

*Naeem Ahmed*

## **POLITICAL TRIUMPH OF ISLAMISTS IN PAKISTAN (2002-2008): CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND THEIR FUTURE**

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### **Abstract**

The political triumph of the Islamists in the 2002 elections has greatly impacted the politics and society of Pakistan. For the first time in the political history of Pakistan, the Islamists formed a comprehensive political alliance known as the Muttahida Majlis-i-Aml (MMA), which comprised all the major religious sects of Islam in Pakistan. The MMA gained substantial electoral victory and subsequently, played an effective role in the Pakistani politics and society. This resulted in the radicalisation of the society as well as the rise of terrorism in Pakistan as the MMA introduced various Islamisation policies and also patronised militant Jihadi groups. Although, the MMA collapsed a little before the February 2008 elections and faced a political defeat in the elections, the Islamists still play an important role in the Pakistani politics and society.

### **1. Introduction**

The political ascendance of the Muttahida Majlis-i-Aml (United Action Front – MMA)<sup>1</sup>, in the general elections in October 2002, significantly impacted the political landscape of Pakistan. For the first time in the political history of Pakistan, the Islamists gained an overwhelming electoral success. The unprecedented political victory of the Islamists also gave them an opportunity to significantly influence the domestic and foreign policy of the Musharraf regime.

The MMA's political victory in the 2002 elections could not be treated as Islamic revivalism, but a testament to Islamists' political power if they are united.

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<sup>1</sup> MMA is an alliance of six major religious-political parties of Pakistan – Jama'at-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-S), Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), Islami Tehrik-e-Pakistan (ITP), and Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith (JAH).

While no more in power now, the after-effects of their rule could be seen in Pakistani politics and society. They are largely responsible for the radicalisation of the Pakistani society. Moreover, the MMA's patronisation of the militant Jihadi and sectarian groups also contributed to the rise of terrorism within and outside Pakistan to a great extent. It must be noted that there are less chances that politics in Pakistan will take a liberal discourse in future mainly because of the potential strength of the Islamists and the vulnerabilities of the liberal-political parties, which are too weak to assert their position as an independent actor.

The paper analyses the political victory of the Islamists in the 2002 elections, its consequences on the politics and the society of Pakistan and the future prospects of the Islamists' role in the Pakistani politics. The paper is divided into six sections. The first section sets the introduction of the paper while the second section gives an overview of the constituent parties of the MMA. The third section analyses the causes of the political triumph of the MMA in the 2002 elections. The fourth section examines the consequences of the rise of political Islamists in Pakistan. The fifth section analyses the future prospects of the revival of the MMA and its impact on the Pakistani politics and society. And finally, the sixth section draws the conclusion of the paper.

## **2. A Brief History of Religious-Political Parties in Pakistan**

To assess the role of religious-political parties in Pakistan's politics, it is pertinent to understand their history, functions, and relationship to the state. Following is the brief history of the component parties of the MMA, which was composed of six religious-political parties belonging to all the major religious sects in Pakistan.

### **2.1 *Jama'at-e-Islami (JI)***

The Jama'at-e-Islami (JI) was established by Maulana Abul A'ala Maududi on 26 August 1941 in India. It is the largest and well-organised religious-political party in Pakistan, with no sectarian affiliation. It is a pan-Islamist party which addresses the idea of an Islamic way of life in an Islamic state. It is committed to establishing a social and political system governed by the Shariah.<sup>2</sup> According to Amir Rana, the JI also works in India, Bangladesh, and occupied Kashmir, but their management is independent of Pakistan. The circles working in the Arab Emirates, Europe, and America are under JI Pakistan.<sup>3</sup>

The JI is a tightly knit community consisting mostly urban, educated professional, and business people. It tries to bridge the sectarian divide but is a

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<sup>2</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG) Report on *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 216, Brussels, 12 December 2011, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Amir Rana, *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan*, Lahore: Mashal Books, 2004, p. 425.

distinct Islamic movement with its own characteristics and vision – more orthodox than the Bareilvi but more modernist than the Deobandi.<sup>4</sup> In terms of organisational capability, media skills, political experience and influence within the state institutions and in society, it is the most powerful religious lobby in the country.<sup>5</sup>

The JI came on the forefront in Pakistani politics in 1953, when it played an important role in the anti-Ahmadiya movement.<sup>6</sup> The JI also opposed Ayub Khan's policies related to Muslim Family Law Ordinance (MFLO) and launched a movement against him.<sup>7</sup> However, its ties with Pakistan's military increased during 1970-71. It formed an alliance with the army in the then East Pakistan and played an active part in the military action against what they believed to be enemies of Islam. This party along with other right-wing parties had initially launched a propaganda campaign to convince the Bengalis that their loyalties lay first with Islam and Pakistan, and not with their ethnic roots.<sup>8</sup> During the crisis, the army raised a volunteer force of one hundred thousand people called 'razakaar' from the civilian non-Bengalis settled in the erstwhile East Pakistan and the pro-Pakistan Islamist groups. The JI and especially its student wing, Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (IJT), joined the military's efforts in May 1971 to launch two paramilitary counter-insurgency units. The IJT provided a large number of recruits. Secular West Pakistani politicians complained about an army of JI nominees. The two special brigades of Islamist cadres were named as Al-Shams (the sun, in Arabic) and Al-Badr (the moon).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> ICG Report on *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 49, Brussels, 20 March 2003, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> "Ahmadiyas are a Sunni minority sect, and followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, whom a section of the community believes was a twentieth century prophet." See ICG's Asia Report No. 216, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan, op.cit.*, p. 3. In 1953, riots broke out in Lahore against the Ahmadiya community. Although Khawaja Nazimuddin, the then Prime Minister, refused to accede to the demands of the Islamists to declare the Ahmadiyas non-Muslims, the PPP government in 1974 succumbed to the Islamists' pressure and declared the Ahmadiyas as non-Muslims under the second constitutional amendment in the 1973 Constitution.

