ANALYSIS OF INTRA-PARTY DISSONANCE AS A FACTOR IN JAMAT-E-ISLAMI'S ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE IN 2018 IN UPPER DIR & LOWER DIR

Karam Elahi[1]
Hina Tillat [2]

Abstract

Jamat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) is one of the oldest political parties of Pakistan. However historically its electoral performance has remained below par. In general elections 2018, JIP even failed to retain the constituencies in Upper Dir and Lower Dir that it had mostly been winning in previous elections. Using primary data generated through interview schedule from purposively selected ten party leaders, this qualitative study analyzes the causes and implications of intra-party rifts on the electoral performance of JIP in general elections 2018 in the two districts. Epistemologically grounded in constructivist / interpretivist worldview, the study relies mainly on the views of those who participated in the phenomenon under examination, while secondary data plays supplementary role. The data of transcribed interviews was thematically analyzed. The study finds that internal discords seriously impaired JIP's electoral performance. It highlights how party ideology gets compromised in the course of exposure to power and electoral politics. The study concludes that JIP needs to undertake a sustained change process for regaining its lost ground in the two districts in future elections.

Key Words: Jamat-e-Islami Pakistan, Intra-party Rifts, Political Parties, Electoral Politics, Democracy, Pakistan.

Introduction

Jamat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) is one of the oldest Islamist parties and movements in contemporary Muslim world. Its influence in shaping Pakistan's constitutional identity, Islamization process and democratic history has been significant enough, recognized and well

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[1] Ph.D. Scholar at Qurtuba University of Science & Information Technology, Peshawar
[2] Hubert H. Humphrey fellowship in public policy, Hubert H. Humphery school of public affairs, University of Minnesota, USA

researched (Nasr, 1994; Khan, 2014; Moten, 2003; Hartung, 2013; Nasr 1996; Nasr, 2001; Amin H. , 2016; Jackson, 2011). The founder of JIP Maulana Sayed Abul Ala Maudoodi (Maudoodi) influenced the thoughts and activism of many Muslims and leaders of Islamist movements (Jackson 2011). The Al-Khidmat Foundation Pakistan (AKFP), established by JIP, has been widely acclaimed for its relief, rehabilitation and other welfare services (Banu, 2009). The party is also perceived to be disciplined, cadred and organized (Malik I. , 2010; Malik A. , 2011), and untainted by corruption (Husain, 2018). Despite these attributes, there is little support for the party (Bajpai, 2011) and the party has a limited social base (Rais, 2017). While over the years JIP has lost ground to other parties in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Mardan, it has traditionally won all elections in Upper Dir and Lower Dir, except when it boycotted the elections or when it lost one odd constituency. But even in these districts JIP lost all but only one Provincial Assembly (PA) constituency in the 2018 general elections. One significant phenomenon observed was that several influential people left JIP at the critical point when general elections 2018 were ahead and the party could not afford desertions. This study seeks to analyze the dynamics of such desertions and their impact on the electoral performance of JIP in 2018.

Research Questions
i. Why desertions of influential people from JIP took place prior to 2018 general elections in Upper Dir and Lower Dir?
ii. Why couldn't such desertions be averted under the circumstances?
iii. How the phenomenon of desertions impacted the electoral performance of JIP in the two districts?

Objectives of the Study
The study specifically seeks to serve the following aims and objectives.

i. Highlighting the causes that led to the desertions of several influential persons from JIP in the lead upto the general elections 2018.
ii. Assessing the impact of these desertions on the electoral outcome for JIP.
iii. Ascertaining why such desertions could not be averted.

