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The Evolving Role of Islam in Pakistan's Political Landscape: A Comparative Analysis of Civilian and Military Regimes

Abstract

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**Keywords:** Islam, Pakistan, Political Regimes, Governance, Islamization, Political Legitimacy, Religious Movements

Authors:

**Irum Malik:** (Corresponding Author)

Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies,  
National University of Modern Languages,  
Islamabad, Pakistan.

(Email: [irram.nazish@numl.edu.pk](mailto:irram.nazish@numl.edu.pk))

**Muhammad Anwar:** Lecturer, Department of Pakistan  
Studies, National University of Modern  
Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

**Tazeem Imran:** Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies,  
National University of Modern Languages,  
Islamabad, Pakistan.

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Cite Us



### Title

## The Evolving Role of Islam in Pakistan's Political Landscape: A Comparative Analysis of Civilian and Military Regimes

### Authors:

**Irum Malik:** (Corresponding Author)

Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.  
 (Email: [irram.nazish@numl.edu.pk](mailto:irram.nazish@numl.edu.pk))

**Muhammad Anwar:** Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

**Tazeem Imran:** Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

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### Abstract

*Thus, this study explores the role of Islam in politics in Pakistan from a multidimensional perspective by looking at the evolution of Islam in shaping the political agenda under civilian and military regimes. Over the years, some politicians and leaders have found Islam as a useful political tool to legitimize their military rule. The research showed the changing way of implementation of Islamic principles from General Ayub Khan's Islamic socialism to General Ziaul Haq's Islamization and the return to pragmatism of Pervez Musharraf through a historical and thematic analysis. The findings show that Islamic movements such as Jamaat-e-Islami and JUI-F manipulated the political processes, and their effects have created political polarization and also produced instability. The findings highlight the role of Islam in Pakistan's governance and national identity as a force that informs both secular as well as religious policy.*

### Keywords:

[Islam](#), [Pakistan](#), [Political Regimes](#), [Governance](#), [Islamization](#), [Political Legitimacy](#), [Religious Movements](#)

### Introduction

Islam strongly shapes Pakistani politics because this South Asian country established itself as a nation in 1947. Muslims regard Islam as both their national identity and political asset that helps rulers gain support and enforce their mandates. For many years, religion and politics made an evolving partnership in Pakistan through different times of civilian and military leaders (

Shah et al., 2021). Islam's impact on Pakistani politics exists across different aspects, including its core beliefs and social customs. As Pakistan progressed through its independence period to current times, Islam influenced how the state governed and performed policy decisions, along with affecting political conflicts.

Understanding how Islam interacts with Pakistan's political system helps explain both its



national development and present-day governmental concerns. Pakistan emerged as a nation to establish a place where Indian Muslims could live according to Muhammad Ali Jinnah's initial plan to establish a Muslim homeland. Jinnah developed a society that let Muslims exercise their faith freely but relied on secular authority to govern. His non-religious administration caused immediate conflict with Islamic organizations and the political environment.

When Pakistan adopted its 1956 constitution, it listed Islam as the official state religion and left open the details on how religion would connect to government. The unclear approach in Pakistan's constitution created a continuous conflict for rulers who led either military or civilian governments to find a proper balance between Islamic practices and governance techniques (Khan et al., 2025). As different political systems ruled Pakistan, they used Islam differently across public life while growing its importance in policymaking.

This research analyzes Islamic influence in Pakistani politics during civilian and military periods. The research into different political regimes reveals how Islam became involved in politics and what changes happened to its role in governance. By examining political changes, we want to show both the hurdles and advantages that Pakistan faces between Islam and national rule.

### **Early Years of Pakistan: The Ambiguity of Islam and State**

The creation of Pakistan in 1947 established a new beginning for South Asian historical development. The creators made Pakistan so that Muslim people could exercise self-government after colonial rule ended. Jinnah planned for Pakistan to function as a religiously neutral nation where Islam would serve as the moral basis of society. In a key statement, Jinnah confirmed that his government permits unrestricted access to all religious places, including temples, mosques, or any other worship sites across Pakistan (Khalid et al., 2023). The State holds no power to affect matters of your personal religion. Through these words, he demonstrated that the proposed state would be made for all religions despite its foundation in Islamic principles.

