

The Role of Ulema as a Pressure Group in Policy-Making in Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper investigated the ongoing debate in academia about the role and responsibilities of ulema in society and particularly in policy-making in Pakistan. Ulema, or Islamic scholars, have played a significant role in the policy-making process in Pakistan. They have been able to do so because of their religious authority and the influence they have over the Pakistani public. Ulemas have been able to influence policy in several ways. They have lobbied the government to adopt policies that are in line with Islamic law, and they have also been able to mobilize public opinion against policies that they disagree with. In some cases, ulemas have even been able to bring down governments. It is important to note that not all ulama agree on every issue. There are a variety of different schools of thought within Islam, and the ulema often disagree on how to interpret Islamic law. This leads to divisions within the ulema community, and it also makes it difficult for ulema to speak with a unified voice on certain issues. Despite these divisions, ulema continue to play a significant role in Pakistani society. They are respected by many Pakistanis, and they have a strong influence over public opinion. The factors and motivations behind the influence and their impact on policy-making in general and on society in particular are discussed in this paper. Furthermore, this paper also discusses the implications or effects of the ulema's pressure on specifically progressive and secular policymaking in Pakistan. This paper focuses specifically on those ulema that possess a traditional, or, in other words, conservative, approach towards progressive policymaking in Pakistan.

Keywords: Ulema, pressure group, policy-making, Influence, Challenges, internationalism.

Historical Background

The ulema have never been directly in power in the history of Pakistan, but they still possess a strong and influential position in policy-making in Pakistan. It is not about Pakistan, but any region of the world where religion has become an influential and important part of society. Ulama, also known as religious clergy, are concerned with religion. Whether this is true or not is a matter of debate, but they (religious clergy) have always considered and presented themselves as custodians of religion. Even the division of the globe into East and West is somehow based on their religious ideologies. We saw the domination of religion in Europe as well, which was challenged, and the religion was separated from state affairs. Though many movements have also been raised in South Asia for the separation of religion from state affairs, many South Asian countries like India, China, Nepal, etc. have successfully reduced the influence of religion over state affairs. Unfortunately,

Pakistan has not done as much so far as it should. When we talk about religious influence or religious supremacy, the role of the ulema is crucial in this regard. This paper will discuss how the ulema manipulated and misused religion in the name of politics before and after the partition of India. Furthermore, there is a division between them, like the traditionalist and modernist ulema. Moreover, there is a huge division between these two on sectarian grounds. It is a fact that any nation hardly survives in isolation in the age of globalization. When the world becomes a global village, one has to follow the patterns and measures that are followed by the world. For instance, the world has rapidly shifted in information technology and data science, and so the policies and structures are shaped accordingly. As the economy has shifted into online trade and businesses, one has no option but to update itself and move with the patterns of the world. This paper will highlight the factors behind the involvement and influence of ulema in policy-making in Pakistan and how they work with the government as a pressure group.

Introduction

The ulema, or Islamic scholars, have played a significant role in the politics of Pakistan since the country's inception. They have used their religious authority to influence government policy on a range of issues, including education, family law, and foreign policy. In the early years of Pakistan, the ulema were instrumental in the drafting of the country's constitution. They were particularly influential in the inclusion of the Objectives Resolution, which declares that Pakistan is an Islamic state. The ulema have also been active in opposition to government policies that they see as contrary to Islamic law. For instance, they have protested against the government's decision to allow women to vote and against its efforts to promote family planning. The ulema have also been active in the political process. They have formed their political parties and contested elections. In some cases, they have been successful in winning elected office. For example, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a coalition of religious parties, won a significant number of seats in the 2002 parliamentary elections. They have a large following among the Pakistani public, and they can mobilize their supporters to take action on issues that they care about. Each government in Pakistan is supposed to take the ulema's views into account if it is to be successful. Furthermore, this paper revolves around questions like how Ulema as a pressure group creates hurdles in progressive policy-making and the factors behind their influence. In Ulemas, the conservative one is the main respondent in our research. Through this approach, I lemmatize the respondent or unit of analysis of the research. Through this, the expected outcome was to know that either this influence of the conservative ulema in policy-making in Pakistan played any role in the development of the country or it pushed the country back.

