

Jamal Shah *

Zahir Shah †

Syed Ali Shah ‡

An Assessment of the Emergence of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, in the 2002 General Elections

Vol. VI, No. 1 (Winter 2021)

URL: [http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2021\(VI-I\).13](http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2021(VI-I).13)

Pages: 142 – 153

p- ISSN: 2521-2982

e- ISSN: 2707-4587

p- ISSN: 2521-2982

DOI: 10.31703/gpr.2021(VI-I).13

Headings

- [Abstract](#)
- [Key Words](#)
- [Introduction](#)
- [Factors Responsible for MMA's Success in 2002 Elections](#)
- [MMA's Achievements](#)
- [Failure of the MMA](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [References](#)

Abstract

Though Pakistani politics is heavily influenced by religion assumed to be the reason d'état of the creation of Pakistan, prior to 2002, religious, political parties had never achieved effective electoral results. The October 2002 elections for the National and Provincial Assemblies were a turning point for the religious, political parties in the history of Pakistan. It was the first time that a conglomeration of six religious, political parties, the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP-N), Jamiat-i-Ahle Hadith (JAH-S), the Jamiat-Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F), Jamiat-Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-S), and the Tehrik-i-Jaferia Pakistan (TJP) swept the polls under the umbrella of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) (United Council for Action) due to the active support of the Army and America. The alliance emerged as the third-largest political force in the country, with 45 out of the 272 National Assembly general seats. Moreover, the MMA got an overwhelming mandate in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Baluchistan, allowing it to form a government in the KP and became a coalition partner in Baluchistan. The present study is an attempt to answer the question, "what were the causative factors of MMA's emergence and whether it achieved what it promised during the election campaign?".

Key Words: Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakhtun Nationalism, Religious Political Parties, Election

Introduction

Islam has played a pivotal role in the creation of Pakistan. The forerunners of the Pakistan Movement appealed to the religious sentiments of the Muslims in British India, which proved instrumental in strengthening the Freedom Movement. The creation of Pakistan was the result of multiple factors-political, socio-cultural and economical, and some scholars have given even a

secular interpretation of the creation of Pakistan: the Muslims of undivided India wanted to liberate themselves from the political and economic domination of Hindus. Here religion played only a role of identity marker (Markovits, 2002: 5, Talbot 1998: 5; Cohen, 2004: 56). Khan (2002: 139) also demonstrates that Pakistan was a rejection of Hindu dominance rather than an affirmation of Islam.

* Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Government Post Graduate College, Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

† Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

Email: zahirshah@awkum.edu.pk

‡ Assistant Professor, Department of Pakistan Studies, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

However, the fact remains that the *raison d'être* of the emergence of Pakistan was exclusively Islam. Islam has remained the key element in the debates regarding constitutions and is considered as one of the major issues delaying the first constitution of Pakistan. Islam has been used as the legitimacy of rule, as a shield for survival by the elites, as a tool of state identity, and as a weapon of state solidarity (Kukreja, 2003: 155-90; Cohen, 2004: 163). The religious parties have always played religious cards for the justification of their political position. However, they, except the 2002 general election, have never effectively shown their presence in the legislature and have always acted as pressure groups in the making and unmaking of governments and have strongly supported the military dictators, especially General Zia ul Haq, for financial and political quid pro quo.

The October 2002 elections were a shift in the traditional electoral mechanism of Pakistan. The MMA gained a surprising victory with 45 seats in the National Assembly and 46 out of 99 in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Provincial Assembly. In KP, the alliance gained 29 out of 35 seats for the National Assembly. In Lahore, it got 3 out of 13 National Assembly seats, while in Karachi, it managed to win 5 out of 20 seats in spite of close competition with the Muhajir Qumi Movement (MQM) and lost the remaining 15 by a small margin. It got 6 out of 13 National Assembly and 14 out of 51 Provincial seats in Baluchistan. One of the significant results of the polls was that Pakhtun voted for Islamism while the rest of Pakistan voted for liberal parties. Since 1970 and the Afghan war, this was the first time that showed such a political split, particularly between Pakhtun and Punjabis. This demonstrated that Pakhtun politics had become Islamized. Vali Nasr has called this trend "Talibanization" of Pakhtun nationalism (Nasr, 2004), which may be explained as not as support for the Taliban's ideology because the majority of the Pakhtuns are opposed to it, are broadminded and tolerant of the other ways of life. The Pakhtuns were opposed to the way the US handled the situation after September 11, 2001, and opposed the attack and the killing of Afghans, most of whom were Pakhtuns. Amanat Shah, Member of the KP Provincial Assembly during MMA government, said, "The MMA effectively took the

case of the Afghan people and severely criticized both the US and the government of Pakistan for the sufferings of Afghan which resulted in its victory in 2002 (personal communication, August 16, 2007). The consolidation of 6 Islamist parties into the MMA was not the first time. They had formed a variety of alliances in most of the elections prior to 2002. For example, they had entered into issues-based alliances on two previous occasions. Firstly, to stop sectarian conflicts in Pakistan, the Milli Yakjehti Council (MYC) was formed in 1995 but proved ineffective due to the conflict between the constituent parties of JUI-F and JUI-S. Secondly, the Islamic Muttahidda Anqilabi Mahaz (IMAM) was formed in 2002 to stop the western cultural and ideological invasions (Misra, 2003). However, it was the first time that they united to contest the election in 2002.

