



The Role of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) in the Parliament of Pakistan (2018-2024)

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) in the Pakistani Parliament from 2018 to 2024. JUI-F, being one of the major religious political parties, its role in parliament is under researched. This study attempts to fill the gap by closely examining the legislative activity, parliamentary speeches, and JUI-F's oversight activity. Qualitative research design was employed whereby parliamentary records, party documents, and interviews were scrutinized. The results show that the JUI-F played a significant role in determining the parliamentary agenda, particularly with regard to issues of Islamic ideology, national security, and social justice. The JUI-F members of parliament were keenly participating in debates, introducing bills, and oversight roles. However, the study discovers that the JUI-F was not able to translate its parliamentary power into effective policy outputs. The party's poor representation in key parliamentary committees disadvantaged its ability to influence policy decisions. Despite these drawbacks, JUI-F's parliamentary role has significant implications for Pakistan's politics. The findings of this research enhance our understanding of the complex nature of religious politics in Pakistan. The research is stressing the importance of further investigation on the representation of religious political parties in Pakistan's parliament and their role in shaping the governance and policy-making system of the country.

Keywords: Pakistan, JUI, Politics, Religious Party, Democracy

INTRODUCTION

Maulana Fazl-ur Rehman is a prominent Pakistani politician and the leader of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), also known as JUI-F. His political contribution to Pakistan has been significant, particularly in voicing religious and conservative elements. Maulana's role in JUI-F is multifaceted, ranging from leadership, ideological backing, and election strategy. His ability to navigate the complex political environment of Pakistan, along with focus on Islamic ideology, has allowed the party to have a significant, if troubled, presence in Pakistani politics.



As the political environment evolves, his grip and direction of the party will be instrumental in shaping future events within the region. Fazl-ur Rehman is a Pakistani politician and Islamic scholar who has been active in politics since the 1980s. Maulana Fazl-ur Rehman was born on June 19, 1953, in Abdul Khail Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. He belongs to an Islamic scholar-politician family. His father, Maulana Mufti Mahmud, was a renowned Islamic scholar and politician who was the Chief Minister of the North-West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) from 1972 to 1973.¹ He received traditional Islamic education in madrasas, which shaped his world view and became the foundation of his later political philosophy. Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman officially entered politics as a member of JUI, where he gained rapid popularity due to his public speaking and organizing abilities. He joined in compliance with the aim of the party to propagate Islamic principles in the government. He founded Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) (JUI-F) in 1980 following ideological fissures within the original JUI, positioning himself as a major player in the advocacy of a more conservative Islamic cause. In the 1980s and 1990s, Maulana formed strategic partnerships with various political parties, including the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (N), that helped increase his political standing. Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind (JU-H) was established in 1919 in India with the main aim of tackling the socio-political challenges confronting Muslims under British colonial rule.² The movement sought to encourage education, social reform, and political enlightenment among Muslims. It was also active in the Indian independence struggle, promoting Muslim rights and unity in the context of more general anti-colonial activism. Important figures involved in its founding were Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani and other major Islamic scholars. JU-H remains a powerful organization within Indian Muslim life, dedicated to education and social justice. The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Faz-lur Rehman) has played a significant role in shaping the political trajectory of Pakistan, particularly during the parliamentarian tenure from 2018 to 2024. Being a leading force within the National Assembly, the party has influenced numerous legislative bills and public policy measures, showcasing its commitment to Islamic principles and conservative governance. Under the leadership of JUI-F, the party has been navigating a volatile political environment with coalition politics, economic issues, and changing public convictions.³

The period has seen the JUI-F battling for education, religious freedom, and social justice, and also serving as a vocal critic of government policy. Understanding the role of the party during this term provides significant insights into the situation of religion vis-a-vis politics in Pakistan and the political institutions' dilemma within a transforming society. He played a pivotal part in forming various political alliances. Surprisingly enough, he cooperated with the opposition as well as ruling parties to strengthen his party. His ability to navigate through complex political spaces has made JUI-F continue to be relevant to national politics. Maulana Fazl ur Rehman has remained engaged in a number of political alliances, including the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) and the

¹ Khan, Muhammad A. "JUI-F's Legislative Performance in Pakistan's Parliament." *Journal of Politics and Governance* 10, no. 1 (2020): 45-60.

