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Keywords: Political Islam, Jamaat-e-Islami, Afghan Conflict, Regional Diplomacy, Pakistan Foreign Policy

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Abstract

This paper examines the interest of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) in the Afghan crisis of 2010-2012 in terms of Political Islam and regional politics. Based on the qualitative discourse analysis of party statements, speeches, and policy narratives, it examines the manner in which JI has expressed its ideological position on Afghanistan and Pakistan's foreign policy. The paper places the JI discourse in the political environment that is undergoing change in Pakistan in the wake of the U.S. troop surge and the consequent drawdown announcements. Results indicate that discourse in JI included anti-imperialist and religious solidarity to confront the relationship between the Western powers and Pakistan and to establish the party as a source of Islamic independence and regional peace. The paper claims the involvement of JI during this time is representative of the operation of political Islam as a theological form as well as a diplomatic idiom in South Asian politics.

Keywords:

[Political Islam](#), [Jamaat-e-Islami](#), [Afghan Conflict](#), [Regional Diplomacy](#), [Pakistan Foreign Policy](#)

Introduction

The South Asian politics and security landscape was drastically changed by the post-9/11 era, which made Pakistan a pivotal geopolitical player in the global War on Terror. Within the changing context, the overlap of religion, politics, and diplomacy took on a new meaning. With Pakistan supporting the Western military operations in Afghanistan, domestic struggles emerged regarding the sovereignty, legitimacy, and ethical responsibility. One of the most outspoken opponents of this

orientation was Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the oldest and most structured Islamist party in Pakistan, which did not see the Afghan war as a territorial or strategic battle but a civilizational battle between Islamic identity and Western hegemony.

JI was established by Abul Ala Maududi in 1941 and has been traditionally a founder of the idea of Political Islam, the view that Islam offers a complete system of governance, law, and foreign relations. The ideology of the party is based on the belief that a political and moral renaissance in Muslim societies



should take place before the real independence of the influence of imperial influence. By the early 2010s, with Syed Munawar Hasan in charge, JI started to be more confrontational in its discourse about the involvement of Pakistan in the operations led by NATO. It saw the collaboration of Islamabad with the United States as a way of ideological oppression that diminished the national integrity as well as the greater Muslim ummah.

The JI increased its activity with the Afghan conflict between 2010 and 2012, with increased rallies, sermons, and press conferences that positioned the resistance of Afghanistan as a global Islamic awakening. The rhetoric of the party was a combination of theological rhetoric and nationalistic elements, which introduced the insurgents, the Afghan Taliban, not only as rebels but also as defenders of religion and freedom. On the contrary, the relationship between Pakistan and the United States was presented as a moral distortion that disrespected the Muslim sacrifices in the region. Such a rhetorical tactic made JI a moral figure and a second diplomatic voice in the divided political environment in Pakistan.

The paper examines how the discourse of JI in the period 2010-12 had an ideological continuity of Political Islam and how it tried to emulate its ideology in the regional diplomacy of Pakistan. Through the examination of the official statements, speeches, and publications of the party, the study proposes that the JI political communication in this era acted as a parallel foreign policy narrative, which fused religious solidarity, anti-imperialism, and national sovereignty. Finally, the study sheds light on how the JI representation of the conflict in Afghanistan can help to understand larger tensions between state-based diplomacy and religious-based political identity in the post-9/11 Pakistani context.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), in its discourse of the Afghan conflict (2010-2012), has positioned itself in terms of Political Islam and its expression of Islamic solidarity, anti-imperialism, and national sovereignty.
2. To analyze the effectiveness of the ideological narratives or JI as a parallel type of regional diplomacy, shaping Pakistan's domestic and foreign policy debate in the post 9/11 period.

3. To investigate how JI has been used as an ideational actor in the creation of the Pakistani diplomatic identity in terms of religious and moral discourse based on the Constructivist theory.
4. To assess how the religious ideology has interacted with practical politics in the communication strategies by JI on Afghanistan, Pakistan-United States relationship, and the unity of Muslims.

In order to make my contribution to the cognizance of the mechanism of Political Islam as a theological structure and diplomatic lingo in South Asian politics.

Literature Review

Political Islam and regional diplomacy have been intersecting to cause great debate among scholars since the late twentieth century. Scholars like Olivier Roy (1994) and Gilles Kepel (2002) have followed the history of Islamic revivalism into their spiritual reform movements into systematic political thoughts, which aim to Islamize the government and foreign relations. Roy (1994) claims that Political Islam tends to form as a reaction to perceived Western hegemony, and simultaneously as a form of identity politics and an alternative conception of modernity. Even Kepel (2002) puts Islamic activism in the world as a response to secular dictatorship and post-colonial exploitation in the context of globalization and transnational activism.