Significance of the study

The role of the ulema as a pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan is a significant topic because it has a major impact on the country's political landscape. The ulema, or Islamic scholars, have a large following among the Pakistani public, and they can mobilize their supporters to take action on issues that they care about. This gives them a great deal of influence over government policy. The ulema have used their influence to promote several policies that are based on Islamic law. For instance, they have lobbied for the dismissal of Mia Atif, who was appointed on September 1, 2018 as a member of an Economic Advisory Council formed by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan to provide assistance on issues of economics and finance. Furthermore, they also lobbied for the introduction of Islamic banking and the implementation of Islamic criminal law. In addition to the political significance of the ulema's role as a pressure group, the topic is also significant from a social and cultural perspective. The ulema play a vital role in shaping the religious and cultural identity of Pakistan. They are responsible for educating the public about Islam, and they guide them on how to live a life that is in accordance with Islamic teachings. The

ulema's influence on Pakistani society is therefore far-reaching. The topic of the ulema's role as a pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan is therefore a complex and important one.

Literature review

Lawrence (1955) presents reflections on the political history of Pakistan. The author has sought to understand the realities of a shift away from what he would describe as democratic nationalization to a more rigidly authoritarian government. The author argues in his study that Pakistan did not have to escape the incubus of its birth to emphasize its democratic purpose. Although Islam was in its national blood, the country seemed to survive because Islam was not judged incompatible with free expression and liberal pursuits. But it was also obvious that authoritarian norms had long dominated the country's political life. Moreover, the author emphasizes that Islam was equally adaptable to authoritarian legacies and democratic aspirations. Therefore, he refers to the Islamic Republic as a version of democratic expression. By the same token, his juxtaposition of the Islamic state stresses the durability of authoritarianism.

Qureshi Salem (1980) This paper presents a thorough review of the connections between political and non-political elements in the Pakistani political framework. It suggests that although political parties have been working in the political system of Pakistan accordingly, non-political elements are looking dominant, apart from exceptional cases. Individual and group interests outweigh the power needed in an organization. In the case of a multi-party system, the interests of the major groups are considered major determinants of political parties, alongside the interests of these groups. The army, bureaucracy, ulema, and boundaries (clans) are the main non-political powers that are deeply rooted in political parties. An analytical and comparative approach is adopted in this paper. Another object of this paper is to analyze the power of major boundaries, bureaucracy, and ulma in politics for the reason that it takes one beyond the traditional range of political theory and practice in its past and present forms.

Riaz Hassan (1987) has built the argument that any attempt to theorize about the social structure of Muslim society in Pakistan and historically in the subcontinent must begin with the question: How did Islam spread in India? And unlike some other places (e.g., Spain), why did it succeed in finding a permanent home in the socio-cultural milieu of the subcontinent? Much of the earlier historical writings about the spread of Islam (in the subcontinent and elsewhere) have concentrated on those aspects that highlight the exploits of Muslim invaders of non-Muslim societies and the role of coercion in converting the conquered populations to Islam. Only in the last eighty years or so has historical evidence been systematically chronicled that shows that missionary work by Muslim Sufi saints in India and Pakistan played a critical and possibly the most significant role in Islamization. This historical evidence has provided valuable insights into the role of missionary Islam in the evolution of Muslim society in the subcontinent. Only very recently have historians and other scholars of twentieth-century India and Pakistan produced evidence that shows how profoundly the social structure of contemporary Pakistani society has been influenced by the religious and social institutions of missionary Islam.

Akhtar (1989) has described the socioeconomic and religious-political aspects and structures of Pakistani society to trace the history of the role of the ulema as a pressure group in Pakistani policymaking. He discussed the role of the ulema in politics from pre-partition (from the 18th century to now). In this detailed paper, he quotes almost all the events of Indo-Pak history in a way that is similar to my topic but not directly relevant to it. The reason that I already mentioned in the limitation part of the proposal is that it is mostly focused on post-partition and progressive laws and policies that face huge criticism and pressure from the traditional ulemas. Secondly, this paper deals with the ulema as a whole, while my paper will concentrate only on the traditionalist ulema and their role as a pressure group in Pakistan.