The present study is an attempt to give a historical analysis of the causative factors which brought the existence of MMA for the first time on the political scene of Pakistan. The second section of this paper analyses these causative factors of the emergence of MMA and its success in the 2002 elections. It demonstrates how various inter-state power pillars cooperated with each other to ensure the success of the MMA. The third section of the study shows the contributions of the alliance in KP. This section also highlights the inherent weaknesses of the MMA, which ultimately led to the breakup of the alliance. The fourth section looks into the possibility of forming another MMA and shows whether it may become a political force in the coming election. The fifth section concludes the paper.

Factors Responsible for MMA's Success in 2002 Elections

The results of the 2002 elections surprised many in the country of the marvellous performance of the MMA, which Sushant Sareen (2004) has called a tectonic shift in Pakistani politics. In the previous elections, the religious parties had never been in a position to get a considerable number of seats in the National or Provincial Assemblies. In the 1988 election, only JUI-F got 1 seat in Punjab, 2 in KP and 9 in Baluchistan, while in the 1990 election, it got

only two seats in KP and 5 in Baluchistan. Similarly, in the 1993 elections, the Pakistan Islamic Front (PIF), an alliance of religious parties, got only two seats in Punjab and 4 in KP, while in 1997's election, only JUI-F got one seat in KP and 7 in Baluchistan (Election Commission of Pakistan). The parties comprised of the MMA worked together despite sectarian differences to provide an Islamic alternative to the existing political and socio-economic setup with their prime objective to uphold the primacy of the Quran and the Sunnah.

Many may argue that the emergence of MMA was the logical result of the Islamization drive initiated by the general Zia regime (1977-88) and pursued by the rightist political parties and the establishment. There may be an element of truth in it; however, the military's support of the MMA in the 2002 elections was a major factor in its success. Unlike other political parties, no restrictions were imposed on the religious parties in regards to public meetings and demonstrations. Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, the leaders of the principal opposition parties, were deported. As a result, the main vote bank of their parties was diluted ([Sareen, 2004](#); [Khan, 2014](#)). General Musharraf engineered the surprising performance of the MMA, which kept other parties weakened. He also encouraged radical groups to join one or the other of the religious party.

It is also perceived that General Musharraf used the rise of the Jihadis as a bargaining chip with the US. It has been reported that Musharraf had directed the provincial administrations to remove cases against those religious leaders and workers who were charged with the violations of the election's code of conduct while other political parties were disqualified from contesting elections on one ground or the other ([Misra, 2003](#); [Shamim-ur-Rehman, 2002](#); [Jaffrelot, 2004: 283](#); Khan, 2014). This cooperation enabled the religious leaders to flourish and keep the MMA alliance united. The Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarian (PPPP) alleged that the military and ISI supported the MMA in the elections. The MMA's success in certain areas was facilitated to show the West the danger of Islamic extremism and to justify the military rule.

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Pakistan (LJ), a Sunni extremist group, organized public meetings for supporting the case of MMA. Similarly, in Punjab, the United Jihad Council (UJC) played an instrumental role in convincing the voters to support the MMA. Though General Musharraf outlawed several radical groups due to pressure from the US, including Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ), Tanzeem-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM), Tehrik-e-Jaferia (TJ), Lashkar-i-Taiba (LT) and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JM), these organizations flourished later on, and their leaders were released and took an active part in politics. This trend is exemplified by the release of Hafeez Muhammad Saeed, former Chief of LT, in November 2002 and Masood Azhar in December 2002.

Coordination between the military and radical organizations was also observed during the April 2002 presidential referendum. The highest turn-out was reported during the referendum in Rawalpindi, the military headquarters, and Jhang, the home base for many of the radical organizations. General Musharraf was aware of the fact that the public would continue to favour a democratic government until his leadership demonstrates more resolve, dedication, efficiency and character; thus, he was compelled to support the Islamists and marginalize the secular parties ([Misra, 2003](#); [Norell, 2007](#)).

The US's attitude toward the Muslim world was the main focus of the MMA's election campaign. The MMA's victory is perceived to be the reflection of the feeling of hatred prevailing in the Pakistani masses against the West's belligerent attitude, especially the Bush administration, towards Muslims. It was the first time that foreign policy was a major factor in Pakistan's domestic elections ([Mizari, 2002](#); [Khan, 2014](#)). The US military action in Afghanistan and its repercussions for Pakhtuns in Pakistan and Afghanistan was effectively highlighted by the MMA. The JUI was a key supporter of the Taliban; the majority of them are Pakhtuns. Consequently, JUI workers started heavy demonstrations after the US started military operations in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. [Hasan Askari Rizvi \(October 24, 2002\)](#) is of the opinion that anti-US demonstrations intensified when dead and injured bodies of Pakistani Pakhtuns

were brought to the KP and Baluchistan. It was perceived that the US ignored the welfare of the people and the reconstruction of post-Taliban Afghanistan. The rise of the Northern Alliance with the support of the US also intensified the anti-US stance because, in the KP and Baluchistan provinces of Pakistan, the Northern Alliance was blamed for the deaths of a large number of the Taliban and other Pakhtun prisoners in its custody. The overrepresentation of the Northern Alliance in the post-Taliban Afghanistan government also added to the list of grievances.