<sup>7</sup> MFLO provided for the restriction of polygamy, regulation of divorce procedures, improvement of maintenance provisions for women, registration of marriages in courts, and inheritance rights of orphaned grand children. By introducing MFLO, Ayub Khan not only attacked the traditional domain of the Ulema, but also set the future direction of his relations with them.

<sup>8</sup> Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army, and America's War on Terror*, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2005, p. 63.

<sup>9</sup> Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2005, p. 79.

The JI was one of the component parties of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), which launched a movement against Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for rigging in the 1977 elections. It also organised Tehrik Nizam-e-Mustafa (Movement for the Establishment of Prophet Mohammad Mustafa's System) in 1977. It was also a part of the Zia-ul-Haq government and played a significant role in Afghan War in 1978.

The JI's performance in the elections has never been impressive. In the 1970 elections, it won only four seats; all in West Pakistan and none in the then East Pakistan. During the 1988 elections, the JI joined hands with the Muslim League (Nawaz Group) and formed an alliance, called the Islamic Democratic Alliance (Islami Jamhoori Ittehad – IJI) against the secular forces, particularly the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). It was a part of the government when the Alliance won the 1990 elections. The JI contested elections in 1993 in alliance with smaller religious parties called the Pakistan Islamic Front (PIF), which won only three seats and later, the party boycotted the 1997 elections.

In 2002 elections, the JI participated as one of the component parties of the MMA and captured 17 seats. It was the second largest component parties of the MMA in the National Assembly. Qazi Hussain Ahmed, Amir of the JI, became the president of the MMA after the death of Allama Shah Ahmed Noorani, head of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP). The JI later boycotted the 2008 elections.

The JI also shares the military's anti-Indian agenda.<sup>10</sup> It not only protested the visit of Indian Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in February 1999, but also supported the Kargil operation.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, it also opposes the present government's decision to grant Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India. The JI also patronises Jihadi groups. Its major Jihadi outfit, which is engaged in Kashmir, is Hizbul Mujahideen (HM). Its links with Al-Qaeda were also revealed after 9/11 when some Al-Qaeda leaders were arrested from the houses of the JI's local leaders. For instance, in 2003, an Al-Qaeda militant, Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, who reportedly financed the 9/11 hijackers, was arrested from the house of a JI Member of National Assembly (MNA) in Rawalpindi. The then Interior Minister Makhdoom Faisal Saleh Hayat claimed that the JI was supporting the Al-Qaeda and providing shelter to its leaders in Pakistan.<sup>12</sup> He also claimed that two other activists of the JI, the Khawaja brothers, were also arrested for allegedly harbouring a top Al-Qaeda leader Yasir Al-Jazeera.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, in 2007, three important leaders of the Al-Qaeda were arrested in

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<sup>10</sup> The ICG Asia Report No 216, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, *op.cit.* p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> "JI accused of providing shelter to Al-Qaeda", *Dawn*, Karachi, 15 August 2004.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Lower Dir, NWFP (Now Khyber-Pukhtoonkhuwa - KPK), from the house of Dr. Ghulam Rasool, a local member of the JI.<sup>14</sup>

## **2.2 Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam - Fazl-ur-Rehman Group (JUI-F)**

The JUI-F is the largest Sunni-Deobandi political outfit in Pakistan. It has been a staunch advocate of implementing an Islamic system of government in Pakistan. It has had its origin in the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH), created by Deobandi Ulema in the pre-partition India. After the partition of the Indian Sub-Continent, another branch of the JUH was created in Pakistan, named the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI). It was founded by Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Usmani, who played a major role in the Objectives Resolution (1949), and institutionalised the role of Islam in the Pakistani politics.

The party got prominence when it started struggle for the inclusion of Islamic provisions in the 1956 Constitution. It was also in the forefront of the anti-Ahmadiya movement of 1953. It also launched a campaign against Ayub's MFLO. During the 1970 elections, the JUI emerged as a significant political party and formed provincial governments in KPK and Baluchistan in coalition with the National Awami Party (NAP). Maulana Mufti Mahmud became the Chief Minister of NWFP, who resigned in protest from the office when Z. A. Bhutto dismissed the Chief Minister and Governor of Baluchistan and the Governor of KPK in February 1973. The Jamiat played a great role in the 1974 Khatam-e-Nabuwat movement (belief in the finality of Hazrat Muhammad (SM)). It was also part of the PNA movement which was led by Maulana Mufti Mahmud.

In mid-1980s, a split took place in the JUI over the support to the military government of Zia-ul-Haq. One group led by Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman, who became the head of JUI after the death of his father in 1980, joined hands with the PPP in the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), and the other, led by Maulana Ubaidullah Darkhwasti joined Zia-ul-Haq's Shura (Consultative Council). Later on, Maulana Sami-ul-Haq became the head of that group, which is now known as JUI-S, after his name.

Fazl-ur-Rehman's faction, JUI-F, is the largest of the two, and has the large vote bank in KPK and Baluchistan. The JUI-F also runs a large chain of madrassas all over the country. Amir Rana notes that there are 1500 madrassas working under or associated with JUI-F in the country. They only include institutions offering secondary and higher education. Frontier has 550, Sindh 500, Punjab 400, and Baluchistan 70 of these madrassas.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Aqeel Yousufzai, *Talibanization: From Afghanistan to FATA, Swat and Pakistan*, (An Urdu Version), Lahore: Nigharshat Publishers, 2009, p. 131.

<sup>15</sup> Muhammad Amir Rana, *op.cit.* p. 163.

During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1970s, the JUI-F set up hundreds of seminaries in KPK and Baluchistan provinces which became the backbone of the education system for the Afghan refugees, in particular those who had few or no economic resources and preferred to attend and learn at these religious institutions free of charge.<sup>16</sup>

Since 1988, the political performance of the JUI-F in the general elections has not been very remarkable. But in the 2002 elections, it emerged as one of the major religious-political parties. It dominated the MMA in terms of seats which it won in the 2002 elections, formed the government in KPK and became the coalition partner in Baluchistan province. Its Amir (leader) Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman was the Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly.

