

# Rise of Religious Parties in Pakistan: Causes and Prospects

Ashutosh Misra

## Abstract

*Pakistan's political climate has always been polarized between the civil and the military leaders, with balance of political fortunes tilting in favour of one or the other, from time to time. With the overthrow of Nawaz Sharif in a bloodless coup in October 1999, the military marched out of the barracks after more than a decade. The new military ruler, Pervez Musharraf started consolidating power and giving supremacy to the armed forces in shaping Pakistan's destiny through an engineered referendum; appeasement of jihadi and religious parties; marginalisation of mainstream political parties and a series of controversial amendments. These were not new practices in Pakistan's troubled politics. But what is new in the October 2002 general elections, is that the religious parties and two Provincial Assemblies—those of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan—made inroads into the National Assembly in an impressive fashion. A conglomeration of six parties, the Muttahida Majilis-e-Amal (MMA) emerged as a new political force and a political alternative to the PPP and PML-Nawaz (PML-N). This paper offers an in-depth analysis of the causes behind such a historic victory of the religious parties and what would be its likely ramifications for Pakistan in the years to come.*



## Introduction

This paper is an attempt to encapsulate the wide canvas of Pakistan's political, religious and social developments. The paper is organised in four broad segments. The first segment presents a brief overview of the Islamisation process of Pakistan since 1956, and provides a setting against which the significance of current developments could be understood better. The second looks into the factors that played a decisive part in catapulting the religious parties to the political centre stage in Pakistan. The third segment of the paper focuses on the possible ramifications of the emergence of the religious parties for Pakistan. The last segment attempts an analysis of the trends.

In the much-awaited October 2002 elections in Pakistan, a conglomeration of six parties, called the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) surprised many by securing around 50 seats in the National Assembly (presently the tally stands at 58), an absolute majority in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and emerging as the second largest party in Baluchistan. Although in the National Assembly the MMA ranks third behind the Pakistan Muslim League-Qaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) and the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarian (PPPP), it has created history by winning so many seats in the National Assembly. In previous elections, any religious party or its conglomeration has not secured more than 10 seats in the National Assembly, and therefore, the rise of MMA should be considered as a landmark event in Pakistan's roller coaster political journey. The 2002 elections were held under the diktats of General Pervez Musharraf who was bound by the Supreme Court's decision to hold elections within three years of the coup of October 1999. The election not only featured the rise of mullahs, but also saw a much marginalised and toothless performance from the mainstream parties such as PPPP and PML-Q. In spite of that, it also witnessed the birth of a new political party—the PML-Q, a product of Musharraf's political machinations and popularly known as the King's party.

Currently, the Pakistani political merry-go-round has mainly three horses: the Military, PML-Q and MMA. It would be useful to study whether any correlation exists between the three or between the military and the MMA. The study rests on the premise that there always has existed a relationship between the military and the religious parties. Therefore, if this can be established to be existing between the military and MMA as well, it could have far reaching implications for Pakistan's domestic and foreign policies. If there exists a mullah-military linkage<sup>1</sup>, it would be very interesting to study what could be the reasons for the military to back the mullahs. This paper attempts to reinforce its assumption that though the rise of the MMA could be attributed to several other factors (listed later), Musharraf's political machinations and the support of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) provided MMA the critical edge. In this study, the most challenging task is to explain why, despite receiving support from the military, the MMA has vehemently opposed Musharraf on several issues. Will the military-mullah relationship be able to sail across the rapids of Pakistani political waters? What will be the threshold for the break-up of this relationship? Will the military pull out of this relationship and detach itself from the current Islamisation drive in the NWFP? Will MMA take the stand-off with the military so far that it endangers its government in NWFP and invites further curbs elsewhere in the country? Where do the mainstream parties stand in such a scenario?

### *Islam and Politics in Pakistan: An Outline*

Since the 1950s, the Islamisation of Pakistan has been sustained not only by the religious parties but more so by the mainstream parties and the military who have always used the religious card as a convenient tool to garner public sympathy and secure legitimacy for their regimes. The Muslim League used Islam as a political tool during the freedom struggle to bring the Muslims together against the Indian National Congress and its vision of an Independent India. After 1947, the interference of the clergy in politics or their utility in politics has been enhanced in a structured manner in Pakistan by the ruling elite on whom the responsibility of shaping Pakistan's political future rested. The Government of India Act of 1935 worked as a provisional Constitution of Pakistan until 1956 when the Constitution containing 234 Articles was passed by the Second Constituent Assembly, under Field Marshal Ayub Khan.<sup>2</sup> The 1956 Constitution endorsed the views of the clergy and declared Pakistan an Islamic Republic. But there was considerable confusion over the role of Islam in politics and different Islamic ideologies made it difficult to formulate a definitive role for Islam.<sup>3</sup> Ayub Khan withdrew the title 'Islamic' in 1962 but reinstated it in 1963 while facing protests from the *ulema*. The secular and democratic image which Ayub projected was widely opposed by the religious community and an anti-Ayub wave swept across Pakistan by the late 1960s. This elevated General Yahya Khan to power. Yahya was hailed and firmly supported by the *ulemas* for waging a crackdown on the emerging revolt in East Pakistan.

However, it was during the presidency of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a trusted aide of Yahya, that the 1973 Constitution was framed which extensively enshrined the Islamic provisions. To appease the Islamic parties, Article 2 declared that Islam would be the state religion and Article 227 said that all existing laws are to be framed in conformity with the injunctions of Islam.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Islam became the state religion, Islamic teachings were made mandatory for Muslims and the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) was created to suggest recommendations on Islamic matters to the government. Around this time, religious animosity also increased as Bhutto declared Ahmediyas as non-Muslims under pressure from the religious parties.<sup>5</sup> Although a socialist, Bhutto had begun to use the Islamic card to seek legitimacy for his governance, his Islamic manoeuvres backfired and the religious parties set up a joint opposition called the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) in 1977 with the support of the military. General Zia-ul-Haq could not have asked for more as, ironically, both Bhutto and PNA vied for the military's support. Eventually, he overthrew Bhutto on July 5, 1977.

Islamisation intensified during Zia's period who had the reputation of being a very religious person who keenly watched the Islamic tenor that anti-Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto demonstrations were gradually adopting. The conflict between the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), for the adoption of *Nizam-i-Mustafa* in 1977 and the overall Islamisation of the Constitution gave Zia the opportunity to impose martial law. After non-compliance with the directive to hold early elections given by the Supreme Court in the Begum Nusrat Bhutto case, Zia started to use the Islamic card in his speeches to counter the PPP propaganda and to legitimise martial law.<sup>6</sup>

After the execution of Bhutto in 1979, the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Zia forged a cooperative platform. Due to a lowering of curbs, the JI maintained a low profile which helped Zia to manage the post-Bhutto execution situation. Besides the JI, several orthodox Islamic leaders and their cadres cooperated with Zia during 1979-1985 because of their opposition to the democratisation process, particularly to the legislature elected on the basis of direct adult franchise. Official estimates indicate that 151 new madaris were opened during 1979-82 and 1000 during 1982-86.<sup>7</sup>

By February 1981, Zia started to face stiff resistance from the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) led by the PPP. After Zia's sudden death in 1988, the opposition gained more strength and was spearheaded by Benazir Bhutto (PPP). The JI and Islamic groups, which were pampered during Zia's regime, became disillusioned in the absence of state support. Their poor show in 1988, 1990, 1993, and 1996 elections to the National and Provincial Assembly is testimony to the fact. Although the religious parties were not able to secure more than 10 seats in the elections, it should not be construed as a decline in their political utility. The religion card has always played a key role in Pakistani politics and, ironically, has been used more effectively by the political leaders and generals than the mullahs. It shows the subservient role which the clergy has always played in Pakistani politics. It facilitated the making of a regime but it never was a strong political force to provide directions to the polity. The early history of Pakistan shows that political executives legitimised and institutionalised the role of the military in politics by making Field Marshal Ayub Khan the defence minister in Muhammad Ali Bogra's cabinet in 1953-54. Similarly, the military has legitimised the use of the Islamic card or mullahs in politics by enshrining Islamic provisions in the Constitution and supporting the latter in marginalising the mainstream parties.

In this backdrop the two international events—terrorist strikes on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent US attack on

Afghanistan, code named 'Operation Enduring Freedom'—become relevant in understanding the emergence of MMA as a political force in Pakistan. The US attack on Afghanistan resulted in the overthrow of the Taliban regime and the death of hundreds of Pakhtuns. This war sent an anti-American wave across Pakistan which very conveniently got glued with the favours that MMA was getting from the military and ISI.