Literature Review
As (Nasr S. V., Ahya-e-Islam Aur Siasi Amal, 2013) As

There is sizable literature on JIP. Scholars have dilated on different aspects of JIP, from its founder Maudoodi to its ideology, organization, role and contribution to state and society in Pakistan, as well as its electoral trajectory. Ahmed (2012) and Jalal (2008) have dilated on JIP's role in the Afghan-Soviet war while Haqqani (2005) has discussed the party's role Kashmiri resistance movement. Banu (2009) deals with the welfare work that JIP has been rendering. In his exhaustive research works on JIP, Nasr (1996; 2001; 1994; & 2013) has extensively discussed several dimensions of the party, underscoring the reasons for its inability to succeed in electoral politics. Calling JIP hierarchical Islamist party, Khan (2014) observes that as incumbent, the party's political calculations and strategies are "driven by political expediency rather than by ideology" (p.149). Haqqani (2005) calls JIP as cadre-based and "the most well organized and internationally visible political party" (pp.26-27) but its followers have remained small. Amina Jamal finds that "elections continue to suggest that the majority of voters in Pakistan vote on the basis of linguistic or ethnic affiliation and practical interest" (Jamal, 2013, p.289). Moten (2003) believes that JIP has transformed beyond its original identity over the years in its vying for popular support. Afridi, Ullah, & Gul (2016) find that during its electoral politics from 1987 to 2009 JIP has moved from ideological politics towards social justice oriented politics. However, several writers have pointed out issues that plague JIP's ability to achieve its goals, including electoral success. Some of the faultlines in JIP highlighted by writers include lack of adequate accountability (Yusaf, 2020; Butt, 2013) dearth of quality leadership (Ansari, 2013; Butt, 2013), boycotting elections (Ansari, 2013; Chishti, 2013), politics of alliance (Hamid, 2013; Muhammad, 2015), aversion to criticism and public debate (Amin, 2013; Ansari, 2013; Butt, 2013), over-indulgence in politics at the cost of ideological work (Hamid, 2013; Amin 2013; Ansari, 2013), limited appeal and access to the masses (Ansari, 2013; Hamid, 2013; Nasr, 2013), and rigid organizational structure (Amin 2013; Butt, 2013). There is, however, not much work that focusses on the impact of the intra-party rifts on JIP's electoral performance in general elections 2018 with special reference to its stronghold constituencies in Upper Dir and Lower Dir. With this fact in hindsight, the instant study seeks to fill up the gap in existing literature on JIP.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study epistemologically grounded in interpretivist /constructivist worldview that posits that reality is socially constructed and construed (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Howell, 2009), and as such the researcher relies on the participants' view of the

phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative study is more suitable for interpretative analysis (Peters, 2013). As a qualitative study, addressing the "how" and "why" questions, it focuses on examination and explanation of a phenomenon through description of the context in light of the personal observations of the respondents who remained involved in the events, processes, and the organization of JIP. The choice of Upper Dir and Lower Dir as well as sample was purposively made because, as Creswell (2009) observes, in qualitative research sites and participants are purposively selected to help understand the phenomenon and address research questions. The two districts were considered JIP's strongholds where the party previously won many elections but lost all but one PA constituency in 2018. Population sampling is based on three consideration, as suggested by Ritchie, Lewis & Elam (2003): first, centrality of the subpopulation to the issue under study; second, the population's ability to provide rich relevant information; third, additional sub-populations holding different views to bring supporting or divergent insights. With these considerations in view, the sample for this study comprises a total of ten individuals, eight male and two female, from the two districts who remained either party office bearers at district level (viz. Presidents or General Secretary) or who remained party candidate in national, provincial or local elections. Because of their strategic location (Gerson & Horowitz (2002) party leaders have first-hand knowledge about the dynamics of the party's electoral politics and can "accurately describe…what happened and why" (LaPorte, 1975, p.185). The respondents were interviewed using interview schedule as "in-depth personal interviews with elite members are a widely used method" (Semenova, 2018, p. 75). The data generated through interviews was then transcribed in MS Word, and thematically analyzed using MS Excel. Themes and patterns were identified and the link among them, finding answers relevant to the research questions as suggested by Willig (2014). Following Creswell's (2009) suggestion, the data so collected in the field was lent support from secondary data, chiefly published works on JIP and data of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Analysis

