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DECOLONIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE RISE OF ISLAMISM IN PAKISTAN

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DECOLONIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE RISE OF ISLAMISM IN PAKISTAN

Habib Ali Katohar, Irshad Ali Wassan, Allah Dino

ABSTRACT:

This research enterprise investigates the decolonial movements against the rule of British India and the subsequent spread of Islamism that shaped and influenced the socioeconomic, political, and cultural landscape of Pakistan. To understand this phenomenon, the study employed the analysis of historical events through thematic, discourse, and content analysis of narratives and texts. The data analyzed is based on the qualitative analysis of secondary sources of data. The core objective of the study is to understand the process of decolonization and the development of Islamic philosophy in Pakistan. The findings of the study suggest that the decolonization process has had a significant bearing on the formation and development of religious ideology in Pakistan paying way to the growth of Islamism as a unified cultural and political force in the country. The analysis of historical events also presents a sketch of the contemporary socio-economic, political, and cultural landscape of the country influenced by the ideological grounds.

KEYWORDS: Decolonial Movements; Islam; Politics; Pakistan

INTRODUCTION:

The spread of anti-colonial uprisings and the ascent of Islamism in Pakistan represents a watershed moment in the history of Pakistan coupled with political, cultural, and ideological elements. The mid-twentieth century in the Indian Subcontinent witnessed a series of decolonial uprisings against British India allowing the development of a distinctive

Islamic political ideology among Muslims of India. According to Eqbal Ahmad (2000), the process of decolonization evolved in a ground strongly wrapped with Islam's historical legacy, highlighting the necessity for a renewed formulation of the link between religion and governance.¹ The legacy of anti-colonial movements extended beyond the political domain, affecting contemporary intellectual debates as well. However, investigating the work of historians such as Eqbal Ahmad (2000) and Ayesha Jalal (1985) reveals that the struggle against colonialism was not just about achieving political sovereignty, but also about rebuilding the nation's social, religious, and cultural fabric.

The search for a distinct postcolonial identity found significance in the writings of intellectuals who attempted to combine Islamic principles with modern political frameworks.² The poet of the East, Muhammad Iqbal, and the founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Abu Ala Maududi, emerged as intellectual architects whose ideas left a lasting impact on Pakistan's ideological environment. In his magnum opus “The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,” Iqbal's poetic vision envisioned a synthesis of old Islamic values with modernity, laying a foundation for the new state's intellectual foundation.³ At the same time, Maulana Maududi's dedication to an Islamic state set up on Sharia principles mounted a system

¹Eqbal Ahmad and David Barsamian, *Confronting Empire: Interviews with David Barsamian; Foreword by Edward W. Said* (South End Press, 2000).

²Ayesha Jalal, *The sole spokesman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

³M. Zawahir, M. Nafeel, *Comparative Study on Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's Political Thought with Particular Reference to His Contemporaries: Abul a La Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb* (United Kingdom: The University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2008).

for a governmental structure based on the religious ethos.⁴ Moreover, Scholars such as Samina Yasmeen (2013) and Asaf Hussain (1976) offer a dynamic relationship of these facets by citing instances of association, conflicts, and coexistence that constituted the socio-political environment. In the view of Asaf (1976), Iqbal and Maududi's intellectual developments were not isolated events but shaped other political movements of the time in the Indian Subcontinent.⁵ For Yasmeen (2013), as Pakistan struggled to define its identity, the interactions between Islamism and alternative ideologies such as nationalism and socialism were crucial in the political environment under British rule.⁶

The anti-colonial movements that culminated in Pakistan had shaped the foundations of Islamic political thinking and socioeconomic environment. As colonial forces withdrew, a vacuum emerged, and a need to frame and address its identity in such a crucial time.⁷ Scholars such as Rehman (2018) and Fazal Tanveer (1999) examine the changing elements of these battles, in which opposition to colonial control became a furnace for the creation of a complex Islamic political discourse. This period's intellectual upheaval established the groundwork for the integration of religious beliefs and political ideas, laying the groundwork for the future growth of

⁴MA Muqtedar Khan, and MA Muqtedar Khan, "Islamic Political Philosophy: A Critical Genealogy," *Islam and Good Governance: A Political Philosophy of Ihsan* (2019): 161-208.

⁵Asaf Hussain, "Ethnicity, National Identity, and Praetorianism: The Case of Pakistan," *Asian Survey* 16, no.10 (1976): 918-930.

⁶Samina Yasmeen, "Pakistan, Militancy, and Identity: Parallel Struggles," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 67, no. 2 (2013): 157-175.

