



Discourse Analysis of Religious (Islamic) Scholars on Democracy

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ABSTRACT

For decades, a global debate has persisted on the relationship between Islam and democracy. Does Islam hinder modern democracy? Could democratically elected Islamic governments become a threat to democracy? These questions remain central to discussions on the compatibility of Islamic values and democratic principles. This study focuses on a discourse analysis of religious (Islamic) scholars to examine the correlation between Islam and modern democracy. It explores the roots of disagreements among Sunni Islamic scholars regarding the compatibility of Islam with democracy and seeks ways to harmonize Islamic values with democratic principles for societal well-being. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with scholars from Sunni schools of thought, along with political scholars and religio-political experts, using a thematic method for analysis. The research has significant implications for educators, students, academics, and policymakers, particularly in Pakistan. It provides insights into how Islamic values can coexist with democracy and offers guidance for enhancing both the democratic system and educational policies.

Keywords: Islam, Democracy, Religio-political scholars, Political scholars, Islamic scholars, Clerics, Sunni understanding of Islam, Nizam-e-Ghair or Nizam-e-Kufr.

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to analyze the discourse of Islamic scholars on democracy to

understand the correlation between Islam and modern democracy. It explores whether Islam poses an obstacle to modern democracy and the potential threat of democratically elected governments transitioning into theocratic Islamic governments. The research addresses the ongoing debate surrounding the relationship between Islam and democracy and provides a framework for examining the experiences of Islamic societies in this context. It aims to understand the disagreements among Islamic scholars regarding the compatibility of Islam and democracy, and to find ways to ensure the coexistence of Islamic values and democratic principles for the betterment of society.

Religion serves multiple functions, providing meaning, social harmony, well-being, and motivation for social change. However, it can also foster contentment with poverty, reinforce traditional gender roles, and exhibit intolerance towards differing beliefs (University of Minnesota). The relationship between democracy and religion is complex. Democracy thrives on pluralism, while religion emphasizes individualism. Democracy accommodates diverse perspectives and seeks compromise, whereas religion is grounded in divine authority. Issues arise when democratic principles or human rights are violated in the name of religion, or when political systems restrict religious freedom and conscience. Balancing the two requires careful consideration to ensure a harmonious coexistence (de Puig, 1998).

Religion and democracy both emphasize equality and inclusion within society. For democracy to thrive, it is essential for women to have equal participation. Both democracy and religion share the objective of promoting the welfare of the population. Democracy aims to fulfill the desires of individuals who seek freedom and peaceful coexistence in their homeland, while religion provides established guidelines for harmonious living within a society. If a liberal government or democracy fails to achieve these objectives, it becomes ineffective, same is the case with religion (Chikelue, 2019). Religious beliefs, rooted in traditional values, can create resistance to representative government. However, they also foster societal capital through institutional trust and public commitment, positively influencing democratic support (Bloom & Arikan, 2013).

One side of scholars claim that Islam is fundamentally incompatible with democracy due to theological reasons, as it contradicts the concept of God's sovereignty. However, opponents of this argument argue that a proper interpretation of Islam is indeed compatible with democracy, with some conservatives sharing this view (O. Voll, 2007).

The core concepts of Islam, such as Tawhid, khilafat, and Akhirat, are not inherently anti-democratic. Islamic principles such as justice, consultation, equality, consensus, tolerance, and accountability align with the ideals of democracy. Islam encompasses not only religious aspects but also addresses human survival and governance. Democracy, on the other hand, is a system of governance unrelated to religious belief. When comparing Islam and democracy, democracy is seen as a means or method rather than an ultimate goal. In this context, democracy does not oppose or contradict Islam. The foundations of Islam, apart from its belief in supremacy, promote democracy and diversity, emphasizing struggle, dialogue, acceptance,

fairness, legal systems, public security, justice, obedience, responsibility, tolerance, and harmony. Its influence on democracy is emphasized in the Qur'an. Its chapter is called "Consultation" (Shura).

The Quran declares that those who are close to God include those who "solve their problems through mutual consultation (Shura)." (Qur'an42:38).