Barring elections that JIP boycotted or rare cases when one odd of its candidates lost election, JIP has been a dominant party in Upper Dir and Lower Dir, winning almost every general election since 1970. The ECP data shows that JIP won the NA constituencies from these districts in 1970, 1977, 1985, 1988, 1992, 2002, and 2013 general elections, losing only once in 1990 (ECP, 2018). Similarly, all its PA

candidates also won in previous elections barring a few cases where the party either did not field its own candidates or lost, such as PF-75 and PF 76 in 1985, PF-73 in 1988 and 1990 (ECP, 1994), and PK-97 in 2013 (ECP, 2018). In general elections 2002 and 2013 JIP made a clean sweep in Lower Dir and Upper Dir in all except one PA constituency of PK-97 Lower Dir (ECP, 2013; ECP, 2002). In 2018, however, it was JIP that was cleanly swept by other parties, leaving JIP with success in only one constituency of PK-12 Upper Dir. The fact that JIP used to win so convincingly in previous elections and lost so comprehensively in general elections 2018 is indeed both intriguing as well as worth examination to understand the dynamics of this complete reversal of fortunes for the party. Previously, neither the populism of Bhutto in the seventies nor that of Imran Khan in 2013 could defeat JIP in these districts, but in 2018 the party lost to Awami National Party (ANP), Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI). What actually wrought this unprecedented defeat for JIP in the two districts in 2018 calls for an in-depth study.

The party leaders interviewed for this study shared their views, perceptions and feelings about the process and dynamics of elections in 2018 in Upper Dir and Lower Dir. They also dilated on JIP's internal issues, trends, and events prior to the 2018 elections. These responses provided significant insights about the way JIP performed in the elections. From the role of establishment to the role of media, youth and unprecedented number of women voters in 2018, different accounts were given of the way election results came about. To quote an MPA of JIP, "The 2018 elections were the worst kind of elections in Pakistan. These elections witnessed the worst kind of engineering; rigging has taken place in them; management of these elections has also taken place." In the words of a senior member of JIP, "Using media or other things for pre-election rigging or post-election rigging or rigging in ballot box, all these things have taken place". Many JIP leaders admitted that while JIP did not have the resources to use mainstream media, it also could not utilize social media to its advantage as much as PTI and other parties did, despite the fact that JIP has a social media team. They also cited women and youth as key factors that contributed to the defeat of the party candidates.

An important phenomenon observed and reported by majority of the respondents was the desertions of party local leaders from JIP. These desertions from JIP took place while political parties were gearing up for the elections and needed unity and team work. Responses of the participants suggested that with JIP's two terms in office since 2002 several influential and ambitious individuals within the party had developed the urge to vie for share in the power.

Resultantly, a tug-of-war ensued in which too many were vying for too few positions. In the ensuring struggle for power share, groupings, lobbying's, pressure tactics and other practices were resorted to. In the process, the ideals and virtues of Islamist ideology got dominated by pragmatic rational choice considerations. A District Amir observed, "There are rifts; different interest groups have emerged; there are lobbies; and they have proper rivalries among them. That thing created our disaster…. in 2018 it increased a lot." According to a losing candidate of JIP who previously remained Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) said:

> To an extent there were lobbying, grouping and internal rifts because the criteria for becoming a member of JIP is relaxed then such people come into JIP who come either because of relation (*Rishta*), or comradery (*Malgartia*), so that my support base increases. This lobbying is done so that when these persons become members then their support will be with me in securing an office (*Uhda*).

A former local leader of JIP who also remained MPA claimed, "*Amir-e-Zillah* (District President of JIP), or the *Tehsil Amir* (Tehsil level President of JIP), they are recruiting people to create vote for themselves…. Now lobbying is in process". Previously there was accountability within JIP against such activities and conduct which was found against the party constitution. However, now accountability has grown weaker due to which such acts have increased. In the words of a JIP District General Secretary, "Lobbying and campaigning have crept into JIP. It is coming from the last eight or ten years and gradually its speed is increasing. And the main reason for this rising speed is that JIP does not take quick action". Convincing for intra-party elections and positions is strictly prohibited in the constitution of JIP (JIP, 2020). A District *Amir* referred to the the moral decline among the party members resulting in acts not allowed in the constitution, "our *Arkans* are also not of that standard. There is proper convincing for seeking office; a lot more things happen in this, which are totally against the basic spirit of JIP". "Previously, people would not vie for offices and candidature, now people do lobbying for it and try to come forward. And these things are there in other parties as well," a senior party leader observed.