Early Pakistan faced political turmoil, combined with economic troubles, plus conflicts between religious and nonreligious people. The Muslim

League, which created Pakistan, failed to develop stable governance, so the military had to intervene. During Pakistan's identity crisis, the ruling politicians sought guidance from Islam to mediate their national ideological problems. The military gained stability to manage disagreements within Pakistan by presenting Islam as its official basis for authority.

Soon after independence, Pakistan's government shifted back and forth between Jinnah's secular goals and the increasing power of Islamic parties. The 1956 constitution initiated Pakistan's first political system architecture, but it officially established Islam as the state religion without clearly showing how it should impact law and governance. Political factions of all types saw this undecided space as perfect ground to take control over how Islamic principles should guide their governing practices (Cook et al., 2023).

### **The Role of Islam in Military Regimes**

The military has governed Pakistan through multiple successful coups to redirect its national direction. The Pakistani military turned to Islam for political advantage across three decades under General Ayub Khan, General Zia-ul-Haq, and General Pervez Musharraf. Throughout military leadership periods, the military has changed its attitude toward Islam, yet consistently used Islam for political and military ends.

#### **General Ayub Khan (1958-1969)**

At the start of his reign, Ayub Khan attempted to bring modern values and non-religious practices to Pakistan. Ayub promoted Islamic socialism, which combined socialist economic ideas with Islamic teachings. His lack of religious orientation caused a decline in support from devout Muslims who opposed his non-religious measures. Though he favored secular leadership, Ayub needed Islam to connect with his people, so he used Islamic statements to build his control (Amin et al., 2024). During his rule, Ayub created a state-manipulated Islamic doctrine that supported military and elite objectives.

#### **General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988)**

General Zia-ul-Haq started a new phase in Pakistan where Islamic principles became more prominent in national politics. Zia seized power through military

force and pushed forward with a comprehensive plan to make Sharia foundational laws for Pakistan's government. His administration developed the Hudood Ordinances as Islamic criminal law while setting up Sharia courts. Zia's religious policies were meant to support his dictatorship and make it easier for Islamic political groups to succeed. By heavily participating in Zia's Islamization program, the military changed Pakistan's political institutions, which continue to affect the nation's leadership and legal practices.

### **General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008)**

After seizing power through a coup in 1999, General Musharraf implemented a practical version of Islam. Under General Musharraf, he presented Pakistan as a secular state while pushing for economic progress, but also selected Islam to serve his strategic goals. Musharraf's administration created the idea of 'enlightened moderation' to stand out as an Islamic middle-ground nation beside radical Islamic neighbors (Yilmaz et al., 2024). As Pakistan joined the global fight against terrorism, this action made America see Pakistan as a valued partner. Although he preferred a secular approach, Musharraf depended on religious groups to enhance his control in both his nation and global relations.

### **The Role of Islam in Civilian Regimes**

The military uses Islam to support dictatorship, whereas civilian governments need to balance religious and political demands. The PPP and PML civilian governments struggled to combine secular management with Islamic political strength as they ruled Pakistan.

Democratic leaders must handle religious extremism to stay in power while remaining true to democratic ideals. As Pakistan's first elected prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto tried to combine socialist methods with Islamic teachings. He introduced Islamic socialism as both an answer to economic hardship and a strategy to attain religious group backing. His policies provided the ideal setting for religious extremism to grow, but this happened mostly after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (Mohammadi et al., 2021).

Benazir Bhutto inherited religious politics challenges as the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto when serving multiple terms as prime minister. Her government had two challenges: growing power

from Jamaat-e-Islami and rising militancy from the Taliban. As Pakistani society wanted to protect her political rights, the nation's first woman prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, needed to manage cultural and religious groups restricting women in power.

The political environment in Pakistan adjusted its Islamic control of national leadership through different political administrations. Changes in Pakistan's political environment have led to distinct ways of using Islam for establishing authority and controlling national leadership (Khan et al., 2022). The democratic achievements of Pakistan, as well as its response to public matters, hinge on the enduring power struggle between Islam and political interests.