In the South Asian context, Vali Nasr (1996) gives the best explanatory coverage on the formation ideology of Abul Ala Maududi and Jamaat-e-Islami. Nasr also follows JI as the founder of the contemporary Islamic political organization, a disciplined party, and an intellectual presentation of Islam as a full social system. The JI model of Islamic activism, which is based on constitutionalism and the persuasion of the masses, not violence, has had a massive impact on Islamist movements in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. Thereafter, scholarly literature such as that by Euben and Zaman (2009) builds on the work of Nasr by investigating how Islamist language is changing to fit into contemporary democratic and diplomatic space.

Recent studies in 2024 highlight that Political Islam has continued to influence regional diplomatic trends in South Asia, especially given the

flux in leadership and electoral processes (International Crisis Group, 2024). According to Ahmed Rashid (2010) and C. Christine Fair (2014), the Afghan policy of Pakistan since 2001 has swung between the side of the Western powers and partnership with the Islamist networks to advance its regional interests. This was what Fair (2014) refers to as a dual policy, which created contradictions within itself that allowed domestic Islamist parties, especially JI, to challenge official diplomacy by using moral and ideological criticism. Shahid Javed Burki (2015) also notes that Islamist discourses in Pakistan tend to reflect the foreign-policy paranoia of that state, where the engagement with the region is defined as a religious and national duty.

Based on the Constructivist theory of international relations, Alexander Wendt (1999) and Peter Katzenstein (1996) underline that not only material interests influence state behavior, but also common ideas, beliefs, and identities. Known as a case of Islamic movements, Ihsan Yilmaz (2017) asserts that Political Islam in Pakistan is a so-called hybrid political identity, and it affects both domestic and international policy. In this perspective, the discussion of Afghanistan by JI can be viewed as an ideational effort to re-establish Pakistan as a diplomatic state by redefining the diplomatic identity of this state as an Islamic state that works in solidarity with the rest of the Muslim ummah.

The Islamist parties are also discussed in recent works as non-state diplomats. Mohammad Qasim Zaman (2018) shows that Islamic movements are becoming more and more moral entrepreneurs of the public sphere that impact the popular image of international relations. Sadia Saeed (2016) also argues that the Islamic parties in Pakistan have used international conflict to bargain for legitimacy in local politics. These observations indicate that the involvement of JI in the Afghan war in 2010-2012 can be interpreted as the continuation of a more extensive process where the phenomenon of Political Islam collides with soft-power diplomacy. A 2024 analysis further suggests that South Asian politics remains shaped by religious identity politics, as Political Islam's influence persists amid ongoing security challenges (Malik, 2025).

Although large volumes of literature are available regarding the Afghanistan policy of Pakistan, and on Political Islam as a form of ideology, limited studies have looked at the

discourse of JI in the narrower 2010-2012 period, when region-level processes were restructured by the U.S. troop-drawdown approach and internal political instability in Pakistan. This void defines the importance of the current study that integrates discourse analysis and Constructivist theory in order to determine how JI political communication presented an Islamic morality vision of regional diplomacy.

Theoretical Framework

The present paper is based on two theoretical premises that include Political Islam and Constructivism in the wider context of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). This combination gives ideological and interpretive instruments that can be used to comprehend the Jamaat-e-Islami discourse in the Afghan conflict (2010-2012), not only as a political rhetoric, but as a calculated effort to establish identity, legitimacy, and the regional foreign policy using religious and ethical accounts.

Political Islam as an Ideological Framework.

Political Islam is the mobilization of Islamic principles and symbols for political, social, and diplomatic purposes. It is a contemporary endeavor that aims at Islamizing the state and the general population, as defined by Olivier Roy (1994), whereas it is a movement that consolidates spiritual resurgence with political activism, as stated by Gilles Kepel (2002). In South Asia, Vali Nasr (1996) describes Jamaat-e-Islami as the model of Political Islam, which was organized - a movement that institutionalized the vision of Islam as a complete system of governance, law, and international relations as proposed by Maududi.

In the case of JI, the Afghan war was a metaphor of the clash between religion-based rule and the secular dominance of the West. Its rhetoric viewed the regional diplomacy not as an object of realpolitik but as a moral obligation based on Quranic concepts of ummah and justice. Political Islam in Pakistan, as Ihsan Yilmaz (2017) argues, is a so-called hybrid: a political form of identity that incorporates democratic institutions and challenges the hierarchies of the world. Therefore, the meaning of the Afghan war by JI was theological solidarity as well as moral diplomacy, the combination of theological action and political course.