### **2.3 Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam - Sami-ul-Haq Group (JUI-S)**

The other group of the JUI, headed by Maulana Sami-ul Haq, also belonged to the Deobandi school of thought. It is more radical than the JUI-F. It also opposed the JUI-F's tilt towards moderate liberal political parties.<sup>17</sup> The group also runs Darul Uloom Haqqania at Akora Khattak. The seminary was founded by his father Maulana Abdul Haq in 1947. He claims that most of the Taliban leadership was educated at his seminary. The prominent leaders of the Taliban who studied at his seminary were Ningarhar's governor Maulvi Abdul Kabir; Maulana Muslim Haqqani, Minister for Hajj; Taliban ambassador to Islamabad Saeedur Rehman Haqqani; Taliban Chief Justice Maulvi Noor Muhammad Saqib; and the Governor of Herat.<sup>18</sup> The JUI-S openly supports Jihad against the foreign forces in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> In August 2000, he closed his school so that students could go to Afghanistan to fight alongside Taliban forces being threatened by more moderate Islamic opponents.<sup>20</sup>

Both the factions of the JUI were also parts of the MMA. However, in the 2002 elections, the JUI-S won only two National Assembly seats, while the JUI-F emerged as the largest party within the MMA, with 41 seats. The JUI-F also dominated the provincial assembly polls, winning 29 of the MMA's 48 seats in the KPK and all the provincial (as well as national) MMA seats in Baluchistan.<sup>21</sup> The JUI-S left the MMA in 2005 because of its differences with the JUI-F. It claimed that the alliance was dominated by the JUI-F, which tried to impose its decisions on the rest of the MMA component parties.

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<sup>16</sup> Imtiaz Gul, *The Unholy Alliance: Pak-Afghan Relations Under the Taliban*, Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2002, pp. 86-87.

<sup>17</sup> The ICG Asia Report No 216, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> *Imtiaz Gul, op.cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>19</sup> The ICG Asia Report No 216, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, *op.cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Imtiaz Gul, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>21</sup> ICG Asia Report No. 49, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

#### 2.4 *Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP)*

The Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), a Sunni-Barelvi group, was created in 1948. It is a moderate religious-political party, which is popular with traditional Muslims who mainly believe in 'Sufism'. Like other religious-political parties, the JUP also calls for implementation of Shariah rule in Pakistan. It made its first show of strength by commemorating Yaum-e-Shariat (Day of Shariah) on 07 May 1948 throughout Pakistan. It also played an important role in the anti-Ahmadiya movement of 1953. In the 1970 elections, the JUP fared well in West Pakistan. It was because of the efforts of Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani, the head of the JUP, that the Ahmadiyas were declared infidels in 1974. The JUP also actively participated in the Nizam-e-Mustafa movement in 1977.

The JUP did not support Zia's military rule because of his inclination towards Wahabi Islam. Similarly, the JUP also opposed the Afghan Jihad. The Party has severe reservations on Saudi support to Wahabi-Deobandi political parties and sectarian groups, which have been involved in the sectarian terrorism in Pakistan. It is because of this that the JUP supported Saddam Hussein during the Gulf crisis of 1991.<sup>22</sup>

The party has a significant presence in the urban areas of Pakistan, particularly in Sindh, i.e., Karachi and Hyderabad. The electoral performance of the JUP has never been impressive. But it has played a significant role as far as the alliance politics of the religious-political parties is concerned. It was part of the Milli Yakjehti Council (MYC – National Solidarity Council)<sup>23</sup>. Its late leader, Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani was the main inspiring figure behind the formation of the MMA.

In 1980s, the JUP divided into several splinter groups; the two prominent ones are JUP-Noorani (JUP-N, named after its former head Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani) and JUP-Fazl Karim Group (JUP-F). After the death of Noorani, the JUP-F became more influential faction. Its leader, Sahibzada Haji Muhammad Fazl Karim, won the National Assembly seat in the 2008 elections on the PML-N ticket.<sup>24</sup> However, his relations with PML-N deteriorated when he demanded the resignation of Rana Sanaullah, Punjab's PML-N Law Minister, over his (Sanaullah's) ties with Punjab-based sectarian groups, which were responsible for the terrorist attack on Data Darbar, a major Sufi shrine in Lahore, in July 2010.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The ICG Asia Report No 216, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Milli Yakjehti Council (MYC), composed of 21 religious organisations, founded in 1993 to bring sectarian harmony in Pakistan, particularly in the Punjab. The major religious-political parties which were the part of the MYC were: JI, JUI-S, Tehrik-e-Ja'afria Pakistan (TJP), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan, Noorani faction (JUP-N).

<sup>24</sup> The ICG Asia Report No 216, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

The JUP-F also opposed the imposition of Nizam-i-Adl (Justice System) in Malakand, KPK, in 2009. The agreement was signed as a result of peace deal between the government and the pro-Taliban and Deobandi Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM). In May 2009, it endorsed the military operation against Taliban in Malakand.<sup>26</sup>

The JUP-F aspires to unite all the Barelvi groups into a multiparty alliance to contest future elections. For this purpose, in April 2011, the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC – Sunni Unity Council), an alliance of eight Barelvi parties, was formed.<sup>27</sup> It is, therefore, yet to be seen whether the JUP-F “contests future elections from the SIC’s platform or opt to revive its alliance relationship with the PML-N.”<sup>28</sup>

### **2.5 Islami Tehrik-e-Pakistan (ITP)<sup>29</sup>**

The Islami Tehrik-e-Pakistan (ITP – Islamic Movement of Pakistan), was the Shiite component in the MMA. It is headed by Syed Sajjad Naqvi and seeks to represent the country’s main minority sect. The TJP replaced its parent organisation, the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah Ja’afria (TNFJ – Movement for the Imposition of Shia Jurisprudence), in 1993 as a political organisation in a convention in Faisalabad, Punjab.