⁷Muhammad Adnan Rehman, "Nation as Neo-Idol: Muslim Political Theology and the Critique of Secular Nationalism in Modern South Asia," *Religions* 9, no. 11 (2018): 355.

Islamism in the country.⁸ According to the analysis of authors such as Rassool (2022) and Amjad (2022), during the decolonial process, intellectual figures, most notably Muhammad Iqbal and Abu Ala Maududi, impacted Pakistan's ideological identity deeply. Iqbal's philosophical thoughts on the reconstruction of Islamic philosophy, as well as Maududi's demand for an Islamic state, have left an indelible effect on the country's trajectory.⁹ The religious and philosophical ideas of Iqbal and Maududi penetrated the sociopolitical fabric, affecting the notion of an Islamic state and creating the framework for the growth of Islamism after the creation of Pakistan.¹⁰

To sum up, this paper tries to contribute substantively to the scholarly conversation on the historical underpinnings of Pakistan's ideological struggle by taking a qualitative secondary data approach and seeks to present a thorough understanding of the forces that have molded the nation's political identity by fostering decolonial movements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The growth of anti-colonial movements and the growth of Islamism in Pakistan received significant scholarly attention, offering an immersed impact of past processes on the nation's intellectual landscape. Academic discourse has also expanded to include a wide range of perspectives, addressing the deep back-and-forth between anti-colonial efforts, Islamic

⁸Fazal Tanveer, "Religion and Language in the Formation of Nationhood in Pakistan and Bangladesh," *Sociological Bulletin* 48, no. 1-2 (1999): 175-199.

⁹Junaid Amjad, "The Question of Pakistan's National Identity: A Study of Islamist and Secularist Narratives," *Research Direct* (2022).

¹⁰G. Rassool Hussain and Mugheera M. Luqman, *Foundations of Islamic Psychology: From Classical Scholars to Contemporary Thinkers* (Taylor and Francis: 2022).

political theory, and the complications of exchanges with other political groups. To understand this phenomenon and address the gaps associated with this study, the paper reviewed the work of renowned scholars.

The work of Eqbal Ahmad, 'Confronting Empire' (2000) provides an outstanding analysis of anti-colonial struggles in South Asia, providing critical insights into the intellectual turbulence that preceded the desire for freedom. Ahmad's approach emphasizes the dialectical relationship between the process of decolonization and the creation of distinct Islamic political ideology, setting the framework for future scholarly investigations.¹¹

The analysis of Ayesha Jalal in her magnum opus 'The Sole Spokesman' (1985) provides a dynamic scrutiny of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's role in the founding of Pakistan, putting light on the complex discussions between religious identity and nationalist goals during the partition. Jalal's historical narrative situates Pakistan's growth within the larger framework of decolonization, shedding light on the contradictions between secular and religious ideologies.¹²

Moreover, a host of studies have thoroughly surveyed Muhammad Iqbal's intellectual contributions to the vocalization of an Islamic political identity. Zafar Anjum (2014) offers a profound analysis in his book 'Iqbal: The Life of a Poet, Philosopher, and Politician.' He investigated Iqbal's philosophical speculations, emphasizing his influence on the notion of a distinct Muslim state. The intersections between Iqbal's vision and

¹¹Eqbal Ahmad, Ibid. 2000.

¹² Ayesha Jalal, Ibid. 1985.

Pakistan's emerging political scene are critical for comprehending the country's intellectual foundations.¹³

Aliva Mishra (2012) in her profound work 'Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: A Comparative Study of Pakistan and Bangladesh' provides a comparative analysis of religious fundamentalism and the rise of Islamism in Pakistan and Bangladesh because of the decolonial struggle against British India. Aliva is of the view that Abu Ala Maududi, the founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami, was a prominent figure in Pakistani discourse on Islamism. She critically examines Maududi's theories and their influence on Pakistan's political path. Aliva also sheds light on how Maududi's ideology affected political discourse, providing vital insights into the interactions between Islamism and the state.¹⁴

Hasan Askari Rizvi offers a comprehensive exploration of the anti-colonial struggle and rise of Islamism in Pakistan. In 'The Military and Politics in Pakistan', Hassan provides a contemporary viewpoint on the connection between Islamism and other political groups. Rizvi's research goes into the effects of the Afghan War on Pakistan's sociopolitical fabric, noting the complex dynamics that emerged when Islamism collided with nationalist and socialist ideals.¹⁵

In a nutshell, the cited scholarly work provided varied integrity of decolonial movements and Islamism in Pakistan as the literature on the

¹³ Zafar Anjum, *Iqbal: The Life of a Poet, Philosopher, and Politician* (Random House India: 2014).