According to an MPA of JIP, "there were rifts among our own people; several people left us and joined other parties; they contested elections from there; a large number of people went away from JIP with such deserters". JIP leaders observed that one key reason for these rifts was the award of party tickets to certain individuals to the dismay of many senior party members. Several party leaders at the local level

were strongly opposed to the nomination of Sahibzada Tariqullah for NA-7, of Malik Azam Khan for PK-11, of Muzaffar Said from PK-15, of Dr. Zakirullah Khan for PK-14, of Shad Nawaz Khan for PK-13, of Saeed Gul from PK-17, to name but a few. In some constituencies even the dissenting voices fielded candidates against JIP's nominated candidates (Dawn, 2018; TheNews International, 2018). In the words of a losing candidate and former MPA of JIP, "you might be aware that in every constituency another colleague (from JIP) had submitted nomination papers". It was observed by a senior JIP leader that "Here due to ministries and membership, some differences emerged and those differences came up in election; they thought that this a solid vote and whoever gets the ticket will be elected, so why should not I become member instead of this other guy." Referring to a former JIP MPA who was disqualified for his fake degree, a senior member of the party observed that the party lost two PA constituencies and one NA constituency in Upper Dir because of this one guy. Several senior members resented that the son of the same guy has been awarded ticket by the party. The *Farzand-e-Osherai* movement, seeking to vote only candidate from Osherai valley, not the candidate from Kohistan (viz. JIP's Muhammad Ali), was a calculated pressure tactic from a former MPA to secure party ticket for his man. Under duress, the party leaders had to appease the JIP members who were behind *Farzand-e-Osherai* in lieu of withdrawing nomination papers.

A district senior office bearer opined that people left the party because "they think for their own forward movement, so the principles of JIP are then trampled. We have not trained people." With the example of Haji Hidayatullah of Jandool Lower Dir in hindsight, he lamented that the party failed to accommodate even individuals who had rendered services for decades, and resultantly they went to other parties to try their luck. This lack of accommodation was also pointed out by a former minister of JIP, "The second category (of deserters) comprises those who did not get the political space in JIP. They wanted to contest election from here (JIP) and wanted to play leadership role but they did not get the space, and they looked for space in some other political party."

Some notable local leaders and supporters of JIP who deserted the party or contested against its candidates in general elections 2018 in Upper and Lower Dir include Sahibzada Sibghatullah, Malik Hayat Khan, Syed Inayat-ur-Rahman, Mr. Gul Sher, Dr. Sarbiland Khan, Maulana Aziz-ul-Haq alias *"Sharbanai Mula"* and Syed Iftikhar Shah. Each one of these individuals took with them a large number of voters causing serious dint in JIP's vote bank, and crippling its ability to retain the constituencies it had been wining in earlier elections. Of these,

perhaps the two most prominent cases are of Sahibzada Sibghatullah and Malik Hayat Khan, both from Upper Dir. Their association with JIP spanned over decades. They remained active members of Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba and subsequently remained associated with JIP. Sahibzada Sibghatullah's father, Sahibzada Safiullah, is largely credited with establishing JIP in Dir on strong footing since the days the party was launched in the district. Yet Sibghatullah could not find space in the party under the dominating influence of Sahibzada Tariqullah. His opportunity arrived in 2018 when he contested elections from NA-7 Upper Dir as PTI candidate and defeated JIP's Sahibzada Tariqullah by a margin of 8347 votes (ECP, 2018). The second case is that of Malik Hayat Khan who left JIP and joined Pakistan Muslim League before general elections 2018. He had twice been elected as MPA from JIP but was distraught at the decision of JIP to allot party ticket for PK-11 to Malik Azam Khan. Malik Hayat secured 4467 votes (ECP, 2018) in general elections and became the single most important cause of defeat of JIP's candidate. Again, as in case of PK-10, in PK 11 also the desertion of a JIP long-time supporter caused not only the defeat of JIP's candidate for PA but also contributed to the defeat of the party's candidate for NA constituency. As vindicated by the participants, the vote of JIP that went away from JIP with Malik Hayat's departure was one huge factor contributing to the defeat of JIP's candidate for NA-5 Sahibzada Tariqullah. A senior office bearer of JIP admitted that JIP voters were divided between two candidates from same family, not only in PK-11 where two cousins, namely Malik Hayat and Malik Azam were contesting but also in NA-7 where two cousins namely Sibghatullah and Tariqullah were in contest.