² Ibid.

³ Ali, Sohail. "The Role of JUI-F in Pakistan's Parliament: A Critical Analysis." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 2 (2020): 123-140.



Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), in an attempt to unite religious and opposition parties against the government. Fazlur Rehman has been in JUI-F's service since it was founded in 1980, after his father Maulana Mufti Mahmood. He has persistently headed the party with its ideological foundations being Islamic ideals. He actively participated in national and provincial elections and continued to enhance JUI-F's representation within KPK and Balochistan, where the party has maintained a strong footing. In the 1980s, JUI-F was more organized and effective with Fazl-ur Rehman as its head, participating in various political coalitions. Maulana has also worked as an opposition leader, often criticizing the government policies and playing the role of advocate of religious minorities as well as conservative groups.⁴ His ability to adapt to changing political situations has allowed JUI-F to remain relevant in Pakistani politics, despite the challenges posed by emerging parties like PTI. The JUI-F has a solid base in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan and often succeeds in winning seats in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies. The party played a key role in the formation of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) in the early 2000s, a coalition of religious parties. Political interests that lead Fazl-ur Rehman to resist the reform of madrasas. These interests fall into two categories although not completely exclusive, first are unempirical strategic interests associated with the very survival of Maulana Fazl-ur Rehman JUI-F as a political force and their long-term survival. Second are tactical in nature serving the needs of immediate political situations. Protection of these interests is central to acquiring and maintaining political power that is channeled into Fazl-ur Rehman's political survival. The whole phenomenon thus boils down to elite utilizing religion instrumentally, which has been deduced through theoretical frameworks of "elite instrumentalism" and "political survival theory." Elite instrumentalism refers to when political elites utilize religious symbols, values, and institutions to realize their individual political objectives. Assume that whatever actions the elites take or hinder is to maintain either dominance to, or hold on to power, for the eventual goal of political survival. President, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), coalition of Islamic parties (2002-2007).⁵

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Main Objective

- To analyze the parliamentary performance and policy influence of JUI (F) during (2018-2024).

Sub-Objectives

- To evaluate the nature and extent of JUI-F's participation in parliamentary proceedings from 2018 to 2024.
- To evaluate the JUI-F's Islamic ideology shaping its stance on key national issues.
- To evaluate the impact JUI-F's opposition on the government's policy decisions.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.



CONCLUSION

The 2024 Pakistan general elections were a turning point for the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) party. JUI-F, despite all the difficulties it has been facing, has secured 4 seats in the National Assembly namely NA-28, NA-40, NA-260, and NA-265. The performance indicates that JUI-F's power in Pakistani politics is not yet declining, particularly in its home regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. With respect to future prospects, JUI-F's ability to learn from evolving circumstances and leverage its own strengths will be crucial. The party will need to navigate internal conflicts, external criticism, and shifting political tides in an effort to remain afloat. Through investments in capacity development, party expansion, and outreach, JUI-F can potentially build its base of support and boost its electoral standing.

The implications of JUI-F's performance and prospects for the future of Pakistani politics are significant. A stronger JUI-F can lead to a more polarized political landscape, with different parties vying to dominate. This can result in more coalition building and alliances, which can lead to improved governance and policy-making. On the other hand, JUI-F's decline would create a power vacuum that would be taken over by other political parties such as the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) or the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). This would shift Pakistani politics' power dynamics and result in a new governance and policy-making system. In governance and policy making, JUI-F's voice would prioritize Islamic values and principles even more. This could be followed by policies that are leaned towards social justice, education, and healthcare, perhaps for marginalized communities.