¹⁴ Aliva Mishra, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: A Comparative Study of Pakistan and Bangladesh," *India Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2012): 283-296.

¹⁵ Hasan Askari Rizvi, "The Military and Politics in Pakistan," *Civil-Military Interaction in Asia and Africa* (1991): 27-42.

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subject evolves. The dialogues initiated by Ahmad, Jalal, Hussain, Aliva, Rizvi, and others contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the historical routes that have shaped Pakistan's political identity, laying the groundwork for future research and discourse in this complex and dynamic field.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Method:

Since the nature of this study is descriptive, the qualitative approach is incorporated to understand the ambiguity of the relationship between the decolonization process and the rise of Islamic ideology in Pakistan. The use of secondary data is employed to analyze historical narratives and present academic debates on the topic.

Data Collection:

This research enterprise is based on the analysis and examination of secondary sources. The data was collected using research journals, research articles, archives, published surveys and interviews, books, and news items. The secondary data is reviewed to address the gaps associated with this study that provided a rigorous understanding of the decolonization movements and the spread of Islamism in Pakistan.

Data Analysis:

The thematic, content, and discourse analysis have been employed as the methods of data analysis. The findings of the study are based on the set of themes and coding schemes that helped in developing an understanding of the emergence of Islamism during the movements of anti-colonialism in the Indian Subcontinent.

Research Ethics:

To preserve the integrity of research, this study is produced while keeping the consideration of research ethics. The data reviewed and interpreted are

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well-cited academically. The study does not include any plagiarized material.

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

Discussions

The formation of Pakistan as a separate homeland for Muslims of India is deeply rooted in both – the process of decolonial movements led by the nationalists and religious institutions and Islamism for the maintenance of a separate identity of Muslims under the colonial rule of the British. To understand this discourse and narratives, scholarly debates and academic work are cited and reviewed.

Historical Context:

Numerous studies and scholars such as Majid (2000), Ahmad (1987), and Irfan (2009) have analyzed the emergence of Islamism in the Indian Subcontinent with different narratives. Generally, they are of the view that since the birth of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, the religion spread throughout the Asian regions within a few decades. In the words of Majid (2000), the flexible nature of Islam allowed it to absorb the different cultures of different regions. For instance, Islamic civilization flourished in Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia, however, it could not flourish in the Indian Subcontinent.¹⁶

Conversely, Ahmed's analysis provides that Islamic civilization was absorbed by Hinduism in the Subcontinent challenging the very spirit of Islam.¹⁷ Therefore, Irfan's analysis suggests that to protect Islam and a

¹⁶ Anouar Majid, *Unveiling Traditions: Postcolonial Islam in a Polycentric World* (Duke University Press: 2000).

¹⁷ Salahuddin Ahmed, "The Identity of the Sub-continent," *India International Centre Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1987): 79-88.

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separate Muslim identity, religious scholars such as Mujadid Alf-e-Sani, Shah Waliullah, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, and Maududi emphasized the importance of Islamic ideology.¹⁸ Since then, the services and literature of such remarkable religious intellectuals have been contributing to uplift the importance of Islamic principles in the political and cultural landscape of Pakistan. The reign of decolonization was also marked by the teachings and guidance of scholars like Allama Iqbal, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, and Maududi.¹⁹

Islamism in Cultural and Political Landscape:

The emergence of Islam as a political and cultural force dates to the interaction between Indians and Arabs as traders. The merchandise relations shifted to Sufism and the conquest of Muslim rulers in the region. However, the evolution of Islam as an ideological and political force against the colonial rule of the British in the Indian Subcontinent is best discussed and analyzed by academicians such as Aziz Rehman et, al (2018), Samina Awan (2018), and Barbara Metcalf (2014). Aziz Rehman et, al (2018) examine the evolution of Islam as a powerful political force during the decolonial movements. For them, the rampant corruption, political instability, influence of Eurocentric knowledge, poverty, and social injustices coupled with threats to the Islamic identity of Muslims made Islamism the last refuge for the Muslims of India. The challenges faced by Muslims allowed Islam to flourish as an influential political body

¹⁸ Irfan Ahmad, "Genealogy of the Islamic State: Reflections on Maududi's Political Thought and Islamism" *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (2009): 145-162.

¹⁹ Irfan, Ibid. (2009).

