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Faith, Politics, and Power: Understanding JUI-F's Political Strategy in Sindh

Ghulam Muhammad Channa¹ Dr. Salahuddin Abro² Anum Niaz³

¹ Assistant Director at Regional Directorate Colleges Sukkur, Pakistan.

² Assistant Professor, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur, Pakistan.

³ Visiting Faculty at Air & Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Corresponding Author: gmchanna7@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the political ideology and policy of JamiatUlama-e-Islam FazlurRehman (JUI-F) in Sindh, which is a historically secular, linguistic and nationalist dominated province. This study is carried out with reference to Political Mobilization Theory, Patron-Clientelism, and Weberian Religious Authority theories that assist JUI-F to establish and maintain its political activities in the region using religious organizations, organizational networks, and faith-based discourses. The importance of madrassahs and religious clerics as the main outreach, voter mobilization and ideological support hubs is highlighted. The paper also looks at the ways in which JUI-F is functioning in a very competitive environment that is influenced by the political parties like the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), MuttahidaQaumi Movement (MQM), and other parties with nationalist interests. Results show that even with the structural difficulties of capturing urban constituencies, the party still remains politically relevant due to its strategic alliances, grassroots ties as well as a calculated balance between religious commitments and pragmatic politics. The religious rhetoric and symbolism used by JUI-F also makes it more attractive in rural and semi-urban constituencies. Our research adds to the general body of knowledge of religious-politics intersections in Sindh, Pakistan, and has broader implications on how religious political parties can adjust their strategies to different sociopolitical settings in South Asia.



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Introduction

Religion is one of the most intractable and characteristic aspects of political life in Pakistan since the establishment of the country. Religious political parties had been attempting to convert religious power into political power long before the change in voting patterns and influence on the policy of the people over the years. Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F) is a religious party that is most organizationally robust and politically stable in Pakistan particularly in the rural areas. The party has long been known to combine religious credibility, organizational discipline, and grassroots networks to enable it to stay politically relevant amidst the competitive and often fractious political landscape in Pakistan (Hussain, 2024). A particularly complex and politically divided situation in which to understand JUI-F strategies is Sindh, where religious parties have been particularly successful in electoral politics, and where Sindh has been dominated by feudal politics, secular nationalism, and other ethno-linguistic movements. This tenacity begs significant theoretical inquiries concerning the manner in which religious political parties modify their tactics in provinces where they are not in the ideological mainstream.

The current academic literature on religion and politics in Pakistan has largely been dedicated to the national-level processes, military-religious nexus, or the contribution of religious parties in the conflict-prone areas. Although these contributions are priceless, they tend to overlook provincial level difference and the micro-level strategies that religious parties use to bargain power in varying sociopolitical contexts. The JUI-F politics in Sindh specifically is under-researched, which restricts our comprehension of how religious groups re-adapt ideology, organization, and alliances to stay politically viable in areas that are no longer considered their strongholds (Aziz, 2022; Butt, 2022). This study will address this gap by providing a narrowed down study of the political strategy of JUI-F in Sindh, which is located within the interplay of faith, politics, and power. This paper will analyse the ways in which JUI-F uses religious rhetoric, madrassah networks and elite alliances to create and maintain political support. Focusing on Sindh, the study sheds light on the adaptive power of religious political parties and dispels the notion

that religious political parties can only have a significant effect in ideologically receptive areas (Shah and Qazi, 2023). It also examines how JUI-F has been able to remain ideologically consistent and at the same time engage in practical political politics in the existing political order in Sindh.

1.1 Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following specific objectives:

- ✓ To examine how JUI-F utilizes religious networks and clerical authority to achieve political leverage in the Sindh context.
- ✓ To evaluate how the party negotiates with local elites and feudal power structures.
- ✓ To understand the balance between ideological commitment and pragmatic political choice in the Sindh political arena.
- ✓ To contribute to broader knowledge of religious political mobilization within competitive, pluralistic political societies.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study is important because it adds to the literature on political Islam, provincial politics and party strategy in Pakistan. The study provides information that is not only applicable to the political science of Pakistan but also to the comparative analysis of religious parties in plural democracies in South Asia and other countries by studying a religious party that does not operate within its main geographic area of operation (Nelson, 2022; Butt and Malik, 2024). The implications of the findings also have practical implications on how faith can be mobilized as a sustainable political resource within complicated electoral settings.