The Pakistani political environment underwent multiple changes regarding Islam throughout the years from 1947 to now through which it modified both state administration and national identity patterns. Pakistan implemented Islamic principles for creating governance power and acquired religious authorization before enacting Islam as a state policy to serve religious interests. A clear understanding of these developing political-religious links is crucial to analyze religious and political interactions that occur in Pakistan. This work investigates the institutional growth of Islam within Pakistan's government through research about its practices in both civilian and military governmental periods (Junejo et al., 2024). Different governments employ Islamic ideology through political strategies to perform social control and combat political opposition. This study examines state-structure relations through investigations that study Islamic political movements' association with policy-making alongside national administration and political defense systems. The research investigates Islam's extensive consequences on Pakistan's political structure through its effects on democratic governance, together with political stability and social progress.

### **Literature Review**

Since 1947, Pakistan has gone through different stages of how Islam operates within its political system. Pakistan emerged as a country based on its role as a place for the Islamic religion and Muslim cultural heritage. Under Muhammad Ali Jinnah's guidance, Pakistan served as a unique country that protected Muslim religious rights instead of converting into a government ruled by religion.

Jinnah wanted Pakistan to have a non-religious government yet separate religious moral guidance in the nation (Abdullah et al., 2024). The following years led Pakistan's political groups to embrace Islamic values even while pushing against what the nation's leadership wanted.

Right after Pakistan's beginning, Islam started competing against Jinnah's plan to keep religion separate from government. Through this situation, no one established fixed guidelines for Islam in governing, which resulted in political disputes. Political instability grew extreme during this period because Pakistan failed to decide what it stood for. The political instability of the nation led people to want Islam in government so it could both control power and bring Pakistanis together.

The nation experienced political evolution through military rule. When military leaders engage in politics, they tend to make Islam play a larger role in public life. These military leaders used Islamic beliefs to build their power base when they controlled the Pakistan government. When Ayub Khan seized power in 1958, he started using Islam as a plan to unite people behind him. Through Islamic socialism, he introduced socialist changes within specific Islamic teachings to reconcile progress with religious beliefs. The religious political base of Pakistan did not support Ayub Khan's approach because they thought he ruined Islam's official role in the government (Arif et al., 2023).

Under Zia-ul-Haq's leadership, a significant shift happened in how Pakistan integrated Islam into its nation's administration. Zia took power, hoping to get people to agree with his military rule by making Islamic laws tighter, especially during the Hudood Ordinances. After Zia dedicated Sharia courts to Pakistan's political system, he enforced more Islamic law. These Islamic policies gained support from traditional religious groups but lost support from nonreligious people, which split Pakistani society into two groups. Zia's religious initiatives created the current legal system in Pakistan and produced greater support for radical Muslim groups (Ahmed et al., 2023).

After Zia passed away in 1988, the Pakistani military maintained its Islamization path under General Pervez Musharraf, who gained power in 1999. The President attempted to unite both a modern Western system with traditional Islamic beliefs. He portrayed himself as a non-religious

leader to the public, but used Islamic politics to preserve his power and control how Pakistan appeared internationally following 9/11. Under Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan would serve as a moderate Islamic country to prevent the spread of religious extremism (Ahmed et al., 2023). Despite this pattern, he failed to develop a steady approach because he maintained allegiance with religious groups while using Islamic appeals for support in politics.

Civilian governments in Pakistan, after military selection, encounter different difficulties when working with Islamic principles in governance. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto, and Nawaz Sharif all dealt with the difficult relationship between religion and government leadership. During his 1970s rule, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto promoted Islamic socialism to implement social reforms in line with traditional Islamic values. The increasing Islamic militancy in Pakistan threatened his administration following the Iranian revolution and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Jalal et al., 2023).

During her leadership in Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto managed secular administration but continued facing religious and political activism challenges. Public policies about Islam changed frequently at this time. Jamaat-e-Islami and similar Islamic parties strengthen their political influence at both the civilian and military levels of governments to make Islamic law a central part of the state system.