The latest election results show that PML-Q has been returned with 115 seats. The PPPP<sup>8</sup> has secured 80 seats, MMA 58, PML-(Nawaz) 19, Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) 17 and National Alliance (NA) 14 seats in the National Assembly.<sup>9</sup> The MMA runs a majority government in NWFP under Akram Khan Durrani, and a coalition government in Baluchistan under Jam Mohammad Yousaf.

### **Rise of the Religious Parties (Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal)**

To many, the success of the MMA came as a surprise. However, a careful analysis of the pre-election strategy of Musharraf, shows strong correlation with MMA's upsurge. In this regard, the following factors which helped the rise of the MMA need attention:

#### *Military-ISI-Ulema Nexus and Marginalisation of Non-Religious Parties*

The Nexus: The electoral success of the MMA is said to have been manipulated by Musharraf and the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). Many analysts have attributed the success of the mullahs to the pre-poll scheming and restrictions imposed by General Musharraf which rendered the mainstream parties orphaned and mauled. The military also encouraged the militants of jihadi groups to join one religious party or the other. The party, which ultimately many joined, was JUI (F). The Urdu daily, *Ausaf* (October 17) reported that the MMA has been maintaining links with terrorist groups and at one point also urged Maulana Azam Tariq, chief of the banned *Sipah-e-Sahaba*, to join the MMA.<sup>10</sup> He is said to be a firm supporter of Musharraf's policies and currently is a Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from Jhang. It was believed that Musharraf could also use the rise of jihadis as a bargaining chip with the US. Nusrat Mirza endorses this view in his column in the Urdu daily, *Nawa-e-Waqt* (October 14).<sup>11</sup> There are reports that, where hundreds of politicians were barred from contesting the elections on one ground or the other, Musharraf had directed the administration in the province to withdraw cases against religious leaders and workers who were charged with the violation of code of conduct for elections. These violations included using loudspeakers, holding unlawful public meetings and making incendiary speeches.<sup>12</sup>

The Urdu dailies, *Ausaf*, *Urdu Point* and *Nawa-e-Waqt* featured reports and editorials on how the military-ISI-jihadi nexus facilitated the success of the MMA. Ali Chaudhary in his column in *Nawa-i-Waqt* (October 16) wrote that the dissenting anti-US faction in the Pakistani Army was hand in glove with the ISI in backing the religious forces. Ali also wrote that this linkage and patronage to a large extent enabled the mullahs to thrive and keep the MMA conglomeration intact.<sup>13</sup> The PPP attributed the rise of the MMA to the military and ISI support and complained that parliamentary candidates were used and pitched selectively by them. Faratullah Babar, PPP spokesman said, “MMA’s formation and victory in certain areas was facilitated to brandish to the West the threat of Islamic extremism and to show the United States that the only alternative to military rule is the rule of the mullahs.”<sup>14</sup>

*Lashkar-e-Jhangvi-Pakistan* (LeJ), a Sunni terrorist group, played an instrumental role in the October elections by organising public meetings for the Islamic parties. Similarly, United Jihad Council (UJC) was active in rural Punjab where the voters have preferred Islamic parties. In the wake of 9/11 and the attack on Afghanistan, Musharraf did resort to a cosmetic crackdown. Under pressure from US, he did proscribe several terrorist outfits such as *Sipahi-e-Sahaba* Pakistan (SSP), LeJ, *Tanzeem-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi* (TNSM), *Tehrik-e-Jafaria* (TeJ), *Lashkar-e-Toiba* (LeT), and *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (JeM). Later, their names were changed. Their leaders were released, and they entered active politics. In the month of November 2002, Hafeez Mohammad Saeed, former chief of LeT was released, followed by the release of Masood Azhar, in December.<sup>15</sup> There was also active coordination and cooperation between the military and jihadis during the April referendum. Sundeep Waslekar says, “Maximum turn out during referendum was reported from Rawalpindi, being military headquarters, and Jhang, where most of the terrorist groups are based”.<sup>16</sup> What makes this relationship perhaps more enduring is that the MMA like previous religious parties also needs the military’s support to compensate for lack of mass support. J. N. Dixit believes, “MMA does not have the clout to dominate the political scene, hence they need the support of the military”.<sup>17</sup>

Marginalisation: There are strong reasons why Musharraf would appease the religious parties. He believes that, no matter how strong and popular the Islamic parties may become, the possibility is remote of them securing an absolute majority in the National Assembly. The only viable threat could emerge from the non-religious parties, like the PPP and PML-N. He is also aware that despite having a bad experience with the democratic regimes, under Nawaz and Benazir, the public still would prefer a democratic government provided that the new leadership shows more resolve and character. Therefore, it was natural for him to favour the religious parties and

marginalise the non-religious parties.

The tribal candidates of non-religious parties in NWFP and Baluchistan were handicapped as a result of the graduation clause whereas the religious parties were allowed to field candidates having madrasa graduate degrees. Also, by implicating Benazir and Nawaz in corruption cases, and exiling them out of Pakistan, Musharraf rendered their parties disoriented. The absence of top leadership, led to these parties being directionless while the second rung leadership lacked the charisma to lift the spirits of the two parties.

### *Anti-Americanism and Curbs on Madaris*

Anti-Americanism: After 9/11 and the US attack on Afghanistan, anti-Americanism in Pakistan has increased dramatically. The MMA has been very vocal in its opposition to the US war in Afghanistan; its increasing interference in Pakistan's domestic affairs; its 'anti-Islam' posture; and the partisan stand on the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Analyst Brigadier Shaukat Qadir said that the American actions in Afghanistan gave rise to anti-American feelings in the region. He observed, "This is going to increase and I gravely apprehend [sic] that if the Americans keep acting unilaterally against Muslims that they are threatening to do in Iraq and Iran, then there may be a greater upsurge of this feeling of being differentiated against. You cannot have Israel doing what it is doing and expect the rest of the Muslim world to suffer under the American war against terrorism."<sup>18</sup>

Curbs on Madaris: The crackdown waged by Musharraf on the jihadis and madaris after 9/11 fuelled anti-military and anti-US sentiments. Musharraf was forced to take such actions at the behest of US which, eventually, helped religious parties unite. Though Musharraf has proposed a range of recommendations pertaining to madaris' curriculum, fund-raising, madaris recruitment among others, he has had little success. Musharraf is also not very keen on pressurising the *ulema* on this issue because they run the jihadi factories that feed terrorist operations in Jammu and Kashmir, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Through his cosmetic crackdown on the jihadis, Musharraf was able to show to the US his sincerity in curbing religious extremism; and, later, by releasing most of the detainees he managed to pacify religious groups and use them in the April referendum. The MMA forged a unity amongst the religious parties out of the crackdown.

### *MMA's Unity and Effective Cadre Network*

Unity: The most striking aspect of the success of MMA has been its cohesiveness. It includes Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani-led *Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan* (JUP) belonging to the Bareilvi Sunni sect, pro-Taliban Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman's *Jamiat*

*Ulema-e-Islam* (JUI-F) and Sami-ul Haq's *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* (JUI-S) both Deobandi Sunni groups, Sajjid Mir's *Jamiat-e-Ahle Hadith*, Allama Sajjid Naqvi's *Pakistan Islami Tehrik* formerly *Tehriq-e-Jafaria* (TeJ) of the Shia sect and last and influential Qazi Hussain Ahmed's *Jamaat-e-Islami* (JI). Noorani is the leader and Qazi Hussain, deputy leader of the MMA.

The coming together of Shias, Sunnis, Bareilvis and Deobandis has surprised many. After tasting electoral success for their unity, they now look to strengthen it further by keeping the alliance together. In an interview, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, said, "Those who came into MMA have benefited from it. Only a fool will leave it now."<sup>19</sup> The positive aspect of the MMA's unity is that it has risen above sectarianism and has agreements between allies on most issues. The two schools of thought, Deobandi and Bareilvi originated from Deoband and Bareilly respectively, in the State of Uttar Pradesh in India.<sup>20</sup> Both are Sunni. But the difference between the schools is that the former is puritan, believes in simple ceremonies and lays stress on morals and principles. The latter is more inclusive, follows sufism and celebrates *urs* (death anniversary) unlike the Deobandis. The basic theological divide between the two is over the role of the Prophet and the status of hereditary saints. The Deobandis tend to demystify the roles of saints and the Bareilvis regard saints as intermediaries to communicate with the Prophet. The two factions of JUI are followers of the Deobandi school of thought and the followers of JUP belong to the Bareilvi school.<sup>21</sup>

The JI, which consists of the urban educated and professional business elite, is considered to be more orthodox than the two schools but more modernist than the Deobandi school. The JI works as a bridge between different sects which are now together under the MMA. The *Jamaiat-e-Ahle Hadith* is associated with the Wahabi sect which follows the Prophet's tradition and not any particular school of thought as such. It seeks guidance from the Saudi Sharia system. The lone Shia party in the MMA is *Islami Tehrik Pakistan* (ITP). The Deobandis and *Jamaiat-e-Ahle Hadith* consider Shias as infidel.<sup>22</sup>

This is not the first time that the religious parties have patched up their differences and formed a common front. It is the first time, however, that they have allied for electoral purposes. On two previous occasions, it was an issue-based alliance. The *Milli Yakjehti Council* (MYC) was formed in 1995 to curb sectarian conflicts in Pakistan which, eventually, derailed due to JUI (F) and JUI (S) differences. In 2000, the *Muttahida Inqilabi Mahaz* (MAM) was established to protest against Western ideological and cultural invasions.<sup>23</sup> Through a unified forum, the MMA constituent parties were able to pool votes in one basket. This upset the calculations of PPP and PML-N.

