

Islamist politics in South Asia after the Arab Spring: Parties and their proxies working with—and against—the state

WORKING PAPER

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SUMMARY: Mainstream Islamist parties in Pakistan such as the Jama'at-e Islami and the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam have demonstrated a tendency to combine the gradualism of Brotherhood-style electoral politics with *dawa* (missionary) activities and, at times, support for proxy militancy. As a result, Pakistani Islamists wield significant ideological influence in Pakistan, even as their electoral success remains limited.

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This chapter examines the fragmented terrain of Islamist politics in South Asia since 2011—both mainstream and militant—with a focus on Pakistan and Afghanistan.

With reference to mainstream political parties, this chapter focuses on the Jama'at-e-Islami (JI), led by lay Muslims, and the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), led by Sunni Deobandi ulema (clerics). With reference to Muslim militancy, it examines the Pakistan Army's distinction between 'good' and 'bad' Taliban, considering the ways in which recent military pressure targeting 'bad' militants might alter the militant landscape. The trajectories explored in this chapter are not confined to South Asia. The chapter concludes with an account of the evolving relationship between militants in South Asia and jihadi conglomerates rooted in the Middle East—especially, al-Qaida and the 'Islamic State'.

Three broad themes structure the narrative in this chapter. The first focuses on the weak electoral fortunes of mainstream Islamist political parties—fortunes that peaked in 2002 before falling off again. The second focuses on the Pakistan Army and its ties to 'proxy' militants operating in Afghanistan and Kashmir. The third focuses on the relationship between militants in South Asia and those hailing from the Middle East. In what follows, I introduce each theme in turn.

The **first** theme considers the role that mainstream electoral approaches to Muslim social and political transformation have played—or, more precisely, have *not* played—in the consolidation of Islamist influence in South Asia. Focusing specifically on Pakistan, I refer to the weak electoral fortunes of mainstream Islamist parties with a principled commitment to gradualism—parties like the Jama'at-e-Islami (JI) and the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI).¹

Before the formation of Pakistan in 1947, those who established the JI and the JUI differed from the views articulated by the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna, insofar as they remained deeply apprehensive about the *territorial* constraints of modern Arab or South Asian Muslim 'nationalism'. Those associated with the JI and the JUI insisted that new forms of social and religious solidarity should be grounded, not in the cultivation of a territorial 'nation', but in the cultivation of a transnational 'ummah' instead.²

Throughout the early 1940s, both the Jama'at-e-Islami and the Jamiat-e Ulema-e 'Hind' (the precursor of Pakistan's JUI) *opposed* the formation of Pakistan—above all, its formation by Mohammad Ali Jinnah and his 'secular' Muslim League—seeing the Pakistan Movement as little

¹ For an historical account of Deobandi madrasas, see Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900* (Princeton, 1982).

² Other differences are worth noting as well. Whereas Hasan al-Banna sought to reform Muslim society from within, JI leaders like Syed Abu'l ala Maududi sought to establish a revolutionary vanguard party set apart from the 'jahil' (ignorant) Muslim masses and poised to lead from above. This was not an extension of Banna's ideas; it was a response to early-twentieth-century Muslim political fragmentation in South Asia—a pattern of fragmentation that extended from the Khilafat Movement and Muslim leaders within the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League to the clerical leadership of the Dar-ul-Uloom madrasa at Deoband and many other groups. Maududi's ideas were rooted in South Asia; however, they went on to influence prominent ideologues within the Muslim Brotherhood as well—above all, Syed Qutb. See Abdelwahab El-Affendi, "The Long March from Lahore to Khartoum: Beyond the 'Muslim Reformation,'" *Bulletin* 17 no. 2 (1990): 137-51; Eran Lerman, "Mawdudi's Concept of Islam," *Middle Eastern Studies* 17 no. 4 (1981), 492-509.

more than a nationalist ploy to divide South Asia's Muslim community. Since the formation of Pakistan, however, each has sought to rehabilitate its patriotic (nationalist) credentials. Embracing the modern bureaucratic state, each has sought new ways to accommodate the routine cut and thrust of electoral politics, relegating the consolidation of a global ummah (or the establishment of a Sunni khilafat) to the realm of an abstract religio-political ideal.

During the 1950s, the JI sought to promote what they described as an 'Islamic' constitution for Pakistan, but the country's political, bureaucratic, legal, and military elite consistently rejected their views. In fact, over time, the founder of the JI, Syed Abu'l ala Maududi, concluded that any effective push to shape the formal legal architecture of Pakistan would have to involve a closer relationship with (and a more substantial presence *within*) Pakistan's elected National Assembly. Initially, the JI and its energetic student wing, the Islami Jamiat-e-Tuleba (IJT), sought to influence the members of Pakistan's elite bureaucracy; but, after 1951, and increasingly after 1957, they contested local elections as well.

The JUI was not engaged in electoral politics until the late 1960s. But, in the months leading up to Pakistan's first national parliamentary election in 1970, JUI-affiliated ulema expressed certain apprehensions regarding the megalomaniacal habits of JI's founder, Maududi. And, highlighting the distinction between lay (JI) and clerical (JUI) leadership, they contested the elections on their own.³

This decision to engage Pakistan's political 'mainstream' via electoral participation did *not* succeed in drawing together existing forms of 'lay' and 'clerical' power. With the electoral performance of each group remaining rather weak, routine forms of democratic practice appeared to reinforce a complex division of labour within Pakistan's evolving Islamist landscape.

Even as the JI (led by Syed Abu'l ala Maududi) and the JUI (led by Mufti Mahmud) slowly turned their attention to *elections*, for instance—a turn that accelerated during the 1970s before reaching its peak during the late-1990s and early 2000s (under JI leader Qazi Hussain Ahmad and JUI leader Fazlur Rahman)—some groups *within* the JI and the JUI insisted on maintaining on what they saw as a more purely 'religious' orientation guided by the principles of Muslim dawa (proselytization) instead.⁴ (In the case of those initially inspired by the JI, these individuals were associated with dissident ideologues like Israr Ahmad and Javed Ahmed Ghamidi. And, in the case of those affiliated with the JUI, this group was often associated with the work of the Tablighi Jama'at.)