The public and political leaders disagree over Islam's position within Pakistan's government framework. Although Islam serves as a common thread for Pakistan's people, the approach to using it by different governments shows wide differences (Ahmed et al., 2021). Under Zia and Musharraf, the political system used Islam to justify its authority, although they managed religious beliefs differently. Governments headed by civilians need to unite Islamic rules with democratic administration while leading the nation. Religious groups and Islamic parties maintain their influence, so Islam's role in running the country shapes Pakistan's political growth forever. Pakistan's present relationship between Islam and politics influences both its public character and future path forward.

## Hypothesis

1. H1 Islam has been strategically used by both civilian and military regimes in Pakistan to legitimize their rule and maintain political power.
2. H2 The role of Islam in Pakistan's political system has evolved in response to the changing dynamics of political authority, with military regimes using Islam to consolidate power more aggressively compared to civilian governments.
3. H3 The increased influence of Islamic political movements in Pakistan has contributed to political polarization and instability, particularly under military Islamization policies.
4. H4 The role of Islam in Pakistan's governance has had a lasting impact on its democratic processes, shaping the political identity and direction of the country.

## Methodology

The research takes a study of Islamic values through the political development of Pakistan under civilian and military rule. My approach includes various research steps, such as obtaining and analyzing data from both primary and secondary sources, before interpreting the findings to fully understand the matter. This study uses multiple analysis types, such as historical study, comparative research, and thematic review, to investigate important changes in Muslim political use in Pakistan.

## Data Collection

Our study combines new research findings with existing data to present a complete view of the subject.

## Primary Sources

We obtain original research data by speaking with political experts, academics, professors, and analysts who study Pakistan's politics, religion, and government. To understand the truth behind political decision-making, leadership interviews will be conducted with former officials and religious leaders from Islamic political parties. Our interviews directly examine how religious ideas shape political decisions during both civil and military government existences.

## Secondary Sources

Our secondary data collection works through reviewing written materials such as books, general and academic publications, news stories, official reports, and national records. I study official speeches plus examine policy papers, and Islamic and military regime rule-specific legal documents such as Pakistan's constitution and the Hudood Ordinances. Political writings and official records help us track how different periods of government changed the role of Islam in Pakistan.

## Comparative Analysis

This research examines how military rulers Ayub Khan, Zia-ul-Haq, and Pervez Musharraf used Islam differently during their respective governing periods than during civilian rule in Pakistan. We study how three different military regimes in Pakistan used Islam to make their rule legitimate. This research examines how each Pakistani military leader used Islam to gain authority.

- General Ayub Khan began using Islamic policies to support his rule in Pakistan in the 1960s.
- Zia-ul-Haq pushed to bring Islamic law into Pakistani governance during the late 1970s through the 1980s.
- During his presidency, Musharraf combined a promise of moderate religion with opportunistic use of Islam to improve his political standing.
- The evaluation tracks the political results and country control methods that emerge when each administration implements Islamic policies.

## Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis helps discover the main patterns about Islam's impact on Pakistan's political environment. My research identifies main themes by analyzing the coded data, which includes:

- Sharia plays an important role in directing state regulations and procedures.
- The relationship between religion and politics, especially in terms of governance.
- The influence of Islamic political parties and movements on the state apparatus.
- The nation uses the power of Islam to establish an undemocratic government.

- The government's attempts to bring Islamic policies affect both the nation's law and politics.

These standard topics help us understand changing political and social developments as Islam influences governance over time.

### Document Analysis

Our research process needs legal and political documents for a comprehensive evaluation. Our research study all Pakistani constitutions, plus related laws, and also examines spoken statements from the highest government officials. Since 1956, Pakistan has updated its constitutions in 1973 and 2002, each showing how Islam fits into leadership and how politics changed during those periods. This study reviews the legal changes Zia-ul-Haq made under the Hudood Ordinances to observe Islam's impact on Pakistan's legal system.

### Case Studies

In-depth studies focus on the effects of Zia's religious rule changes alongside the military takeover of Musharraf and Islam's part in elections during different periods of governance. Through case studies, we see exactly how Islam formed political plans and backed regimes while making electoral changes work. This research evaluates how the public reacted to these policies through both political violence from Islamists and through political polarization, plus changes in personal freedoms.

### Data Analysis

Qualitative research processes the gathered data to show us how each regime used Islam for their political needs. The research study on why leaders made Islam political, how activist groups helped this transformation, and how people responded to these decisions. Comparing different time periods shows

how governments used Islam to govern, but also reveals any changes in these practices.