Cadre Network: The MMA had chalked out a sound strategy for the elections, with its strong cadre network. In the elections, madaris became fully functional. They provided not only street power but also the organisational support to the MMA. According to a survey, there are 6,000 madaris in Pakistan. Of these, 2,333 belong to the Deobandi school of thought; 1,625 to the Barelvi sect; 224 to the Ahle Hadith; and 163 to the Shia sect. In addition, 815 are affiliated with *Jamiat-ul-Islam* (F); 58 with *Jamiat-ul-Islam* (S); 120 with *Jamiat-ul- Pakistan*; 67 with *Sipah-e-Sahaba*, 119 with *Tahrik-e-Jafria*; and 2,969 miscellaneous.<sup>24</sup> Khurram Dastgir Khan says, “These madaris have filled a need created by rising unemployment and the collapse of state education. There is no entry test, no fees, and room and board is free. For an unemployed, indigent teenager willing to undergo the rigmarole, enrolment in a madaris provides an ascriptive dignity, prospect of employment in new mosques and in the burgeoning mehfil/dars industry, in addition to spiritual rewards and salvation.”<sup>25</sup> The cadres of non-religious parties were no match for these devoted jihadis.

*Ideological Bankruptcy of Non-Religious Parties and MMA’s Political Strategy in Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan*

Ideological Bankruptcy: Over the years, the disenchantment of the public with political parties, especially with PPP and PML-N, increased because of widespread corruption, embezzlement, nepotism, and mis-governance. Their performance between 1998-1999 was poor. In the 2002 elections, they failed to take on stand on issues like Musharraf’s controversial referendum, US attack on Afghanistan, Legal Framework Order (LFO), restoration of democracy and one-man-one-post policy. Such lack of character undermined their credentials and strengthened the *locus standi* of the mullahs. Rasul Rais, says, “ Never have the people of Pakistan voted in such large numbers for the religious parties before... Again, this change is not confined to the old, ignorant, rural people, but young, urban and professional class seems to be tilting toward the religious parties... But the trend is visible and, if the mainstream political parties continue to ignore the fundamental issues of good governance, good state and society, the general public including the middle class may embrace the fold of religious parties.”<sup>26</sup>

The MMA, on the other hand, has been very vocal against America’s high-handed tactics in Afghanistan and its interference in Pakistan’s policies. It continued to maintain pressure on Musharraf on these issues and condemned the US bombing of Iraq in which several innocent civilians were killed. Compared to the issue-driven campaign of the MMA, the conduct of the non-religious parties has been vacuous and spineless.

MMA's Political Strategy: In contrast to Maulana Qazi Hamidullah who said that the mission of *Mutahidda Majlis-i-Amal Pakistan* (MMAP) is not to rule but to enforce the Shariat laws in the country,<sup>27</sup> the MMA donned a rather liberal robe before the elections. They called for equal rights for minorities; expressed are willingness to settle the Kashmir issue through peaceful dialogue under the Simla Accord; and design a cordial and non-confrontationist relationship with the West, especially the US. MMA's secretary general and party's prime ministerial candidate, Fazlur Rehman said, "Pakistan and its people have a clear policy on Kashmir as they want its solution according to the UN resolutions and under the spirit of the Simla Agreement."<sup>28</sup> The MMA was aware of the popular perception its political agenda and it was important not to highlight their hidden agenda during the elections. Its election manifesto, too, was prepared with care by avoiding controversial issues such as implementation of the Shariat, educational segregation, status of women, etc.<sup>29</sup> It also chose not to attack Musharraf too much in the early stages, when the military was playing a dominant role in masterminding the elections. MMA's accommodative approach pleased Musharraf and he showed a noticeable preference to them. From April 2002 onwards, Musharraf and the religious parties realised how important it was for both to have an understanding. This has led to the MMA and its madaris getting exemption from several curbs, which were imposed on the other parties. For instance, none of the non-religious parties was allowed to hold any public rally in Rawalpindi whereas MMA and its constituent parties were exempted from such a prohibition.

Baluchistan: The success of the MMA in Baluchistan can be attributed to two factors. First, after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan and its subsequent breakup, there was an ideological vacuum which the Baluch nationalists failed to fill. This split the Baluch nationalists and there was no single platform to assemble and persue their political objectives. Second, the Baluch or the secular nationalists also failed to take any stand whatsoever on the US attack on Afghanistan. As a result, they ended up appearing to be pro-Musharraf on several issues.<sup>30</sup> MMA's anti-US rhetoric paid rich dividends in Baluchistan and it was successful in projecting the alliance against Musharraf's US policies.

NWFP: The ethnic factor was efficiently exploited by MMA not only in Baluchistan but also in NWFP. MMA won most of its seats in Pakhtun-dominated areas and lost out in the non-Pukhtun areas of Abbotabad, Haripur and Manshera in NWFP. Likewise, in the Pakhtun areas of Baluchistan like Zhob, Pishin, and Loralai, MMA achieved better results. In Baluch-dominated areas, Baluch nationalists along with PML-Q made their presence felt.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, in MMA's victory the ethnic factor became an important element, rather than the religious factor. The US drive against Pakhtuns in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom was vehemently criticized by the Pukhtun elements in JUI (F) and JI, within MMA. They organized massive rallies opposing US strikes against Pukhtuns, who in return considered MMA as champions of the cause of the Afghan Pakhtuns.

Pakhtun sympathy for the MMA also developed because Pakhtun nationalists were seen more as anti-Taliban and pro-American. This explains why even PPP (Aftab Sherpao) won more seats than the Awami National Party (ANP).

Sindh: MMA's election strategy in Sindh had a different approach. It won five out of 20 NA seats but importantly, was a close runner-up in the remaining 15 seats. Its successes in Karachi and Hyderabad had two reasons. First, MMA managed to exploit the sentiments of the people against the US war on Afghanistan and excessive interference in Pakistan's internal matters. Second, it successfully utilised the anti-incumbency factor against the MQM.<sup>32</sup>

The MMA focused its entire election campaign to highlight local issues such as health, education, civic concerns and *bhatta* (extortion). Which impressed thousands of shopkeepers and businessmen. The MQM leadership, which was seen as being more pro-Musharraf, was severely hit by the people's apathy towards them. There were reports about their ill-planned political campaigns and lack of mobilisation of voters. Also, the entire MQM political campaign was locked in an inter-factional (Altaf and Haqiqi) feud.<sup>33</sup> On the one hand, MMA managed to expose the failure of MQM in delivering the goods to the public; and on the other, it used its strong cadre for mobilising people on the polling day and in organising rallies.

### *Doctored Referendum*

There was resentment over the April 30 referendum which Musharraf held to sustain himself for another five-year term. Before going into the general elections, Musharraf wanted to consolidate his position and guard against any political ouster, which victorious anti-military political parties may have engineered. The referendum was questioned on Constitutional grounds and revealed that Musharraf was unwilling to relinquish his position and sought to legitimise military's re-entry into active mainstream politics. Presently, there are some petitions pending in the courts, which questions the legality of the referendum.<sup>34</sup> Criticism has been leveled by all parties who have labeled it as unconstitutional as there is no provision in the Constitution for holding referendum for the office of the president.<sup>35</sup> The Human Rights

Commission of Pakistan also questioned it, and discribed the voters as ‘captive voters’.<sup>36</sup> Musharraf’s credibility suffered a severe dent which was exploited by the MMA. However, in June 2003, in a major setback to the opposition of Musharraf’s election through a referendum, the Lahore High Court rejected a petition filed by the Lawyer’s Forum and validated the referendum saying that it did not impinge upon any Constitutional provision.<sup>37</sup>

## **Prospects for Pakistan**

The rise of MMA in Pakistan is being viewed with apprehension. It could have far-reaching ramifications for Pakistan, both domestically and externally. It could lead the country to further Islamisation. MMA’s political agenda for Pakistan becomes more critical considering the frail state of Pakistan’s economy, spiraling poverty and low human development index. There is a strong demand from the international donors, including the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), for the government to increase its development spending and strengthen revenue enhancement policies. In such a situation, MMA’s vision of Pakistan’s economic upliftment could well be a hindrance. MMA’s stand on several other important issues could cast a shadow on Pakistan’s social, political and religious domains. Let us look at the following possible impact areas.