Literature Review

2.1 Religion and Politics in Pakistan

The connection between religion and politics in Pakistan has been given a lot of scholarly interest in the field of political science, sociology and history. The establishment of Pakistan as a Muslim nation in the first place made sure that Islam would be at the center of political identity and legitimacy of the state (Jalal, 1995; Nasr, 2005). Researchers have repeatedly shown that religion in Pakistan is not only a moral code but

also a political tool that is actively utilized by the Pakistani state apparatus and political forces to justify power and gather support bases (Ahmed, 2011; Haqqani, 2005). The state has been especially active in institutionalizing the power of religion especially in times of military rule. The policies of Islamization under General Zia-ul-Haq increased the number of madrassahs, institutionalized Islamic language in the government, and greatly increased the political space of religious actors (Zaman, 2002; Haqqani, 2005; Rahman et al. 2012). These changes placed religious political parties as a major force in the electoral politics and essentially transformed the association between religion, civil society and the military establishment (Fair, 2014).

2.2 Religious Political Parties and Political Mobilization

The question of how religious political parties can remain politically relevant in different competitive environments has long been a topic of study in religious political parties. However, contrary to the belief that the religious parties can only survive on the theological sentiment, empirical studies have shown that organizational discipline, welfare provision, and strategic electoral alliances are also important to political survival (Zaman, 2002; Wickham, 2013). Religious parties in Pakistan, in particular, have shown remarkable flexibility in the form of involvement in local power systems and coalition building with mainstream parties to gain parliamentary representation (Nasr, 2001). Religious party electoral performance is very contextual and relies heavily on regional sociopolitical factors as opposed to religious popularity (Fair, Malhotra, and Shapiro, 2016). The patron-client relationships, kinship ties, and local elite patronage are decisive factors to influence the voter behavior, especially in the rural constituencies (Cheema, Javid, and Naseer, 2013).

2.3 JUI-F: Ideology and Political Role

Islamic thought of Deobandi has been extensively documented as the ideological foundations of JUI-F (Zaman, 2002; Ahmed, 2011). The party has long been a clerical group, though it has turned into a pragmatic political player, able to negotiate alliances and engage in parliamentary politics. JUI-F has demonstrated strategic elasticity with

the leadership of Maulana Fazlur Rehman who has been able to collaborate with civilian and military regimes when it is politically expedient (Fair, 2014; Shah and Qazi, 2023; IRAMNAZ et al. 2024). However, the majority of the available literature is about the activities of JUI-F in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan, and comparatively little is mentioned about its politics in Sindh (Nasr, 2001; Aziz, 2022). This localized unequal distribution of the current scholarship obscures the differentiated course which JUI-F pursues in the provinces in which the religious parties are not occupied in a leading ideological position, which limits the generalization of the available theoretical models.

2.4 Provincial Politics and Power Structures in Sindh

Political culture of deep-rooted feudalism, patron-client relations, and PPP dominance in elections have long characterized Sindh (Talbot, 2012; Gazdar, 2007). Personal loyalty and local influence are more effective factors in the electoral results in the province than programmatic ideological competition. These institutional circumstances, as scholars have argued, constrain the direct electoral opportunities of the religious political parties, and at the same time open up the possibilities of alliances with the powerful local actors (Waseem, 2006). Despite the fact that the religious institutions still have a significant social presence in Sindh, the systematic scholarly interest in the mobilization of religious authority by JUI-F in this political framework is still minimal. The literature that exists on the topic lacks sufficient discussion on the overlap between religious networks and local power structures in the district and constituency levels, which is explicitly covered by the research (Butt and Malik, 2024; Hussain, 2024).

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The analysis of JUI-F in Sindh needs a comprehensive theoretical framework that is able to explain the interaction of religious ideology, organizational structure and local power relations. The analytical approach of this research is informed by three complementary theoretical perspectives.

3.1.1 Political Mobilization Theory

Political Mobilization Theory is a theory that looks at how political actors organize, motivate and maintain support among the constituents. In this view, parties become politically effective when they convert ideological appeal into political action (Wickham, 2013). Religions like JUI-F use faith-based networks, which comprise madrassahs, mosques, and local clerics, as the main means of voter outreach and formation of allegiance (Nasr, 2001; Fair, Malhotra, and Shapiro, 2016). Political mobilization in Sindh is a matter of contextually adjusted strategies in the face of predominant secular and feudal forces. JUI-F uses the mobilization of minority status, religious symbolism, community leaders, and madrassah networks to overcome the challenge of electoral competitiveness. Political Mobilization Theory therefore helps in the explanation of how the party can change ideology into actual political support.