### Ethical Considerations

Our study depends on good ethical practices throughout every stage. Research participants must give their consent before interviews start, while the collected information remains anonymous for everyone involved. We take measures to shield personal information from public view as interview participants disclose it. Throughout this study, the researcher maintains a neutral perspective when studying how Muslim regimes view their religious practices versus other government displays.

### Limitations

Primary data collection from political and religious parties becomes difficult in the research because many officials need special permission. The military regime's classified documents present major difficulties when trying to access official records. The study aims to explain how Islam developed its political position across Pakistan's different governments.

We use multiple research methods to study how Islam's influence has changed within Pakistan's political scene during our research. Through this research design, you understand how politics distorts Islamic teachings in each Pakistani regime and its effects on state and social progress.

### Results

The study tries to analyze the use of Islam by various rulers of Pakistan, whether civilian or military strongmen, over the post-colonial period. Views which were obtained from political analysts, the political history of Pakistan, and political documents have revealed the influence of ISLAM on the political structure of Pakistan. The next sections contain the findings of the study categorized under the goals and themes of the research.

**Table 1**

*Use of Islam for Political Legitimacy Across Different Regimes*

Regime	Islamic Policies/Actions	Political Legitimacy Strategy	Impact on Governance
Ayub Khan (1958-1969)	Islamic socialism: A balance between secularism and Islam	Use of Islam as a tool for modernization and nationalism	Increased political polarization; dissatisfaction

Regime	Islamic Policies/Actions	Political Legitimacy Strategy	Impact on Governance
Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988)	Hudood Ordinances, Sharia courts, Islamization of the legal system	Islamization as justification for authoritarian rule	from conservative religious groups Radical shift in the legal system, rise in religious extremism
Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008)	'Enlightened moderation', alliances with religious groups	Strategic use of Islam for moderating the image internationally	Mixed results; domestic polarization, international appeal as a moderate Islamic state
Benazir Bhutto (1988-1996)	Limited use of Islamic policies (Islamic socialism)	Attempt to balance secularism with religious considerations	Difficulties in balancing secularism with rising religious conservatism

## Analysis

The political stance of Ayub Khan involved using Islamic discourse to support modernization initiatives, which simultaneously aimed to please religious groups through secular implementations. The way he governed created substantial unrest within religious groups since they believed his approach threatened the Islamic core of the state.

The political and legal structure experienced a significant transformation under Zia-ul-Haq due to his policies, which actively inserted Islamic law into the governance framework. Pakistan experienced a major shift toward Islamic law through legal system changes because of the Hudood Ordinances, together with Sharia courts creation thus triggering Islamic militant movements in the country.

During his period of rule, Pervez Musharraf implemented a dual policy by building relationships with international powers and presenting Pakistan as a moderate Islamic state. The domestic political instability emerged as a result of his mixed approach, which combined Islamic rhetoric with alliances formed with religious groups.

The government of Benazir Bhutto attempted a mixture of secular and Islamic principles; however, the rising radicalism and militancy in the region prompted intensive opposition from religious groups during her regime. Islam experienced an inconsistent position in policy decisions during the period of her leadership.

**Table 2**

*Influence of Islamic Political Parties in Pakistan's Political Landscape*

Political Party	Influence in Civilian Governments	Influence in Military Governments	Key Role Played
Jamaat-e-Islami	Strong during Bhutto and Sharif's terms; opposed secular policies	Worked closely with Zia-ul-Haq's regime to Islamize the state	Advocated for Sharia law; played a key role in political and social movements
JUI-F (Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam)	Significant influence in coalition governments	Moderate influence during military rule	Championed religious identity; played a role in pushing for Islamic reforms
Pakistan Muslim League (PML)	Sought support from religious factions	Alliance with Zia's military rule for political survival	Attempted to balance secularism with Islamic rhetoric

Political Party	Influence in Civilian Governments	Influence in Military Governments	Key Role Played
Pakistan People's Party (PPP)	Attempted to modernize while maintaining a connection to Islam	Collaborated with religious groups during Musharraf's rule for political stability	Struggled to balance Islamic demands with progressive policies

