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Revival in Motion?

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Introduction

Founded during the last years of British rule in the Indian subcontinent, the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI, 'Society of Islam') has frequently been viewed as the South Asian equivalent to the Muslim Brotherhood, which advocated for Arab liberation from Western rule from 1928 onward. Like the Muslim Brotherhood, the JI sought to revive Islam in opposition to foreign imperialism and what it viewed as the growing secularization and Westernization of Muslims in the region. From the offset, the JI has therefore been a highly exclusivist and, in essence, Islamist organization. Following the partition of British India into a Hindu-majority secular India and a Muslim-majority Islamic Pakistan in 1947, the JI became focused on transforming Pakistan into what the organization viewed as a 'truly' Islamic society, free from both Western and Hindu influence. The history of partition and the JI's Islamist credentials have necessarily resulted in political opposition to the State of India. The JI has also emerged as a major supporter of Islamist groups throughout the region, including by supporting terrorist outfits in the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). As such, the JI has come to both shape and embody the fault lines shaping the bilateral relationship between Islamabad and New Delhi until this day.

The JI split following the war of 1971, which resulted in Bangladesh gaining independence. Since then, the two chapters of the JI have registered both converging and diverging trajectories. In Bangladesh, the JI has directly contributed to the growing radicalization of Bangladesh's political culture and has now been banned by the secular-leaning Awami League government of Sheikh Hasina. Similarly, the Pakistani JI has directly contributed to the radicalization of Pakistani society, including through its material and ideological support for pro-Pakistan terrorist and separatist groups in J&K. In both Bangladesh and Pakistan, the JI has also selectively engaged with military rule when it was politically opportune. Yet, the JI continues to operate as both a conventional political party and a grassroots organization in Pakistan - a status the JI in Bangladesh no longer formally enjoys. It is evident that the JI has played a key role in both countries, shaping domestic discourses and partially altering the way governments interact with countries in the neighbourhood, most notably in regard to India. The contemporary political ideological effects of this revivalist movement, however, remain understudied.

This article fills this knowledge gap by examining the trajectory of the JI in South Asia and the contemporary sociopolitical forms the organization has taken in Bangladesh and Pakistan. The article is structured as follows; The first section situates the JI in its broader ideological and historical contexts of Islamic revivalism and the colonial period. The subsequent section then examines the JI's role between 1947 and 1971, specifically focusing on the JI's response to demands for greater Bengali autonomy in the build-up to the 1971 war. The last two sections then study the post-1971 trajectory of the JI in Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively.

The history and ideology of the JI in South Asia

The JI, often simply known as Jamaat, was founded in British India in 1941 by the Muslim theologian Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, who was deeply concerned about the perceived decline of Islamic values and the impact of Western secular ideologies on Muslim communities in British India. During the colonial era, British India underwent profound changes in its social, political, and economic structures, with the influence of Western education, culture, and governance producing a transformative impact on Indian society. Maududi, who was born in Aurangabad (in the state of Maharashtra in modern-day India) in 1903, lived through these

rapid changes in India's societal make-up and became increasingly concerned about what he perceived as the erosion of Islamic values and the rapid encroachment of secular ideas (Synech, 2023). In this context, Maududi was specifically critical of what he saw as the negative impact of modernity and secularism on partially Islamic societies, which he believed to be incompatible with Western-style secular governance and societal norms. His writings reflected a desire to counter these influences and establish a society based on Islamic values. Maududi began communicating his views through journalistic outlets and various publications, a capacity that was boosted when he married into a rich family in 1937. Maududi articulated his ideological vision in works such as *"Islami Nizam-e-Hayat"* (The Islamic Way of Life) and *"Tafheem-ul-Quran"*, in which he outlined his ideas about the establishment of an Islamic State governed by Sharia law, where all aspects of life, including politics, economics, and social norms, would be guided by Islamic principles (Synech, 2023). In 1941, Maududi officially founded the JI in Lahore, located in modern-day Pakistan, with the objective of having the JI serve as an organizational platform for promoting Maududi's vision of an Islamic State and society. The JI became involved in political activities, advocating for the implementation of Islamic principles in governance and social structures. Maududi envisioned the JI to be more than a political party - instead, he aimed it to be a comprehensive Islamic movement influencing all aspects of life via activities in social welfare, education, and political activism (Religion and Public Life at Harvard Divinity School, n.d.). As nationalist sentiments intensified throughout British India in the early 1940s, Maududi was initially critical of the idea of a separate State based solely on religious lines advocated by the likes of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who argued that Hindus and Muslims were two culturally separate 'nations' that should be divided along religious lines. However, Maududi eventually supported the creation of a Muslim-majority Pakistan as an opportunity to establish an Islamic State.