Others, however, including the JI's own student wing (IJT) and, somewhat later, a band of Deobandi madrasa graduates known as the Afghan Taliban, rejected *both* elections *and* dawa. They turned to violence instead.

Again, the electoral success of the JI and the JUI as 'mainstream' political parties was always

³ See Sayyid A.S. Pirzada, *The Politics of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Pakistan: 1971-1977* (Karachi: Oxford, 2000); Joshua T. White, *Pakistan's Islamist Frontier* (Arlington, VA: Centre on Faith in International Affairs, 2008), 29.

⁴ See Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1994), 28-43.

quite modest—reaching a peak of just 11% of the popular vote in 2002 before falling off again. In fact, notwithstanding Maududi's early push in the direction of electoral politics, what we see is a recurring tendency, amongst Islamists, to combine the 'gradualism' associated with mainstream *electoral* competition (including intra-Muslim competition) with (a) ostensibly 'apolitical' forms of *proselytization* and (b) the more 'proactive' agenda commonly associated with *militancy*.⁵

The **second** theme in this chapter moves away from mainstream party politics and modern missionary activity to focus, more specifically, on the specific question of militancy. Here, particular attention will be paid to the relationship between specific militant groups and the work of the Pakistan Army.

Within the Army, what we see is a form of ambivalence in which the Army has sought to *collaborate* with JI-affiliated proxy forces like Al Badr (East Pakistan) during the early 1970s, Hizb-e-Islami (Afghanistan), during the 1980s, and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen in Kashmir (after 1989)—as well as JUI-affiliated Deobandi militants like Harkat-ul-Muhahideen (Kashmir) and the Taliban (Afghanistan)—while, at the same time, *clashing* with renegade militants like Jundullah (populated by former members of JI's student wing) as well as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (populated by renegade Taliban members) who attack the Army instead.⁶

In short, the Pakistan Army stands at the center of a complex pattern (framed by enduring difference between the JI and the JUI) in which South Asia's Islamist parties and their proxies work both *with* and *against* the state simultaneously.

In doctrinal terms, the Army's proxies are not drawn from the popular, mystical, shrine-based form of Islam known as 'Barelwi' Islam that has, with various forms of Shiite Islam, dominated the rural landscape of South Asia for centuries. Instead, they tend to reflect the worldview of reformist 'Deobandi' and 'Salafi' Sunni madrasas (which regard the spiritually intermediating role of Barelwi *sheikhs* with suspicion) as well as the Jama'at-e-Islami.

I stress these underlying doctrinal (and sectarian) cleavages to highlight the Army's interaction with 'Deobandi' Sunni groups like the Afghan Taliban while, at the same time, highlighting the Army's struggle to rein in anti-state groups like the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) whose aspirations typically outstrip the Army's orders.

The **third** and final theme in this chapter returns to the Middle East. Focusing on the fragmented nature of Sunni militancy, I describe the evolving rivalry between al-Qaida (led by Ayman al-Zawahiri) and the so-called 'Islamic State' (currently led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi)—a rivalry focused on the tactical and, increasingly, the sectarian branding of an anti-state global jihad—with reference to trends in South Asia. I do not argue that IS has already established a strong presence in Pakistan or Afghanistan. Instead I highlight the political and military *contingencies*

⁵ For a similar shift focused on student politics, see Matthew J. Nelson, "Embracing the Ummah: Student Politics Beyond State Power in Pakistan," *Modern Asian Studies* 45 no. 3 (2011), 565-96.

⁶ These renegade militant groups emerged in response to the Army's role in the US-led 'war on terror' after 11 September 2001. Jundullah emerged in 2003; the TTP in 2007.

that might press for a stronger IS presence over time. These contingencies are rooted in the development of an increasingly sectarian landscape as well as ongoing efforts on the part of Pakistan's Army to instrumentalize militants who advance Pakistan's interests abroad (e.g. the Afghan Taliban) while, at the same time, attempting to contain those who attack the Army at home (e.g. the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan).

Mainstream Parties and Their Proxies in Pakistan

Throughout this chapter, three sets of actors require special attention. The first includes mainstream political parties involved in periodic elections; as noted above, I focus on the JI and the JUI. The second set includes those who *reject* electoral politics in a push to reassert the value of madrasa-based education and Muslim missionary activity. (I consider these first two sets of actors together.) The third includes those who reject *both* electoral politics *and* mainstream educational-cum-missionary engagements, using violence to advance their goals instead.

Mainstream

Shortly after the formation of Pakistan in 1947, key leaders within the JI and the JUI articulated different ideas about the relationship between Islam and the modern state. Remaining energetically involved on the margins of Pakistan's protracted constitutional debates, *both* the JI *and* the JUI felt that the secular Muslim-majority state envisioned by Mohammad Ali Jinnah would require careful oversight by religious elites to avoid the promulgation of laws that might be considered 'repugnant' to the terms of Islam.⁷

As ideological formations set apart from the routine cut-and-thrust of electoral politics, however, the JI and the JUI disagreed about which group should be charged with this supervisory task. Whereas the JI stressed the ambitious leadership of a revolutionary vanguard led by lay Muslim intellectuals like Syed Abu'l ala Maududi, the JUI favoured a special role for religious scholars trained in Deobandi madrasas.⁸

For at least ten years after the formation of Pakistan in 1947, the Jama'at-e-Islami focused on the cultivation of its own leadership cadre within Pakistan's university-educated bureaucratic, legal, and professional elite. This activity highlighted the work of its active student wing, the IJT, founded in December 1947 with organizational assistance from an Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood member (the son-in-law of Hasan al-Banna) named Sa'id Ramadan.⁹ Provincial elections in 1951, followed by a strong showing in Karachi's municipal elections in 1958, however, whetted the Jama'at's appetite for electoral politics. And, since then, the party has often struggled to break into Pakistan's crowded electoral arena.

⁷ See Matthew J. Nelson, "Islamic Law in an Islamic State: What Role for Parliament?" in *Constitution-Writing, Religion, and Democracy*, A. Bali and H. Lerner, eds. (Cambridge, 2015).

⁸ See Pirzada.