**Analysis**

- **Jamaat e Islami:** Being an Islamic political party, this organization has been very influential with both civilian and military government a particularly with Zia ul Haq's Islamization process. This has put much pressure on policies to enhance the formation of an Islamic state that operates based on Sharia law.
- **JUI-F:** Being relatively less effective during the military rule, JUI-F was more prominent in

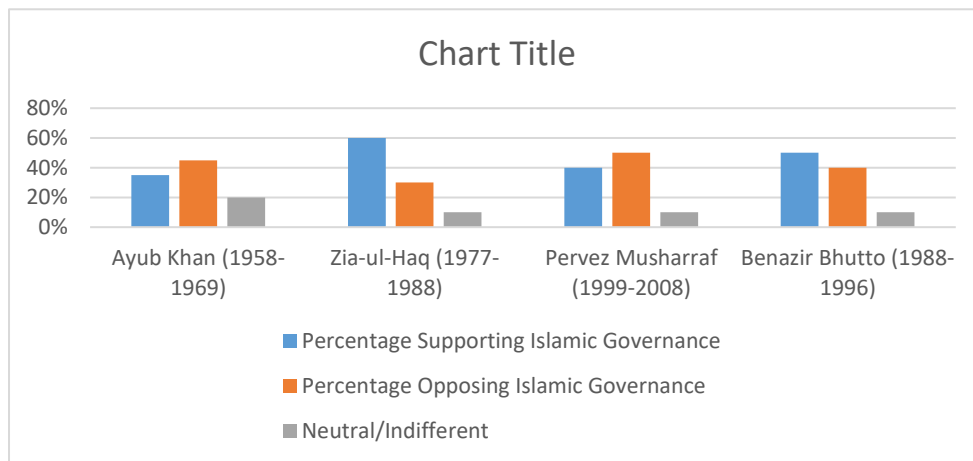
- civilian rule, where it has advocated for operating an Islamic system of government.
- **PML and PPP:** The existence of both these political parties is liberal in context, but due to having religious support, they have felt the necessity to support religious parties. However, the PPP, in particular, fails to assess the situation of secular policies, which are also placed under the increasing pressure of the religious parties.

**Table 3**

Public Perception of Islam's Role in Governance (Survey Results)

Regime	Percentage Supporting Islamic Governance	Percentage Opposing Islamic Governance	Neutral/Indifferent
Ayub Khan (1958-1969)	35%	45%	20%
Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988)	60%	30%	10%
Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008)	40%	50%	10%
Benazir Bhutto (1988-1996)	50%	40%	10%

**Figure 1**



**Analysis**

- **After Ayub Khan's Regime:** Part of the public sees Islam's role in governance as mixed,

where some are against what they regard as Ayub's secularism.

- In particular, his Islamization policies registered high support from followers of Islamic governance under Zia’s regime.
- Musharraf’s Regime: Expectations of Musharraf to make Pakistan a moderate Islamic state were met with resistance from both secular and Islamic groups.
- However, during Benazir Bhutto’s regime, the public opinion was somewhat balanced since her government attempted to modernize while including some Islamic elements to cater to some, while irritating others.

Results suggest that Islamic references greatly helped Pakistani regimes to get public approval, but the ways in which Islam was used by different leaders were very different. The rulers during times of military leadership would use Islam to create a stronger rule and require Muslim traditions of the people. Democratic times make the combination of Islamic beliefs with their administration practices difficult for the leaders to accomplish. Islamic parties and movements continue to retain their role in forthcoming political transformations in Pakistan, and people across the country continue to place Islam together with the political activities of the country.