All the above factors intensified the anti-US feelings that were already widespread throughout the KP and Baluchistan. In the two provinces, the alliance understood the ground realities and successfully articulated the anti-US feelings among the Pakhtuns. Most of the Pakhtun secular nationalist parties were badly defeated in both the provinces because they had either supported US military actions in Afghanistan or stayed neutral. Nadir Shah, MMA's ex-MNA, while commenting on the very poor performance of the Awami National Party (ANP), remarked that the nationalist parties were defeated because they supported the aggressor, the United States (personal communication, March 22, 2004). The MMA was at the forefront in opposing the US war against Afghanistan, her anti-Islamic posture, her support for Israel, and her increasing interference in the internal affairs of the Muslim countries in general and Pakistan in particular.

The resurgence of populist Islam in Muslim civil society, including Pakistan, was also a contributing factor in the emergence of MMA. Shireen Mizari (2002) argues that the alienation of the westernized elites from the mainstream polity and the continuing elitist power structure which has been preserved has brought resentment to the public, which was successfully highlighted by the MMA. The elections returned many ordinary educated citizens into the assemblies and encouraged the middle class.

The initial drive to keep the alliance cohesive was also a factor in the success of the MMA. The coalition of *Sunnis, Shia, Deobandis and Barelvis* surprised many. Qazi Husain Ahmed, JI leader, said, "Those who came into the MMA have benefited

from it, and only a fool will leave it" ([Khan, November 2002](#)). The MMA had risen above sectarian lines, and its component units had agreements on most of the issues. JUI-F and JUI-S follow the *Deobandis Muslak* (schools of thought). They have a strong hold in the Pakhtun areas of KP and Baluchistan. Both of them had supported the Taliban's cause and had strong links with them. The JUP follows *Barelvis Muslak*, which has a difference from the other *Muslak* on a number of issues. "*Barelvi*" and "*Deobandi*" *Muslak* originated from Bareilly and Deoband, respectively, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. Both are *Sunni* groups, but the former is puritan, believing in simple ceremonies and stressing morals and principles, while the latter follows Sufism and celebrates *Urs* (death anniversary). The JI has educated and professional business elites. It is more orthodox than the two *Muslak*. However, it has been a supporter of the Taliban and Jihad in Kashmir and Afghanistan. The Jamiat-i-Ahle Hadith is a *Wahabi* sect that follows the prophet's tradition and not any particular *Muslak*. This sect follows the Saudi Shariah system. The Tehrik-i-Jaferia Pakistan (TJP) was the only *Shia* party in the MMA, despite the fact that Jamiat-i-Ahle Hadith and *Deobandi* consider *Shia* infidel.

The sound strategy of MMA for the elections was another important factor in its favour. The strong cadre network was extensively used during the election campaign. The mosques and *madaris* became fully functional campaigning tools that provided not only organizational support but also street power to the alliance. The *Ulema* used mosques as campaigning centres during the Friday sermons for the success of MMA candidates, which their rivals were unable to utilize ([Khan, 2014](#)). According to a report, there is 6000 *madaris* in Pakistan. Of these, 2333 are *Deobandi*; 1625 *Barelvi*; 224 belong to Ahle-i-Hadith, and 163 are *Shia madaris*. In addition, 815 are affiliated with JUI-F; 58 with JUI-S; 120 with JUP; 67 with SSP, 119 with Tehrik-i-Jaferia and 2969 are miscellaneous ([Ahmad, October 20, 2002](#); [ICG, 2003](#)). The designation of 'book' as an election symbol also contributed to the victory of the alliance. 'If you want an Islamic government, casting your vote in favour of the book' was the slogan of the alliance. The book was glorified as the Holy Quran by the

candidates of the MMA, which emotionally and religiously charged the masses for casting their vote in favour of the MMA.

[Hasan Askari Rizvi \(October 24, 2002\)](#) attributes the success of MMA in the 2002 election, particularly in KP and Baluchistan, to its successful campaign strategy, which was focused on two levels. At one level, it gave emphasis to constituency-specific issues where it talked about the construction and repair of roads and streets, improvement of civic amenities, schools, increasing job opportunities, making the administration more responsive to people's needs and ending corruption at all levels of government. On the second level, it gave emphasis to broader issues with strong ideological commitments where it severely criticized Pakistan's political and socio-economic set-up and projected an Islamic alternative. The alliance focused its campaign on basic ideological issues. It promised to govern in a simple manner and would end the well-entrenched VIP culture and protocol ([Yusafzai, 2008](#)).

Since 1947, non-religious parties have not delivered the promised services to the people and have come to be perceived as ideologically bankrupt. The MMA's political strategy and the negative perception of the non-religious parties in KP, Baluchistan and Sindh were factors that could not be ignored while analyzing the success of MMA in the election. The public's disappointment with the non-Islamist political parties, particularly with PML-N and PPP, has increased over the years due to their involvement in widespread corruption, inefficiency, misuse of power and bad governance. They failed to take a firm position on issues like General Musharraf's referendum, the Legal Framework Order (LFO) of 2002, the one-man-one-post policy; the US attack on Afghanistan; the restoration of democracy and the revival of the constitution (see [Khan, 2008](#)). The lack of character on the part of non-Islamist political parties damaged their credentials and strengthened the position of the MMA. The MMA very successfully highlighted the US high handed tactics in Afghanistan and its interference in Pakistan's policies.