This expression may be interpreted to refer only to consultations between selected scholars (ulamas), advisers, or ministers. However, the verse itself contains no such restrictions (Nazrul Islam & Saidul Islam, 2017).

In fact, for the majority of the world, "democracy is the only surviving cause of political validity that has evolved from a form of government to a way of life". The question of the correlation amidst Islam and liberal government (democracy) has been raised by politicians and scholars. This question cannot be consciously answered within the limited conceptual framework of the ancient standard form (O. Voll, 2007). Most advanced states globally practice democracy, while Muslim countries, comprising a significant portion of the world's population, predominantly lacks democratic systems. These countries, primarily located in Africa and Asia, often exhibit social incompetence, economic instability, and autocratic governance. Islam, as the dominant religion in these societies, influences not only sacred and spiritual aspects but also social, political, and traditional behaviors. Muslims perceive Islam as a comprehensive system encompassing concepts, values, beliefs, prescribed rites, standards, and ethical guidelines (Nazrul Islam & Saidul Islam, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

In Peshawar, various perceptions exist among Islamic scholars about the compatibility of democracy with Islam. Some believe democracy aligns with Islamic teachings and actively engage in politics, while others consider it entirely un-Islamic or Anti-Islamic, referring to it as Nizam-e-Ghair or Nizam-e-Kufr. Some scholars propose that modifying the concept of democracy could make it compatible with Islamic teachings, referring to it as Islamic democracy. This paper will sort out the point of differences amongst the different interpretations of Islamic religious scholars, by delving into the following major questions;

1. Why do Islamic Religious Scholars have differing viewpoints on democracy?
2. Why the interpretations of Islamic scholars on democracy varied despite Islam being unified?
3. What is the correlation between Islam and modern democracy?
4. How can a balance be achieved between upholding Islamic values and promoting democratic principles?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Democracy has No Room in Islam (or Democracy is Nizam-e-Kufr)

Some Islamic scholars oppose the inclusion of democracy in Islam, arguing that Sharia should be the sole legislative source. They assert that democratic principles may conflict with Islamic values and lead to the adoption of contradictory laws. However,

this viewpoint is not universally shared among Islamic scholars.

After Pakistan's establishment, many religious scholars and leaders supported it as an Islamic Republic with a democratic form of government. However, some religious thinkers expressed dissatisfaction and viewed democracy as incompatible with Islam, labeling it as an anti-Islamic or Kufriya system (Israr Madani, 2021). Islam does not align with the concept of democracy, which involves nationwide elections and majority-based decision-making. Certain scholars resist accepting Islamic teachings and defend democracy as a hard-earned system that should not be challenged. However, this form of democracy lacks knowledge and bears no connection to Islam (ilahi). A government that denies the sovereignty of Allah and the supremacy of Sharia law, instead claiming that power rests with the people and the law is determined collectively, is considered a non-Islamic government. It cannot be classified as an Islamic government (idrees kandehlavi, 2010).

Modern democracy and Islam are fundamentally incompatible. The notion of a "government of the people for the people" in democracy is an illusion, and any attempt to merge it with Islam is deceptive. Islam and democracy are two opposing concepts that cannot be reconciled or combined (ludyanuvi, 1989). The Islamic Shariah Council system and present democracy are fundamentally different. Democracy, a Western concept, is unrelated to the Islamic council system. Referring to democracy as "Islamic democracy" is akin to calling something "Islamic wine" (F. Muhammad). Maulana Sufi Muhammad of the TNSM movement vehemently opposes democracy, despite his own past involvement in the district council. In a speech to a large audience in Mingora on April 19, 2009, he boldly stated that democracy, elections, high courts, supreme courts, and attorneys are incompatible with Islam. He argued that Islam does not support democratic principles or election processes, contradicting the beliefs of certain political and religious groups. Sufi Muhammad further contended that democracies promote equality among Muslims, non-Muslims, men, and women, which goes against Sharia teachings. (Iqbal Khan, 2010).

Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian Islamic theologian and writer who is considered one of the key ideologues of the Muslim Brotherhood. In his book "Milestones," Qutb criticized democracy as a Western concept that was incompatible with Islamic principles. He argued that the only legitimate source of law and governance in Islam is the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Qutb, 1964). There is no room for this infidel system (democratic government and governance) in Islam, nor can the Islamic system come in this way till the day of judgment (Ahmad Ludyanuvi, 1977). This democracy does not exist anywhere in Islam, nor can a savant person imagine good inside it (Al-hassan Gangohi, 2012). Such a democratic empire (government) which is a mixture of Muslim and kafir members (non-Muslim), it became kafa empire (i.e., non-Muslim government) (Democracy, in the eyes of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, 2018).

Conservative Muslim thinkers in the Islamic world argue that Islam and democracy are antithetical, firstly because according to Islam's concept of absolute supremacy of God, the concept of popular sovereignty in democracy runs counter to its basic principles. Second, according to Islam, laws were established by God, divine

law and Shariah, could not be changed by an elected assembly. And thirdly, the perception of parliament as a sovereign body was seen as blasphemous (O. Voll, 2007). According to Kalim Siddiqui, nationalism is the primary political kufr [unbelief] of the contemporary world, followed by democratization (people sovereignty), socialism or collective ownership (autocracy of the proletariat), laissez-faire or capitalism, and “unrestricted will”. It is the parcel of Kufr that includes political structures based on one or more of these beliefs, sentiments, or philosophies (O. Voll, 2007).

Mufti Zarwali Khan of Karachi challenges the Urdu translation of democracy, stating that it is incorrectly rendered as “Jamhoriyat,” which implies “majority.” According to him, the word is derived from Arabic word “Jamhara,” meaning “shining grains of sand.” Therefore, the majority’s desires are not necessarily decisive; rather, decisions should be made by knowledgeable individuals with insight, resulting in benefits for the majority (khan, 2020). Dr. Israr Ahmad argues that democracy, based on human and popular sovereignty, represents the greatest rebellion in Islamic history against God. His argument is based on Qur’anic verse 2:38, which states that those who follow God’s guidance will not fear or be saddened by it (ahmad, 2018). Dr. Manzoor Mangal criticizes democracy for equating the wise with the foolish, emphasizing that societal change cannot be achieved solely through the majority’s opinion. He argues that democracy primarily emphasizes the votes and opinions of the majority, making it difficult to bring about positive transformations. Instead, he suggests that change should be guided by the opinions of knowledgeable and insightful scholars. He stems his argument from Qur’anic verses; (Quran 39:9) Are those who have knowledge the same as those who don’t? Only intelligent people (people of understanding) should take note (mangel, 2022).

Islamic and Western scholars hold contrasting views on the compatibility of democracy and Islam. Some Western scholars, including Fukuyama, Pipes, Lewis, and Huntington, argue that Islam and democracy are incompatible. In contrast, scholars such as Halliday, Eickelman, Piscatori, Esposito, Voll, and Entelis acknowledge that democracy and Islam can coexist harmoniously (Nazrul Islam & Saidul Islam, 2017).

Concept of Democracy is in Accordance to Islam

Some Islamic scholars argue that democracy is compatible with Islam, asserting that it can align with Islamic principles. According to Maulana Fazlur Rehman, head of a religious political party Jamiat ul Ulama Islam, since General Zia-ul-Haq imposed martial law, the nation has struggled to uphold and strengthen democracy (“Fighting for Democracy,” 2022). Certain Muslim scholars argue that democracy aligns with Islamic principles, viewing it as a modern form of consultation, a concept rooted in the Qur’an. They cite verses like (Qur’an 42:38), “And [conduct] their affairs by counsel among themselves,” and (Qur’an 3:159), “And take counsel from them in matters of importance,” to support their stance. These scholars believe that voting in a democracy serves as a contemporary method of consultation, reflecting the essence of Islamic teachings on governance (Maaz-ul-qirani).