⁹ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, "Students, Islam, and Politics: Islami Jamiat-e-Tuleba in Pakistan," *Middle East Journal* (1992), 66; also Robert Dreyfus, "Cold War, Holy Warrior," *Mother Jones*, January/February 2006, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2006/01/cold-war-holy-warrior?>

The JI's decision to engage in electoral politics, however, was fraught with difficulty. In particular, the party's decision to field candidates after 1958 produced a schism within the party—a schism between religious ideologues and political pragmatists that prompted key ideologues like Amin Ahsan Islahi to resign.

In 1965, Maududi himself changed his stance on the role of women in politics to support Fatima Jinnah (the sister of Mohammad Ali Jinnah) in her bid to challenge General Ayub Khan for the presidency. Fatima Jinnah failed in her bid to unseat Ayub. But, as the 1960s unfolded, divisions within the realm of student politics (along with a certain amount of tacit anti-left wing support from General Ayub) created an opening for the JI-affiliated IJT to secure a series of electoral victories at the University of Karachi and, later, at the University of Punjab in Lahore. These victories produced an unusual combination of 'mainstream' and 'militant' campus politics simultaneously, with a campus-based brigade of vice-and-virtue militants known as the Thunder Squad enjoying the protection of IJT-affiliated student unions.¹⁰

Off campus, however, the electoral performance of the JI remained extremely weak, partly owing to a rapidly intensifying campaign of repression under General Ayub Khan—a campaign not unlike that suffered by the Muslim Brotherhood during the 1960s under Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt.¹¹ This electoral weakness was particularly apparent during the elections of 1970, when the JI won just four seats in the National Assembly (having fielded more than 150 candidates).

In the elections of 1970, however, the JUI fared somewhat better, winning seven National Assembly seats (out of 105 candidates) and nine in Pakistan's provincial assemblies; in fact the JUI joined coalition governments in Balochistan and Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), with the leader of the JUI, Mufti Mahmud, pursuing an ulema-led policy of Islamization as NWFP's Chief Minister.¹²

During the late-1960s, and especially after elections in 1970, however, the JI's combination of mainstream and militant politics also evolved, with some members of the party's student wing forming a state-sponsored militia known as Al Badr to crush Bengali liberation forces on campuses across East Pakistan. Indeed, even as the JUI was helping to form a pair of mainstream provincial governments in West Pakistan, some students nominally affiliated with the JI were busy cultivating new forms of state-sponsored militancy in the East.

During the 1950s and 1960s, both the JI and the JUI sought to maintain a certain distance from Pakistan's military and civilian leaders. But, after the partition of Pakistan in 1971 and Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's efforts to recast 'Muslim' solidarity as a bulwark against enduring forms of Pakistani provincialism (albeit within a language of 'federalism' favouring Bhutto's native Sindh over JUI-affiliated provinces like Balochistan and the NWFP), this initial distance

¹⁰ See Nasr (1992), 59-76; also Nelson (2011).

¹¹ Nasr (1994), 153-4.

¹² Nasr (1994), 164-8; Pirzada, 67. The JUI's efforts to form coalition governments with 'regional' parties in Balochistan and the NWFP split the party—once again, between religious ideologues and political pragmatists. This split was reinforced in 1988 when Fazlur Rahman took over from his father Mufti Mahmud: Sami-ul-Haq (JUI-S) led a group of ideologues working closely with General Zia-ul-Haq and the JI; Fazlur Rahman (JUI-F) led a group of 'regional' populists who sought to distance themselves from the Jama'at. See also White, 29.

between key religious and political actors was relaxed.¹³

In fact, after Maududi resigned from the leadership of the JI in 1972 owing to ill health, his successor Mian Tufail Mohammad developed a close relationship with his nephew—Pakistani dictator General Zia-ul-Haq—both domestically (with JI leaders spearheading Zia’s Islamization efforts even as they pressed Zia to hold elections) as well as internationally (via JI-affiliated militants like Hizb-e-Islami in Afghanistan and, after 1989, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen in Kashmir).¹⁴

Indeed, mainstream electoral manoeuvres and transnational militancy were never strictly at odds during the 1980s. By 1985, non-party National Assembly elections conducted during the height of the anti-Soviet jihad actually brought these elements together *within* Zia’s military dictatorship.¹⁵

After the Soviet withdrawal from Kabul in 1989, however, the ensuing civil war in Afghanistan saw existing patterns of state patronage shift away from the JI—away from Hizb-e-Islami commanders like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, for instance—in favour of JUI-affiliated Taliban commanders with ties to Deobandi madrasas like Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania led by Sami-ul-Haq in Akora Khattak. These ‘Afghan’ Taliban had been tied the patronage of the Pakistani state for several years. However, their success as guerrilla warriors during the Afghan civil war pushed ongoing forms of collaboration between the Pakistan Army and its militant proxies much closer to the JUI (and, especially, the more aggressively sectarian faction affiliated with Sami-ul-Haq).¹⁶ This shift did not reduce the value of JI; it merely shifted the prevailing balance away from JI in favour of JUI-S.¹⁷

Within Pakistan, it is crucial to stress that neither the JI nor the JUI are directly involved in militancy (with the possible exception of periodic anti-Shi’i or anti-Ahmadiyya violence). Instead, prevailing forms of militancy tend to be managed via JI *proxies* like Al Badr in East Pakistan, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen in Kashmir, Hizb-e-Islami in Afghanistan, and so on, as well as anti-Shi’i Deobandi proxies like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi in various parts of southern Punjab, Karachi, and Balochistan.¹⁸

By and large, this attachment to militant ‘proxies’ means that political parties like the JI and the JUI have been able to focus the bulk of their religious-cum-political work as ideologues and educators across a wide range of schools, madrasas, and media outlets. In fact, broadly speaking, the *ideological* influence of these parties tends to outweigh their specific *electoral*

¹³ When Prime Minister Bhutto dismissed the JUI-affiliated provincial government of Balochistan in 1973, the NWFP government (led by JUI Chief Minister Mufti Mahmud) resigned in protest. See Pirzada, 73.

¹⁴ See Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, “Islamic Opposition to the Islamic State: The Jama’at-e-Islami, 1977-1988,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, no. 2 (1993), 261-83.