Leading up to the election, the MMA adopted somewhat liberal stances on certain issues, including

equal rights for minorities and women education. The alliance showed a willingness to peacefully settle the Kashmir issue through dialogue under the Shimla Accord (1972). It adopted a cordial and non-confrontational attitude toward the West. MMA's Secretary-General and the then leader of the opposition, Maulana Fazl ur Rahman stated, "Pakistan and its people have a clear policy on Kashmir, they desire its resolution according to the UN resolutions and under the spirit of the Simla Accord (1972)". The MMA prepared its manifesto with great care to avoid controversial issues such as educational segregation, implementation of *Shariah* and the status of the woman. As the military was playing a dominant role in the election process, the MMA avoided criticizing General Musharraf too much in the early stages of the election.

The ethnic factor also played an important role in KP. According to Vali [Nasr \(2004\)](#), Pakhtun nationalism was highly exploited in the KP, Tribal Areas and the Pakhtun belt of Baluchistan areas where the MMA got more seats. Pakhtun ethnicity influenced the MMA success along with the emphasis on the supremacy of "Allah" during their elections campaign. JUI-F and JUI-S enjoyed support mainly amongst the Pakhtun areas in KP and Baluchistan. Their active electoral campaigning in these areas was largely responsible for the MMA's electoral victory. In previous elections, regional nationalist parties like the Pakhtunkhawa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) in Baluchistan and the Awami National Party (ANP) in KP exploited Pakhtun nationalism. They lost the ethnic Pakhtun vote due to their weak position in the US military operation in Afghanistan. The MMA, on the other hand, exploited the Pakhtun feelings against the US to its benefit in the election ([Sareen, 2004](#)). MMA got most of its seats in Pakhtun dominated areas and was defeated in the non-Pakhtun areas of Mansehra, Haripur, and Abbottabad in KP. Similarly, the MMA got better results in the Pakhtun areas of Baluchistan, such as Zhob, Pishin and Lora Lai ([Sareen, 2004](#)). In the astounding performance of the MMA, the ethnic factor became more important than the religious factor. Pakhtun elements in JUI-F and JI within the MMA strongly criticized the US anti-Pakhtun drive in Afghanistan during "Operation Enduring Freedom". They

organized demonstrations against the US action against Pakhtun, who in return thought MMA as the supporter of the Afghan Pakhtun. Pakhtun nationalists were more anti-Taliban and pro-US, which strengthened Pakhtun sympathy for MMA. This shows why even Pakistan People Party-Sherpao (PPP-S) got more seats than the ANP.

In Sindh, the MMA adopted a different approach. In the cities of Karachi and Hyderabad, its success had two reasons. First, MMA tried to exploit the anti-US feelings of the people, stemming primarily from the US military operation in Afghanistan and its interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. Second, it successfully utilized the weaknesses of the Muttahida Qumi Movement (MQM) (Rizvi, November 2002; Norell, 2007). People severely criticized the MQM leadership for its support of Musharraf. Rizvi (November 2002) demonstrates that MQM's political campaign was ill-planned and was paralyzed by the inter-factional (Altaf and Haqiqi) rivalry which consequently, did not mobilize the voters. The MMA tried to expose the weaknesses of the MQM and used its strong cadre to organize rallies and mobilize voters.

The anti-establishment stance is a popular political stance in Pakistan. The MMA's anti-establishment stand gained support by strongly opposing General Musharraf's foreign and domestic policies. Political mobilization around the world is done broadly around four platforms. These are class, ethnicity, religion and an anti-establishment stance. The MMA utilized all of these platforms in the election complaint of 2002. All of the component units of the alliance have a monopoly over religion. As a result, they are more effective at using religion as a tool for political mobilization than other parties.

The B.A/B.Sc (Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science) being declared as the minimum educational qualification for candidates under LFO 2002 resulted in the disqualification of a lot of senior politicians from the elections. It was, therefore, to the advantage of the MMA that the government accepted the *madaris* degree as equivalent to a B.A/B.Sc degree. General Musharraf's electoral reform of reducing the voting age from 21 years to 18 years also benefited the MMA. Over 70,000

Pakistani Taliban from the *madaris* actively worked for the successful campaign of the MMA (Waseem, 2006: 151). The majority of the youth were fed up with the existing system. "They are all corrupt" was the argument presented in most of the discussion with the youth. They often said that the only solution is the Islamic revolution.

The then Senior Minister, KP, Siraj-ul-Haq, said that the success of MMA was not accidental as many factors contributed to its success. The vital factor was the long term efforts and many sacrifices made by the leaders of the religious, political parties. The effective political strategy that united the religious, political parties on a single platform to contest elections and the event of September 11, 2001, were substantial contributing factors (personal communication, April 19, 2004). Most of the analysts and commentators believed that in addition to the three factors of Pakistan politics-Allah, America and the Army (AAA) - the success of the MMA in the 2002 election was the result of the interplay of five factors along with morality and religion. These factors are (a) the strong anti-US feelings in the border areas; (b) rigging of the election on certain seats; (c) the leadership vacuum in the country following the deportation of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto; (d) rise of nationalism; and (e) disappointment with the familiar mainstream political parties.