Maududi and the JI were part of a broader Islamic revivalist movement that sought to revitalize and reaffirm Islamic principles in response to Western imperialism and the perceived Westernization of non-Western societies. As noted, the JI has been frequently viewed as the South Asian counterpart to the Muslim Brotherhood, which focused on resisting Western imperialism in Arab Muslim countries (Laub, 2019). In the context of South Asian opposition to colonialism, the activism of Maududi was inspired by the revivalist movements of Islamic leaders like Syed Ahmad Khan and Allama Iqbal, who advocated for the preservation and promotion of Islamic identity, in the late 19th and early 20th century (Rumi, 2022). More broadly, the JI and the Muslim Brotherhood share ideological similarities as Islamist movements seeking to establish societies and States based on Islamic principles. Both organizations are rooted in a broader cultural countermovement that emerged in response to the perceived challenges posed by modernity, secularism, and Western influences. As a result, they both share a common commitment to the idea of implementing Islamic principles in governance, law, and social structures. The writings and ideas of figures such as Sayyid Qutb from the Muslim Brotherhood have found therefore resonance among Islamist movements beyond the Arab world, influencing thinkers such as Maududi. The JI and the Muslim Brotherhood have advocated for a sense of global Islamic solidarity, emphasizing the unity of the Muslim *Ummah* (community) across borders. Members of the JI and the Muslim Brotherhood have, in some instances, participated in common political platforms or coalitions, especially in international forums addressing issues related to Islam, governance, and human rights (Pew Research Center, 2010). A major policy issue focused on by both organizations is, unsurprisingly, the Palestinian cause. Although both bodies are thus organizationally distinct and historically focused on different geographies, there are clear ideological overlaps.

In South Asia, the division of British India into India and Pakistan ultimately also split Pakistan into two. As the colonial State was split along religious lines, the Muslim-majority State of

East Bengal became part of Pakistan, creating a split between East Pakistan (today's Bangladesh) and West Pakistan (Pakistan proper), with the two wings of the State being physically disconnected. In 1971, the independence of Bangladesh led to the organization being split into its two current wings, the Bangladesh JI (BJI) and the Pakistani JI (PJI).

The JI in a divided Pakistan: 1947-1971

Now operating in an independent Pakistan, the Maududi-led JI set about implementing its vision of developing a truly Islamic society. The JI emphasized the implementation of Islamic principles in all spheres of life, worked to propagate its interpretation of Islam, and sought to establish an Islamic system of governance based on its interpretation of Sharia law. In this context, the organization became actively involved in legislative processes, including the formulation and passing of the Objective Resolution in 1949, which laid the foundation for the future constitution of Pakistan. The JI became more actively engaged in domestic politics as the 1950s progressed, including by arguing against what it perceived to be the growing influence of secular ideas in Pakistani society. It also played a key role in the early marginalization of the prosecution of the Ahmadiyya community, which the JI and other hardline Sunni groups labelled as non-Muslims, contributing to the broader politicization of sectarian differences in Pakistan that continues to shape Pakistani society today (Amnesty International, 2012). For the JI, Pakistani independence created a political and ideological vacuum that the organization sought to fill via its revivalist teachings.

Although Pakistan had been envisioned by Jinnah to be the homeland of all South Asian Muslims, significant power imbalances were built into the relationship between East and West Pakistan from the offset. Governance capacities were concentrated in West Pakistan, where the military establishment was concentrated. The political elite in West Pakistan, dominated by ethnic Pashtuns and Punjabis, quickly came to replicate the British colonial approach towards East Pakistan by implementing a series of policy measures that consolidated political power in West Pakistan to balance against the demographic size of East Pakistan, with the population of Bengal being larger than the collective population of West Pakistan's five provinces. In line with the racial categorizations developed under British colonial rule, which had viewed Pashtuns and Punjabis as 'martial' and Bengalis as 'non-martial' races, this policy agenda was driven by a perception of Bengalis as racially inferior, impure, effeminate, and frequently more akin to the Hindu population of West Bengal (Guruswamy, 2016). Although the majority of the total Pakistani population resided in the eastern wing, only 27,648 of a total of 114,032 Pakistani civil servants were based in East Pakistan (Haqqani, 2016). Government subsidy allocation, public investments, and aid provisions also favoured the population in West Pakistan (Akmam, 2002). The subsequent lack of economic development in East Bengal meant that most of the regional citizenry remained part of a peasant, rice-farming class (Gerlach, 2019). In both political and economic terms, East Pakistan remained structurally disadvantaged relative to West Pakistan as a result of the political decisions made by West Pakistani elites.