The TNFJ came into being on 13 April 1979 at Bhakkar. The Tehrik got prominence when Zia-ul-Haq announced the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance in 1980. The TNFJ called for a convention on 05 July 1980. The move resulted in the Islamabad Agreement and the government agreed to a separate Islamiat course for Shiite students, no Zakat or Ushr for Shiites’ and other demands. Imam Khomeini played an important role in this agreement and had asked for an assurance from Zia-ul-Haq that the Shiite demands would be met.<sup>30</sup> Amir Rana discloses that the TNFJ had also close relations with Hezbollah of Lebanon, and many young men were sent to learn how to run the Imamia Student Organization (ISO) along the lines of Hezbollah.<sup>31</sup>

Although the TNFJ (till 1993 and then TJP) has participated in all the elections, its performance has never been notable. Joining the MMA and contesting 2002 elections from its platform was a show of lessening sectarian strife in Pakistan.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Previously known as Tehrik-e-Ja’afria Pakistan (TJP), which was banned in November 2003, the party resurfaced with a new name, Islami Tehrik-e-Pakistan (ITP).

<sup>30</sup> Muhammad Amir Rana, *op.cit.*, p. 405.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 407.



### 2.6 *Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith (MJH)*

The Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith (MJH), representing the Salafi sect of Islam, is headed by Professor Sajid Mir as its Amir. It is the political organ of a minuscule Wahabi-influenced sect, whose members consider themselves “the people of the Prophet’s tradition” and do not ascribe to any school of law. Their version of an Islamic state is modelled on the Saudi system of Shariah.<sup>32</sup>

The Jamiat links its roots to the ‘All India Ahl-e-Hadith Conference’ held on 23 December 1906 at Ara in the province of Bihar. After Pakistan came into being, Lahore became the organisation’s centre. The Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith made its first show of strength at Mochi Gate in Lahore by arranging an Ahl-e-Hadith conference on 18 April 1986. The party’s charter emphasises upon making “every decision in accordance with Quran and Sunnah and workings of the four caliphs.”<sup>33</sup>

Currently, the party is aligned with PML-N. Although the Ahl-e-Hadith was a part of the MMA, its Amir, Professor Sajid Mir contested the 2002 elections on the PML-N ticket.<sup>34</sup> Hafiz Saeed’s Jama’at Dawa (JD) has also been associated with Ahl-e-Hadith organisation.

The Ahl-e-Hadith runs about 300 seminaries in the country. There are about 17 organisations of the Ahl-e-Hadith and, of these only six are active in politics. Several organisations associated with the Ahl-e-Hadith run terrorist groups in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). They receive large funds from Saudi Arabia and rich Arabs.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. The October 2002 Elections and Causes of MMA’s Political Triumph

In the political history of Pakistan from 1947 to 2002, the theological and political differences among the major religious-political parties resulted in the absence of any effective and comprehensive political alliance among them to contest elections. Before the 2002 elections, the religious parties had formed political alliances with both secular and liberal political parties<sup>36</sup> or among

<sup>32</sup> ICG Asia Report No. 49, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, op.cit. p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> ICG Asia Report No. 216, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, op.cit. p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Kalim Bahadur, “The Rise of the MMA in Pakistan”, in Ajay Darshan Behera and Mathew Joseph (eds.), *Pakistan in a Changing Strategic Context*, New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2004, p. 199.

<sup>36</sup> In 1988 elections, the JI made an electoral alliance with the PML-N called Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), which won 55 seats. Similarly, in the 1990 elections the JI and PML-N again joined hands together under the umbrella of the IJI. Although the PML-N won the elections and formed the government, the JI’s contribution remained very small.

themselves on a limited scale,<sup>37</sup> but not like the MMA. The MMA was solely an Islamists' alliance, in which all the major religious sects of Islam joined hands, in a reaction to the US' military attack on Afghanistan after the 9/11 incident, and with the intention to counter government policies.

The decision taken by the Pakistani State, dominated by the military, to withdraw support to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and cracking down on Pakistan-based militant Jihadi groups as well as rooting out Al-Qaeda's terrorist network after the 9/11 incident stirred the religious-political parties. This situation compelled them to be more involved in mass politics by campaigning against the policies formulated by the Musharraf regime in the wake of the post-9/11 international political scenario.

Realising the implications of the post 9/11 situation for the Pakistani society and politics, the religious-political parties organised themselves in the form of a political alliance, known as the MMA. The next step of these religious-political parties was to gain political strength in the elections in October 2002. Their efforts materialised when they got unprecedented political victory in the elections. It emerged as the third largest political bloc in the Parliament by winning 60 seats in the National Assembly (Lower House) and 23 in the Senate (Upper House). The extraordinary performance in the polls placed the MMA in a position to also form provincial government in the KPK, and become a coalition partner in Baluchistan. These two provinces are strategically important as they share borders with Afghanistan, where the American-led war against international terrorism is going on. According to Zahid Hussain, a renowned Pakistani journalist, "The MMA was closely linked with the Taliban and its rise to power fuelled insurgency in Afghanistan. There was a marked increase in attacks on US forces and their Afghan allies by the Taliban, who then fled back to the Pakistani Pushtun tribal areas."<sup>38</sup>

This paper notes that there were four main contributing factors to the rise of political Islamists in Pakistan during and after the 2002 elections: the political unity of religious parties, the rise of anti-Americanism, the marginalisation of mainstream parties, and the use of religious congregations.

### ***3.1 Political Unity of Religious-Political Parties***

The State's U-Turn *vis-à-vis* the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and cracking down on the militant Jihadi and sectarian groups after the 9/11 incident

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<sup>37</sup> During the 1993 elections, three major alliances of the religious-political parties emerged on the political scene. They were: The Muttahida Deeni Mahaz (MDM), the Islami-Jamhoori-Mahaz (IJM), and the Pakistan Islamic Front (PIF). However, none of them secured significant political victory.

<sup>38</sup> Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle within Militant Islam*, Lahore: Vanguard, 2007, p.173.

compelled the religious-political parties to realise that relying upon the State would no more be fruitful for their political survival and for the pursuit of their political and religious agenda. They, therefore, had to play a role of an independent actor and establish direct contacts with the masses through political means. Husain Haqqani rightly analyses that situation by arguing that Pakistan's religious parties had then become a well-armed and well-financed force. They were not content with having a secondary role in national affairs and have acquired a momentum of their own.<sup>39</sup> For this purpose, they formed an alliance of six major religious-political parties, called the MMA, in January 2002. It was for the first time in Pakistan that the religious-political parties, belonging to conflicting ideological sects, formed a political alliance and contested elections from a common platform. This political unity of the major religious-political parties of Pakistan validated their legitimacy in the eyes of the common people. As a result of the effective election campaign, the MMA emerged as a significant political force at the national and provincial levels in the 2002 general elections in Pakistan.