MMA's Achievements

Against this backdrop, the MMA emerged as a strong political force by securing 45 seats in the National Assembly and ranking third following the PML-Q and PPPP. It gained an absolute majority in the KP and formed its government under the Chief Ministership of Muhammad Akram Khan Durani. It emerged as the second-largest party in Baluchistan. Although it ranked third in the National Assembly, its winning of so many seats was unprecedented, and therefore, the rise of MMA should be considered a milestone in the history of Pakistan.

After forming the government in KP, the MMA started implementing its 15 points manifesto. The manifesto gave emphasis to make Pakistan a true Islamic welfare state and working for the socio-economic and political development of the people

of the province. Two developments of the MMA stood out. First, it retained its cohesion and proved resilient in the face of the military's efforts to break it up. The opposition in the KP Assembly suffered from so much internal division that an independent MPA, Shahzada Gustasap Khan, was made the parliamentary leader. Second, General Musharraf faced stiff resistance to his efforts to amend the constitution up to his liking to sanction military rule. JI's leader, Qazi Husain Ahmed, was at the forefront of opposition to the Legal Framework Order (LFO) of 2002, the constitutional changes that Musharraf proposed to legitimize the military control of the state. Qazi Husain Ahmed demanded that Musharraf take off his uniform if he wished to remain president ([Nasr, Spring, 2004](#)). However, the MMA made a deal with the government regarding the LFO. The parliamentary leader in the Senate, Maulana Gul Nasib, declared that MMA had entered into the deal under coercion in the best interest of the nation and to put the democratic train back on track. Defending the decision, he said the situation would have worsened beyond repair had the MMA not struck the deal ([Husain, January 15, 2004](#)).

In order to justify its claim of being a religious alliance, the MMA established Nifaz-e-Shariat Council (NSC) to prepare recommendations for Islamisation of existing laws within the province. KP Assembly passed a resolution by the absolute majority asking the provincial government to ban bank interest and revert to Friday as the weekly holiday. It gave final shape to the Shariah bill in a short time, and the Provincial Assembly unanimously approved the said bill on June 2, 2003. A Judicial Reform Commission was constituted by the government under the Shariah Act, 2003, to examine the laws from Shariah point of view. The Act was intended to Islamize all the existing institutions like educational segregation, judicial system, economy, culture and governance.

Liquor and gambling were completely banned. Directives were given to bureaucrats to pray five times a day; the sale of music and videos was curbed; posters featuring women were destroyed; male coaches for women athletes and male journalists covering women's sports were prohibited; and practical steps were taken to stop

vulgarity and obscenity with a ban on music in public transport and a reduction of the number of channels on a cable network ([Brohi, 2006: 78](#)). Nazih Brohi (2006) goes on saying "The entire struggle is, therefore, to keep women confined to their biologically determined roles as mothers, daughters and wives". The overall effects of these developments were that cinemas and the business of musicians and recording companies were severely affected. Many of the musicians and drum beaters in Peshawar were arrested with the result that many of the famous musicians fled to foreign countries because of threat (Ali, 2010). These moves of MMA were criticized by the opposition and civil society organizations as the 'Martial Law of Maulvies' ([Khan, 2014](#)). At the Center, the MMA continued to exercise pressure on the government to declare Friday as a holiday and make arrangements for segregation of education. The MMA also stiffened the criteria for NGOs; many of them were closed and were branded as promoting western culture and agenda. Hafiz Hashmat, the then Minister for Women Development, said, "The activities of NGOs will have to be monitored because of grassroots concerns about a hidden agenda that could undermine Islamic values and cultural tradition" (cited in [Misra, 2003](#)).

The MMA government took a particular interest in promoting the rights, welfare and well being of minorities in the province. Reasonable funds were allocated for repair, maintenance and renovation of their places of worship. A scheme entitled "Welfare Package for Minorities" was executed with an allocation of Rs. 12 million. Similarly, a sum of Rupees Rs. 22 million was allocated for three separate projects for minority groups in 2004. The minority members were treated equally in funds allocation, and one of them was even given representation in the Nifaz-e-Shariat Council.

MMA's political agenda claimed to uplift the status of women; supported their election to the assemblies; through the *Hasbro* bill sought to protect women from social repression and cruel exploitation in all forms; their share in the parental inheritance was legalized; a separate female university and medical college were established with all-female staffs; a separate female sports

directorates were established to ensure full participation of women in games; at least 25% share was reserved for women in the microfinance program of the Bank of Khyber; and *Dar-ul-Amans* was established for female at various cities ([Siraj-ul-Haque, 2004: 41-43](#)). However, Qazi Husain Ahmad, leader of JI, said that the alliance would give equal job opportunities to women, repeal discriminatory laws, abolish honour killing, but at the same time would ban co-education and establish separate educational institutes for women ([Misra, 2003](#)). Though the MMA's policies were directed on the segregation of education, it focused on increasing female education at the primary level (see, for example, [Joshau, 2008: 58-9](#)).