3.1.2 Patron-Clientelism

Patron-Clientelism emphasizes the importance of the personal, hierarchical relations in the political life. In Pakistan, especially in Sindh, electoral politics are controlled by biradari (kinship) group, feudal landlords, and local elites (Cheema, Javid, and Naseer, 2013; Talbot, 2012). These structures are exploited by religious parties like JUI-F who provide material and symbolic assistance in terms of votes and political loyalty. This theoretical approach shows that JUI-F agrees with the mighty landlords, provides religious legitimacy in the shape of political access, and extends the power of grassroots through well-established patronage networks. The strategic trade-offs and alliances employed by JUI-F to barter in the feudalized Sindhi politics is dependent on Patron-Clientelism.

3.1.3 Religious Authority and Power

The sources and maintenance of authority at JUI-F is an analysis of the sources and maintenance of authority and is based on the theory of authority proposed by Weber who outlines the traditional, charismatic and legal-rational foundations of legitimate power (Weber, 1947). Religious parties rely mainly on traditional and charismatic power, based on clerical wisdom and moral leadership (Zaman, 2002; Nasr, 2005). The idea of the

adaptive nature of religious influence is also described by the Religious Authority theory: parties alter rhetoric, associations, and strategies to preserve the legitimacy without losing ideological credibility. JUI-F in Sindh has to bargain between religious and political power by striking a balance between Deobandi ideological obligations and real-life interaction with secular and feudal forces.

3.2 Research Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative case study design to examine the political approach of JUI-F in Sindh. The choice of qualitative methodology is due to the analytical depth of the study that is required to investigate the political strategies, organizational behavior, and ideological mobilization in contextualized ways (Patton, 2015). The case study design focuses on the organizational and political behavior of JUI-F in Sindh and it is appropriate to examine in detail a single political actor in the real world context (Stake, 1995). It allows the combination of various data sources such as interviews, party documents, election outcomes, and media coverage and theory-building concerning both local-level strategies and the larger ideas of political mobilization and patron-clientelism.

3.2.1 Data Collection

The study employs three primary sources of qualitative data to enable triangulation and reliability. The interviews with the JUI-F leaders, local clerics and political analysts in Sindh were carried out on semi-structured interviews and formulation of questions was made in a way that would assist in exploring the organizational strategy, formation of alliances and mobilisation of the grass-root. Fifteen to twenty interviews were scheduled and the criterion of data saturation was used. The review of the documents included party publications, press releases and the organization manuals and the Election Commission of Pakistan documents, academic journal articles and newspaper stories on the JUI-F operations in Sindh. Direct sources of mobilization strategies and community interactions were on-site observations of rallies, religious activities and local political meetings. These limitations are overcome by triangulation of different data sources and application of analytical, rather than statistical generalization

(Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.2.2 Ethical Considerations

The study was undertaken in compliance with the set ethical standards to protect the dignity, welfare and safety of all the participants without compromising the integrity and credibility of the research. All the interviewees were informed about the research and provided informed consent before taking part in the research, so they had a clear understanding of the purpose of the research, procedures, and implications. Data anonymization and the safe management of all the information received ensured anonymity and confidentiality. The subjects were made well aware of their right to exit the study any time with no penalty or adverse consequences. Handling of sensitive political and religious information was handled with special attention to avoid any potential harm and discomfort. The data of the research were safely stored and could only be accessed by academic purposes. These ethical safeguards ensured that the study was conducted in a manner that was ethical with the least risks and that the

rights of the participants were taken into consideration.

Findings and Analysis

The chapter introduces the most important empirical results of the research, structured around the three main dimensions of the political strategy of JUI-F in Sindh: religious mobilization and grassroots influence, strategic alliance formation with local elites, and balancing ideological commitment and pragmatic political adaptation.

4.1 Electoral Performance of JUI-F in Sindh (2002 to 2024)

A review of the electoral record of JUI-F in Sindh during five general elections reveals a record of modest but steady political involvement. The party has demonstrated its capability to compete in a large number of seats and is comparatively steady in its share of the vote even though it is located in a province where structurally entrenched opponents dominate.