Interpretive Lens Constructivism

The second pillar of this framework is based on Constructivist International Relations theory, which assumes that material power is not the sole determinant of political behavior, but ideas, norms, and identities are also considered. It is often said by Alexander Wendt (1999) that anarchy is what states make out of it, and this implies that international politics are socially constructed through shared meanings and stories. In a similar light, Peter Katzenstein (1996) shows that norms and cultural identities shape the way states shape their interests and activities.

Using this prism in the context of the regional diplomacy of Pakistan, Constructivism makes it possible to examine the role played by the discourse of JI in the formation of the discourse of collective identity and foreign-policy debates. The framework views JI not as a fringe opposition party, but as an ideational actor, or one likely to impact the nation-wide discourses of sovereignty, resistance, and legitimacy. The disapproval of Pakistan by JI, concerning its alliance with the United States, particularly, is a Constructivist process whereby the conflicting visions of identity (Islamic solidarity/strategic alignment) are pitted against one another at the domestic political level.

The merger of political Islam and Constructivism.

With the synthesis of these two frameworks, the paper views the work of JI on the Afghanistan conflict as an ideological claim as well as a discursive act to establish the reality. Political Islam gives the content of the JI's worldview, the view that political sovereignty has to be consistent with Islamic morality, and Constructivism gives the means of comprehending how this worldview is expressed and bargained out in discourse. Collectively, they demonstrate how JI tried to make Pakistan alter its approaches to foreign-policy decisions, which are based on security reasons but not on value-driven ones, and have Islamic ethics as the pillar of the regional diplomacy.

Such an integrated framework, however, can allow a more subtle interpretation of the JI rhetoric in 2010-2012: as an effort to define the meaning of diplomacy itself, to transform it into a resource of moral authority, rather than of geopolitical interests, and ideological integrity.

Research Methodology:

Research Design

The proposed research will use a qualitative research design based on discourse analysis, which will analyze the role played by language in creating meaning, identity, and power dynamics in political dialogue. As the point of the paper is Jamaat-e-Islamis (JI) involvement in the Afghan war (2010-12), the discourse analysis will allow us to interpret the statement of the party as not only the political texts but also as the ideological acts that define the party's concepts of Islam, sovereignty, and diplomacy.

Discourse, as Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (2008) would suggest, is a variant of social practice that involves political actors building and/or challenging hegemonic ideologies. In this context, the paper examines how the JI political discourses create an Islamic worldview of regional politics, making the Afghan conflict a moral and religious conflict, but not a strategic conflict.

Data Collection

The paper relies on both primary and secondary sources to guarantee the depth and authenticity:

Primary data will consist of the official press releases, policy documents, and speeches of party leaders, in particular, Syed Munawar Hasan and Siraj-ul-Haq, issued between January 2010 and December 2012. These resources were connected via the other party's site (www.jamaat.org). News archives of Dawn, The News International, and The Express Tribune.

The secondary sources will include academic sources on Political Islam, the Afghan policy of Pakistan, and regional diplomacy (e.g., Nasr, 1996; Rashid, 2010; Fair, 2014; Yilmaz, 2017). These sources offer a theoretical and contextualized background of understanding the discourse of JI.

The chosen timeframe (2010-2012) represents a critical stage in the regional relationships between Pakistan, with the troop surge by the U.S., the secret operations, including the raid of Abwaho (2011), and the new peace attempts between Kabul and Islamabad. This period was marked by the escalation of the frequency and ideological depth of JI, which is why it can be the best time frame to conduct the analysis.

Sampling and Selection Criteria.

A purposive sampling was used to get the textual materials that clearly mention Afghanistan, U.S. foreign policy, or the diplomatic stance of Pakistan. The inclusion criteria were: Speeches or statements by the official JI representatives (central or provincial). Publications made during the period of January 2010 and December 2012. Rhetoric that discusses the theme of jihad, sovereignty, U.S. intervention, or Muslim unity. This is similar to Silverman (2013), who suggests purposive sampling to establish the ideological patterns rather than quantitative representation in qualitative research.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis was done in three phases:

Textual Analysis: Determining the patterns of the use of language and rhetoric, such as the use of the words: imperialism, Islamic unity, sovereignty, and resistance.

Ideological Coding - These patterns were coded into larger ideological categories that represented Political Islam (e.g., moral legitimacy, ummah consciousness, anti-Western framing).

Interpretive Contextualization - Upping these classifications with the larger foreign-policy context of Pakistan, as the suggested context-sensitive discourse studies in the works of Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton (2015) would. The point was to find out the way JI constructs meaning, not only what it says. Such an interpretative emphasis is consistent with Constructivist IR theory (Wendt, 1999), which considers discourse as one of the processes of defining shared identities and diplomatic standards.