This regional imbalance also contributed to an increased factionalization within the JI, undermining organizational coherence. The early 1950s were marked by increased tensions between East and West Pakistan amid what Bengalis viewed as the intensifying marginalization of their linguistic and cultural identity. In 1952, the so-called Language Movement in East Pakistan broke out in response to the announcement that Urdu, not Bengali or Bengali and Urdu, would serve as Pakistan's official language (Schmidt, 2011). This neglect toward the distinct cultural and linguistic identity of East Pakistanis was emblematic of their larger deprioritization within the State. The West Pakistani chapter of the JI opposed calls for a greater role for Bengali identity in the State and ultimately aligned with the political

objectives of the central authorities. However, parts of the JI in East Pakistan began supporting the Language Movement.

Following the military coup led by Ayub Khan in 1958, the JI began playing a more active role in domestic politics, viewing military rule as a favourable condition to advance its vision for a ‘truly’ Islamic society. The JI had initially supported Khan’s takeover in 1958 but later clashed with the military government over the introduction of family laws that were perceived as violating Islamic principles. The party more broadly engaged in campaigns against what it viewed as un-Islamic laws and policies but supported the 1962-1963 constitutional amendments that declared Pakistan an Islamic Republic and emphasized the role of Islamic values in the interpretation of legal principles such as democracy, freedom, equality, and social justice. The party also became increasingly vocal on matters of foreign policy, including by opposing the 1966 Tashkent Agreement between Pakistan and India in 1966. The agreement, JI politicians argued, included compromises that could weaken Pakistan’s position, especially in relation to the Kashmir issue, and the JI opposed any broader concessions to India, reflecting the JI’s heavily anti-Indian thinking and political approach. Characterized by both support for and opposition to military rule, the JI’s relation to the military establishment thus remained ambiguous following Khan’s takeover.

Growing domestic tensions and disagreements about the future relations between East and West Pakistan, however, continued to dominate the JI during much of the 1960s. Some JI members in East Pakistan became part of the Democratic Action Committee in the 1960s, which supported the Six-Point Movement led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founder of the Awami League. In his policy program, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman demanded greater legislative rights for East Pakistanis, greater policy autonomy, enhanced capital controls to prevent capital flight to West Pakistan, a separate fiscal and monetary policy for East Pakistan, and a separate militia or paramilitary force led by the authorities in East Pakistan (Dhaka Tribune, 2020). Rahman’s policy demands led to a rapid deterioration between East and West Pakistan, where policymakers viewed the program as effectively translating into a demand for secession (Ouassini & Ouassini, 2019). Among much of West Pakistan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s demands reinforced a perception that Bengalis were not ‘properly’ Pakistani and culturally more akin to Indians – and therefore not trustworthy (Haqqani, 2016). Although members of the JI had supported calls for greater autonomy, the official position of the JI remained in opposition to the quasi-independence demands of Bengalis in East Pakistan and supported the policy of a united Pakistan. In the 1971 elections, the pro-unity parties were defeated by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s Awami League, strengthening pro-autonomy voices, further intensifying political tensions, and ultimately leading to the outbreak of the 1971 war.

In the ensuing Bangladeshi war of liberation, the JI actively supported the military intervention of West Pakistan in Bangladesh and participated in a variety of serious human rights violations against the civilian population of East Pakistan. To facilitate military operations in East Pakistan against Bengali nationalists, Pakistan formed the East Pakistan Central Peace Committee, also known as the Shanti Committee in Bengali, as a collaborationist body. The head of the East Pakistani chapter of the JI, Ghulam Azam, was appointed as one of the founding members of the Shanti Committee. Following the invasion of East Pakistan by West Pakistani forces, the Shanti Committee began formulating hit lists identifying known Bengali nationalists and organizing the paramilitary Razakar (‘volunteer’) units, which collaborated with the occupation forces and were engaged in serious human rights abuses, including extrajudicial massacres, the operation of concentration camps for Bengali detainees, and the widespread use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. The broader organizational opposition of the JI to an independent Bangladesh thus motivated its support for the atrocities committed

in the war (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Amid opposition by Bengali nationalists and the ultimate intervention of India in the conflict, Pakistan ultimately suffered a humiliating defeat in December 1971. Bangladesh, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, consequently gained independence.