### *Introduction of Sharia in NWFP and Islamisation of the Legal System*

Sharia in NWFP: MMA runs the government in NWFP under Akram Khan Durrani. Since the party is in absolute majority, it has started implementing its agenda in the province. According to *Nawa-i-Waqt*, the NWFP Assembly passed a resolution with a big majority asking the provincial government to ban bank interest and revert to Friday as the weekly holiday. The resolution also called for the implementation of the recommendations of the Council for Islamic Ideology (CII) in the province. The recommendations lay down that no tax should be levied on weapons, houses and vehicles. The daily *Din* wrote that, though PML-Q and PML-N members opposed the Friday resolution, they were in agreement on removal of *riba* from bank transactions. The Urdu daily, *Jang* reported that the NWFP government had set up a committee to recommend the enforcement of such Islamic punishment as stoning to death, amputation of limbs and death penalty for blasphemy and consumption of liquor.<sup>38</sup> There were reports that the Basant celebration, held every year with fanfare, could be banned from 2004. Qazi Hussain Ahmed of the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) and MNA’s Samina Naveed also urged the government to frame laws at the earliest for banning Basant celebrations.<sup>39</sup>

Durrani has also constituted a 14-member, *Nifaz-e-Shariat Council* (NSC), to help his government implement the Islamic rules and reforms recommended by CII in the government departments. For the purpose, a 'Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice' is also being set up. However, according to Articles 145-152 of the Constitution of Pakistan, the National Assembly has the overriding authority of reversing legislation of any provincial assembly.<sup>40</sup> As expected, notwithstanding any criticism that the Islamisation drive may invite, NWFP passed a bill on June 2, 2003, to implement sharia or Islamic law in the province. On the Taliban model, a bill is to be introduced to set up a Hasba (Department for Accountability) and a department to promote religious tolerance. In NWFP, directives have also been given to bureaucrats to pray five times a day and follow the sharia laws. The provincial government has already ordered curbs on the sale of music and videos, destruction of posters featuring women and advertising western products and the imposition of complete ban on alcohol. Medical examination of women by male doctors, male coaches for women athletes and male journalists covering women's sports have been prohibited.<sup>41</sup> At the centre, the MMA has continued to exercise pressure on the government on Friday as a holiday, educational segregation, waiver of fees for arms licenses, condemnation of US policies and release of Pakistani prisoners from Afghanistan.<sup>42</sup>

The introduction of sharia in NWFP is said to have brought it on a collision course with Islamabad.<sup>43</sup> Although the National Assembly can reverse any legislation passed in any of the provinces, whether it will choose to do so is to be seen. Musharraf, has thus far taken a non-confrontationist approach on the Islamisation drive in NWFP. If he has assailed the so-called Islamisation drive, he has also asked for drawing a distinction between Islamisation and Talibanisation. He said that the implementation of sharia should not cause any alarm to the world because it is not the perception of the vast majority of Pakistanis also, sharia is quite misunderstood in the world.<sup>44</sup> It seems Musharraf is still not willing to take measures against the strong NWFP government. If he dissolves the NWFP Assembly it would mean undermining his own credibility and the system he has put in place.

Legal System: Islamisation of the Pakistani legal system in accordance with sharia is not a new phenomenon. In 1979, during Zia's tenure, four ordinances, also known as the Hudood ordinances were issued. These prescribed punishment according to Islamic law such as death penalty, flogging, amputation of limbs, stoning for theft, adultery, and blasphemy.<sup>45</sup> Apart from the Supreme Court and High Court, there is the Federal Sharia Court (FSC) which administers Islamic law in Pakistan. The FSC, which established a parallel judicial system in May 1980, was a serious blow to the supremacy of parliament. Article 230-D of the Constitution empowers the

Court to strike down any statute law, which may be deemed repugnant to the injunctions of Islam.<sup>46</sup> In 1991, Enforcement of Sharia Act was passed which made sharia the supreme law of the land. The Act said, “The sharia, that is to say the injunctions of Islam as laid in the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah, shall be the supreme law of Pakistan.”<sup>47</sup>

The MMA has started to move on its agenda on sharia implementation, in the NWFP. In the National Assembly (NA), it is not in a majority and has taken the moral high ground by keeping the pressure on Musharraf and the Jamali government for the implementation of sharia. Shah Ahmed Noorani has said, “Pakistan came into being in the name of Islam. Its Constitution is also Islamic. Therefore, its Islamic identity and 1973 Constitution should be restored.”<sup>48</sup> The MMA has urged the Government to strengthen the FSC through Constitutional amendments and by inducting more *ulemas* to run the Court. But the MMA’s ambitious agenda can be implemented only with NA’s approval. This is where the litmus test lies for the MMA. Musharraf and the Jamali government, on the other hand, would be according priority to economic issues over political ones, but the political agenda of the MMA could end up affecting the economic agenda of the government as well.

#### *Interest-free Economy and Land Reforms*

Interest-free Economy: On the economic front, all that the 15-point election manifesto of the MMA offered was “to create an independent, just and humane economic system where citizens will be provided opportunities for halal jobs, business and investments.”<sup>49</sup> By ‘halal jobs’ MMA meant an interest-free economy wherein ‘*riba*’ or interest is abolished from all business transactions. The *riba*-free transaction is an old practice which Zia sought to introduce by ‘Islamising’ the economy. He had imposed the pre-quranic medieval forms of *mudaraba* (profit sharing), *muzaraa* (share-cropping), *zakat* (charity), *ushr* (tithe), and *riba* (usury). Islamic or interest-free banking is being developed on the basis of the medieval concept of *mudaraba*.<sup>50</sup>

In November 1991, the FSC declared that all interest-based financial transactions would be considered unIslamic and illegal. Although, neither the Benazir nor the Sharif government implemented the order, yet on December 23, 1999, the Sharia Appellate bench of the Supreme Court ordered the Government to implement the 1991 order by June 30, 2001. Acting on the directives of the Apex court, Musharraf set up a Law Ministry Task Force and a Commission on the Transformation of the Financial System (CTFS) to look into the Islamisation of economy.<sup>51</sup> The Government order of June 30, 2000 read, “The Government is determined to eliminate *riba* from the financial system by June 30, 2001. The present regime is committed to Islamise the economy and enforce all fiscal laws in consonance with the Holy Quran and the

Sunnah. It is hoped that that government will be successful in transforming all fiscal laws, whether relating to the government, commercial banking or foreign transactions, in accordance with the provisions of the sharia.”<sup>52</sup>

Some reports have already been compiled on the issue of ‘interest-free economy’.<sup>53</sup> Qazi Hussain Ahmed said in an interview, “There is no problem in introducing a *riba*-free economy. All we have to do is implement those reports.”<sup>54</sup> The MMA will continue to pressurise the government on this issue and a fair amount of progress, if not implementation, can be expected. How far these measures benefit Pakistan, given its current economic vulnerabilities, is debatable.

Land Reforms: Since 1947, influential feudal families have gained enormous benefits through their connection with the military and bureaucracy. They have thwarted all attempts at land reforms in Pakistan. T. Sreedhar writes, “According to Census of Agriculture 1990, in Punjab province only one per cent land owners possess 26 per cent of the total cultivable land which is 26.6 million acres. Few from this class can actually be defined as growers and tillers as they are all feudal lords employing landless farmers and keeping them as serfs.”<sup>55</sup> Influential feudals have played a dominant role in politics and have earned favours through backing one party or the other in elections. Twice, the government tried to introduce land reforms: in 1959 (under Ayub Khan) and 1972 (under Z. Bhutto). But it did not have any major effect.<sup>56</sup>

The MMA manifesto provides for ‘the abolishment of all chronic and new feudal systems with forfeiture of illegal wealth and its distribution among poor; and to provide lands to peasants and farmers for their livelihood; and guarantee reasonable prices for their produce.’<sup>57</sup> Pakistan Awami Tehriq says, “Feudalism and sardari as a system will be totally abolished and absentee landlordism banned. Through a process of land reforms, excess lands of over 50 acres per family will be taken over by the state without compensation and a minimum of 8 acres will be given to the landless tenants on easy terms. This will result in immense increase in agricultural production and will raise the standard of living of the rural population (which is 70 % of the total population) to a great extent. It will give a tremendous boost to the country’s economy as well.”<sup>58</sup>

The World Bank has also proposed an agenda for land reforms in Pakistan to raise agricultural productivity, reduce rural poverty and realize the full potential of economic growth. According to the report, two per cent of households own more than 40 acres of land and control 44 per cent of the land area. Collectively, large and very large farmers control 66 per cent of all the agricultural land.<sup>59</sup> Successive

governments have distributed state lands among landless peasants but at a very slow pace.<sup>60</sup> Qazi Hussain Ahmed, in an interview to *Dawn* had said, “MMA would disband all the Jagirdaris (big land ownerships) and carry out fresh land reforms to put a limit to land holdings in the country.”<sup>61</sup> This is one aspect of MMA’s agenda which could have a positive influence on the entire agriculture sector, including peasants and agricultural production. It may be instrumental in alleviating poverty and hardship in the rural areas, where the feudals can no longer exploit the tenants. However, getting such legislation passed in the NA is a big question. Feudals have their own political clout and would try their utmost to block any such measure, which impinges on their privileges.