A.S. Pirzada (1997) has the view that the political career of ulema revolves around opposing the government. To analyze the assumption, he presented his study in two historical phases, i.e., 1947–1977, in which he historically reviewed the ulema’s role in the political history of Pakistan. The author argues in this study that when the British eliminated Mughal rule in India, the ulema moved to the forefront of politics and developed their aspirations. After independence in 1947, the ulema endeavored to prescribe an Islamic political order for the state of Pakistan. Their aspiration was not recognized by successive governments and the bureaucratic elite. Consequently, they adopted an oppositional or confrontational stance.

Alvi Hamza (2002) Religious parties were implacably hostile to the Pakistan Movement. When Jinnah inaugurated Pakistan's constituent assembly, he proclaimed Pakistan's secular ideology, voicing the established secular ideological position that the Muslim League had adhered to throughout its career. Fundamentalist Islamic ideology played no part in the origins of Pakistan, although contemporary ideologues of Islamic fundamentalism, including academics, claim that it was Islamic ideology and slogans that created Pakistan and that they, therefore, have the right to decide its future.

Zaman MQ (2002) The 'ulama self-consciously represent a complex scholarly tradition that they typically see not so much as being inseparable from Islam as constituting its very definition. It is in this tradition that they view themselves and the world around them, express their ideas of Islamic society and state, and elaborate on their conceptions of the common good. The 'ulama’s conceptions of the common good are important for understanding not just their thought but also the processes through which facets of that thought are articulated, as well as the public sphere in which they are constituted. Yet what these conceptions of the common good are and how they relate to the 'ulama’s long-standing tradition—as well as to their contemporary contexts—are questions that have seldom been asked. This chapter represents a preliminary effort to address these questions in a broadly comparative framework.

Ahmed Mugees (2009) presents a thorough review of connections between political and non-political elements in the Pakistani political framework. It suggests that although political parties have been working in the political system of Pakistan accordingly, non-political elements are looking dominant, apart from exceptional cases. Individual and group interests outweigh the power needed in an organization. In the case of a multi-party system, the interests of the major groups are considered major determinants of political parties, alongside the interests of these groups. The army, bureaucracy, ulema, and boundaries (clans) are the main non-political powers that are deeply rooted in political parties. An analytical and comparative approach is adopted in this paper. Another object of this paper is to analyze the power of major boundaries, bureaucracy, and ulma in politics for the reason that it takes one beyond the traditional range of political theory and practice in its past and present forms.

Kasur focuses on the genesis of the ulema’s role in policy-making in Pakistan. This paper argues how Ulema pressurized the government to create Pakistan as an Islamic state. The liberals wanted to build a secular nation-state on the Western model. But the ulema, who had supported the Pakistan movement, wanted to construct an Islamic state. The first constituent assembly of Pakistan was a sovereign body. It functioned from 1947 to 1954 and involved two major parties. The Pakistan Muslim League was the official party representing the government’s point of view. The Assembly initially had forty-nine out of a total of sixty-nine seats. The other party was the Pakistan National Congress, which had eleven members, all Hindus from East Pakistan. Members of the PNC actively participated in the deliberations on the Objectives Resolution and forwarded many amendments to its text. When the PML government started working on the details of the new Constitution of Pakistan, it faced considerable problems and demands. The most important and immediate was the demand to pronounce Pakistan an Islamic state. The groups of Ulema in the Government, i.e., Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, the President of the Jamiat-al-Ulama-i-

Islam, Pir of Manki Sharif in the NWFP, Maulana Akram Khan, the President of the East Pakistan Provincial Muslim League, and outside the government, i.e., Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), constantly urged the Government to declare Pakistan an Islamic state and to base the future constitution on Islamic principles. Maulana Maududi, the Amir of JI, also presented a 4-point formula for an Islamic constitution. Muslims were a party of moderate people; even the opposition leaders of Hindus quoted Jinnah's speech, in which Jinnah proclaimed the secular state of Pakistan.