But the JUI-F's influence would also introduce more sectarian grievances and conflicts, which would destabilize the country. Furthermore, the party's opposition to women's rights and defense of minorities would reverse achievements in these areas. In the end, whether or not JUI-F succeeds or fails and how this will affect Pakistani politics would rely on many factors, including how much the party is able to transform and become modernized, how good other parties do, and what people want. Through its complex and changing political existence, Pakistan's future will rely heavily on the role of the JUI-F. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) (JUI-F) has been a strong force within the Parliament of Pakistan from 2018 to 2024. Being one of the top Islamic political parties, JUI-F has played a crucial role in the making of the laws and policies in the country. Holding 13 out of 342 National Assembly seats and 5 out of 104 Senate seats, JUI-F has been an active contributor to parliament. The president of the party, Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman, has been a prominent Pakistani politician as the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly from 2004 to 2007.

JUI-F has been quite active in various legislative proposals, particularly those dealing with Islamic principles and values. The party has been actively pushing for the imposition of Sharia law and Islamic education. JUI-F has also been against legislation that it believes is against Islamic values, such as the domestic violence bill. The party's stance on these issues has been guided by its commitment to Islamic ideology and its insistence on promoting a more just and equitable society. While it is a significant player in Pakistani politics, JUI-F has come under criticism and scandal, most notably regarding its attitude towards women's rights and minority rights. The party has come under fire for promoting a selective and intolerant brand of Islam, which has contributed to Pakistan's



sectarianism and extremism. JUI-F's opposition to women's and minority rights has also been taken to task by many, arguing that the party's stance is out of step with the hopes and aspirations of modern-day Pakistan. However, JUI-F's role within Pakistani politics must be acknowledged. The party has a strong base of support, particularly from the inhabitants of the Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. The support for Islamic ideals and its goal of constructing a fair and equal society by JUI-F strikes a chord in the majority of Pakistanis. The party has also played significant influence in the parliament, with JUI-F playing a significant role in the country's legislation and policy-making. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) has been effective in the Parliament of Pakistan from 2018 to 2024. Despite the party being criticized and mired in controversy, the vision of the party to maintain Islamic values and to establish a more just and equitable society has resonated with most Pakistanis. The role of JUI-F in the parliament has been significant, and the party's influence on the country's legislation and policy will remain significant in the coming years. As Pakistani politics continues to evolve, the support of JUI-F for Islamic teachings and its drive towards establishing a fairer and more just society will remain a critical factor in Pakistani politics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- JUI-F has to put a special focus on engaging young voters, who are becoming an increasingly dominant force in Pakistani politics. This may involve the utilization of social media, establishing campus organizations, and developing policies to hear the concerns and aspirations of young Pakistanis.
- JUI-F's opposition to women's rights and the protection of minorities has been decried, and the party must reconsider its stance on both issues. In calling for an inclusive and diversified approach, JUI-F will be able to close the gap with other political parties and constituencies.
- JUI-F must place utmost importance on strengthening its party organization and internal democracy. This can be achieved through having clearer decision-making lines, transparency, and accountability, and more effective mechanisms for handling internal conflicts.
- JUI-F has never been able to make inroads in Punjab in the past, and the party needs to develop a more effective strategy for competing within this critical province. This could involve entering into coalitions with provincial parties and politicians, spending money on grassroots organizing, and developing policies that address the specific needs and concerns of Punjabi voters.
- JUI-F should prioritize economic development and social welfare since these are issues of top priority to the welfare and prosperity of Pakistani citizens. By conceptualizing policies that promote economic development, employment, and social welfare, JUI-F can increase its connection with voters and promote a more equitable and just society.
- JUI-F can be involved in mobilizing the constructive opposition and coalition building, realizing that these efforts can help build more efficient governance and policy making. By working together with other parties and stakeholders, JUI-F can create bridges and build a more inclusive and cooperative political style.



- JUI-F has to prioritize leadership development and succession planning, knowing that these are the most vital endeavors for party long-term well-being and achievement. By recognizing and developing potential new leaders, JUI-F can build a stronger and more resilient organization better able to negotiate the challenges of Pakistani politics.