Similarly, for the first time free of cost textbooks were distributed at an annual cost of 500 million to 3.5 million students from Primary level to Matric. As a result, 5 lakh more students were admitted into educational institutions. The literacy rate of KP was increased from 45% in 2002 to 53% in 2007. For the first time, 45 thousand teachers were appointed on a merit basis. In the backward districts, including Kohistan, Chitral, Shangla, Swat and Dir, the government provided a stipend of Rs. 200 to female students to encourage female education. An additional 980 new Primary Schools, 563 Middle Schools, 464 High

Schools, 70 Higher Secondary Schools, and 77 colleges were opened. The Education budget was increased from Rs. Three hundred ninety-four million in 2002 to Rs. 3525 million during 2006-07. Free education was introduced up to the Matric level throughout the province. A multipurpose educational project, 'Education for All', was launched at the cost of Rs. 1 billion. Its basic aim was to teach those people who, due to a variety of reasons, were previously unable to get an education. Similarly, to ensure health facilities, the MMA government upgraded 122 District Headquarter Hospitals.

The MMA government was extremely concerned over the rising scale of poverty and took a series of measures to eradicate this menace. A loan of Rs. 5-7 billion was obtained from the World Bank, and the funds under Structural Adjustment Credit (SAC) were utilized strictly on provincial

reforms and poverty alleviation programs. Three major projects of regional development, including the Malakand Rural Development Program, Dir Area Support Project, and Barani Area Development Project, were proving helpful in the government's efforts to reduce the current scale of poverty. Adequate measures were taken through the Department of Social Welfare and Women Development for the welfare of physically and mentally handicapped people.

The MMA government was committed to Islamizing the economy and enforcing all fiscal laws in consonance with the Quran and Sunnah. The Bank of Khyber was authorized after an amendment in the said bank Act by the Provincial Assembly, allowing it to convert all its branches in Islamic banking. Each sector of Islamic banking showed remarkable performance, and within a year, the deposits registered 133 percent increases, lending 1249% and saving account rose to 362%. Under section 8 of the Shariah Act 2003, an Economic Reforms Commission was constituted to make suggestions for eradication of interest and pinpointing alternative systems ([Siraj-ul-Haque, 2004: 29-30](#)).

It was also an unprecedented achievement of the MMA Government to hold the first-ever KP International Investment Conference on 14-16th March 2005 at Peshawar, in which more than 200 local and foreign delegations participated, including delegations from countries such as Sweden, Italy, China, Malaysia and the United Kingdom. Muhammad Asif Iqbal, the then KP Minister for Information, said that the Conference as a whole was productive because a number of investors showed their keen interest in investment in the minerals, hydel and tourism sectors (personal communication, March 26, 2005).

To promote better communication with the general public and provide them with relief in their day-to-day problems, in its initial session, the provincial cabinet bound the ministers and senior officials to make themselves available to meet with citizens and resolve their genuine grievances. To ensure good governance, the government tried to eradicate the infamously rampant "ad hocism" and "red-tapism" and to bridge the gulf between the

government and the masses. Instilling a sense of participation among the public was given special attention. Simplicity, austerity, and merit-based decision making in all affairs was the hallmark of the government. The salaries of the ministers were cut down while non-developmental expenses were drastically reduced. Concerted efforts were made to ensure the rule of law, public access to speedy and cheap justice and to clear the society of all kinds of social and moral vices. The reported number of dacoits and lawlessness was comparatively low. Police reforms were introduced to empower the police force and make it more efficient in the discharge of its duties. A concept based on reward and punishment was introduced under the 'Shuhada Package'. The families of policemen killed during their duties became eligible to receive their full pay and allowances until the retirement date. Three hundred kanals of land was reserved for police Shuhada. Provincial Police Complaint Authority was sanctioned.

Under the jail reform, the MMA government took practical steps to provide food, clothing, medical treatment facilities, education, and religious teaching to the prisoners. The plan to provide modern and basic additional residential facilities in central jails stood out as an exemplary achievement. The male and female prisoners serving 5 to 25 years sentences were allowed to live with their families for three days after every month in jail. Another reform ensured that every prisoner was allowed to take two hours of daily exercise ([Siraj-ul-Haque, 2004: 89-93](#)).

The MMA government took the initiative to make Urdu the official language of the province. The objective was to ensure that all citizens would be able to understand official transactions. Necessary instructions were issued to all the Administrative Secretaries for strict compliance of economy in expenditure, including a ban on medical treatment abroad, purchase of vehicles, participation in seminars, workshops, training in foreign countries and visits abroad at the government's expense. The government also directed all the provincial departments not to hold official meetings, workshops, and seminars in hotels. If it was deemed necessary to hold such activities in hotels under certain circumstances, the

prior approval of the Chief Minister, KP, was to be required.

Failure of the MMA

The MMA was initially capable of controlling itself and its image. Stephen P. [Cohen \(2005: 188\)](#) is of the opinion that the alliance showed considerable cohesion on different occasions till 2005, and even Musharraf failed to weaken the coalition. However, it later faced some inherent weaknesses and took some unrealistic steps, which highly alienated much of the general public. The main problem was the deep-seated differences within its own ranks. The *Shia, Sunni, Deobandi, Barelvi* and *Ahle Hadith* do not accept each other's interpretations of Islam (ICG, 2003: 20). The MMA leaders said that the Council of Islamic Ideology would decide the differences, but the Council could not unveil any coherent and systematic scheme defining Islamization in substantive terms.