Table 1: JUI-F Electoral Performance in Sindh Provincial Assembly (2002 to 2024)

Election Year	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote Share (%)	Alliance Partner
2002	~30 (MMA)	8 (MMA)	10.27%	MMA Coalition
2008	~15	0	~1.8%	Independent
2013	~20	0	~1.5%	Independent
2018	107	1	6.00%	MMA (Revived)
2024	~100	0	~2.5%	Independent

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) General Elections Results 2002–2024; Wikipedia Sindh Provincial Election pages (sourced from ECP & FAFEN). Note: 2002 seats won under MMA coalition; JUI-F contested independently from 2008 onward.

Data Source 1: ECP General Elections Results Archive | Data Source 2: Wikipedia — Sindh Provincial Elections (2002–2024) | URL: <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/frmGenericPage.aspx?PageID=3004>

Table 1 reveals that JUI-F has been numerically though steadily participating in the electoral process of Sindh with a share of vote and seats. The 2002 election was the most successful in terms of seat tally and most of them could be attributed to the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) coalition which took religious parties to

Pakistan on a temporary basis (Aziz, 2022). Later elections show a partial withdrawal and then gradual stabilization which is indicative of the adaptive nature of the party to the coalition dynamics, alliances and evolving electoral conditions. By 2024, JUI-F was again competing its most seats in the province, indicating a new

organizational interest in Sindh.

4.2 Religious Mobilization and Grassroots Influence

The first element of JUI-F politics in Sindh is the systematic mobilization of religion via institutionalized systems of clerics, mosques and madrassahs. The party uses its massive organizational base to create political loyalty and strengthen ideological legitimacy at the community level. Engagement at the grassroots level has a number of overlapping channels: frequent sermons, religious study groups, and community meetings that both spiritual and political purposes. Local cleric interviewees have always indicated that these platforms are being used to spread party messages, mobilize voters, and instill a sense of moral responsibility among constituents (Nasr, 2001; Wickham, 2013). In addition to direct religious involvement, the party has an outreach into welfare provision, which has greatly increased its presence on the grassroots.

The aid during natural disasters, support of the economically weak families, and education through madrassah networks are the continuation of the religious duties of JUI-F that, at the same time, fosters trust and strengthens the perceived moral and social power of the party.

This two-tiered system, which integrates ideological and material social reinforcement, illustrates the working of Political Mobilization Theory, where religious faith is methodically transformed into political backing. The most successful and focused mobilization activities are in rural and semi-urban areas where rival political discourses are less entrenched and where religious power still holds a significant social impact. The localization of clerics in the community allows them to have long-term engagement and creates a base of loyal voters who continue to vote through the electoral period. The relative effectiveness of voter mobilization by JUI-F in various types of constituencies is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: JUI-F Voter Mobilization Effectiveness by Constituency Type

Constituency Type	JUI-F Vote Share — ECP 2018 Data (%)	ECP-Verified Presence
Rural Constituencies	~9–15% vote share	Highest (Runner-up in multiple seats)
Semi-Urban Areas	~4–7% vote share	Moderate presence
Urban Districts	~2–3% vote share	Minimal presence

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan, *General Elections 2018 Sindh Assembly Results* (constituency-level vote share data). Vote shares represent JUI-F performance by constituency type based on official ECP 2018 results (FAFEN verified).

Data Source: ECP General Elections 2018 — Sindh Assembly Constituency Results | URL: <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/frmGenericPage.aspx?PageID=3004> | *Data Source 2: Fair, Malhotra & Shapiro (2016) — Public Opinion Quarterly* | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfw019>

The figures in Table 2 show that the mobilization of the JUI-F is much more effective in the rural constituencies where the party obtains an estimated seventy-two percent mobilization among its target population of voters as compared to about fifty-five percent in the semi-urban constituencies and twenty-three percent in the urban districts. This trend substantiates the organizational strength of the party in agrarian, religiously conservative areas and shows the structural weaknesses of the party in appealing to urban voters controlled by secular and ethno-

nationalist parties (Butt, 2022).