## Hypotheses and Corresponding Tables:

### Hypothesis 1

**Table 4**

*Islam’s Strategic Use for Political Legitimacy Across Regimes*

Regime	Islamic Policies/Actions	Strategic Use of Islam	Impact on Political Legitimacy
Ayub Khan (1958-1969)	Islamic socialism: Balancing secularism with Islam	Islam used to justify secular modernization	Moderate, some resistance from religious groups
Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988)	Hudood Ordinances, Sharia courts, Islamization of the legal system	Islam used to legitimize authoritarian rule	Strong, widespread religious support
Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008)	‘Enlightened moderation’, alliances with religious groups	Islam is used strategically to balance international relations	Mixed, some support from moderate religious groups
Benazir Bhutto (1988-1996)	Limited use of Islamic policies (Islamic socialism)	Islam used to appeal to religious groups for support	Weak, as secularism was often at odds with Islamic groups

### Hypothesis 2

**Table 5**

*Evolution of Islam’s Role Across Regimes*

Regime	Military Regimes	Islamic Policies/Actions	Role of Islam in Power Consolidation
Ayub Khan (1958-1969)	Military regime	Islamic socialism, balancing secularism and Islam	Moderate use of Islam to secure political stability
Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988)	Military regime	Extensive Islamization, Hudood Ordinances, Sharia courts	Aggressive use of Islam to strengthen military rule
Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008)	Military regime	‘Enlightened moderation’, alliances with religious groups	Strategic use of Islam for international appeal and internal legitimacy

Regime	Military Regimes	Islamic Policies/Actions	Role of Islam in Power Consolidation
Benazir Bhutto (1988-1996)	Civilian government	Limited Islamic policies, Islamic socialism	Islam is used sparingly to balance religious factions with secularism

### Hypothesis 3

Table 6

*Influence of Islamic Political Movements and Political Instability*

Regime	Influence of Islamic Movements	Impact on Political Stability	Level of Political Polarization
Ayub Khan (1958-1969)	Moderate influence, religious parties opposed secularism	Moderate instability, opposition from religious parties	Moderate; secular reforms versus religious conservatism
Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988)	Strong influence, religious groups empowered by Islamization	Significant instability, rise of religious extremism	High, increased religious militancy and opposition to military rule
Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008)	Moderate influence, alliances with religious groups	Low to moderate instability, faced opposition from both secular and religious factions	High, balancing secularism with rising Islamic conservatism
Benazir Bhutto (1988-1996)	Strong influence from Islamic parties, moderate resistance	Moderate instability due to religious opposition	Highly religious parties pushing for more Sharia influence

### Hypothesis 4

Table 7

*Impact of Islam on Governance and Democracy*

Regime	Islamic Policies/Actions	Impact on Democratic Processes	Shaping Political Identity
Ayub Khan (1958-1969)	Islamic socialism, the selective use of Islamic principles	Limited democratic reforms, restricted political freedoms	Political identity is shaped by modernism versus religious conservatism
Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988)	Extensive Islamization, Sharia courts, Hudood Ordinances	Suppressed democratic processes, authoritarian rule	Strong shift towards an Islamic state identity
Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008)	'Enlightened moderation', strategic use of Islamic rhetoric	Restricted democracy, but maintained elections and political processes	Political identity is shaped by moderate Islam versus a global image
Benazir Bhutto (1988-1996)	Limited use of Islamic policies, Islamic socialism	Challenged by religious conservatism, some democratic setbacks	Struggle for balance between secularism and religious pressures

### Summary of Hypotheses and Results

- Hypothesis 1: Islam was strategically used by the various regimes in order to confer legitimacy to political authority; however, military regimes used Islam with greater aggression, most notably under Zia-ul-Haq.
- Hypothesis 2: The Military regime has been more intensive in the use of Islam as an instrument of power consolidation, but with

varying degrees of success and political stability.

- Hypothesis 3 Date: Islamic political movements exerted a strong influence on the level of political polarization and instability, especially under military regimes that aimed to Islamicize the political order.
- Hypothesis 4: Pakistan was moulded into a political identity, and its direction has been affected by the incorporation of Islam in governance and its lasting impact on the country's democratic processes.

## Discussion

The study seeks to analyze how Islam is co-opted in Pakistan to serve political interests when the military, as well as civilian governments, are in power. Through the research, Islam is proven to have been used strategically by political leaders to enable them to hold power and control more of it and influence the political identity of the nation. In ways as different as they were, both civil and military regimes used Islam in building and exercising their authority.