The ICG Asian Report (2003: 20) indicates serious political and personality clashes within the alliance. Maulana Fazl ur Rahman and Maulana Sami ul Haque have a deep personality clash. Maulana Sami ul Haque had initially threatened to leave the alliance charging that the JUI (F) and JI were ignoring the smaller constituents of the alliance. Ultimately, he left the alliance in late 2005, citing differences with Fazl ur Rahman and Qazi Husain Ahmad. Sajid Mir was a close ally of Nawaz Sharif and was opposed to any deals with Pervaiz Musharraf. Maulana Sami ul Haque's JUI (S), Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani's JUP, Professor Sajid Mir's Jamiat-i-Ahle Hadith and Allama Syed Sajid Naqvi's Tehrik-i-Islami were agitating for a greater share in the provincial cabinet. The JUI (S) and JUP even threatened to leave the alliance if their MPs were not made ministers. The JUI (F) and JI have opposite views on a number of political issues. The JUI (F) is keen to improve relations with India and is not opposed to ending the jihad in Kashmir. The JI, on the other hand, is opposed to any rapprochement with India and ending the jihad in Kashmir before that issue is settled. Matters have come to a breaking point more than once between the JUI (F) and JI on the Kashmir issue ([Khan, 2008](#)).

The MMA compromised its stature when it

struck a deal with Pervaiz Musharraf on Legal Framework Order (LFO) and assisted him in passing the 17th amendment to the constitution. The MMA also supported Musharraf in the passage of the "to have two post act" in 2005 (Khan, 2008). The Act empowered President General Pervaiz Musharraf to remain Chief of the Army staff in addition to his position as President. The JUI-F and JI had big differences on whether to enter into a deal with Musharraf on LFO or not. The JUI-F was in favour of striking a deal, while the JI strongly opposed it. The JUI (F) had a stake in the system, with a government in KP and a coalition partner in Baluchistan. As the JUI-F has a support base in these two provinces, therefore, it did not want to compromise its interests there. The JUI-F thought that it would get benefits with compromise, not with confrontation. The JI, on the other hand, was against any deal with Musharraf and thought that its political interests would be better served by confronting the government. However, the deal was struck with Musharraf, with the result that the image of the MMA as an anti-establishment and anti-status quo force was damaged. The people's general impression of the MMA's anti-government position was that it was mere political posturing and that, in fact, the alliance was acting as the "B" team of the Pakistan Army. Many people who looked for the MMA as a critique of the government for its un-Islamic, anti-Islamic and pro-West policies viewed the alliance no better than the old-style politicians.

The JI and some other members of the cabinet of KP also complained about the lack of consultation by the Chief Minister, Muhammad Akram Khan Durani. They said that Maulana Fazl ur Rahman handpicked the Chief Minister for the job, thereby obliging him to give precedent to Maulana's wishes. In fact, the repeated assertion by critics that Durani took orders from the Maulana and his brother finally provoked him to admit that he was Maulana's man. Durani undertook major development projects in his native Bannu, and his soft corner for Bannuchis also attracted criticism from his allies and rivals. The opposition parties are alleging that Bannu, along with Maulana Fazl ur Rahman's constituency in Dera Ismail Khan and senior minister Siraj ul Haque's native Lower Dir district, got the lion's share in the annual developmental program for the province.

The general population had complaints about the inability of the MMA to realize the promises made during the elections in 2002. The MMA, especially in KP, was perceived as having wasted its energies on symbolic issues such as the *Shariah* bill, *Hasba* bill, blackening billboards bearing female models, banning music at public places and banning liquor and gambling. Very little was done to address the basic concerns of the general public. According to political analysts, the MMA was not true to its own words. On several occasions, the alliance threatened to resign if certain proposed actions/laws were to be taken by the central government. But once the proposed actions were taken, the MMA acted like a silent spectator made various excuses for non-resignation. For example, it made no move to resign after the passage of the Women Protection Bill or after Musharraf's refusal to take off his uniform on 31st December 2004, as he was obliged to do under his deal with MMA on LFO and military operations in FATA.

One of the major weaknesses of the MMA was that majority of its members was inexperienced and easily handled by the bureaucracy. They had the least control over the bureaucrats and were dependent on them. They did not make any effective efforts to reform the bureaucratic environment, to abolish red-tapism, formalism and corruption from the bureaucracy. Political crystal ball gazing is a difficult exercise in a country as complex as Pakistan.

Conclusion

The role of Islam in Pakistani society in general and KP society, in particular, cannot be underestimated. It is highly instrumental in the state politics of Pakistan. The trend of Islamization in Pakistan has been sustained through the state's support since 1947. It has been used for the legitimization of regimes and defining state's policies. However, the anomaly is that state guardians mainly expanded the role of religion and used it as a tool in internal and external affairs. In general, Pakistani society is feudal, tribal and status-oriented. However, Pakhtun society is tribalistic and poverty-ridden. The majority of the Pakhtuns consider religion as a panacea for all problems. They are also patriotic

citizens and have a love for their country and province. Their disillusionment with ethnic and other secular leaders skewed them towards the religious parties in the 2002 elections. This internal factor, along with others, brought MMA to power, although the emergence of MMA is also seen, to a greater extent, as part of the revolt against the Western policies and propaganda against the Muslims. The MMA was able to exert a great deal of power over the poorest and least educated provinces of Pakistan (the KP and Balochistan). The MMA opposed Pakistan's friendship with the US and Pakistan's dedication to counter-terrorism. Apart from its severe criticism against the "War on Terrorism", the MMA did not interfere in anti-terrorism operations, whether they were law enforcement, military or paramilitary.