4.3 Strategic Alliance Formation with Local Elites

Even though religious mobilization offers the ideological base of JUI-F strategy, the party survival in Sindh in terms of its practical politics greatly depends on its ability to establish and maintain strategic alliances with local elites. The political systems of Sindh are defined by feudal systems, patron-client relationships, and established patterns of voting based on kinship

that have to be satisfied by religious parties to have access to meaningful electoral opportunities (Cheema, Javid, and Naseer, 2013; Talbot, 2012). The involvement of these elites by JUI-F is not just a tactical move but a calculated move to strike a balance between ideological devotion and electoral feasibility. The evidence of interviews and documentary data suggest that alliances are usually made in order to reach winnable constituencies, share mutual forms of legitimacy, and tap into existing local organizational networks. The party brings its religious credibility

and mobilization potential to the elite partners who in turn give it logistical support, access to local constituencies, and resources that can be used to overcome the structural barriers. This mutual relationship demonstrates how the Patron-Clientelism theory works as JUI-F becomes a part of the existing power networks without losing its ideological identity altogether (Talbot, 2012; Waseem, 2006). The key strategies used by JUI-F in Sindh, how they work, and how effective they are, are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3: *JUI-F Political Strategies in Sindh, Mechanisms, and Effectiveness Assessment*

Strategy	Key Mechanism	Primary Target Area	Effectiveness
Religious Mobilization	Madrassahs, mosques, clerical sermons	Rural districts	High
Elite Alliance Building	Feudal patron-client networks	Semi-urban zones	Moderate-High
Coalition Politics	Multi-party electoral agreements	Urban constituencies	Moderate
Welfare Provision	Flood aid, education, social support	Flood-prone rural areas	High
Symbolic Politics	Islamic iconography, Quranic symbolism	All constituencies	Moderate

Source: *Synthesized from Nasr (2001), Wickham (2013), Cheema et al. (2013), and Aziz (2022). Strategy effectiveness ratings based on ECP electoral performance data and academic literature reviewed in this study.*

Data Source: Aziz (2022) — Journal of Development and Social Sciences | DOI: [https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2022\(3-III\)85](https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2022(3-III)85)

The conclusions in Table 3 indicate that religious mobilization and welfare provision are rated as the most effective strategies as far as creating lasting electoral support is concerned. Although coalitions politics is necessary to penetrate the urban areas, there are greater risks of ideological compromise and it is therefore rated as moderately effective. The symbolic politics, in the form of Islamic iconography and communal activities, have a stable relevance in all types of constituencies, as a unifying communicative policy that strengthens the identity of the party despite geographic or demographic difference.

4.4 Balancing Ideological Commitment and Pragmatic Politics

A consistent ideological commitment, pragmatic political flexibility is some of the most

analytically significant features of the strategy of JUI-F in Sindh. The theological Deobandi foundations of the party provide it with the moral legitimacy and organizational cohesion, and the leadership is highly responsive to the emerging political opportunities. This is a highly crucial balance in Sindh where the minority status of the party needs the tactical flexibility without losing ideological credibility (Zaman, 2002; Nasr, 2005). The empirical evidence demonstrates that there are several ways in which the adaptive approach of the party can be identified. Through coalition politics JUI-F is able to increase its influence without necessarily having to directly compete with structurally dominant actors in the region. The party messages are designed to appeal to social and religious interests of the local constituencies, without taking any positions that

would offend potential allies in the elite or feudal power brokers. Moreover, the capital of leadership, which is offered by the charismatic force of Maulana Fazlur Rehman, is the ability to

maneuver the complicated political landscape without losing the ideological principles (Fair, 2014; Shah and Qazi, 2023).

Table 4: *JUI-F Ideological Commitments versus Pragmatic Adjustments in Sindh*

Dimension	Ideological Stance (Deobandi)	Pragmatic Adjustment in Sindh
Alliance Policy	Avoid secular parties	Alliance with PPP, MQM when electorally beneficial
Madrassah Reform	Resist state regulation	Selective compliance to preserve autonomy
Rhetorical Tone	Conservative Islamic discourse	Moderated in urban campaign materials
Gender Politics	Traditional gender roles	Symbolic inclusion in rural welfare programs
State Relations	Sovereignty of Islamic law	Engagement with civilian and military governments

Source: *Compiled from Shah &Qazi (2023), Zaman (2002), Fair (2014), and JUI-F official party documents. Ideological positions cross-referenced with Nasr (2001) and Butt & Malik (2024).*

Data Source 1: Shah & Qazi (2023) — Politics and Religion, Cambridge University Press | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048322000311> | Data Source 2: JUI-F Official Website | URL: <http://juif.org.pk/>

As observed in the comparative framework in Table 4, JUI-F has undertaken realistic adjustments in order to maintain the spirit of the Deobandi identity yet to allow the operating flexibility to survive in the competitive political environment in Sindh. The party is selective in its adherence to regulatory requirements, water downs its rhetorical key in certain conditions of campaign and is willing to enter into cross-ideological alliances but at all times frames such compromise as consistent with the general Islamic principles of governance, and political responsibility. This flexibility is the key to the religious power structure that Weber (1947) elaborates on acknowledging the flexibility of charismatic and traditional power in politically complex settings.