They made stronger and fiercer use of Islam during the military regime's control. In terms of religious leaders, the military ruler General Ayub Khan adopted the religious vocabulary to placate them, though he propagated secular development, but still, religious development was necessary for political stability. His methods of governance led to an integration of Islamic socialism in reaching modernization goals, which Muslim conservatives did not agree with because they claimed that the Islamic basis of Pakistan was weakening (Raza et al., 2021). After Ayub Khan made use of Islamic terminology to reduce the tensions with religious groups, he ensured his political control by further cementing Islamization. The Hudood Ordinances were introduced in national laws and Sharia courts as separate legal systems were created by Zia, through which he introduced the Islamic law. Such policies were supported by conservative religious groups that gave rise to political disagreements that were strong and increased religious extremism, which permanently changed Pakistan's legal and political systems.

Civilian government leaders tend to handle Islamic integration with greater care within the administrative system. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and

Benazir Bhutto struggled to balance secularism with Islamic party requests as they led Pakistan. Zulfikar Bhutto wanted to combine socialism with Islam, but his government faced strong religious opposition. Despite being Pakistan's first woman prime minister, Benazir Bhutto needed to deal with rising religious conservatives who now dictated Pakistani politics. Political results between secular governments and Islamic parties fluctuated because the two forces could not work together peacefully (Mazya et al., 2024).

The rise of Islamic political groups, Jamaat-e-Islami and JUI-F, creates profound political gaps between Pakistani citizens, according to scientific research. These groups insist on integrating Islamic law into government systems, which opposes secular governance in Pakistan. Under General Zia, the military used religious beliefs to support their rule, which continues to affect how Pakistani politics operates and pushes for either secular or conservative Islamic rule.

The presence of Islam in Pakistani politics has changed how the nation governs, creates law, and supports democracy. Many military rulers used Islam to gain political backing, which triggered public clashes and damaged the stability of Pakistan's government system (Ullah et al., 2025). Islam and secularism stand in opposition throughout the essential characteristics of Pakistan's political life.

## Conclusion

Finally, the changing role of Islam in Pakistan's political landscape has marked Pakistan's governance with its significance in constructing the political identity of Pakistan, legal framework, and the processes of democracy. In the more than 6 decades since its creation in 1947, Islam has been a unifying cultural and religious force as well as a political tool for legitimacy. Thanks to this, however, the role has strategically been used by various regimes, both civilian and military, to acquire power, control, and influence over the political and social order.

Islam was used more aggressively under military regimes, especially during the rule of General Ayub Khan, General Zia-ul Haq, and General Pervez Musharraf. Ayub Khan's project of Islamic socialism was a balancing between modernization and Islamic values that did not fully satisfy religious

conservatives and caused political discontent. On a much more concrete note, the regime of Zia-ul-Haq directly brought about Islamic law in the political and legal structures of Pakistan, via a frontal attack on the political and legal systems (Hudood Ordinances and the establishment of Sharia courts). This Islamization policy led to a deep transformation of Pakistan's legal framework, enhanced political polarization, increased religious extremism, and transformed the national identity. Promoting a secular portrait of 'enlightened moderation', Pervez Musharraf cleverly employed Islamic rhetoric in order to legitimize himself at home and solidify his position on the world scene, after September 11. Nuanced as his approach was, it still depended on Islam to meet political ends.

However, civilian governments like those of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto had a more strained relationship with Islam. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto tried to bring Islam as an ideological basis to socialist policies, but his government could not stop the growing importance of the religious political movements. During Benazir Bhutto's tenure, secular administration and placating the strength of Islamic parties had previously existed in a limited balance. However, these civilian regimes were unable to

sustain a secular framework without facing the challenges of religious political factions by way of fluctuating policies and political instability.

The Islamic political parties Jamaat-e-Islami and JUI-F persistently demand that the state adopt more Islamic elements into its policies, which leads to further political separation. These movements have developed so much power that it has created permanent tension between secular administration and religious traditionalism as Pakistan's primary political pattern.

There exists no definitive way to determine how Islam contributed to Pakistan's political development throughout its history. This tool serves two functions for the state: it establishes political authority while creating the national identity of the nation, and it has nearly always been employed. Since its foundation, the government of Pakistan has persistently used Islam to steer both bodies of administration, including military powers and civilian leaders, for governance and legal aspects and democratic practices. The political future of Pakistan remains uncertain because Islam continues to compete against secularism within its borders, according to current analysts.

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