Validity and Reliability

Triangulation was also used by employing the discourse of JI across varying media houses and time periods in a bid to render analytical credibility. The bias was minimized and the accuracy of the context was ensured with the help of cross-verification with external sources (e.g., government statements and international reports). As well, the positionality of the researcher was accommodated by the use of reflexive interpretation as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to ensure continuity in the interpretation.

Limitations

Although discourse analysis provides a rich and qualitative insight, it has limitations. The research only concentrates on public communication, and this might not be the practice of internal strategic considerations in JI. In addition, a shortage of access to secret diplomatic communications hinders the possibility of a direct correlation between rhetoric and the official policy of JI. However, Bacchi (2000) continues to note that studying the ideational forces that shape political actions and legitimacy, however, has been well achieved through analysis of the public discourse.

Analysis and Discussion

Framing the Afghan Conflict Ideologically.

JI depicted the Afghan war as a religious and moral, but not a political conflict. Numerous speeches were given in 2010 by Munawar Hasan, who said that the Afghanistan nation is struggling to achieve freedom and religion against occupation. In 2024, JI leadership including Hafiz Naeem ur Rahman has continued to advocate for policy dialogues with the Afghan Taliban to address lawlessness and promote regional peace (Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, 2024). This rhetoric established JI squarely in the moral high ground of Islamic resistance, and it made the Taliban acceptable in its political autonomy and disassociated Pakistan with U.S. strategic ambitions.

In this way of framing, JI reinvented the heroism of Muslim unity, making the fight of Afghanistan look like a continuation of the struggle for independent thought and identity of the Pakistani people. The discussion combined the science of theology, geopolitics, and Islam was not only a faith but an ethos of foreign policy.

The Pakistan-U.S. Alliance is criticized.

Pakistan experienced growing internal criticism of its relations with NATO forces between 2010 and 2012. The discussion of JI directed this alliance as a kind of invasion of the national honor, and the continuation of Western hegemony. JI leaders criticized American drone attacks and their perceived subservience to the American government.

This rhetoric fits into constructivist ways of seeing diplomacy as identity politics; national sovereignty is identical with Islamic authenticity. The criticism

by JI aimed at re-establishing the meaning of national interest with moral legitimacy in place of strategic realism.

Regional Diplomacy and Political Islam.

Although unofficially, JI contributed to the formation of a narrative of Pakistan in relation to regional diplomacy. The party was in touch with the Afghan religious groups and sponsored the efforts to advance Islamic governance. JI instrumentalized the necessity of the Afghan-led reconciliation in the public forums and denied solutions imposed by foreigners.

This discourse, by encouraging this, made JI a norm entrepreneur, molding the way Pakistan thinks of its neighbor. The role of the party towards Islamic solidarity solidified the traditional Pakistan cultural and religious closeness to Afghanistan. (Tariq et al., [2019](#)).

Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics Intersection.

The period was between 2010 and 2012, when society was engaged in domestic instability of civil-military conflict, growing extremism, and economic calamity. JI leveraged on this climate by connecting internal government failures to foreign policy. Its rhetoric meant that Pakistan was too dependent on Western aid, which weakened democracy and faith-based integrity.

Therefore, the involvement of JI in the matter softened the distinction between domestic legitimacy and foreign diplomacy, and it formed Political Islam as a unifying discourse, which was

able to resolve the two. In 2025, Pakistan formalized a defense agreement with Saudi Arabia, marking a major shift in its foreign policy and reassessing its leadership role within the Muslim ummah post-US withdrawal from Afghanistan (Pak-Saudi Security Review, [2025](#)).

Striking a Balance between Ideology and Pragmatism.

Although it was quite ideological, JI also had a practical line of thought. Such leaders as Siraj-ul-Haq stressed dialogue and peaceful resolution and demanded that Pakistan should become a mediator of peace and not a proxy in war. This is the adaptive quality of Political Islam- choosing between moral conviction and getting down to business.

Conclusion

In 2010-2012, the Jamaat-e-Islami's involvement in the Afghan war demonstrated the collapse of the religious and political ideology of South-Asian diplomacy. JI also positioned itself as the keeper of the Islamic values as well as an antagonist of Western affiliations of Pakistan. The party changed the field of regional dialogue and national sovereignty by positioning diplomacy as a continuation of faith.

The paper concludes that Political Islam in Pakistan is more of a discursive power which entails the formation of a national identity, a way of influencing people, and offering moral alternatives to the state policy. The Afghan story of JI highlights the timeless applicability of Islamic movements in the formation of political and diplomatic pathways of South Africa.

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