63	Lithuania	82
Mexico	64	Russia	82
Uganda	64	Luxemburg	82
<b>Jordan</b>	<b>64</b>	Ukraine	83
S Africa	65	Montenegro	83
<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>66</i>	Bulgaria	84
<i>Sweden</i>	<i>67</i>	Latvia	84
<i>Finland</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>Denmark</i>	<i>85</i>
India	68	Poland	85
Vietnam	68	<i>Austria</i>	<i>85</i>
S Korea	69	Estonia	85
Chile	69	Serbia	85
Moldova	69	<i>France</i>	<i>86</i>
Puerto Rico	70	Croatia	86
Tanzania	70	<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>87</b>
<i>Britain</i>	<i>72</i>	Malta	90
<i>E Germany</i>	<i>72</i>		
Nigeria	73		
<i>Japan</i>	<i>74</i>		
Argentina	74		
<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>74</b>		
Philippines	74		
<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>74</b>		
Slovakia	74		
<b>Jordan</b>	<b>74</b>		
<i>W Germany</i>	<i>76</i>		
<i>N Ireland</i>	<i>76</i>		
Bosnia	76		
<b>Albania</b>	<b>77</b>		
<i>Ireland</i>	<i>78</i>		
<i>Canada</i>	<i>78</i>		
Hungary	78		
<i>Slovenia</i>	<i>78</i>		
Romania	78		
<i>Greece</i>	<i>78</i>		
<i>Italy</i>	<i>79</i>		
<b>Turkey</b>	<b>79</b>		

Note: Countries with an Islamic majority are shown in bold face type; high-income countries (as defined by World Bank in 20) are in italics.

Source: World Values Surveys.

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