¹⁵ Of the 68 candidates supported by the JI during the non-party elections of 1985, only 10 were successful. In effect, the JI was punished for collaborating with the dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq between 1977 and 1985. See Nasr (1994), 196-7.

¹⁶ Mainstream politicians like Benazir Bhutto continued to collaborate with a JUI faction (JUI-F) led by Fazlur Rahman. The military tended to support the JUI-S faction led by Sami-ul-Haq.

¹⁷ See also White, 30-1.

¹⁸ For an account of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, particularly since 2007, see Arif Rafiq, “Sunni Deobandi-Shi’i Sectarian Violence in Pakistan,” *Middle East Institute*, December 11, 2014, <http://www.mei.edu/content/report-sunni-deobandi-shii-sectarian-violence-pakistan>.

clout. This is particularly true insofar as the right-of-centre political space in Pakistan has never been limited to overtly religious parties. On the contrary, this space has also been associated, since the 1980s, with military dictators like Zia-ul-Haq and right-of-centre politicians like Mohammad Nawaz Sharif.¹⁹

Indeed, even within this right-of-centre political space, it is useful to keep in mind that religious parties like the JI and the JUI often play a supporting role. On key issues (e.g. the formal legal status of sharia), they ratchet the political conversation to the right; and, as this ratcheting process unfolds within the government—pointing to a measure of success on their part—their own electoral fortunes fade. The JI and the JUI, in other words, remain influential even *without* a pattern of success at the polls.

Beginning in 1987, however, Mian Tufail Mohammad's successor as leader of the JI, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, made a concerted effort to shift his party's base beyond its 'vanguardist' orientation in favour of a 'mass-based' profile focused explicitly on broader social, economic, and political concerns (including a more overt anti-Western agenda).²⁰ In fact, over time, this broadly anti-imperialist orientation allowed both the JI and the JUI to join right-of-centre ruling coalitions at both the national and the provincial levels.

Between 1990 and 1993, both the JI and the JUI-S belonged to a ruling right-of-centre coalition led by Nawaz Sharif from the Pakistan Muslim League. This coalition, known as the Islami Jamhori Ittehad (Islamic Democratic Alliance), was formed in 1988 with assistance from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) to counter the return of left-wing populists like Benazir Bhutto. In fact, as an historical matter, this coalition grew out of General Zia-ul-Haq's close ties to both the JI and the JUI-S before 1985, as well as his relationship with Nawaz Sharif (who had been nominated to serve as both Finance and Chief Minister of the Punjab during the course of Zia's regime).

Again, those affiliated with the JI and the JUI-S did not hesitate to join the IJI; having settled their own internal differences regarding the value of accessing state power years before, each saw this new political formation as a vehicle for recapturing the opportunities they previously enjoyed under Zia.²¹

During the 1988 elections, however, the IJI was defeated by Benazir Bhutto. (Bhutto won 93 National Assembly seats compared to the IJI's 54, of which eight were associated with candidates closely tied to the JI).²² At a provincial level, however, the IJI captured the Punjab, allowing Nawaz Sharif to return to Lahore as Chief Minister.

Less than two years later, however, Benazir Bhutto's government was dissolved by Pakistan's

¹⁹ See also White, 73.

²⁰ See Humeira Iqtidar, *Secularizing Islamists? Jama'at-e-Islami and Jama'at-ud-Dawa in Urban Pakistan* (Chicago, 2011), 93-5.

²¹ White argues that the JI was a reluctant member of the IJI, 33-4. In particular, he notes that the JI signaled its dissatisfaction with various IJI (and PPP) governments by criticizing their foreign policies, including the IJI's decision to accept a negotiated settlement to the civil war in Afghanistan—a decision that, according to White, led the Jama'at to quit the IJI alliance in 1992.

²² The JI fielded 26 candidates. The JUI-F, contesting separately, won 7 seats.

president. And, in the elections that followed, the IJI won quite easily (capturing a total of 106 National Assembly seats, of which eight were tied to the Jama'at).²³ This time, however, the Jama'at-e-Islami was not offered any positions in the cabinet of Nawaz Sharif. In fact, when Sharif proposed a largely toothless 'Enforcement of Shariat' bill in 1991, both the JI and the JUI-F abstained, seeing it as little more than religious-cum-political sloganeering.

Indeed, as an electoral alliance, the IJI did not last long. When, in 1993, the government of Nawaz Sharif was dissolved, the IJI fell apart, forcing the JI to contest the next round of elections alone. This time, Benazir Bhutto returned to power, with the JI being reduced to just three seats in the National Assembly.²⁴

Finally, after Bhutto's government was dissolved for a second time in 1997, the JI chose to vilify Pakistan's 'corrupt' electoral system and declare a boycott. Few parties joined them, and Nawaz Sharif returned to power with a thumping single-party majority of 63% in Islamabad and 88% in Lahore.²⁵ Clearly, the JI was not on a winning trajectory, moving from a seat at the table in General Zia's government to a series of thrashing electoral defeats (Indeed, even as the JI fell from eight seats to three in the National Assembly, the JUI-F dipped from seven [1988] to four [1993].)

After Nawaz Sharif was deposed by General Pervez Musharraf in 1999, however, the electoral fortunes of both the JI and the JUI were revived. Building on some of the 'anti-imperialist' rhetoric cultivated by Qazi Hussain Ahmad—following in the footsteps of the JUI's Mufti Mahmud (and his son Fazlur Rahman)—the JI and the JUI stepped forward during Musharraf's 2002 elections seeking to capitalise on a wave of public consternation following the American invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. They also benefited from General Musharraf's efforts to marginalise Pakistan's mainstream politicians, including Sharif and Bhutto.²⁶ In fact the JI and the JUI took the lead in a new religious alliance known as the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), or United Council of Action, winning 45 National Assembly seats in the October 2002 elections.²⁷

These seats allowed the MMA to play a key part in Musharraf's central coalition while, at the same time, forming a provincial government in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). Within the NWFP, the MMA quickly introduced a controversial Hisba Act to monitor public 'morality'. However, by 2006, its spirited vice-and-virtue brigades had been struck down by the Pakistan Supreme Court as an arbitrary form of Sunni 'parallel justice' without adequate protections for (a) Pakistan's sectarian diversity and (b) basic norms of legal due process. The MMA also introduced a bill in the National Assembly seeking to punish unrepentant male apostates with death. However, this bill failed to emerge from its standing committee; and, even today, Pakistan still has no law governing apostasy. In fact, as its Islamization agenda began to

²³ The JI fielded 18 candidates. The JUI-F, contesting separately, won 6 seats.