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in modern-day India and Pakistan.²⁰ However, the investigation of Samina Awan and Kausar Parveen (2018) offers a distinctive approach. Samina and Parveen are of the view that the communal violence between Muslims and Hindus, and the resurgence of Hinduism as a powerful political and cultural force inspired Muslims of India to reproduce Islamic identity as a counterforce.²¹ For Barbara Metcalf (2014), the political backwardness of Muslims – particularly that of the All-India Muslim League (AIML) vis-à-vis to Indian National Congress fueled the importance of the Islamic political and social system to unify the Muslims to counterbalance Congress. Thus, Islamism spread as a powerful political and cultural force in Pakistan.²²

Rethinking Decolonization:

The profound analysis of Gould (2007), Robbinson (2000), and Talbot (1998) provide a dynamic understanding of addressing the decolonization process in the Indian Subcontinent. According to Talbot (1998), with ethnic groups, political parties, and class dynamics, the religious parties and Islamic ideology played a pivotal role in the creation of a separate nation for the Muslims of India.²³ However, Robbinson's analysis offers a different understanding of the decolonization process. For him, political figures such as Fatima Jinnah, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, and Fatima Jinnah played a significant role in the decolonization process

²⁰ Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, Princeton University Press* 778 (2014): 1860-1900.

²¹ Samina Awan and Kausar Parveen, "Ideological Orientation of Muslim Urban Leadership in Colonial India," *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 55, no. 1 (2018).

²² Barbara, *Ibid.* 2014.

²³ I. Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (Yale University Press: 1998).

by seeking to mobilize Islamic institutions and parties.²⁴ Gould's work elucidates the trauma of partition as a force in fostering Islamism against colonial mindsets. He is of the view that mass migration from India and mass murder triggered Islamic ideology as a unified force against the colonial political landscape. Therefore, Islam emerged as the center of Pakistan's political and social force to frame the country's constitutional and political mechanisms.²⁵

Findings

The scrutiny of scholarly work provided a deep understanding of anti-colonial movements and the birth of Islamism in Pakistan. With the help of secondary sources, the study produced the following findings:

1. First, the study found that at the time of British rule, Indian society witnessed rampant political instability, poverty, and unequal distribution of resources resulting in a vacuum. The vacuum set a space for Islamic political and ideological grounds to influence the socioeconomic, political, and ideological platforms. Therefore, the gradual rise of Islamism offered solutions to these problems.
2. Second, the study analyzed the widespread failure of secular government in addressing the socioeconomic inequalities and social injustice and increased disillusion among the masses over secular setups. The increased misery of people – particularly that of Muslims of India – pushed the society to bring change in social, political, cultural, and ideological order. Therefore, the

²⁴C. A. Robinson, *In Place of Pakistan: Partition and the Construction of India and Pakistan* (Princeton University Press: 2000).

²⁵B. Gould, *India against Itself: An Account of the Partition* (Vintage Books: 2007).

disappointment led to the adjustment and rise of Islamic ideological and political settings as the last resort.

3. Third, the identity crisis before and after the British rule has been a critical challenge faced by the Muslims of India. The influence of Eurocentric knowledge and hegemonic Hinduism posed severe threats to the separate identity of Muslims in India. To address the challenge of vague identity, the writings of religious intellectuals such as Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Maududi – who emphasized the importance of Islamic principles – mainly inspired the nation culminating in the formation of an Islamic social and political landscape.
4. Fourth, the biased patterns of partition and displacement of a chunk of the masses inspired Muslims of India to form a separate political and ideological identity where they could practice religious rituals and worship without any hatred or violence. Therefore, Islam was the final refuge and destination for millions of migrated masses.
5. Finally, the study found that since the end of British rule, Islamic ideology has possessed an influential place in the country's socioeconomic, political, and public decision-making. Currently, Islamic movements shape and influence public and private discourses and policies encouraging the formation of Sharia law and Islamic knowledge.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, the decolonial movements in the Indian Subcontinent had significantly transformed the socioeconomic, political, and cultural life of Muslims of India. The quest for a separate identity coupled with the influence of the secular political landscape and increased social and

economic disparities and political instability left Islam as the destination for Muslims of India to establish a separate homeland with Islamic ideological grounds. For instance, politically, the formation of Objective Resolution (1949) is one of the remarkable sources of Islamism in Pakistan representing Islamic political parties and Islamic ideology. Additionally, the literature produced by Islamic intellectuals such as Allama Iqbal and Maududi had profoundly left a dynamic legacy. Therefore, since then, Islam has been serving as a diverse and unified force and the socioeconomic, political, and cultural including public and private resources and decision-making processes have been highly influenced by the Islamic injunctions and religious political parties.



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