### **3.2 The Rise of Anti-Americanism**

The MMA's political victory could also be attributed to the rise of anti-Americanism in the Pakistani society after the US attack on Afghanistan. The tribal belt and the Pushtun areas of KPK and Baluchistan had very much been affected by the attack. These were the areas where the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl-ur-Rehman Group (JUI-F) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam - Sami-ul-Haq Group (JUI-S) scored well in the 2002 elections.

Public opinion in Pakistan, particularly in Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)<sup>40</sup>, strongly resented government's policy of withdrawing support to the Taliban and extending full cooperation to the US military campaign in Afghanistan. The MMA articulated the resentment, first in the form of the protest movement against the government's policies, and then turned into an election campaign.

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<sup>39</sup>Husain Haqqani, *op.cit.*, p. 318.

<sup>40</sup> According to the Article 246 (b) of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, the areas include in the PATA are: (i) The districts of Chitral, Dir and Swat (which includes Kalam), [the Tribal Area in Kohistan district,] Malakand Protected Area, the Tribal Area adjoining [Mansehra] district and the former State of Amb; and (ii) Zhob district, Loralai district (excluding Duki Tehsil), Dalbandis Tehsil of Chagai District and Marri and Bugti tribal territories of Sibi district. Similarly, the FATA areas include: Tribal Areas adjoining Peshawar district, Tribal Areas adjoining Kohat district, Tribal Areas adjoining Bannu district, Tribal Areas adjoining Lakki Marwat District, Tribal Areas adjoining Dera Ismail Khan district, Tribal Areas adjoining Tank District, Bajaur Agency, Orakzai Agency, Mohmand Agency, Khyber Agency, Kurram Agency, North Waziristan Agency, and South Waziristan Agency, available at <http://www.mofa.gov.pk/Publications/constitution.pdf>, accessed on 05 October 2010.

While addressing an election rally in KPK, the then Amir of JI, Qazi Hussain Ahmed said, “The United States wants to avenge the tribesmen in the name of operation against so-called Al-Qaeda and reach Pakistan’s sensitive installations.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover, criticising Musharraf, Qazi said that the Americans and the allied forces had launched a crusade against the Muslims in the name of so-called war on terror and operations against Al-Qaeda.<sup>42</sup> The MMA leaders frequently referred to the speech of President Bush in which he had referred to the crusades.

The Congressional Research Service reported that Islamists were notable for expressions of anti-American sentiment; they had at times called for ‘Jihad’ against what they viewed as the existential threat to Pakistani sovereignty that alliance with Washington entailed.<sup>43</sup> In January 2004 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a senior U.S. expert opined that Pakistan was probably the most anti-American country in the world, ranging from the radical Islamists on the one side to the liberals and Westernised elites on the other side.<sup>44</sup>

The MMA took advantage of this rise in anti Americanism in the Pakistani society and converted it to their favour by highlighting the American military atrocities in Afghanistan in particular and in the Muslim World in general. The effective anti-American campaign helped the MMA secure maximum political advantage in the 2002 elections.

### ***3.3 The Marginalisation of Mainstream Political Parties***

The State’s post-9/11 policies also resulted in the loss of legitimacy, which the religious-political parties used to provide to the military regimes in Pakistan. In order to seek the political legitimacy, the Musharraf regime pursued a policy of dividing the mainstream political parties by creating factions out of them. Therefore, the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-e-Azam Group (PML-Q), led by Mian Azhar, former Punjab Governor, was created as a breakaway faction of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Sharif Group (PML-N). He was then replaced by Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain. Later on, when the PML-Q was short of few seats to form the government, a group of PPP MNAs, led by Makhdoom Faisal Saleh Hayat, former Interior Minister, supported the PML-Q. This group left the PPP and formed the Patriot Group. Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, head of the PPP (Sherpao group) and former Chief Minister of KPK, also extended his support to the PML-Q. As a result, the role of PML-N and PPP was forcibly marginalised.

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<sup>41</sup> *The News International*, Karachi, 17 September 2002.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Alan Kronstadt, “Pakistan-U.S. Relations”, *Congressional Research Service*, The Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 02 March 2005, p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

Moreover, in August 2000, through an amendment in the 1962 Political Parties Act, Musharraf barred all those politicians, who could threaten his regime, from public office. This meant that both Ms. Benazir Bhutto and Mr. Nawaz Sharif, former prime ministers of Pakistan, could not take part in the elections. Therefore, the absence of the mainstream political leadership enabled the Islamists to contest elections without any major challenge from the mainstream political parties.<sup>45</sup> As a result, they gained maximum political mileage in the 2002 elections.

### **3.4 The Use of Religious Congregations**

It is a fact that the religious congregations are an important source of public gathering in Pakistan. These gatherings have been used by the religious-political parties and Jihadi organisations for their political objectives. The official ban on political gatherings and rallies did not affect the MMA. It used mosques and madrassas as platforms for its election campaign in order to mobilise the masses.

It must be noted that the major component parties of the MMA, the JI, JUI-F, and JUI-S, run thousands of madrassas in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. The JI operates a country-wide chain of schools and madrassas. The total number of JI-run institutions is 632.<sup>46</sup> It also runs the Saudi-funded Islamic University in Islamabad. The JUI-F controls the largest number of mosques and madrassas in Pakistan. It is estimated that there are 1500 madrassas working under or associated with JUI-F in the country.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the JUI-S runs Madrassa Haqqania at the Akora Khattak.