Among the other deserters, the ANP candidate from PK-10 Upper Dir Mr. Gul Sher was previously a longtime supporter of JIP but left the party in 2018 and contested elections against JIP's Muhammad Ali. He secured 5230 votes (ECP, 2018) causing the defeat of JIP in this constituency. His vote also seriously harmed JIP's candidate Sahibzada Tariqullah for NA-5. In 2013 ANP had got 4262 votes (ECP, 2013) from NA-33 Upper Dir but in 2018 it got 8557 votes (ECP, 2018), partly due to the desertion of Mr. Gul Sher from JIP to ANP before general elections 2018. In Lower Dir, the JIP leaders confirmed that Mr. Azizul Haq had remained a long-time supporter of the current Amir JIP Mr. Siraj-ul-Haq in his constituency in Lower Dir and was also heading the *Ittihad-ul-Ulema* (Alliance of Religious Scholars) at the District level. Yet in general elections 2018, appealing mainly to his *Mashwani* tribal affiliates, he contested against JIP's candidate Mr. Saeed Gul and contributed to the latter's defeat. Another person Syed Iftikhar Shah, who previously used to vote JIP, stood as a candidate in

97

general elections 2018 from PK-17 Lower Dir, securing 1427 votes (ECP, 2018) and together with the vote of Aziz-ul-Haq dampened the chances of the victory of JIP's candidate. Another longtime activist of JIP Dr. Sar Biland Khan also left the party and joined PTI to contest against JIP's Izaz Ul Mulk from PK-16. He secured 11988 votes and, although failed to win, contributed to the defeat of JIP's candidate in the constituency. His departure also created a dint in the vote bank of Mr. Siraj-ul-Haq, JIP's candidate for NA-5 Lower Dir.

Participants observed that there were many cases where even though several influential elements associated with JIP did not desert the party and did not contest elections, but became inactive and did not lend any support to the JIP candidates during the election in 2018. They had their own reasons for not supporting the party candidates. One losing candidate of JIP who also remained MPA shared his experience of how a day or two before the elections he had to visit such influential and longtime activists of JIP, beseeching them to abandon their apathy and contribute to the election campaign. In the case of PK-14, there were several party members and supporters who were disappointed that the party awarded ticket to Dr. Zakirullah Khan who had earlier left JIP and joined the party back only before general elections 2018. In PK-13 again, several influential old workers and supporters of JIP were highly resentful at the award of party ticket to Mr. Shad Nawaz Khan, a relatively less prominent name compared to many old timers. Many respondents admitted that as a result of this situation, a number of ideologically committed and longtime activists of JIP got despondent and preferred to stay on the sidelines rather than participate in the party's election campaign. These trends among the leaders, supporters and activists of JIP rendered the prospects of success for JIP's candidates bleak. However, the exact quantification of the effect of this phenomenon is difficult.

The implications of party desertion adversely impacted JIP's position vis-à-vis its competitors. Although not exhaustive, the table below highlights how defections of influential party activists and supporters alone impacted the electoral results of JIP's candidates in Upper Dir and Lower Dir in general elections 2018.