The dissolution of East Pakistan into the newly independent State of Bangladesh brought an end to the notion of a unified JI, which subsequently split into the BJI and the PJI. Between 1947 and 1971, the JI had consolidated its organizational structures, selectively engaged with military rule, and had started formulating a broader foreign policy agenda focused on asserting Pakistani control over J&K and opposing India. However, the inherent tensions in the relationship between East and West Pakistan meant that the JI primarily remained focused on domestic challenges and issues.

The JI in Bangladesh after 1971

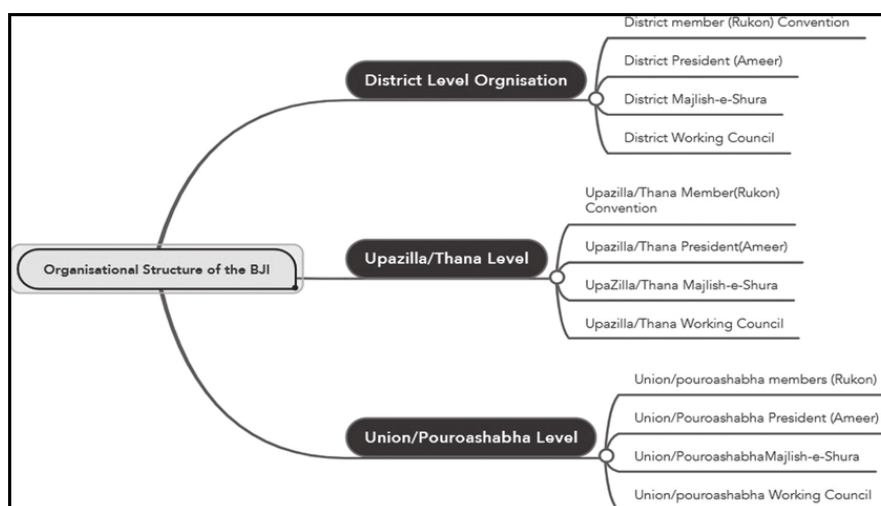
In the now independent Bangladesh, the Awami League government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman banned the BJI for its collaboration with Pakistani forces during the 1971 war. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman specifically sought to forbid the creation of parties along religious lines to enable the emergence of Bangladesh as a secular and socialist State. The Rahman administration also withdrew the citizenship of Ghulam Azam, leading top BJI officials to flee to Pakistan and other Muslim-majority countries, including in the Middle East (Refworld, 1994). In Saudi Arabia, BJI officials then began promoting a narrative that suggested that Rahman and his secular government sought to undermine Islam in Bangladesh, including by sponsoring anti-Muslim violence by Bangladeshi Hindus. Domestically, Rahman developed a series of legislative frameworks to crack down on the BJI. The most important element of the legal code was the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act of 1973, which enabled the government “*to provide for the detention, prosecution and punishment of persons for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other crimes under international law*” (Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 1973). Under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League, Bangladesh thus sought to immediately clamp down on the BJI because of the role it had played in 1971.

However, the BJI returned to the mainstream political fray following a military coup in 1975 that killed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family. Following a period of significant domestic volatility, military rule was ultimately consolidated under the former General Ziaur Rahman, who saw his regime immediately recognized by the countries that had hosted JI officials, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. In 1977, Ziaur Rahman pushed through constitutional amendments that re-permitted the existence of political parties based on religious belonging. This enabled the BJI to relaunch activities in the country and allowed Azam to return to Bangladesh and once again head the BJI. To provide a counterweight against the now severely weakened secular leaning Awami League, Ziaur Rahman founded the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Since its founding, the BNP has actively undermined secular elements in Bangladesh’s political cultures by allying with a range of Islamist parties, including the Islamic Oikya Jote, which is believed to be affiliated with the Al Qaeda-linked Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) (Congressional Research Service, 2007). The perhaps most crucial member of the BNP’s coalition force has been the BJI, which the BNP frequently partnered with under Ziaur Rahman. The de facto BJI-BNP alliance was continued by Ziaur Rahman’s successors throughout the 1980s, firmly re-embedding the BJI into domestic elite politics as part of the social forces arrangement under military rule. The BJI’s formal return to power politics highlighted a highly ambivalent historical legacy as the social forces that had initially opposed an independent Bangladesh now played a key role in governing it. In this context, the BJI’s ideological focus thus shifted from Bangladesh as part of the Pakistani State project towards

entrenching Islamist rule in Bangladesh. The BNP's attempt to appeal to BJI supporters also meant that ethnic and religious violence against non-Muslims in Bangladesh remained commonplace, including under the auspices of the explicitly anti-Hindu BJI (Refworld, 1994). Political violence and the crackdown against political opposition consequently emerged as a defining element in post-independence Bangladeshi politics.