The Jihadi organisations in Pakistan also proved to be the main support base for the MMA. They had established their direct links with the masses. It is evident from the holding of annual congregation of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in which over half a million people participate from all over the country. Similarly, Tablighi-Jamaat (TJ) attracts around a million people every year.<sup>48</sup> These congregations are attended by people from all over Pakistan, belonging to diverse regions and social classes. These annual congregations not only provide an opportunity of social networking and solidarity among the participants, but also the leaders of these groups use it as a forum to send their political and religious messages across. Using a book, signifying the Qur'an, as its campaign symbol,

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<sup>45</sup> Nawaz Sharif was overthrown in a military coup by General Pervez Musharraf on 12 October 1999, and was exiled to Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Ms. Benazir Bhutto was self-exiled. Both leaders then came to Pakistan. Later on, Ms. Bhutto was assassinated in Rawalpindi, Punjab, on 27 December 2007.

<sup>46</sup> "Enrolment in Seminaries rises by 40 pc", *Dawn*, 28 October 2009.

<sup>47</sup> Muhammad Amir Rana, *op.cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>48</sup> Hassan Abbas, *op.cit.*, p. 214.

the MMA leaders told mosques and other religious congregations that they had the choice of voting for or against Islam.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. Consequences of the Rise of Islamists

After their electoral success in 2002, the MMA not only consolidated its position politically, but also started influencing the society. It also proved to be the main opposition party, which not only gave tough time to Musharraf and opposed his policies, but also tried to enforce Shariah-based Islamic system in an attempt to purify the Pakistani society. Moreover, MMA's patronisation of the militant Jihadi and sectarian groups also caused the rise of terrorism in the Pakistani society. Following are the three main consequences of the rise of political Islamists in the Pakistani politics: they tried to purify the society, they contributed to radicalisation in society, and they also caused the rise of terrorism.

##### 4.1 MMA's Attempts to Purify the Society

Once the religious-political parties got impressive political support in the 2002 elections, they sought to strengthen their base in the society by attempting to purify it from sins. For this, they attacked the perceived un-Islamic cultural aspects in the society. In their perception, in that way, they would increase sympathies of the masses as they represented people's wishes.

In KPK and Baluchistan, the MMA introduced several Islamisation policies, which included, ending co-education in schools and colleges, Islamisation of the curriculum of the government-run schools, enforcing people to offer prayers, constructing a large number of mosques in the province etc.<sup>50</sup> In June 2003, the KPK Assembly adopted the Shariah (Sacred law of Islam) Bill that pledged to impose "Allah's rule on earth through His pious men."<sup>51</sup> In order to introduce the Islamic economic system, the MMA in KPK demanded that provincial banks should stop charging interest. Other measures included: the banning of cable TV channels and music on buses, and the closure of cinemas and theatres on the charges of obscenity. Moreover, billboards, which featured women, were smeared with black paint.

The MMA's influence did not restrict only to KPK, but could also be felt in other provinces as well. For instance, in June 2003, in Lahore and the southern Punjab town of Multan, activists belonging to JI's youth wing, the Shabab-i-Milli (Youth of the Nation), spoiled billboards that were depicting women.<sup>52</sup> In

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<sup>49</sup> The ICG, *Unfulfilled Promises: Pakistan's Failure to Tackle Extremism*, ICG Asia Report No. 73, Brussels, 16 January 2004, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> "Prayers made compulsory in NWFP", *Daily Times*, Karachi, 02 June 2003.

<sup>51</sup> Mohammed Riaz, "Frontier PA adopts Shariat Bill", *Dawn*, 03 June 2003.

<sup>52</sup> For detail see ICG Asia Report No. 73, *Unfulfilled Promises: Pakistan's Failure to Tackle Extremism*, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

Karachi, the JJ-run local government banned the advertisements which illustrated women, calling them (advertisements) ‘obscene and vulgar’.<sup>53</sup> In December 2003, one of the MMA MPs in Baluchistan led an attack on a circus, destroyed it and killed the animals by declaring it un-Islamic.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, in July 2005, the MMA-led government in KPK introduced Hasba (Accountability) Bill, which created an accountability department, whose purpose was to ensure the enforcement of Islamic laws at the provincial, district, and local levels. The Bill was modelled on the Taliban’s department of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

#### **4.2 Radicalisation of Pakistani Politics**

After the 2002 elections, the MMA not only established itself as the maker or breaker of national coalitions, but had also eliminated the more established secular parties in the frontier states. The Baluchistan National Party (BNP) and the Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) won one seat each in the National Assembly as compared to three and two seats respectively in the previous elections, held in 1997. Similarly, the Awami National Party (ANP) was completely wiped out from KPK in 2002 elections, while in 1997 elections it won ten seats in the National Assembly.

With the marginalisation of liberal and secular political parties, the MMA tried to promote its conservative religious agenda by emphasising upon the greater role of Islam in Pakistani politics. It is true that Pakistan’s ideological identity is based on Islam, which has been used as a national unifier at the domestic front, and as an anti-Hindu and anti-India rhetoric at the regional front. The political commitment to an ideological state gradually evolved into a strategic commitment to exporting Jihadist ideology for regional influence<sup>55</sup>, first in Afghanistan<sup>56</sup> and then in Kashmir<sup>57</sup>.

While Musharraf had promoted a moderate interpretation of Islam and its place in Pakistan’s domestic and foreign policy, the Islamists, who wanted to become an independent actor in the Pakistani politics, insisted on realising the country’s true identity as an Islamic state. For the MMA, Musharraf’s secular outlook and his liberal policies, based on ‘enlightened moderation’, were blasphemous. It publicly vowed to islamise Pakistani state and society, and opposed the liberal Islamic notions of the state by arguing that as Pakistan was created in the name of Islam, it was its duty to transform the state into a true

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Husain Haqqani, *op.cit.*, p. 316.

<sup>56</sup> From 1979 to 1988 as a so-called Jihad against the Soviets, and then from 1994 to 2001, in the form of the Taliban.

<sup>57</sup> Pakistan officially banned Jihadi groups fighting in Kashmir from 1989 to 2002.

Islamic entity by imposing Shariah (Islamic Laws) in its true sense. Thus, the MMA emphasised upon the theocratic nature of the state, where Shariah would be the source of law.