Sherani Saiful Rehman Since 1947, Pakistan's political history has been largely a continuous struggle between religious orthodoxy and secularism. Sometimes overshadowed in this debate is the curious paradox that the most traditional section of religious leadership supports secularism against the fundamental Islamic leadership. This has been obscured in recent studies of Pakistan's religious leadership by a tendency to group as ulema all religious leaders regardless of differences of opinion among them. By identifying the different types of leaders and focusing particularly on one of them, the pirs, or 'saints', this chapter seeks to clarify the role of religious leaders in Pakistani politics and social structure.

The role of the ulema as a pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan has been the subject of much debate. Some scholars argue that the ulema have a positive influence on Pakistani politics as they promote policies that are based on Islamic law. Others argue that the ulema have a negative influence on Pakistani politics, as they often use their religious authority to promote extremism and violence. There is evidence to support both sides of the argument. On the one hand, the ulema have played a key role in promoting several positive policies in Pakistan, such as the introduction of Islamic banking and the implementation of Islamic criminal law. On the other hand, the ulema have also been involved in several negative incidents, such as their support for the Taliban and the promotion of sectarian violence. The government needs to find a way to balance the ulema's religious authority with the need to promote a secular and democratic society.

Here are some of the key arguments in the debate:

Arguments in favor of the ulema's influence:

The ulema have a deep understanding of Islamic law and can guide how to implement it in a modern context.

The ulema have a large following among the Pakistani public and can mobilize their supporters to take action on issues that they care about.

The ulema can help promote religious harmony and tolerance in Pakistan.

Arguments against the ulema's influence:

The ulema often uses their religious authority to promote extremism and violence.

The ulema are often out of touch with the needs of the Pakistani people.

The ulema's influence can stifle progress and innovation in Pakistan.

The debate over the role of the ulema in Pakistani politics is likely to continue for many years to come. It is a complex and important issue that deserves careful consideration.

Research Questions

- What is the role of the Ulema as a pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan?
- What are the implications for religious freedom, governance, and social dynamics?
- Are the ulema's main hurdles in secular policy-making in Pakistan?

Research Framework

The research framework employed for investigating the role of the ulema as a pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan encompasses a comprehensive blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches. To acquire in-depth insights, qualitative methods such as interviews and document analysis are utilized. Interviews are conducted with key stakeholders, including ulema leaders,

policymakers, and experts, allowing for a deeper understanding of the strategies, tactics, and activities employed by the ulema as a pressure group in influencing policy-making processes. Additionally, document analysis involves examining policy documents, fatwas (religious rulings), and public statements made by the ulema to identify their positions on various policy issues. Complementing the qualitative findings, quantitative methods are also employed to gather empirical data. Surveys are conducted among policymakers and relevant actors to quantitatively assess the perceived influence of the ulema in policy-making, their relationships with political parties, and their role in mobilizing public opinion. Statistical analysis is then employed to analyze the survey responses, enabling the identification of patterns and correlations related to the ulema's influence on policy decisions. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations are given paramount importance, ensuring the protection of participants' identities, informed consent, and confidentiality. The validity and reliability of data are upheld through rigorous data collection and analysis techniques. The research findings are subsequently interpreted in conjunction with existing literature and theoretical frameworks, thereby providing a robust and comprehensive understanding of the role of the ulema as a pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan.

Findings and analysis

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of the Ulema as a pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan. The historical context reveals that the Ulema have exerted influence since pre-independence times and have continued to play a pivotal role in shaping the country's policies. Their organizational structure, characterized by key Islamic organizations and hierarchical leadership roles, has contributed to their collective strength and effectiveness in influencing decision-making processes. Furthermore, the role of the Ulema as a pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan has been significant and impactful. Through their historical influence and well-organized structure, the Ulema have effectively shaped policies related to religion, society, and governance in the country. They have employed various methods of pressure and advocacy, including religious decrees (Fatwas), public demonstrations, political alliances, and the utilization of media and religious platforms. Their influence can be seen in constitutional amendments, legislation, education policies, curriculum reforms, and women's rights issues. However, their involvement has also generated controversies and criticisms, including concerns about limitations on religious diversity, human rights, and political implications. Moving forward, it is crucial to strike a balance between the Ulema's influence and the need for an inclusive and pluralistic society, taking into account the evolving interpretations of Islam and the aspirations of a modernizing society. Moreover, The Ulema employ a range of methods to exert pressure and advocate for their preferred policies. Fatwas, or religious decrees, have been a powerful tool utilized by the Ulema to shape public opinion and influence policy outcomes. Public demonstrations and street power have also played a significant role in mobilizing support and drawing attention to their causes. Furthermore, political alliances and lobbying efforts have allowed the Ulema to forge alliances with political parties and exert influence over policy-making through direct engagement with policymakers. Media and religious platforms provide additional avenues for the Ulema to disseminate their messages and shape public discourse. The impact of the Ulema's involvement in policy-making can be seen in various areas. Constitutional amendments and legislation have been influenced by their interpretations of Islamic principles, leading to the shaping of legal frameworks in line with religious teachings. Education policies and curriculum reforms have been subject to the Ulema's influence, particularly in shaping the content and delivery of religious education. Women's rights and gender issues have also been influenced by the Ulema's advocacy, often resulting in conservative interpretations and limitations on women's rights.