²⁴ Together, the 'Deobandi' JUI-F and the 'Barelwi' JUP (Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan) won 4 seats.

²⁵ See *The First 10 General Elections of Pakistan* (Islamabad: PILDAT, 2013), 57.

²⁶ General Musharraf sought to marginalise Pakistan's political 'old guard' by requiring candidates to hold a university or high-level madrasa degree. (The former helped the lay leadership of the JI; the latter helped the ulema-based leadership of the JUI.)

²⁷ See *The First 10 General Elections of Pakistan*, 62.

stall, the MMA turned away from its religious platform to construct a pragmatic (i.e. populist) program of social and economic reform.²⁸

As General Musharraf's political fortunes began to fade, however, the electoral position of the MMA began to slip as well. And, during the elections of 2008, the NWFP's MMA government was dramatically removed from power. In fact, with the JI deciding (once again) to boycott the national elections, the remainder of the MMA was reduced from 45 seats in the National Assembly to just 7—although, even then, JUI-F leader Fazlur Rahman managed to secure a place in the emerging coalition led by the widower of Benazir Bhutto (Asif Ali Zardari) and the Pakistan People's Party.

Finally, during the most recent 2013 General Election, both the JI and the JUI returned to figures more in keeping with their overall electoral performance since 1970. With a combined total of 5% of the vote, the 'populist' JUI-F won 15 National Assembly seats (all concentrated in the NWFP, which was renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010) while the more strictly 'religious' JI won 4.

In recent years, these electoral failures have continued to draw younger citizens with an Islamist bent away from the JI and the JUI in three directions. Some have begun to test out new right-of-center parties like the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (Pakistan Movement for Justice) led by Imran Khan (see below). Some, recalling the distinction between 'party' and 'movement' prevailing in various parts of the Middle East, have returned to quietist forms of Muslim social development (including dawa movements focused on religious proselytization). And, in keeping with larger trends prevailing since the early 1970s, some have continued to embrace the path of militancy—often (but not always) in collaboration with the Pakistan Army.

Amongst those who have begun to shift their focus to new political parties, many have chosen to cast their lot with right-of-center populists like Imran Khan, combining strongly jingoistic forms of anti-Americanism with a trenchant critique of the impunity-oriented 'VIP culture' surrounding so many of Pakistan's leading politicians. In 2013, for instance, Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) emerged as the second-largest party in all of Pakistan's major cities. And, displacing both the secular and the religious parties that previously fought to control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khan succeeded in forming a government there in coalition with the Jama'at. In fact, many of the PTI's election rallies featured religious leaders from a far-right amalgamation known as the 'Defence of Pakistan' Council—a group that, in addition to the Jama'at, included both the JUI-S as well as pro-Army Salafis like Hafiz Saeed and his militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba.²⁹

Apart from this turn to Imran Khan, however, a certain number of citizens—both young and old—have also continued to affiliate themselves with dawa groups focused on social welfare and religious proselytization. These groups maintain a studied distance from both electoral politics and militant violence, articulating quietist forms of transformational religious thought instead.

²⁸ For a more detailed account of the MMA regime in the NWFP, see White 47-83.

²⁹ Lashkar-e-Taiba has been implicated in various acts of terrorism, including the 2008 Bombay bombings.

With reference to social welfare, both JI-affiliated groups like Al-Khidmat and Deobandi groups like the Al-Khair Trust figure prominently, as do groups with a Salafi orientation—groups like Jama'at-ud-Dawa. In recent years, all of these groups have become increasingly well-known for their contributions to routine medical care as well as large-scale relief operations in the wake of natural disasters like the Kashmir earthquake of 2005 and flooding in 2011 and 2012.

With reference to proselytization, however, the landscape is somewhat different, revolving around 'pious individuals' as much as specific organizations. In this context, one encounters lay leaders like Israr Ahmed and Javed Ahmed Ghamidi (both of whom joined, but then abandoned, the Jama'at-e-Islami) as well as lay social movements like the Tablighi Jama'at (which grew out of, but then departed from, key features of the madrasa-based Deobandi tradition).³⁰

Following JI defectors like Amin Ahsan Islahi in rejecting the Jama'at's decision to embrace electoral politics during the 1950s, Israr Ahmed together with his Tanzim-e-Islami and Tehreek-e-Khilafat pressed for the re-creation of a global caliphate beginning in a region known as 'Khorasan' (extending from eastern Iran to northern Pakistan and Central Asia).³¹ In fact, Ahmed was a familiar face on several different television programmes throughout the 1970s—mostly at the urging of General Zia-ul-Haq. And, although he never associated himself with specific jihadi organizations, his impact on the radicalization of religious and political discourse has often been described as 'enormous'.³² He was, for instance, a key supporter of the Afghan Taliban regime in Kabul, although he tended to see Taliban resistance to NATO's post-9/11 invasion as a form of 'national liberation' rather than a religious 'jihad'.

Javed Ahmed Ghamidi also figures prominently within Pakistan's lively 'dawa sphere', drawing special attention to his own media platform, Al-Mawrid. Unlike Israr Ahmed and his organization, Tehreek-e-Khilafat, however, Ghamidi does not see the establishment of a new caliphate as essential for Muslim dawa. Instead, recalling some of the views articulated by his intellectual mentor Amin Ahsan Islahi—and with a great deal of support from General Pervez Musharraf after 9/11—Ghamidi sought to highlight a thoroughly 'individualised' approach to religious reform—a rigorous text-based approach to piety and modern religious 'self-polishing'.³³

Unlike Ahmed and Ghamidi, however, who reflect the social origins of the Jama'at in catering to Pakistan's urban professional and rising middle classes, the Tablighi Jama'at has adopted a different stance. TJ shares an interest in fundamental religious reform; but, unlike Ahmed and Ghamidi, it peddles its programme across a much wider social base. The Tablighi Jama'at is, in fact, often described as the largest dawa movement in the world. It is particularly well known for its practice of 'apolitical' proselytization—calling 'lapsed' Muslims, not to Deobandi madrasas

³⁰ See Mumtaz Ahmad, "Media-Based Preachers and the Formation of New Muslim Publics in Pakistan," *Who Speaks for Islam? Muslim Grassroots Leaders and Popular Preachers in South Asia* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2010), 1-28.