### *Impact on Women, Education and NGOs*

Women: In Pakistan, women have been subject to discrimination in various forms. MMA’s political agenda, although claims to uplift the status of women, could further erode their socio-economic rights. In Pakistan, women were granted the right of franchise under the 1956 constitution, which was soon abrogated in 1958. The 1973 Constitution provided 20 reserved seats for women under Article 51(4). In the 2002 elections, reserved seats for women included 60 for the National Assembly, 17 for the Senate, 66 for provincial assemblies in Punjab, 29 in Sindh, 22 in NWFP and 11 in Baluchistan.<sup>62</sup> Ideologically, MMA is against women’s participation in political and public life. However, it is heartening to see promotion of women candidates in the National Assembly, despite MMA’s opposition to women representation. It seems the MMA gave priority to power over ideology. It should be mentioned here that 12 MMA women candidates were elected to the National Assembly, including Qazi Husain Ahmed’s daughter and Fazal-ur Rehman’s three sisters-in-law. Other women candidates were fielded for the provincial assemblies.

MMA so far has pursued a mixed policy on women’s issues. Hafiz Hashmat, MMA’s Minister for Women Development said, “ We want women to have the status given to them by Islam, as mothers, wives and sisters. But we will not force them to follow the Islamic code of behaviour. We will not use force but persuasion and education.”<sup>63</sup> This statement can be interpreted in multiple ways. It emphasizes the Islamic version of the status of women and creates a facade for the MMA’s progressive outlook.

The problem starts when one finds MMA prioritising implementation of the CII ideology. The CII recommendations provide: mandatory veil for women; veil-observing women should not be forced to submit photos for employment; women should not be asked to receive foreigners at airports; men’s entry should be banned

in female hospitals, especially gynecology wards; women should not go to male doctors nor get clothes stitched from male tailors; and family planning policy should be withdrawn as it is unIslamic and increasing population is not a burden on the economy.<sup>64</sup> Another facet of the issue is that JI has vowed to provide women basic military training and make the controversial Hudood Ordinance consonant with the teachings of the Holy Quran. Reports suggest that women would be given rifle training and JI would urge the government to arrange funds for such training.<sup>65</sup> It will be a huge challenge for the MMA to strike a balance between its ideology and the due role of women in a developed and progressive Islamic Pakistan. The MMA would have to weigh each and every CII recommendations in an objective and pragmatic manner.

Education: The MMA has a range of recommendations for Pakistan's educational system. At the top of the list is MMA's Shariat implementation programme which demands, among other issues, segregation of women in educational institutions. In December 2002, the MMA organized a convention for women to dispel fears of a imposition of Taliban-like code for women. At the convention, Qazi Hussain Ahmed said that while the MMA would give equal job opportunities to women, repeal discriminatory laws and abolish honour killings, the party would also ban co-education and establish separate educational institutions for women.<sup>66</sup> The logic was unconvincing. Qazi said, "The country, because of its defence and debt liabilities, already has very little to spend on education and effort should be to make maximum use of the limited money available."<sup>67</sup> If there is a financial crunch, it would better to continue with the current system rather than create new segregated institutions.

It should be noted that the banning of co-education did not openly feature in the MMA's manifesto. Such measures are a part of its hidden agenda. In an interview, Qazi handled the question very diplomatically, saying, "We haven't said that we'll take the girls out tomorrow. This is a gradual plan. When separate arrangements have been arranged, we'll implement it. This is not the MMA's demand but a demand of our women. Most women skip education because they do not like studying in co-educational institutions. And there are no alternative arrangements. What we spend on education is shameful."<sup>68</sup> The educational sector in Pakistan will come under pressure from the MMA in the days ahead. More than legislative diktats, social diktats will be enforced. Already on several occasions fundamentalist measures suggested by religious parties and groups have become a 'law' due to the fear factor. MMA has to guard against such fears of a Taliban-like rule becoming true.

NGOs: Regarding Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), MMA has called for streamlining those who have indulged in espionage and hurt Pakistani culture through

foreign funds and serve other interests. The MMA is also not comfortable with NGOs who vehemently oppose child labour in the football industry of Pakistan. It argues that NGOs that will help provide children with education, vocational training, and health services and most important create, conditions for better income for families, will be encouraged. NGOs, especially in NWFP and Baluchistan, have come under immense pressure. They have been labeled as pro-Western and asked to follow strict screening and registration processes. Hafiz Hashmat says, "The activities of NGOs will have to be monitored because of grassroots concerns about a hidden agenda that could undermine Islamic values and cultural traditions."<sup>69</sup> The curbs on NGOs could be very detrimental to Pakistan's development as they play an important role in providing necessary services in education, health, and other sectors, to compensate for the government's failure.

### *Opposition to Musharraf and Impetus to Democratic Norms*

Opposition to Musharraf: Musharraf has been under constant pressure on the issue of the one-man-one-post demand, Legal Framework Order (LFO), National Security Council and pro-US foreign policy stance. The MMA and the other opposition parties demand have asked for his resignation from the army chief's post to prove his sincerity and bonafides in restoring true democracy in Pakistan. The latest reports suggest that MMA has expressed its willingness to give August 14, 2003 as the deadline for laying down his uniform. This appears fairly ambitious.<sup>70</sup> The MMA accords top priority to the restoration of the 1973 Constitution and to the withdrawal of the controversial provisions in the LFO which it considers draconian. Article 58(2)(B) or the Eighth Amendment is a case in point. It was passed during Zia's regime in November 1985 but was repealed by the Sharif government in April 1997. The Article empowers the president to dissolve the National Assembly at his discretion, when in his opinion the functions of the government could not be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.<sup>71</sup> Musharraf again seeks to induct it in the Constitution and is reported to have ordered the Law Ministry to print new copies of the Constitution, with LFO 2002 as an 'integral part'.<sup>72</sup> Qazi Hussain Ahmed urged Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali to prevail upon Musharraf and seek parliament's approval. The LFO empowers Musharraf to remain president as well as army chief for five more years; and, dissolve parliament and sack prime ministers.<sup>73</sup> The MMA is pursuing the matter in cooperation with the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD). More than half of the parliamentarians have declared the LFO illegal. The Supreme Court eventually intervened and declared it will decide the issue.<sup>74</sup>

The NA has witnessed only three, that too paralysed sessions, till May 2003 after the October 2002 elections. The assembly has echoed slogans such as 'No

LFO', and 'Go Musharraf, Go'.<sup>75</sup> A perplexed Musharraf reacted to the pandemonium and said, "I will address only a civilized assembly because I do not want the world to develop the perception that we are not civilised (people)."<sup>76</sup> There were talks on deciding the fate of LFO through a referendum.<sup>77</sup> In an interesting development, the government-opposition Joint Constitutional Committee agreed to abolish 58 (2) (B) and to bring National Security Council under parliament. The Committee felt that if 58 (2) (B) were used to dismiss the government, then the same National Assembly would again elect the new prime minister and his cabinet through a confidence vote. President should not have such powers.<sup>78</sup>

With MMA's political clout gaining strength in the last few months due to the US attack on Iraq, Musharraf is beginning to feel the heat. He now has to counter MMA not only on domestic issues but also on external ones. The showdown between Musharraf and MMA and others is expected to further intensify in the next few weeks and months.