The BJI's political fortunes began to somewhat shift when the military-dominated government, headed by the BNP-BJI alliance, came undone in 1990 and 1991. In 1990, mass protests led by students led to the formation of a caretaker government. The first parliamentary elections were held in 1991 and saw the BNP, led by Khaleda Zia, the wife of former President Ziaur Rahman, win the election. Although the BJI recorded 12.1% of the overall vote in the 1991 elections, the democratization of the political system also generated more space to criticize the BJI's role in the 1971 war and the crimes it had committed under the leadership of Azam. In a case that went as far as the Supreme Court, Azam's right to Bangladeshi citizenship was challenged after it had been restored by the Khaleda Zia's government in 1993 (United Press International, 1993). As pressure on the BJI increased, its electoral support fell: in the 1996 parliamentary elections, which were boycotted by most opposition parties due to the continued repression of political opposition by the BNP, the BJI lost fifteen seats, reducing it to a total of three seats in the 300-seat Bangladesh parliament (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1998). Democratization and calls for greater accountability for the BJI's collaboration thus substantially undermined its formal role in domestic party politics. Yet, the BNP's undemocratic governance and its support for Islamist groups, including Al-Qaeda linked ones, also helped to increasingly legitimize Islamist violence in Bangladesh, including via attacks on secular politicians such as Sheikh Hasina in 2004 (Macdonald, 2024). Although the BJI's role became formally more marginalized, its ideological role as a driver of Islamist extremism thus prevailed, including through its affiliation with extremist and violent groups.

Figure 1: Organizational structure of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami



Source: Islam, Politics and Bangladesh (M. N. Islam et al., 2020)

When the Awami League returned to power in 2008, the new government began actively targeting the BJI, ultimately banning it in 2013. Sheikh Rahman's daughter, Sheikh Hasina led the Grand Alliance, a coalition of parties, against a BNP-led coalition that also included the BJI. The 2008 general election occurred against the backdrop of two years of significant

political instability that had seen a military-led caretaker government repeatedly delay the elections. Hasina registered a landslide victory in the elections, firmly displacing the BNP-BJI alliance from political power. In 2009, the Hasina government formed the International Crimes Tribunal with the mandate to investigate abuses that had occurred in 1971 and during military rule (Islam, 2021). By 2011, the Tribunal had charged two BNP officials and ten BJI leaders with war crimes committed during the 1971 war. Ghulam Azam, then ninety years old, was given a prison sentence of ninety years for masterminding the atrocities committed by the JI and the Razakars in 1971 (Arab News, 2014). Particularly crucial was also the conviction of the BJI politician Abdul Quader Mollah, who was charged with having abetted and perpetrated war crimes and genocide in 1971 (Al Jazeera, 2013). Mollah was later executed. While international observers, including the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner (2013), raised doubts concerning the fairness of the trials, which targeted Hasina's political opponents, the verdicts enjoyed widespread societal support. The condemnation of Mollah was the key motivation for what became known as the Shahbag Protests of 2013, which demanded Mollah's execution, a ban of the BJI from partaking in national politics, and a boycott of BJI-linked organizations (Lewis, 2013). 2013 also saw a series of counter protests by BJI-linked groups such as the BJI's student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir, which staged nation-wide protests that killed dozens and destroyed public and private infrastructure, especially in Hindu-majority areas (Amnesty International, 2013). The State security forces responded with force, killing at least 87 protestors. In August 2013, the Bangladesh High Court thus cancelled the BJI's registration, suggesting that the party was insufficiently committed to democratic and secular governance (Hammadi & Burke, 2013). This banned the BJI from electoral politics.