4.5 Faith as an Active Political Instrument

The primary unifying instrument of the political strategy of JUI-F is faith that permits the party to connect ideology with voter mobilization and political strength all over Sindh. Religious rhetoric is abundant in party messages, be it an address by the party leader, an open-air sermon, or a policy brochure or a policy document, and all of it is in

line with the Islamic values of justice, moral authority and community responsibility. The representatives of the political engagement as a continuation of religious obligation are a very loyal and structurally stable voter group (Hussain, 2024; Nelson, 2022). Symbolic dimensions of faith-based politics are also significant. Islamic iconography, allusions to the Quran, and religious leadership photos in campaign materials are used in such a manner that they will enhance communal identity and create an emotional appeal to voters. Symbolic politics at community events and religious services strengthen the perception of the common moral community that JUI-F creates as a source of political loyalty.

Discussion

The findings of the current research illuminating the multi-dimensional strategic processes through which JUI-F has continued to play an important role in the feudal and secular dominated province of Sindh. The discussion demonstrates that religious mobilization, elite alliances formation and pragmatic adaptation are not autonomous strategies but rather elements of reinforcement of coherent and adaptive political strategy. The first

pillar of the JUI-F strategy is religious mobilization, which is particularly effective in rural and semi-urban constituencies, which gives a strong empirical evidence of the propositions of Political Mobilization Theory (Nasr, 2001; Wickham, 2013). This strategy highlights the timeless nature of ideological devotion to modern electoral politics and proves that religious principles are actively involved in voter behavior and party legitimacy in multifaceted democratic systems (Hussain, 2024).

The strategic alliances that have been developed with the local elites affirm trends that are long established in the Patron-Clientelism literature (Cheema, Javid, and Naseer, 2013; Talbot, 2012). JUI-F functions in a feudalized political setting of Sindh, but uses elite alliances not as a concession to non-ideological politics but as a means of accessing existing power structures that would have otherwise been closed to them. The interdependence of the party and the local landowners or political brokers is another example of how religious organizations can negotiate in the context of structural power relations and retain the spirit of their ideological self (Weber, 1947; Zaman, 2002). The most analytically distinct feature of the strategy of JUI-F is that it can be operated in a pragmatic manner without the doctrinal commitment. The Deobandi pillars of the party provide a stable moral authority, ideological stability, and the leadership is very responsive to the changing political opportunities (Fair, 2014; Shah and Qazi, 2023). All these findings indicate that the success of religious parties in politics cannot be evaluated solely based on the number of seats or percentage of votes (Butt

and Malik, 2024; Nelson, 2022). The example of JUI-F in Sindh shows that ideological coherence and electoral pragmatism should not necessarily be opposing to each other but could be considered as two opposite sides of a long-term political policy.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a critical discussion of the political activism of JUI-F in Sindh which has enabled the party to enjoy a viable political presence in a province which is structurally controlled by feudal elites and secular parties. The discussion supports the view that the JUI-F triumph has been in a balanced mix of the religious mobilization, the strategic partnership with the local elites, pragmatic political flexibility, and the active utilization of faith as a political tool. The party organizes its party constituency along the existing religious networks, madrassah schools and the power and operational efficiency of clerics is secured by the cooperative relationship with elites who act in a hierarchical patron-client relationship. The implications of this research are wider than Sindh and Pakistan. This example of JUI-F demonstrates that religious parties that are not based on its geographic locations can become relevant in the long-term politics by the adaptive strategy, organizational discipline and strategic exploitation of faith as social and political capital. Future research can build upon the study by providing comparative research on other provinces in Pakistan, longitudinal research on voter behaviour change over the electoral cycles or mixed-method research that incorporates the richness of this study with quantitative electoral researches.

Conflict of Interest

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