It is also clear that the MMA had no Taliban like agenda. Taliban are intolerant, while MMA was flexible and wanted to solve their problems through dialogue and had a democratic approach toward

the political issues. In this regard, many of the policies of the MMA were against the Taliban agenda, such as female education, participation in sport and tourism. The MMA also showed great flexibility in regards to family planning and religious minorities' issues. In the end, the MMA paid a very high price for its internal weaknesses and the cosy promises in the form of seats it grabbed in the parliamentary elections 2008. It was heavily defeated by the nationalists and secular political parties. It gained a paltry ten seats in the KP, while in the 2002 elections, it had gained 46 seats. In 2002, it had 59 general seats, 29 from KP, in the National Assembly. In 2008 it won only six seats, four from KP. In Baluchistan, it came down from 14 PA seats and 6 NA seats in 2002 to 7 PA and 2 NA seats in 2008. The alliance disintegrated over the issue of the election boycott. The JI boycotted the elections while the JUI (F) and others contested the elections.

References

- Abbas, H. (2005). Pakistan's drift into extremism, Allah, the army, and America's war on terror. New Delhi: *Pentagon Press*.
- Ahmad, M., October 20, 2002. MMA's Victory: Implication for Pakistan. *The Daily Jang*.
- Ahmad, T. (2001). An introduction to contemporary Islamic groups and movements in India. *Author's Publication*.
- Ali, M. (December 16, 2010). Cultural depravation: The sound of silence. Express Tribune at tribune.com.pk > Pakistan > KP & FATA.
- Brohi, N. (2006). The MMA offensive, three years in power 2003-2005. Islamabad: *Action Aid International*.
- Cohen, S. P. (2004). The idea of Pakistan. Washington D.C. *Brookings Institution Press*.
- Cohen, S. P. (2005). The Idea of Pakistan. Lahore: *Vanguard Books*.
- General Elections Pakistan, 1997. Vol. II, Election Commission of Pakistan.
- Husain, A. (January 15, 2004). MMA defend deal with government over LFO. *The daily Dawn*.
- Jaffrelot, C. (2004). A History of Pakistan and its origins. London: *Anthem Press*.
- Joshau T. W. (2008). Pakistan Islamist frontier: Islamic politics and U.S. policy in Pakistan's North West Frontier. Arlington: *Center of Faith and International Affairs*.
- Khan, J. (2014). The rise of political Islam in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: The case of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). *The Dialogue IX* (3), 299-312.
- Khan, K. A. (2008). 17th Constitutional amendment & its aftermath: The role of Muttahidda Majlis-i-Amal (MMA). *Pakistan Horision* 9(2), 101-121.
- Khan, M. I. (November 2002). Interview with Qazi Husain Ahmad. *The Herald*.
- Khan, N. S. (2002). The new global order: Politics and the women's movement in Pakistan. In S. Mumtaz, J. L. Racine & I. A. Ali (Eds.), *Pakistan: The contours of state and society* (137-151). Oxford: *Oxford University Press*.
- Kukreja, V. (2003). Contemporary Pakistan: Political processes, conflicts and crises. New Delhi: *Sage Publications*.
- Markovits, C. (2002). Cross-currents in the historiography of partition. In S. Mumtaz, J. L. Racine & I. A. Ali (Eds.), *Pakistan: The contours of state and society* (3-23). Oxford: *Oxford University Press*.
- Misra, A. (2003). Rise of religious parties in Pakistan: Causes and prospects. *Strategic Analysis*, 27(2), 186-215.
- Mizari, S. M., (November 12-14, 2002). South and South East Asia in perspective -20th and 21st Century, (unpublished paper). Lisbon: *Institute of Political and Social Studies*.
- Naqvi, M. B. (2010). Pakistan at knife's edge. New Delhi: *Roli Books Private Limited*.
- Nasr, V. (Spring, 2004). Military rules: Islamism and democracy in Pakistan. *The Middle East Journal*, 58(2), 195-209.
- Norell, M. (2007). The Taliban and the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 5(3), 61-82.
- Rizvi, H. A. (November 2002). Another Muttahidda. *The Herald*.
- Rizvi, H. A. (October 24, 2002). Dynamics of MMA ascendancy. *The daily Dawn* at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1063758>.
- Sareen, S. (February 27, 2004). The MMA and its future at <http://www.orfonline.org/research/the-mma-and-its-future/>
- Shamim-ur-Rehman (December 30, 2002). Did government strike deal with MMA? *The daily Dawn*.
- Siraj-ul-Haque (2004). Aml-e-phem: Hukumat-e-soba Sarhad ki karkardagi (Urdu). Peshawar: The Printman.
- Talbot, I. (1998). Pakistan: A modern history. London: *Hurst and Company*.
- Waseem, M. (2006). Democratization in Pakistan: A study of the 2002 elections. Karachi: *Oxford University Press*.
- Yusafzai, R. (February 14, 2008). Rise and falls of Mullahs. *Newsline Magazine* at newslinemagazine.com/magazine/rise-and-fall-of-the-mullahs.
- Yusufzai, R. (October, 2003). No gain, no pain. *The Newsline*.