³¹ In 1991, Tanzim-e-Islami was joined by Tehreek-e-Khilafat to 'bring about an Islamic revolution by a "disciplined force" that will culminate in the establishment of [a] global caliphate'; see Ahmad, 14. More than any other figure in South Asia, Israr Ahmed's ideas reflect the millenarian views of IS.

³² Ahmad, 18. According to Israr Ahmed, only the caliph, as the leader of an Islamic state, was in a position to declare the launch of a 'jihad'.

³³ See Husnul Amin, "Post-Islamist Intellectual Trends in Pakistan: Javed Ahmad Ghamidi and His Discourse on Islam and Democracy," *Islamic Studies* 51, no. 2 (2012): 169-92.

(like the JUI), but rather to Deobandi mosques.

Again, moving away from mainstream political parties like the JI, what is significant about these dawa groups is their political influence *notwithstanding* their distance from both mainstream political parties and militancy. The platforms established by these groups cannot be described as a simple conveyor belt carrying individuals away from mainstream politics into militancy; they are, instead, a stable, non-violent, ‘middle ground’. In short, they cater to a certain frustration with the failures of Pakistan’s mainstream Islamist political parties while, at the same time, going out of their way to question the ‘religious’ merits underpinning violent forms of jihad.

To be sure, groups with Islamist or Deobandi roots like Tanzim-e-Islami or the Tablighi Jama’at are often seen as ideological training grounds for subversive cliques like Hizb-ut-Tahrir as well as cross-border militant organisations like the Taliban. But, *within* Pakistan, it is worth repeating that the micro-politics of militancy tend to remain more closely tied to organizational *offshoots* like Jundullah (established by dissenters from the IJT) as well as renegade affiliates of the Afghan Taliban now associated with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

I will discuss both Jundullah and the TTP below. For the time being, it is simply worth pointing out that, even as the electoral fortunes of the JI have declined and various dawa groups have proliferated, JI leaders have struggled to define a consistent approach to militancy. Between 2002 and 2013, for instance, as the fortunes of the JI slipped from a postcolonial peak to less than 2% of the popular vote, JI leader Munawar Hussain shuffled back and forth between the party’s traditional support for the Pakistan Army—often seen as playing a ‘double game’ in the context of America’s War on Terror given its tactical support for the Afghan Taliban—and a countervailing pattern of support for insurgents like the TTP (who *attacked* the Pakistan Army for its record of collaboration with the U.S.). When the TTP’s second emir, Hakimullah Mehsud, was killed by an American drone strike, for instance, Hussain ignored Hakimullah’s ‘anti-state’ militancy and lauded his ‘anti-American’ credentials, describing him as a Muslim martyr.

Clearly, after so many decades of proxy militancy (both within and beyond the state), the JI has *not* come to share the Muslim Brotherhood’s frequently reported aversion to militant violence.

Militant

The relationship between the JI and terrorist groups like Jundullah, as well as the relationship between the JUI and insurgent groups like the Taliban, is often difficult to unravel. In what follows I will focus on the Taliban, highlighting the Pakistan Army’s distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Taliban. However, having done so, I will also consider the link between specific elements of the ‘bad’ Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and JI offshoots like Jundullah.³⁴ Increasingly, a nuanced understanding of this latter relationship requires a deeper sense of the ties that bind militancy in South Asia to militancy across the Middle East (including, as noted above, the relationship between al-Qaida and its chief rival, Islamic State).

³⁴ See Ali K. Chishti, “How Jundullah Became Al-Qaeda,” *The Friday Times*, December 14, 2014, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/how-jundullah-became-al-qaeda>.

Nominally, members of what is known as the ‘Afghan’ Taliban swore allegiance to a commander named Mullah Omar. (Mullah Omar was known for sheltering the late al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan during the late-1990s, and, although Omar he was not seen for several years, his followers regarded him as the Amir-ul-Momineen, or Leader of the Faithful, until his death in 2013 was finally reported in July 2015.) Without any clear guidance from Mullah Omar for so many years, however, the leadership of the Afghan Taliban became increasingly divided with respect to the prospect of negotiating an end to Afghanistan’s civil war with Afghanistan’s elected government. Some Afghan Taliban commanders like Abdul Qayyum Zakir, for instance, have refused to consider any form of negotiation until all international forces have left.

Even as Pakistan sought to encourage talks between the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban (viewing the latter as a key resource in its larger push to ward off Indian influence in Afghanistan), however, the Pakistan Army has also sought to annihilate what it sees as the ‘bad’ Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, primarily owing to the latter’s habit of attacking the state of Pakistan itself.³⁵

In 2007, several different Tehreek-e-Taliban commanders were brought together under a single TTP leader known as Baitullah Mehsud from South Waziristan.³⁶ When Baitullah was killed by a U.S. drone strike in 2009, however, the leadership of the group passed on to Hakimullah Mehsud from another part of Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), namely Orakzai. Together, high-profile attacks orchestrated by Baitullah and Hakimullah signalled the vigorously anti-state posture of the TTP, with Baitullah suspected in the 2008 assassination of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Hakimullah appearing in a 2011 video recording the death of a key Pakistan intelligence officer known as ‘Colonel Imam’.³⁷

Like Baitullah before him, however, Hakimullah was also killed by a U.S. drone—this time in 2013—after which the leadership of the TTP passed on to a controversial figure named Fazlullah (famous for his role in the attack on Nobel Prize-winner Malala Yousafzai) based in the district of Swat.³⁸

The selection of Fazlullah, however, created new fissures within the TTP, partly owing to Fazlullah’s non-Mehsud tribal background and his ties outside of the Deobandi tradition—for example, his ties with a JI-affiliated movement known as the Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (Movement for the Enforcement of Mohammad’s Islamic Law) in Swat. In fact Fazlullah’s disgruntled ‘runner-up’ Khan Said (a.k.a. ‘Sajna’ Mehsud) from South Waziristan used the occasion of his non-selection to defect from the TTP altogether. Mehsud insisted that his loyalty remained with Mullah Omar. However, his defection inspired further departures, with

³⁵ Like the Afghan Taliban, TTP militants also swore a nominal form of allegiance to Mullah Omar. The TTP remain deeply fragmented along tribal and regional lines, however, with different TTP commanders in each of Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

³⁶ See Michael Semple, “The Pakistan Taliban Movement: An Appraisal” (Barcelona: CIDOB, 2014), 5.