In Hasina's most recent electoral victory of 2024, however, the BJI made an unofficial comeback. Although the BJI was banned from contesting elections between 2013 and 2024, its ideological influence continued to be felt as some political parties maintained affiliations with BJI, and there were instances of coordination on issues of Islamic governance despite the ban. In general, radicalized Islam has become increasingly prominent in Bangladesh's civil society over the past years. Islamists have also taken to new recruitment methods, including social media, to appeal to potential supporters (Muggah, 2020). The Awami League has used the threat emanating from extremist quarters as a justification to launch a wave of repression on alleged political opponents, frequently using the supposed threat of terrorism as a way of discrediting the opposition and clamp down on dissent (Kfir, 2018). Prior to the 2024 elections, both the BJI and the BNP had thus proposed a boycott of the elections, suggesting that the elections would neither be free nor fair considering the repression of dissent by Hasina (Halder, 2023). For all the valid concerns regarding the BJI, Hasina has thus firmly reinforced the authoritarian tendencies of previous governments in the name of promoting secularism (Connors, 2019). However, Hasina has also selectively cooperated with Islamist parties and organizations to garner voter and policy support on key issues (Abrar, 2021), indicating the extent to which Islamist groups can play the role of kingmaker in contemporary Bangladesh.

In conclusion, the historical trajectory of the BJI in Bangladesh is marked by complex dynamics and significant shifts in its role within the political landscape. Banned under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for its collaboration with Pakistani forces during the 1971 war, the JI returned to mainstream politics under military rule. Its alliance with the BNP, the BJI has decisively contributed to the gradual Islamization of the country today, which is expressed in the continued violence exerted against minorities and the general push toward more conservative social and religious policies. Formal political democratization in the 1990s led to increased scrutiny of the party's actions during the war, resulting in declining electoral support. However, the BNP-BJI alliance persisted, further entrenching Islamist elements in Bangladeshi politics. The BJI's influence endured through ideological roles, even as its formal political role became

more marginalized following the ban in 2013. The intensification of repression against the BJI in 2013, including the cancellation of its registration, reflected a growing societal demand for accountability and the degree of alienation between the Awami League and the BNP-BJI alliance. Despite the ban, the BJI subtly persisted in influencing politics and domestic courses. In the context of the 2024 elections, the BJI remained officially banned but continues to wield influence through affiliations and coordination with other parties, showcasing the enduring complexity of its role in Bangladesh's political landscape. The ongoing interplay between political repression, radicalized Islam, and popular sentiments underscores the multifaceted challenges facing Bangladesh's political future.

The JI in Pakistan after 1971

In a Pakistan humiliated by the loss of Bangladesh, the PJI opposed the secular-leaning government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was elected in 1973, and ultimately played a key role in the further Islamization and radicalization of Pakistani society under the military dictatorship of Zia ul-Haq from 1977 onward. When the civilian government of Bhutto came into power, the PJI once again criticized what it viewed as the Westernization of Pakistani society. Following Bhutto's election, the student wing of the PJI, the Islami Jamiat-e-Talabam, went as far as appealing to the military establishment to overthrow Bhutto's secular government due to "*its inherent moral corruption*" (Haqqani, 2016). When the military deposed the civilian Bhutto administration in a 1977 coup d'état led by General Zia ul-Haq, the PJI once again put its support behind military rule, as it had initially done under Ayub Khan. Envisioning a broader Islamization of Pakistani society, Zia's government implemented a series of policies aimed at bringing the legal system, education, and other institutions more in line with the administration's interpretation of Islamic principles. The PJI actively backed these initiatives and saw them as a step towards establishing a more Islamic State. Not only did Zia's Islamist discourse validate the ideas of the PJI, continued support for the military regime by the PJI also saw the Zia government staff various official positions with PJI members, thus ensuring that the PJI's growing ideological influence outlasted the Zia government (Bennett-Jones, 2002). Zia's support for the Islamization of Pakistani society also provided political space for the PJI to continue and expand its social and educational activities during the Zia era via operating schools, hospitals, and welfare projects, with the newly privatized educational system promoting a more Arab (Wahhabi) interpretation of the Islamic faith that weakened South Asian interpretations (Irfani, 2009). As was the case of Bangladesh, the role of the PJI thus transcended that of a conventional political party and was more akin to the functioning of a grassroots movement that became firmly embedded in the socioeconomic contexts it was operating in. The push for a more radicalized form of Islam also found its expression in the Zia government's foreign policy, which became focused on supporting the Afghan Mujahideen in their fight against the Soviets from 1979 onward (Shams, 2016). The PJI subsequently emerged as a supporter of various factions fighting in Afghanistan, including what would later become the Taliban. In Zia, the PJI had found a military leader that was wholly supportive of its extremist program, highlighting the growing convergence between elements of the military establishment and parts of the extremist Islamic community during that time.