Impetus to Democratic Norms: The rise of MMA is certainly going to have far-reaching effects on Pakistan's troubled democracy. It would strengthen the democratic discourse which, after the ouster of Nawaz Sharif, and marginalisation of the mainstream parties, has received a serious blow from the military. The democratic opposition to Musharraf's machinations has been strengthened with the rise of the MMA, which is being seen as a viable political alternative to the PPPP and PML-N. Kalim Bahadur, former professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, believes, "The MMA is not going to be untouchable anymore. They are here to stay. This will also be helped by the fact that the military will never like Benazir and Nawaz to stage a come back in the foreseeable future."<sup>79</sup> Rasul Baksh Rais says, "It is not my argument that MMA is the best candidate for taking Pakistan to the destination of Western liberalism: quite the opposite. But like any other party they have the constitutional and moral right to compete for political power; and after winning elections, they have the right and responsibility to implement their agenda."<sup>80</sup>

#### *Intensification of Anti-Americanism and Jihadi Activities*

Anti-Americanism: The MMA has vociferously condemned US policies in Afghanistan and its aggression against Iraq. Anti-Americanism can be considered the determining factor in bringing the six-party alliance together. Although the MMA was formed in June 2002 in Aghora Khattak in NWFP much before the US campaign against Taliban started in 2002, the US attack on Afghanistan has provided a common ideological platform.<sup>81</sup>

Anti-US feeling has intensified in Pakistan since mid-2002, after a madrasa was bombed in Angoor Adda, inside Pakistan, in a shootout between a Pakistani soldier and US troops. A spurt in the hate-wave has come after the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) arrested and deported over 1200 Pakistani immigrants. According to the National Council of Pakistani Americans (NCPA), 167 more cases of deportation are pending in US courts and upto 2,00,000 Pakistanis are in the loop. Pakistani courts are helpless in providing any relief in the matter. Many Pakistanis are reported to be selling off their assets in the US and moving to Canada. Another hate-wave factor is that, out of 25 included in the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS), 23 are Muslim countries.<sup>82</sup> The interference of US, its forces and intelligence agencies in Pakistan has infuriated the Islamic parties. Qazi Hussain Ahmed said, "FBI has been given a free hand to conduct raids on any house, mosque or madaris and round up respectable citizens while Pakistani courts are helpless in offering any relief."<sup>83</sup>

Mushahid Hussain wrote in *Nawa-e-Waqt* (October 15, 2002), "It can be said that the election results are the first direct reaction against America's anti-Islam policies".<sup>84</sup> The *Jang* (October 12) reported, "The success of the MMA reflects the sentiments of the Pakistani people against America's anti-Islam policies. The people of Pakistan now want bold changes in the country's foreign policies."<sup>85</sup> MMA is mobilizing support for its anti-US campaign and there are reports that its Punjab unit chief, Hafiz Idris, was organising a massive anti-US rally. The alliance was also gearing to send its youth to fight against the US in Iraq, as they did in Afghanistan. He also said that the MMA demanded that US forces, including FBI personnel who were reported to be taking part in raids against Al Qaida militants hiding in Pakistan, should leave immediately.<sup>86</sup>

Reacting to the US attack on Iraq, the MMA organised 'million-man-march' all over Pakistan. They have carried out the marches in Karachi (March 1), Rawalpindi (March 9), Lahore (March 23), Peshawar (March 30), Quetta (April 2) and Multan (April 4). The MMA also declared March 28 as a countrywide protest day against the US invasion of Iraq.<sup>87</sup> The importance of these marches was amplified by the overwhelming participation of activists from non-religious parties, women and numerous organisations. In Lahore, an estimated 2,00,000 people flooded the streets. The entire country was being painted in anti-US colours and made Musharraf very nervous. Addressing a meeting he said, "We can talk to the US...but how can we convince them on our points when the whole country echoes with the slogans of jihad (against the US)."<sup>88</sup> The present hate-wave is expected to spread more as the

coalition forces close in on Iraq. In this regard the MMA can be a hindrance in US-Pakistan relations. The US Congressional Research Service Report (Update June 19, 2003) revealed that the US on its part is keeping a keen eye on the domestic political developments in Pakistan, while maintaining its relationship with Pakistan, as a key partner in the global war against terrorism.<sup>89</sup>

Jihadi Activities: The notion of 'Islam in Danger' has put Islamic countries on a collision course with the West, especially USA. The overthrow of Taliban from Afghanistan and US pressure on Pakistan to nail down the protesting jihadis drew the battle lines. In the October 2002 elections, the above-stated factors got public sympathy for the MMA. The religious parties have also given a call for jihad against the US in the Iraq crisis, which has echoes in Islamic states across the world. The agenda of MMA, which lays ample stress on the implementation of sharia and Islamisation of Pakistan, has 'jihad' as an effective political instrument. This has paid rich dividends. Musharraf himself has expressed his helplessness in calming down the temper of the mullahs crying for jihad against the US. MMA, with a sizable presence in the National Assembly and control over NWFP and Baluchistan, is rapidly painting Pakistan in jihadi colours. It would take a long time to fade.

#### *Decline in Sectarian Violence*

The coming together of parties belonging to different sects (Shia, Sunni, Deobandi, and Bareilvi) under a common banner is expected to reduce sectarian violence in Pakistan. They were 'tired of sectarian animosity'.<sup>90</sup> Figures on sectarian violence show that in 2001, 261 people died, in 154 incidents of sectarian violence. In 2002, in 63 such incidents 121 people lost their lives. In 2003 till March, a total of 8 incidents were reported in which 12 people were killed.<sup>91</sup> Abdul Malik of JI says, "We decided to put out our sectarian differences and fight for Islam as one unit in the face of the Western onslaught. The madrasa alliance was the beginning that culminated into the MMA's formation. It is a logical progression."<sup>92</sup> The crackdown and arrests that various groups in Pakistan had to face in the wake of 9/11 brought the religious parties and all sectarian groups together. They had a common enemy—the US and the pro-US military regime of Pakistan. Success in the elections has made the sectarian parties realise the benefits of pursuing common interests. The MMA has been successful in using the super glue—'Islam in Danger'—in bringing these parties together.

#### **Conclusion**

The graph of Islamisation in Pakistan, which has been sustained through state support since 1950s, dipped between 1988 and 1996. After 1999, Musharraf and

his military regime along with the ISI, have played an important role in the rise of the clerics. There is no reason to believe that this role will be abandoned. The military, since the 1970s has shown a visible tilt towards religious parties. Its opposition to non-religious parties, PPP in particular, has been reaffirmed. This, therefore, strengthens the argument that state sponsorship of jihadi activities will continue and the state will use it more and more as a tool in Kashmir, Afghanistan and elsewhere. The Pakistan military needs the jihadis to further its foreign policy agenda.

As long as his regime is not threatened, Musharraf may not be too eager to confront the MMA in the near future. Since his primary goal is regime survival and personal longevity as President and army chief, he would manipulate rules and laws even if that benefits the mullahs. It is important to mention that in an Islamic state like Pakistan where religious undercurrents can become dormant, but never die, not only the military but the democratic governments also will look to exploit the 'Islamic card' to garner legitimacy and public support. However, it should be mentioned that whatever Islamic recommendations have been made so far by CII and the sharia court, none of the democratic regimes after 1988 have implemented them. In the new political environment in which the MMA has emerged as a new political force, all parties will be giving serious consideration to a long-term association with the MMA for political gains. The tussle between civil and military would continue and the religious parties will play a vital role in tilting the balance in favour of one or the other side. Such dual-utility of the MMA would enhance its political longevity.

The challenge for Musharraf and his regime would be, how far can they accommodate the Islamisation agenda of MMA. MMA's vision for Pakistan would impact on several issues. Its Islamisation drive in NWFP has come into conflict with Islamabad. Extreme measures or Talibanisation would disturb Islamabad, but not ring alarm bells there as Islamabad also wants to avoid political turmoils, which may be exploited by PPP and PML-N. Musharraf's tolerance of the MMA agenda in NWFP comes from his understanding that the MMA would certainly realise the need to maintain good relationship with him and therefore, not take the confrontation to a stage that would threaten the military regime.

He also understands that no matter how threatening the mullahs may become, the military can still nail them down at will, without evoking any significant protest from any quarter. The same cannot be done if there is a strong democratic government led by PPP and PML-N in Islamabad.

The MMA needs the military and *vice versa*. It is, however, a complex matter to explain concretely why MMA has continued to maintain an offensive stance towards Musharraf despite his supportive manoeuvres that helped the party in staging a historic victory. Perhaps, MMA will draw a rubicon it will not cross to make Musharraf feel threatened. Similarly, Musharraf may avoid any confrontation to keep the neo-political system or 'sustainable democracy' intact. Musharraf and MMA, have allowed each other considerable political space without compromising their basic stands on contentious issues. Such a relationship, in all likelihood, would continue to grow. Musharraf will be least bothered with any measure or activity of MMA like implementation of sharia or opposition to US, unless it begins to jeopardize his regime. Besides, the presence of jihadis also gives Musharraf a negotiating card with the US. By tolerating the MMA and keeping them politically alive as a possible alternative for Pakistan, Musharraf is adroitly passing on a message to the US that the non-military option would be much worse.

The MMA on the other hand has to understand that in order to have a national base and country-wide support for future political purposes, has to be more balanced in its stand on issues such as women, education, NGOs and the economy. Its window of opportunity would close if they have 'Talibanised' orientations. They have scored points by sending 12 women to the parliament. But they still need to allay the fears of women who feel that MMA has a Taliban-like agenda for them.