Importantly, prior to the 11 September 2001 incident, the role of Islam was mutually defined by the nexus of military and religious-political parties. However, after the 9/11 incident, both the actors separately tried to define the role of Islam in the Pakistani politics. The Islamists' working as an independent actor in the Pakistani politics and society has been very alarming since they also control and patronise the militant Jihadi and sectarian groups, which have been involved in terrorist activities both within and outside Pakistan.

### **4.3 Rise of Terrorism: The Blessings of the MMA Rule**

The MMA's support and patronisation of the militant Jihadi and sectarian groups contributed to the rise of terrorism within and outside Pakistan. During its rule, the MMA strengthened its links not only with the Pakistan-based militant Jihadi and sectarian groups, but also with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Moreover, two prominent doctor brothers from Karachi, Dr Akmal Waheed, a cardiologist, and his brother Dr Arshad Waheed, an orthopaedic surgeon, who were said to have provided medical treatment to members of Jundullah, have been associated with the Pakistan Islamic Medical Association (PIMA), affiliated with the JI. They treated several high-profile Al-Qaeda leaders in South Waziristan. They were also said to have raised funds for Al-Qaeda and helped several Arab families to return to their countries of origin.<sup>58</sup>

It is a fact that three main component parties of the defunct MMA – the JI, JUI-F and JAH – support and patronise their respective militant Jihadi groups – HM, Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and LeT, respectively. These groups have been actively involved in the so-called Jihad in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Consequently, Pakistan's relations with the neighbouring countries have been overshadowed by the issues of terrorism. The increasing terrorist activities in Afghanistan as well as the dominance of terrorism issues in Pakistan-India relations after the Mumbai incident are cases in point.

Furthermore, Al-Qaeda's global reach and the involvement of Pakistan-based militant Jihadi and sectarian groups for providing fresh recruits to perpetrate global terrorism have sketched out Pakistan's relations with the US and the European countries as well. For instance, Rashid Rauf, a British-born key-accused in the alleged plot to blow up US-bound airliners from London, had links with the Pakistani madrassas.<sup>59</sup> Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, the then Pakistan's

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<sup>58</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad, "The Legacy of Nek Mohammad", *Asia Times Online*, 20 July 2004.

<sup>59</sup> "Madrasah registration", *Dawn*, 26 February 2006.



Federal Interior Minister, revealed that Mr. Rauf had confessed his association with Al-Qaeda.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the arrest of Faisal Shahzad, a terrorist suspect in the car bomb attempt in Times Square, New York, USA, in May 2010, has vindicated American claim that Pakistan-based militant groups have global agenda and reach, and thus, Pakistan's FATA region and tribal areas are the epicentre of international terrorism.

It is a fact that the Musharraf regime and the present PPP government have failed to curb the power of the religious-political parties. It was because of the MMA's patronisation that the Musharraf regime could not effectively launch a crackdown on the militant Jihadi and sectarian groups. As a result, their organisational structure remains intact. The coordinated efforts of all these radical elements have resulted in the perpetration of terrorism. The message is clear – to revert the policies which the respective governments have formulated after the 9/11 incident.

One may argue that the MMA's stay in power, particularly in KPK and Baluchistan, caused an unbearable damage to the Pakistani society. As a result of the MMA's attempt to purify the society, the liberal cultural values of the Pakistani society got threatened, and the society moved to further radicalisation. This could be seen when in February 2007, the self-appointed moral monitors of Jamia Hafsa's female students in Islamabad, with the help of madrassa men, tried to impose their brand of Islam. While challenging the law of the land, they occupied Children's library, attacked shops selling CDs, kidnapped Chinese nationals for involving in alleged 'immoral activities', and abducted police personnels. Although the security forces succeeded in establishing the writ of the state through a military operation in July 2007, the Red Mosque carnage further increased sympathies for the Islamists in the Pakistani society. It is said that after the Red Mosque siege, the suicide terrorism in Pakistan increased rapidly.

## 5. The Future Ahead

Although, the MMA faced political defeat in 2008, the constituent parties still have the potential to disturb the political environment of Pakistan. They still enjoy the street power and have their links with the militant Jihadi and sectarian groups as well as with Al-Qaeda.

The MMA alliance disbanded before the 2008 elections because of its conflicting stance on various issues. First, the rift ensued among the constituent parties of the MMA over the resignation from the National Assembly, Senate and provincial assemblies after the passing of Women Protection Bill by the government.<sup>61</sup> The JI and JUP wanted resignation first and then launching a

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<sup>60</sup> "Rauf has confessed association with Qaeda", *Daily Times*, Karachi, 21 August 2006.

<sup>61</sup> Women's Protection Bill (WPB), passed in 2006, was an amendment in Pakistan's Penal Code in order to provide protection to women against the misuse of law in the

country-wide movement against the government, while the JUI-F and JAH wanted to launch a nation-wide protest movement against the government before the resignation from Parliament. Second, the two major parties of the MMA, the JI and JUI-F, were at logger heads over the government's move to normalise relations with India. For the JUI-F, Afghanistan was more important than Kashmir. On the other hand, the JI did not want any compromise on Kashmir. Third, the other minor parties of the MMA, JUI-S, JUP and ITP had also reservations vis-à-vis JI and JUI-F; where the former blamed that the latter had dominated the MMA and imposed their decisions on the rest of the MMA component parties. Moreover, the minor parties were not consulted in the decision making. In December 2006, the JUI-S alone decided to launch Deen Bachao Tehreek (Save the Religion Movement) against the Women's Protection Act (WPA).

The differences within the MMA on various issues became so acute that the alliance had practically broken down before the February 2008 elections. The JUI-F contested the elections on its own, while the JI, JUP, JUI-S, ITP and JAH boycotted the elections. As a result, the MMA constituent parties were badly defeated in the 2008 elections. Even in KPK, where the MMA formed the provincial government after the 2002 elections, the JUI-F could only win 4 seats of the National Assembly, and 14 seats of the Provincial Assembly.