The end of direct military rule following the death of Zia saw the PJI become a more regular part of the hybrid political structure characterizing Pakistani politics during the 1990s. The PJI continued its participation in electoral politics during the post-Zia period by contesting elections and maintaining a presence in the national and provincial assemblies. To remain electorally relevant, the party often pursued alliances with other political parties, including mainstream political parties, to form coalition governments at the provincial level. At its core, the PJI remained committed to its core agenda of advocating for the implementation of Islamic

principles in the legal, social, and political spheres (Haqqani, 2013). As Pakistani society had become more radicalized due to the experience of the Zia years and the Soviet war in Afghanistan, the PJI now operated in a sociopolitical context that was more conducive to its messaging. Alongside its political activities, the PJI subsequently continued its social welfare initiatives by running schools, hospitals, and charity organizations, which further reinforced its presence at the grassroots level. As Pakistan's political system changed, the PJI thus operated within the confines of a more democratic setting whilst continuing its grassroots approach.

Figure 2: Organizational Activities of Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami (1974–1992)

	Punjab	NWFP	Baluchistan	Sind	Total
1974					
Meetings	9,272	250	2	2,412	11,936
Training camps	10	—	—	103	113
Meetings with potential recruits	299,137	3,000	688	328,063	630,888
Missionary work training camps	334	—	—	14	348
Jama'at-i Islami libraries and reading rooms	1,578	71	12	179	1,840
Conferences and conventions	10,941	1,183	53	4,179	1,6356
1977					
Meetings	13,635	2,203	166	—	14,021
Training camps	114	23	2	—	139
Meetings with potential recruits	—	—	—	—	—
Missionary work training camps	4,000	—	—	38	4,038
Jama'at-i Islami libraries and reading rooms	4,375	556	12	222	5,165
Conferences and conventions	46,175	3,335	77	5,620	55,207
1983					
Meetings	12,028	6,820	103	9,611	28,562
Training camps	799	593	32	186	1,610
Meetings with potential recruits	19,878	3,274	98	—	23,250
Missionary work training camps	121	157	4	132	414
Jama'at-i Islami libraries and reading rooms	1,186	271	32	65	1,554
Conferences and conventions	4,423	1,114	57	225	5,819
1989					
Meetings	10,758	2,610	358	556	14,282
Training camps	137	61	18	35	251
Meetings with potential recruits	37,652	1,037	910	39,084	78,683
Missionary work training camps	75	4	2	22	103
Jama'at-i Islami libraries and reading rooms	844	99	29	176	1,148
Conferences and conventions	2,753	242	53	924	3,972
1992					
Meetings	2,329	654	52	2,469	5,504
Training camps	361	93	7	101	562
Meetings with potential recruits	226	29	10	42	307
Missionary work training camps	2,390	403	19	2,098	4,910
Jama'at-i Islami libraries and reading rooms	2,322	467	69	1,553	4,411
Conferences and conventions	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Organization Bureau of Jama'at-i Islami/The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution (Seyed Vali Reza Nasr 1994)

When General Pervez Musharraf deposed the civilian government of Nawaz Sharif in 1999, the PJI took a more ambivalent approach toward military rule than it had previously, particularly due to Musharraf's support for US military intervention in Afghanistan. In the early years of Musharraf's rule, the PJI initially supported the military government due to the focus on shared conservative values. Reflecting its support for Musharraf's military dictatorship, the PJI continued partaking in the elections held by the military regime, which were primarily boycotted by other mainstream parties due to allegations of electoral rigging (Gall, 2007). After 2001, however, the PJI became increasingly critical of Musharraf's foreign policy, which lent support to US military operations in Afghanistan and selectively targeted Islamists in the tribal Pashtun borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan (Tellis, 2007). When Musharraf declared a state of emergency, suspended the constitution, and dismissed the judiciary in 2007, the PJI joined other political parties and civil society organizations in opposition to the measures and participated in protests against emergency rule. The PJI played a role in the so-called Lawyers' Movement, which emerged in response to Musharraf's restrictions against the judiciary and aimed to restore the judiciary's independence and democratic norms (Walsh, 2008). The party also expressed dissatisfaction with what it saw as Musharraf's lack of commitment to Islamic principles. Crucially, PJI support was no longer tied to whether the government in question was civilian or military - Pakistani politics had become so radicalized that a conservative domestic agenda may indeed be more well-served with a democratic government.