³⁷ ‘Colonel Imam’ played a key role in grooming Afghan Taliban figures like Mullah Omar. His murder drew a sharp line between the loyalties of the Afghan Taliban and the renegade TTP.

³⁸ Shortly after the Pakistan Army launched Operation Rah-e-Rast to retake the Swat Valley in 2009, Fazlullah shifted his base to eastern Afghanistan.

some announcing their interest in swearing allegiance, not to Mullah Omar, but rather to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his expanding 'Islamic State' (IS).

IS emerged in 2013 when an al-Qaida branch in Syria known as the Nusra Front became embroiled in an al-Qaida (AQ) leadership struggle between Osama bin Laden's successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Al-Baghdadi sought to absorb the Nusra Front within his incipient Islamic State; and, to assert his influence, he declared himself 'caliph' in June 2014. Al-Zawahiri, however, responded to al-Baghdadi's audacious religious-cum-political claim with the formation of a new AQ franchise in South Asia known as Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent—a franchise that quickly sought to hijack several Pakistan Navy vessels in a plot to attack U.S. ships stationed throughout the Indian Ocean.³⁹

When Fazlullah's TTP leadership was contested, then, his 'runner-up' (Khani Said 'Sajna') defected. And, in due course, this defection inspired others to carve out a new place for themselves within the context of this emerging AQ-IS rivalry: identifying Fazlullah within the pre-9/11 orbit of Mullah Omar, the Afghan Taliban, and AQ, for instance, fearsome TTP commander Hafiz Said Khan of Orakzai intervened to support al-Baghdadi as the leader of a new IS province in South Asia—the province of 'Khorasan'.

Broadly, the nearly simultaneous arrival of Fazlullah and IS coincided with much wider patterns of fragmentation within the TTP, as local commanders like Mangal Bagh in Khyber Agency, Omar Khalid Khorasani in Mohmand Agency, and Hafiz Dawlat Khan in Kurram Agency explored the possibility of abandoning their loose ties with AQ for IS.⁴⁰ (Already, TTP figures like Mangal Bagh and former IJT members with ties to Jundullah have met with IS representatives in South Asia. And, already, Deobandi sectarian organizations like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi have sent fighters to support IS's sectarian campaign in Syria.⁴¹) Indeed, al-Baghdadi himself quoted JI founder Maududi extensively during the speech in which he declared himself 'caliph'.

Clearly, building on the ideological spadework of earlier JI defectors like Israr Ahmed, the views articulated by al-Baghdadi are not unfamiliar in Pakistan.⁴² In fact, moving forwards, it is not the TTP's weak historical relationship (via the late Mullah Omar) with AQ, but their ties to a more explicitly *sectarian* agenda via local Deobandi madrasas and affiliated sectarian groups like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) that could hold the key to an expanding role for IS in South Asia.⁴³

³⁹ The leadership of AQIS is now said to include some with Deobandi connections (Maulana Asim Umar) and some with IJT links (Ustad Ahmad Farooq).

⁴⁰ See Muhammad Amir Rana, "The Impact of the Islamic State on Pakistan," (Oslo: NOREF, 2015), http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/049ee274000481e510fd0414ba61d63b.pdf; also Semple, 11, 12. More recent reports indicate that Fazlullah, Mangal Bagh, and Omar Khalid Khorasani continue to work together, see Bill Roggio, 'Pakistan Jihadi Groups, Lashkar-i-Islam Merge into the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan', *The Long War Journal* (12 March 2015) <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/03/pakistani-jihadist-groups-lashkar-i-islam-merge-into-the-movement-of-the-taliban-in-pakistan.php>. It remains to be seen whether this alliance will continue and lean toward AQ or IS.

⁴¹ Even before the battle to control al-Nusra, splits within AQ saw Ayman al-Zawahiri attempting to rein in runaway sectarian killing perpetrated by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. (Zarqawi himself began his jihadi career in Afghanistan.)

⁴² See Ali Akbar, "From TTP to IS: Pakistan's Terror Landscape Evolves," *Dawn*, March 16, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1169542/>.

⁴³ In May 2015, Jundullah claimed responsibility for an attack killing 43 Ismaili Shiites in Karachi. In July 2015, LeJ chief Malik Ishaq was killed during an 'encounter' with police in Pakistan.

There is, as yet, little reason to believe that intra-Sunni differences distinguishing Middle Eastern Salafis (e.g. IS) from South Asian Deobandis (e.g. LeJ) will prevent these groups from establishing a common cause rooted in the annihilation of South Asian Shiite.

Much depends on a complex array of contingencies tied to emerging forms of pressure imposed by the Pakistan Army: Operation Rah-e-Rast (2009), Operation Rah-e-Nijat (2009), Operation Zarb-e-Azb (2014), and so on. To what extent will this military pressure work—quite *unintentionally*—to *enhance* the evolving ties between Deobandi dissenters in the TTP (or Lashkar-e-Jhangvi) and encroaching sectarian militants from IS?

Following elections in May 2013, the civilian Government of Pakistan initiated a series of peace talks with assorted TTP commanders. By April 2014, however, these talks had collapsed. They collapsed when a breakaway fragment of the TTP led by Omar Khalid Khorasani from Mohmand killed 23 Pakistani soldiers who had been held captive for several years. In fact, not long after these soldiers were killed, the Army launched a fresh offensive targeting militants in FATA known as Operation Zarb-e-Azb.