It is true that the Islamist parties individually cannot influence politics in Pakistan. Their strength lies in their unity and collective struggle. The MMA is a significant case study which influenced the Pakistani politics from its inception in 2002 to its collapse in 2008. Now the question arises: Are there any prospects for the revival of the MMA or another MMA-like alliance with the inclusion or exclusion of former member parties?

In this regard, Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman has made efforts to revive the MMA and for that purpose he also convened a meeting of all the constituent parties of the defunct alliance in June 2010. Although several efforts on the part of the JUI-F have been made since then, it seems very difficult to bring all the religious-political parties at one platform. Putting tough conditions, the JI demands the JUI-F not to cooperate with the PPP in future. Moreover, the JI also demands "50 per cent share in the allotment of tickets both for national and provincial assemblies."<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, the JI also wants "equal share in the allotment of

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name of the Hudood Ordinance (1979), and other discriminatory laws. For detail, see <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/legislation/2006/wpb.html>, accessed on 07 March 2012.

<sup>62</sup> "Jamaat's tough stance hampers MMA revival", *Dawn*, 26 December 2011, available at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/12/26/jamaats-tough-stance-hampers-mma-revival.html>, accessed on 25 February 2012.

seats in KPK and FATA because the party had improved its vote bank in both the areas.”<sup>63</sup>

The religious politics in Pakistan took a new turn after the assassination of the Governor of Punjab, Mr. Salman Taseer, on 04 January 2011, by his bodyguard, after his (Taseer’s) meeting on 20 November 2010, with Ms. Asia Bibi, a Christian woman, sentenced to death by a Pakistani court for committing blasphemy.<sup>64</sup> Sensing the government’s intention to make some amendments in the Blasphemy laws, the religious-political parties came on the street to exert pressure on the government. On this issue, two major religious alliances have been formed: one is Sunni Ittehad Council (the council of Sunni unity), led by JUP’s Sahabzada Fazl Karim Group along with 18 other parties of Barelvi school of thought including the Sunni Tehrik; and the other is, Tehrik Namoos-e-Risalat (Movement for the Dignity of the Prophet), which comprised of JUI-F, JI, and JUP’s Abul Khair Group. The latter is said to be a new form of the MMA. It seems that these two groups will play a major role in the religious politics of Pakistan in future.

In such a scenario, when a broad-based MMA-like political alliance of religious-political parties or the revival of the MMA may not be possible in the near future, one may not underestimate the street power of the Islamists and their potential to disturb the political landscape of Pakistan. The recent protests by Pakistan Defense Council on the opening up of NATO supply are an evidence of the alliance of the right-wing conservatives and Islamist forces in Pakistan. Moreover, the floods in Pakistan in 2010 were also a blessing in disguise for the Islamists. The failure of the government to provide relief services has given an ample space to the Islamists, who are well-organised and resourceful. They have presented themselves as an alternative and have also succeeded in seeking peoples’ sympathies as they did during the October 2005 earthquake. At a joint press conference with the US Senator John Kerry on 19 August 2010, after visiting flood-affected areas of Multan and Jampur, President Asif Ali Zardari feared that if the flood victims were not provided with relief facilities then “the militants can take orphaned babies and put them in terror training camps.”<sup>65</sup> This situation may also benefit the militant Jihadi and sectarian groups, which have been patronised by the Islamist parties, to perpetrate terrorism within and outside Pakistan.

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> “Punjab Governor Salman Taseer assassinated in Islamabad”, *BBC News*, 04 January 2011, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12111831>, accessed on 04 March 2012.

<sup>65</sup> “Militants can take advantage of crisis”, *Dawn*, 20 August 2010.

## 6. Conclusion

After the 2002 elections, the Islamists emerged as a major player in the politics of Pakistan. Their political victory affected the political, social, and cultural stability of the country. After the elections, they not only disassociated themselves from the military, but also countered the policies of the military regime of Musharraf by presenting themselves as an alternative political force amid the absence of leaderships of the two mainstream political parties – PPP and PML-N. The Islamists' political victory also increased their stakes in the Pakistani politics. This situation provided an opportunity to the MMA to play a significant role in the domestic as well as regional politics by pressuring the Musharraf regime to change the policies which it had formulated after the 9/11 incident.

In social and cultural terms, the MMA changed the fabrics of the Pakistani society, which became more radical and conservative. It attempted to purify the Pakistani society from all sins by not only introducing Islamisation policies after passing the Shariah Bill in KPK, but also by patronising and protecting the militant Jihadi and sectarian groups in the wake of state's crackdown on them. Consequently, they perpetrated terrorism within and outside Pakistan.

It was expected that with the defeat of the MMA in the 2008 elections, Pakistani politics and society would take a liberal course, and to the extent the MMA contributed to terrorist groups' activities, terrorism would decline. However, the MMA's downfall did not decrease the role of religious-political parties in the Pakistani politics. Although the differences within the Islamists have restricted the revival of the MMA, however, one may not rule out the possibility of the emergence of the Islamists as a strong political force in the next elections in Pakistan.

The mainstream political parties of Pakistan and the international community need to act in some ways to prevent the re-emergence of the MMA. With reference to Pakistan, it is high time that the liberal-democratic forces join hands against the non-democratic forces. Moreover, the government needs to extend democratisation process to the tribal areas, where radical militias have a political monopoly. The mainstream political parties must be allowed to work there freely. Similarly, the international community, particularly the US, needs to resolve the long-standing political disputes, such as, Kashmir, which provides an eternal justification to the militant Jihadi groups and their patrons in the military and religious-political parties to involve in terrorist activities within and outside Pakistan.

It must be noted that as long as there is a rift among the religious-political parties, their role in Pakistani politics will remain marginalised. Consequently, they will also be unable to support their respective militant Jihadi and sectarian groups in order to expand their political agendas. Once the political patronisation

of the religious-political parties to the militant Jihadi and sectarian groups is ended, it will be very difficult for the latter to carry out terrorist activities within and outside Pakistan. Furthermore, such a situation will also strengthen democracy in Pakistan since the Islamists have already lost the support of the Pakistani military in the wake of state's post-9/11 policies.