Since the fall of the Musharraf government and the return to a more hybrid form of governance, the PJI has thus returned to the fray of political parties. The PJI continues to advocate for the implementation of Islamic principles in the legal, political, and social systems of Pakistan and has been part of political coalitions and alliances with other religious and political parties. Beyond electoral politics, the party remains involved in a variety of forms of social activism and maintains its stance against what it perceives as the secularization of the State.

Today, the main strength of the PJI is arguably not its role in mainstream party politics but its deep entrenchment into civil society organizations. The PJI runs a series of professional unions, the aforementioned Islami Jamiat-e-Talabam student union, and a youth group (Paracha, 2012). The party has also sought to shape discourses within Pakistan through a number of affiliated news outlets and publications. Additionally, the PJI runs a series of Madrassas all over the country, primarily in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - long a staging ground for terrorist outfits (Ahmed, 2023). In this sense, the PJI is a wider umbrella organization that uses different avenues to promote its societal vision for an ideologically Islamist and 'pure' Pakistan. Due to the extent to which it is involved in grassroots movements, the PJI thus no longer depends on a conventional party apparatus to promote its societal visions. Crucially, the activities of the PJI fill a sociopolitical vacuum generated by the absence of the State in policy domains such as education and social welfare. A stronger and more consolidated State would thus reduce the space groups such as the PJI have used to spread their messages.

The party has also sought to actively influence the conflict with India over J&K, including by supporting terrorist outfits operating in Indian-administered J&K. As early as 1974, the PJI launched an independent affiliate in Pakistan-administered J&K, the Jamaat-e-Islami Azad Kashmir (JIAK). The JIAK was tasked with undermining the spread of secular rather than Islamist ideas in Pakistan-administered J&K and promoting the emergence of Islamist outfits in Indian-administered J&K, including in opposition to the ostensibly secular Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) (Hashim & Fareed, 2019). As such, the PJI has actively supported the emergence of terrorist outfits such as the Hizbul Mujahideen, which has since

staged a variety of attacks in Indian-administered J&K. Other affiliated organizations, such as the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi, have since become allied with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has ramped up attacks on Pakistani targets to demand a more Islamised State (Mir, 2022). In Pakistan, the PJI has thus played an active role in promoting terrorism, both in Pakistan and other countries in the region. This had had wider ripple effects for the region as a whole, as well as Pakistan, as is reflected in the escalating violence perpetrated by the TTP.

As in Bangladesh, the JI in Pakistan has cooperated selectively with both civilian and military governments in the pursuit of its broader policy agenda. In Pakistan, the PJI directly benefited from the explicit Islamization policy agenda under Zia, which allowed the organization to penetrate the educational and social sector while exerting long-term influence over policy processes. This deep integration into the socio-economic fabric of contemporary Pakistan somewhat distinguishes the PJI from the BJI, where this influence appears less pronounced. Another notable difference is the PJI's focus on the conflict in J&K, which the organization has sought to actively become involved in by shaping discourses and supporting Islamist outfits. This reflects the continued centrality of the Kashmir conflict in the world view of modern-day Islamists in Pakistan.

Conclusion

The broader revivalist vision of Maududi and the JI for South Asia continues to have a profound impact on South Asian societies and interstate relations today. In both Bangladesh and Pakistan, the JI has actively promoted radical Islamist groups and social elements, thus directly contributing to the intensifying radicalization of both societies. In effect, this continues to render both countries an unsafe place for religious and ethnic minorities, most notably Hindus in Bangladesh and groups that are not viewed as Muslims in Pakistan, such as the long-marginalized Ahmadiyya community. The espousal of conservative religious norms also contributes to the long-standing marginalization of women and girls in modern-day Bangladesh and Pakistan. At the same time, the JI's teachings and ideological foundations have shaped the region's international relations. The JI was actively involved in the violence perpetrated during the war of 1971, which shapes perceptions of the organization in Bangladesh today. In the case of Pakistan, the JI's consolidated base has helped to support terrorist outfits in Afghanistan and J&K in the name of supporting *Jihad* and opposing what Islamists view as the Indian occupation of J&K. Beyond its provision of social goods such as education and welfare programs, the JI has thus had a severely destabilizing effect on the countries it operates in as well as the wider region it is situated in.

Progressive social forces in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan are thus well advised to keep on monitoring the group. At the same time, repression as currently witnessed in Bangladesh is unlikely to eliminate the organization or its ideological appeal. Ultimately, governments must become better equipped at recognizing the social vacuums the JI can capitalize on and filling these social, political, and economic spaces adequately by providing functional alternatives to the appeal of groups like the JI.

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