Mainstream parties such as PPP and PML-N would be kept on the by-lines by Musharraf. There are very slim chances of Benazir and Nawaz making a comeback. The likely course of action for the two parties may be to maintain the pressure on Musharraf under the ARD banner on points like the LFO, and NSC. Ironically, their national political base and previous performances make Musharraf wary of making any compromises with them. The way PPP and PML-N conduct their activities in the current political space available for them would determine not only their future, but also the political utility and longevity of MMA.

**List of Acronyms**

<b>ANP</b>	Awami National Party
<b>ARD</b>	Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy
<b>CII</b>	Council for Islamic Ideology
<b>CTFS</b>	Commission on the Transformation of the Financial System
<b>FBI</b>	Federal Bureau of Investigation
<b>FSC</b>	Federal Sharia Court
<b>IJI</b>	Islami Jamhoori Ittehad
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>INS</b>	US Immigration and Naturalisation Service
<b>ISI</b>	Inter Services Intelligence
<b>JI</b>	Jamaat-e-Islami
<b>JUH</b>	Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind
<b>JUI</b>	Jamiat-ul Islam
<b>JUP</b>	Jamiat-ul-Pakistan
<b>LeT</b>	Lashkar-e-Toiba
<b>UJC</b>	United Jihad Council
<b>LFO</b>	Legal Framework Order
<b>MDM</b>	Muttahida Deeni Mahaz
<b>MMA</b>	Muttahida Majlis-e Amal
<b>MQM</b>	Muttahida Qaumi Movement
<b>MQM</b>	Mohajir Qaumi Movement
<b>MRD</b>	Movement for the Restoration for Democracy
<b>PDA</b>	Pakistan Democratic Alliance
<b>PIF</b>	Pakistan Islamic Front
<b>IJM</b>	Islami Jamhoori Mahaz
<b>LeJ</b>	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi
<b>NCPA</b>	National Council of Pakistani Americans
<b>NGO</b>	Non Governmental Organizations
<b>NSC</b>	National Security Council
<b>NSC</b>	Nifaz-e-Shariat Council
<b>NSEERS</b>	National Security Entry-Exit Registration System
<b>PAT</b>	Pakistan Awami Tehrik
<b>PML-N</b>	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz Sharif)
<b>PML-Q</b>	Pakistan Muslim League (Qaid-e-Azam)
<b>PPP</b>	Pakistan Peoples Party

<b>PPP(S)</b>	Pakistan Peoples Party (Aftab Sherapo)
<b>PPPP</b>	Pakistan Peoples Party (Parliamentarian)
<b>SSP</b>	Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan
<b>NWFP</b>	North West Frontier Province
<b>TeJ</b>	Tehrik-e-Jafaria
<b>TNSM</b>	Tanzeem-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi
<b>UJC</b>	United Jihad Council
<b>WB</b>	World Bank

## **Annexure-2**

### **MMA Manifesto**

Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) has released its 15-point manifesto. The detailed party programme would be made public later.

The main points of the manifesto are as under:

1. To revive fear of God, affection to the Prophet (PBUH) and service to people with particular emphasis on government officials and cabinet members.
2. To make Pakistan a true Islamic welfare state to ensure justice to people and eradicate corruption whatsoever.
3. To ensure provision of bread, clothes, shelter, education, jobs and marriage expenses to all citizens.
4. To protect basic human rights (life, property and honour) of citizens.
5. To create an independent, just and humane economic system where citizens will be provided opportunities for halal jobs, business and investments.
6. To ensure uniform and quick justice to every citizen, from the president to a layman.
7. To develop a God fearing, helping, brave and protecting police system.
8. To get the entire society literate within ten years to enable everyone to know one's rights and responsibilities.
9. To ensure compulsory and free of charge education till matriculation and provide opportunities to meritorious students and scholars for advanced research.
10. To protect rights of women guaranteed by Islam and restoration of their honour and prestige.
11. To abolish all chronic and new feudal systems with forfeiture of illegal wealth and its distribution among poor.

12. To provide lands to peasants and formers for their livelihood and guarantee reasonable prices to their produce.
13. To protect provincial autonomy and district governments, taking care of backward areas and classes and taking special steps to get them at par with developed areas.
14. To get the country and people rid of influence of imperialistic forces and their local agents.
15. To extend moral, political and diplomatic help and support to all suppressed with particular emphasis on Kashmiris, Palestinians, Afghans and Chechens.

Source: [http://mma.org.pk/the\\_party/manifesto/](http://mma.org.pk/the_party/manifesto/)

### Annexure-3

#### Latest Party Positions in National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies

Political Parties	NA	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Baluchistan
Pakistan Muslim League (QA)	115	67	14	8	15
Pakistan Peoples Party	81	63	51	8	2
Parliamentarians	58	9	8	52	14
Muttahidda Majlis-e-Amal Pakistan	14	0	2	7	1
Independent	19	38	0	4	0
Pakistan Muslim League (N)	17	0	31	1	0
Muttahida Qaumi Movement	14	12	12	0	5
National Alliance	3	3	0	0	0
Pakistan Muslim League (J)	5	0	9	0	0
Pakistan Muslim League (F)	2	0	0	10	0
Pakistan Peoples Party (Sherpao)	1	0	0	1	0
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf	1	0	0	0	0
Pakistan Awami Tehreek	1	1	0	0	0
Pakistan Muslim League (Z)	1	0	1	0	0
Mohajar Qaumi Movement Pakistan	1	0	0	0	3
Jamhoori Wattan Party	1	0	0	0	2
Pakistan Muslim League (Jinnah)	0	3	0	0	0
Awami National Party	0	0	0	8	0
Baluchistan National Movement	0	0	0	0	3
Pakistan Paktoonkhawa Milli Awami Party	0	0	0	0	2
Baluchistan National Democratic Party	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>48</b>

Source: *The Herald*, November and December 2002.

#### Acknowledgement

The author thanks the two anonymous referees for their comments and suggestions on the paper.

## References/End Notes

- 1 MMA is also referred to as Mullah-Military Alliance in the media circles.
- 2 Jalal, Ayesha, *The State of Martial Rule*. 1990. Cambridge University Press; Cambridge. p. 214.
- 3 Kukreja, Veena, *Contemporary Pakistan: Political Processes, Conflicts and Crises*. 2003. Sage Publications; New Delhi. p. 163.
- 4 Abbas, Hassan, *Poleaxe or Politics of the Eighth Amendment 1985-1997*. 1997. Watandost; Lahore. p. 34.
- 5 *Ibid*, p.164.
- 6 Begum Nusrat Bhutto vs. the Chief of Army Staff, etc. PLD, 1977, Supreme Court, pp. 657-763. In Hasan Askari Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan*. 1988. Konark Publishers. New Delhi. p. 233.
- 7 International Crisis Group (ICG) Asia Report, No. 36, July 29, 2002, p. 9.
- 8 There was a change in the nomenclature and *Parliamentarian* was suffixed to PPP to avoid disqualification from contesting the elections.
- 9 Case in Point. *The Herald*. December 2002, p. 20. Also see Annexure-3 for detailed election results.
- 10 Strategic Foresight Group. *Window on Pakistan: Rise of Hardliners*. *Times of India*. New Delhi. October 21, 2002.
- 11 *Ibid*.
- 12 Shamim-ur-Rehman, "Did Govt. Strike Deal with MMA?" at <http://www.dawn.com/2002/12/30/top6.htm>.
- 13 *Ibid*.
- 14 ICG Asia Report, No. 49, March 20, 2003, p. 15.
- 15 For details see "Pakistan's Militant Islamic Groups", at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/1758534.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1758534.stm). Also see Pak Court Sets Free Jaish Chief Azhar. *Sunday Times of India*. December 15, 2002.
- 16 Speaking at Hotel Oberoi, New Delhi on 'Future of Pakistan', October 30, 2002.
- 17 Interview with the Author. February 10, 2003.
- 18 Qadir, Shaukat, "Pakistani Islamists Stage Anti-US Demonstration", January 3, 2003 at <http://www.naviquest.com/812313459.htm>.
- 19 Khan, M. Ilyas, Interview with Qazi Hussain Ahmed. *The Herald*. November 2002. p. 56.
- 20 For detailed information on Islamic groups and movements see Talmiz Ahmad. *An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Groups and Movements in India*. 2001. Author's Publications.
- 21 ICG Asia Report, No. 49, no. 14, pp. 5-6.
- 22 *Ibid*.
- 23 *Ibid*.
- 24 Ahmed, Mutahir, "MMA's victory: Implications for Pakistan" at <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/oct2000-weekly/nos-20-10-2002/pol1.htm>
- 25 Khan, Khurram Dastgir, "The Coming Theocracy" at <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/nov2002-daily/02-11-2002/oped/o2.htm>.