However, the Ulema's role as a pressure group has generated controversies and criticism. Some argue that their influence has limited religious diversity and pluralism, stifled dissent, and

marginalized minority groups. The debate between a secular and religious state has been a contentious issue, with the Ulema often advocating for a more prominent role for Islam in governance. Human rights concerns have also emerged, particularly in relation to freedom of expression and the application of blasphemy laws. Looking ahead, the Ulema's role as a pressure group in policy-making will face challenges and require careful consideration. The dynamics between the government and the Ulema, as well as power struggles within the Ulema themselves, may shape the extent of their influence. Furthermore, the increasing diversity of religious interpretations within Pakistan's society, along with ongoing modernization and social change, may impact the Ulema's ability to maintain a unified front and shape policies unilaterally.

The Ulema's role as a pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan has been influential and far-reaching. Their historical significance, organizational structure, and methods of pressure have allowed them to shape policies related to religion, society, and governance. However, striking a balance between the Ulema's influence and the need for an inclusive and pluralistic society remains a crucial challenge. A nuanced approach that considers evolving interpretations of Islam and the aspirations of a modernizing society is essential for effective policy-making in Pakistan. The findings of this study shed light on the multifaceted role of the Ulema as a pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan. The Ulema's historical influence, well-organized structure, and diverse methods of pressure have allowed them to shape policies that align with their religious interpretations and societal values. Their impact can be observed in constitutional amendments, legislation, education policies, and women's rights issues. However, the Ulema's involvement in policy-making has not been without controversy. Critics argue that their influence has sometimes led to limitations on religious diversity, curtailed freedom of expression, and marginalized minority groups. The debate between a secular and religious state has been a recurrent theme, with tensions arising between those advocating for a greater role of Islam in governance and those advocating for a more inclusive and pluralistic society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of the ulema as a pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that warrants careful examination. This research has shed light on the various aspects of the ulema's influence on policy decisions and their engagement with the political landscape. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, this study has provided valuable insights into the strategies, tactics, and activities employed by the ulema to exert pressure and shape policy outcomes. The findings of this research indicate that the ulema plays a significant role in policy-making processes in Pakistan. They utilize a range of mechanisms, including religious authority, public statements, fatwas, and the mobilization of public opinion, to influence policymakers and sway policy decisions in alignment with their religious and ideological perspectives. The ulema's close relationships with political parties and their ability to mobilize support within the population further enhance their leverage as a pressure group. However, it is important to note that the ulema's influence is not without its limitations. Factors such as political dynamics, competing interests, and societal changes also shape policy outcomes. Moreover, the ulema's influence is not homogeneous, as different factions within the ulema may hold divergent views and exert varying degrees of pressure on policy-making. Understanding the role of the ulema as a pressure group in policy-making is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and society at large. It highlights the intricate dynamics between religion, politics, and public policy in Pakistan and provides insights into the broader question of the relationship between religious actors and governance. By acknowledging and comprehending the ulema's influence, policymakers can make more informed decisions, taking into account the diverse perspectives and interests within society. In conclusion, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering a comprehensive analysis of the role of the ulema as a

pressure group in policy-making in Pakistan. It underscores the need for continued research and dialogue on the evolving dynamics of religious actors in the policy arena, paving the way for informed discussions and informed decision-making in the future.

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