Shortly thereafter, however, the JI held its own internal elections, replacing its pro-TTP leader Syed Munawar Hussain—who (as noted above) mourned the death of TTP emir Hakimullah Mehsud as a Muslim martyr—with a pro-Army leader named Siraj-ul-Haq. Omar Khalid Khorasani (who killed the 23 soldiers in Mohmand) wrote to congratulate Siraj; but, when he did so, he also reminded the JI of festering differences. Whereas Siraj sought to turn his back on TTP militancy, for instance, Khorasani insisted that sharia could only be introduced by force.

At the same time, seeking to facilitate further talks between the Afghan Taliban and the government of Afghanistan, the Pakistan Army teamed up with countries like the United States and China to sponsor a new round of talks between the Afghan government and Afghan insurgents—so long as the Afghan National Army continued to pressure renegade TTP forces (above all, Hakimullah's successor Fazlullah) taking refuge on the Afghan side of the border. (As these talks progressed during the summer of 2015, TTP-commander-turned-IS-affiliate Hafiz Said Khan was reportedly killed in a U.S. airstrike).

Indeed, it is precisely this type of pincer move—designed to press for (a) talks aimed at facilitating a role for the *Afghan* Taliban (and, thus, a friendly face for Pakistan within the Afghan government) and (b) attacks seeking to destroy the Tehreek-e-Taliban *Pakistan* on both sides of the Afghanistan border—that might succeed in assuaging the Afghan Taliban while, at the same time, destroying the TTP. However, it is also possible that such moves might actually succeed in drawing various fragments of the TTP together—not only with one another, but also with Afghan Taliban refuseniks like Abdul Qayyum Zakir and transnational terrorists like IS. Recent U.S. airstrikes like the one that reportedly killed IS 'Khorasan' chief Hafiz Said and his spokesman Shahidullah Shahid, however, may help to prevent this.

It is unlikely, given the strength of the Pakistan Army, that IS will succeed in capturing any

territory inside Pakistan.⁴⁴ If an IS-affiliated ‘Khorasan’ were to emerge, it is more likely to emerge on the Afghan side of the border.⁴⁵

Conclusion

Just a few months before he articulated his appreciation for the anti-state militancy of the TTP, JI leader Munawar Hussain exchanged visits with Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammad Morsi—first in Cairo (June 2012) and then in Islamabad (March 2013). He later hosted a rally in Islamabad to protest Morsi’s ouster by General Abdul Fatah el-Sisi—a rally attended by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi.⁴⁶

With the election of Siraj-ul-Haq, however, the JI turned away from any support for TTP militancy. Departing from Hussain’s appreciation for revolutionary figures like Morsi, in other words, the JI’s new leader reaffirmed his party’s longstanding pattern of cooperation with the Pakistan Army. As in Egypt, then, so too in Pakistan: cooperation with the Army is an important feature of survival.

There is, however, one further difference between the experience of the Jama’at in Pakistan and the evolution of the Brotherhood in Egypt. In Pakistan, there is no reason to believe that, even *after* the election of a pro-Army leader like Siraj-ul-Haq, the Jama’at will abandon its links to militant proxies—from its own student movement (IJT) to affiliates in Afghanistan (Hizb-e-Islami) and Kashmir (Hizb-ul-Mujahideen).⁴⁷ Indeed, with reference to mainstream politics and militancy, asking ‘the real JI’ to please stand up betrays a certain misunderstanding of Pakistani Islamism. In Pakistan, militant proxies do not separate the JI from the work of the Army; in some cases, given the configuration of Pakistan’s ongoing rivalry with India, they work to draw Islamism and the Army closer together.⁴⁸

The Deobandi inspiration underpinning the JUI is, like the JI, equally adaptable, sustaining a wide range of attachments stretching all the way from pro-Army commanders within the Afghan Taliban to anti-state elements within the TTP. Indeed, the same Deobandi family is likely to sustain diametrically opposing engagements simultaneously, from the sectarian murders perpetrated by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi to peaceful dawa missions associated with the Tablighi Jama’at.

There is no evidence of a monolithic Islamist presence led by the JI or the JUI in South Asia—neither in the form of a political party, nor a dawa movement, nor militancy. There is, instead, a

⁴⁴ See M. Ilyas Khan, “Can Islamic State Move into South Asia?” *BBC News*, January 31, 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-31022576>.

⁴⁵ See Hassan Siddiqui, “IS, Taliban Pairing Up in Northern Afghanistan,” *Express Tribune*, May 8, 2015, <http://www.tribune.com.pk/story/883104/is-taliban-pairing-up-in-northern-afghanistan-official/>.

⁴⁶ In May 2015, PTI chairman Imran Khan denounced Morsi’s death sentence.

⁴⁷ As a hedging strategy (and recalling JI’s reluctance to support a negotiated end to the Afghan war in 1992—see fn21), Hizb-e-Islami chief Gulbuddin Hekmatyar recently urged his affiliated fighters to support IS.

⁴⁸ The Army will continue to rely on a wide range of proxy forces as well, ranging from the (Deobandi) Afghan Taliban to the (Salafi) Lashkar-e-Taiba—even as it is plagued by mutinous voices supporting anti-Army plots masterminded by various affiliates of al-Qaida.

deeply *competitive* 'Islamist' political sphere.

The declining electoral fortunes of mainstream Islamist parties are not sufficient to explain this evolving mix of religious-cum-political trends—trends in which the key question facing Pakistan is no longer 'whether Islam' but rather 'which Islam'. In fact it may be helpful to reach beyond a simple *distinction* between mainstream and militant politics to focus, more specifically, on a range of mainstream political parties (and the military) working both 'with' and 'against' an assortment of rival militants.

It is too early to identify any clear shift away from state-oriented political parties (JI, JUI) and anti-state rebellions (Jundullah, TTP) focused strictly on Pakistan to a new clutch of insurgent networks connecting South Asia militants to the Middle East, e.g. moving beyond AQ to IS. The rise of IS as a more explicitly 'sectarian' network, however, is significant. If the forms of cooperation between mainstream parties, military actors, and proxy militants that have dominated the past 40 years begin to unravel, there are some indications that South Asian Islamism's 'new normal' will reflect a greater emphasis on violent sectarianism.