Constituency	JIP Candidate	Loss Margin	Votes secured by Dissidents	Dissident Candidate	Party of Dissident
NA-5	Tariqullah	8347	66654	Mr. Sibghatullah	PTI
PK-11	Malik Azam	4418	4467	Mr. Hayat Khan	PMLN
PK-17	Mr. Saeed Gul	4036	2200	Mr. Aziz-ul-Haq	Independent
			1427	Sayed Iftikhar Shah	AAT
PK-16	Mr. Izaz Ul Mulk	2720	11988	Mr. Sar Biland Khan	PTI
PK-10	Muhammad Ali	1477	5230	Mr. Gul Sher	ANP
PK-15	Mr. Muzaffar Said	4595	631	Mr. Inayat-ur-Rahman	PMLN

Calculations and compilations based on ECP data. Different reasons contributed to the party's inability to manage the phenomenon of party desertions within time before the elections. One main reason was the deficit of quality leadership that could timely intervene and tactfully resolve the rifts. With regard to resolving the disputes leading to desertions, a senior party leader observed that the provincial and central party leadership should have at least sorted these issues out themselves, if they were not decided as suggested by the local leadership. Timely decisions were not taken due to lack of decision-making quality in incumbent leadership. Below par leadership had trickle-down effect "leadership hierarchy below him gets useless and ineffective," observed a senior party leader. While the higher party leadership did not solve the problems itself, the local leadership also found itself helpless, given the party's hierarchical chain of command. A District level leader pointed out that "still problems exists with regard to our leadership, there are great many hardships, and they are not of the level of the District (leadership) to solve." A former MPA observed that he does not see the kind of leadership which is required. Existing literature (Butt, 2013; Ansari, 2013; Amin, 2013) also highlights leadership quality as one lingering constraint of JIP.

Participants also pointed out issues of space for potential aspirants who perceive that powers and benefits are appropriated only by some individuals to the exclusion of others. A sense of over-confidence and misleading sense of invincibility was also cited to have inhibited leadership from adopting a more reconciliatory handling and accommodation of those influential elements who ultimately left the party. In the words of a district Amir, "One major thing in 2018 was that our victory in the 2013 elections got the better of us. Then we won the 2015 Local Government elections, which gave us a false sense of confidence that we are now there (as an established power); now we are invincible". Participants also cited the rise of urge for power among activists due to decline of pristine quality of character and inadequate training. Together these reasons account for the party's inability to manage the tricky issue of party desertions which in turn culminated in JIP's worst electoral defeat in Upper Dir and Lower Dir in 2018 elections.

Majority of the participants concurred that while all is still not lost for JIP in Upper Dir and Lower Dir, the party will have to make efforts to set its house in order to regain its lost ground in the next elections. The kind of serious organizational vulnaribilties experienced by JIP in 2018 require matching strategies and leadership skills to cope with new and often conflicting pressures (Bolleyer, 2013, p. 25). Although the party's response comes in shape of new attitudes, rules,

procedures, or structures (Miles et al, 2014), change is not easy. Change is inhibited by several factors, including selective perception and ideological barriers, "despite the shock of successive electoral defeats" (Norris & Lovenduski, 2004, p.97). Several party leaders agreed that change process in JIP is a highly challenging task, beyond the capacity of the incumbent leadership. The JIP's post 2018 election initiatives stipulated in its Long Term Strategy 2020-33 and Action Plan 2020 (Jamat-e-Islami, 2020a; Jamat-e-Islamic Pakistan, 2020) are neither specific to the two Districts nor transformational enough. Although incremental in nature, the stipulated measures, if implemented, offer some hope for the party's future prospects in Upper Dir and Lower Dir.

Conclusion

The defeat of all but one candidate of JIP in general elections 2018 in its two stronghold districts of Upper Dir and Lower Dir was quite unprecedented and intriguing for the party. Based on the interviews of the party leaders, both present and those who deserted the party before general elections 2018, and data of ECP, this study examined the dynamics and impact of desertions of local influential people on the electoral performance of JIP in these districts in 2018. The participants cited various reasons for the party's poor performance, including electoral engineering, role of media, youth and women voters. However, the data of ECP lent strength to the observations of the participants that internal rifts and the resulting desertions and despondency of several local party leaders and supporters contributed to the defeat of JIP candidates. Several factors contributed to this process including dearth of quality leadership, the surge of urges for power among aspirants, the lack of space to accommodate potential leaders and claimants, and a false sense of invincibility. The study concludes that although change is not easy, JIP needs to translate its envisioned initiatives in its Long Term Strategy and Action Plan to be able to regain the lost constituencies of Upper Dir and Lower Dir in the future elections.

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