- 26 Rais, Rasul Baksh, Rise of Religious Parties. *The News*. October 19, 2002 at [www.jang.com.pk/thenews/oct2002-daily/19-10-2002/oped/opinion.htm](http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/oct2002-daily/19-10-2002/oped/opinion.htm)
- 27 “MMA to Enforce Shariat Laws” at [www.dawn.com/2002/10/17/nat8.htm](http://www.dawn.com/2002/10/17/nat8.htm).
- 28 “MMA to Fulfill Pledges Made to World: Leaders Assure Diplomats” at <http://www.dawn.com/2002/10/24/top2.htm>.
- 29 See Annexure-2.
- 30 Mutahir Ahmed, no. 24.
- 31 Qazi, Reza Rehman Khan, “The Political Economy of MMA’s Victory” at <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/oct2002-weekly/nos-20-10-2002/pol1.htm#6>
- 32 Askari, Hussain, Another Muttahida. *The Herald*. November 2002. p. 48.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Reddy, B. Murlidhar, Musharraf’s Case Hearing on April 22. *The Hindu*. April 17, 2002.
- 35 “PML Launches Drive Against Referendum” at <http://www.dawn.com/2002/04/13/nat3.htm>.
- 36 ICG Asia Report, No.10. p. 20.
- 37 Varma, K.J.M., Musharraf can Continue as Army Chief rules HC. *Economic Times*. June 12, 2003.
- 38 “Back to Friday as Holiday”, Nuggets from the Urdu Press, March 3, 2003, at <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/nuggets.htm>.
- 39 For analyses see Khaled Ahmed, “Will Qazi Hussain Ahmed Stop Basant Next Year?” at [www.thefridaytimes.com/main31.htm](http://www.thefridaytimes.com/main31.htm). Also see “MPA for Ban on Basant” at <http://www.dawn.com/2003/02/04/nat14.htm>
- 40 The Mullahs and the Military. International Crisis Group. Asia Report No. 49. no. 14, pp. 29-30.
- 41 “Pak Province Votes to Enforce Islamic Law” at [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/cms/cms.dll/html/uncomp/articleshow?msid=2856](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/cms/cms.dll/html/uncomp/articleshow?msid=2856). June 3, 2003.
- 42 Ibid
- 43 “Centre, NWFP Heading for Confrontation” at [www.dawn.com/2003/06/04/top2.htm](http://www.dawn.com/2003/06/04/top2.htm).
- 44 “President Hints at Giving up Army Office: Talibanization Won’t be Allowed” at [www.dawn.com/2003/06/23/top1.htm](http://www.dawn.com/2003/06/23/top1.htm)
- 45 Kukreja, Veena no. 3, p.172.
- 46 Shakeer, Naeem, “The Blasphemy Law in Pakistan and its Impact” at <http://www.ahrchk.net/hrsolid/mainfile.php/1999vol09no07/1143/>
- 47 “Enforcement of Shari’ah Act 1991” Gazette of Pakistan, Extraordinary, Part I, June 18, 1991, at <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/legislation/1991/actXof1991.html>
- 48 “Noorani Asks for Restoration of 1973 Constitution” at [www.mma.org.pk/news/2002/10/Noorani.restoration.Constitution.Islamic.identity.country.shtml](http://www.mma.org.pk/news/2002/10/Noorani.restoration.Constitution.Islamic.identity.country.shtml)
- 49 For details of MMA’s election manifesto see Annexure-2.
- 50 Kukreja, Veena, no. 3. p. 171.
- 51 Raman, B., “Islamisation of Pakistan’s Economy” September 30, 2000, at <http://www.asiafeatures.com/business/0010,1505,03.html>.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Zafarullah Haq Committee, State Bank of Pakistan, and Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) have so far compiled the report on economic reforms.
- 54 Khan, M. Ilyas, no. 19.

- 55 Sreedhar , T., “Pakistan’s Economic Dilemma” June 18, 1998, at <http://www.nyu.edu/globalbeat/southasia/06181998sreedhar1.html>
- 56 Fazal, M. Abul, Feudalism. *The Nation* (Lahore). June 10 & 11,1997, cited in Veena Kukreja, no. 3, p. 81
- 57 See Annexure-2.
- 58 Siddiqi, Safdar Hasan, “Building Quaid-e-Azam’s Pakistan” at [http://www.insaf.org.pk/articles/articles\\_building\\_Quaid-e-Azams\\_Pakistan.htm](http://www.insaf.org.pk/articles/articles_building_Quaid-e-Azams_Pakistan.htm)
- 59 Poverty in Pakistan: Vulnerabilities, Social Gaps, and Rural Dynamics. World Bank Report. No. 24296. October 28, 2002.
- 60 Bokhari, Jawaid, “World Bank for Land Reforms” at <http://www.dawn.com/2002/11/13/ebr4.htm>.
- 61 “MMA Vows to Carry out Land Reforms”, <http://www.mma.org.pk/news/2002/10/mma.ows.carry.out.land.reforms.shtml>
- 62 Chaudhary, Ghani, “Women in Pak Elections” at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/2002/10/16/opinion/3.html>.
- 63 ICG Report, No. 49. p. 21.
- 64 Ibid. p. 24.
- 65 “JI to Give Women Military Training” at <http://www.mma.org.pk/news/2002/10/JI>
- 66 “Freedom of Voice” at <http://www.dawn.com/2002/10/22ed.htm>
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Khan, M. Ilyas, no.19, p. 58
- 69 ICG Asia Report. No. 49, p. 30.
- 70 “Govt-Opposition Agree on 58 (2) (B), NSC’ Fate” at <http://www.dailymailnews.com/200305/14/news/113.html>
- 71 See Hasan Abbas, no. 4, p-58.
- 72 Klasra, Rauf, “LFO Made Part of Constitution.” *The News*, at <http://www.jang-group.com/thenews/oct2002-daily/21-10-2002/main/main2.htm>
- 73 Asghar, Raja, “Govt, Opposition Still Poles Apart” at <http://www.dawn.com/2002/03/18/nat.htm>
- 74 “SC to Decide LFO Issue After Transfer of Power” at <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/nov2002-daily/22-11-2002/main/main6.htm>
- 75 Ashgar, Raja, “NA Prorogued Amid Protests: No Business on Third Day” at <http://www.dawn.com/2002/03/11/nat.htm> March 11, 2003.
- 76 Jamal, Nasir and Ashraf Mumtaz, “Musharraf says LFO part of Constitution: Address not Possible in Current Situation” at [dawn.com/2003/04/22/top1.htm](http://dawn.com/2003/04/22/top1.htm).
- 77 “Opposition Demands Referendum on LFO” at <http://www.dawn.com/2003/04/22/top4.htm>.
- 78 See M. Ilyas Khan, no. 19.
- 79 Interview with the author. New Delhi. February 2, 2003.
- 80 Rais, Rasul Baksh, no. 26.
- 81 M. Ilyas Khan, Inside the MMA. *The Herald*. November 2002. p. 46.
- 82 “If Iraq is Attacked, Can We be Far Behind, Ask Pakistanis” at [www.navakal.com/news/regional/200212236009.asp](http://www.navakal.com/news/regional/200212236009.asp)

- 83 “3 States on US Hit-list After Iraq says Qazi”, at [www.dailymailnews.com/sep2002/25/main/?news=7](http://www.dailymailnews.com/sep2002/25/main/?news=7). Also see, “Pakistan Next on US Hit list” at <http://www.jamaat.org/news/pr021203.html>.
- 84 Zia, Shiraz, Media. *The Herald*. November 2002. p. 26
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 “MMA to Send Youth to Iraq to Fight Against US” at <http://www.thenation.co.uk/kash.html>.
- 87 Mehmood, Amjad, “MMA Marchers Condemn Attack” at <http://www.dawen.com/2003.03/24/top3.htm>.
- 88 “The Net Closes on Pakistan” at [www.pakistan-facts.com/article.php?story=2003012-2091532637](http://www.pakistan-facts.com/article.php?story=2003012-2091532637).
- 89 Kronstadt, K. Alan, Pakistan’s Domestic political Developments: Issues for Congress. Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, June 19, 2003. p. CRS-6.
- 90 M. Ilyas Khan, no. 19. p. 55.
- 91 For detailed facts and figures on sectarian violence in Pakistan see <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/sect-killing.htm>
- 92 See ICG Report, no.49. p. 14.

Dr Ashutosh Misra is a Research Fellow at IDSA, specialising on Indo-Pakistan relations. He has a PhD from the Centre for International Politics, Organisation and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has served as Executive Assistant from 1999 to 2000 at the United Nations University’s Leadership Academy in Amman, Jordan where he coordinated the Academy’s conflict resolution and leadership programmes. Dr Misra has published articles and papers in several books, journals and newspapers in India and abroad.