According to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, democracy reflects the true image of the government advocated by Islam, as seen during the time of the Prophet of Islam and his successors. However, this system was not maintained over time, and Muslims

were influenced by the myths of glorious empires such as the Roman, Eastern, and Iranian Empires, leading them to desire autocratic rule. Regardless, it is the duty of every Muslim to demand the establishment of a democratic government, even if it is purely Islamic in nature. Any deviation towards personal rule or a few rulers forming a bureaucratic system should be considered unjust, prompting a call for change. Islam introduced a unique and comprehensive system of government that laid the groundwork for a legal, democratic structure. It emphasized public rights, formulated laws governing finance, domestic affairs, and administration, and promoted justice while eliminating personal rule and discrimination. Islam also advocated for decision-making through mutual consultation, exemplified by the Majlis Shura held in Masjid Nabawi, where both special members and general Muslims participated. Hazrat Umar (R.A.) further institutionalized these assemblies, consistently seeking their counsel. The Farooqi era is replete with instances of ordinary Muslims exercising their right to voice objections, a testament to the consultative nature of governance during that period (Azad, 2017).

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi argues that democracy is not incompatible with Islam. He highlights Islam's emphasis on consultation and consensus-building, citing the Prophet Muhammad's practice of seeking opinions from his companions. While acknowledging potential conflicts, such as the issue of sovereignty, Ghamidi suggests that reconciliation and compromise can resolve them. He further asserts that Islam promotes democratic values, as the Holy Qur'an mandates consultation among citizens. Ghamidi maintains that any flaws in implementation can be identified and addressed without undermining the core concept (Ahmad Ghamidi, 2014). Modern Muslim intellectuals widely endorse and assert that Islam not only supports but also laid the groundwork for democracy. Eminent figures such as Allama Iqbal, Maududi, and Wahiduddin Khan actively advocate for this perspective, solidifying the Islamic backing of democratic principles (Israr Madani, 2021). Maulana Zahid al-Rashidi asserts that in Islam, it is incorrect to claim that the opinion of the common people holds no significance. He states that the Islamic government is actually founded on 'public opinion,' citing the example of Hazrat Abu Bakr's selection as the first Caliph. Most scholars discussing the caliphate agree that the initial caliph was chosen based on public opinion (Israr Madani, 2021).

Barrister Zafar Ullah Khan emphasizes the need for consultation to reform our political system. He highlights that a change in our political thought is essential for meaningful reform. The political system in Arabia during Prophet Muhammad's time was semi-tribal and semi-royal, while neighboring countries had hereditary and absolute monarchies. Islam transformed the Arab political system into a cooperative and consent-based system. The concept of people's sovereignty, existing in Islam for centuries, was later adopted by the Western world. However, this political process is yet to be fully implemented today. In many Islamic countries, rulers govern against the will of the people, supported either by claims of divine power or cultural and political influence (Khan, 2021).

According to Islamic analyst Khurshid Ahmad, Islam and democracy are inherently compatible, with no conflict between them. He suggests that

democratization and Islam go hand in hand, and the progress of democracy will ultimately lead to the realization of Islamic objectives (Parray, 2010). Islamic texts and traditions predominantly endorse democracy, promoting social fairness, economic welfare, tolerance, religious freedom, and peace. Islam does not hinder democracy but actively encourages and supports it (“Islam and Democracy with Special Reference to Pakistan,” 2019). It is important to note that nothing in the Quran and hadith opposes democracy. Those who perceive democracy as contradictory to the Quran and hadith either lack understanding or have ulterior motives that hinder societal progress (Qayum Hazarvi, 2013). Democracy, based on the principle of people’s sovereignty, is the most suitable system of government, with no alternative that offers the same level of organization and structure. While there may be some flaws that require addressing, it is the system that aligns closest with the command of Allah in the Quran (42:38), emphasizing the importance of conducting affairs through mutual consultation (Khalid Aribi, 2009). Riffa al-Tahtawi, a prominent Islamic thinker, supported the idea of incorporating elements from the Western enlightenment that aligned with Islamic Shariah principles (Nazrul Islam & Saidul Islam, 2017).

Islam’s governmental structure embodies democratic values, respecting individual and collective liberty, safeguarding lives and property, and promoting civic virtues. Egyptian author Ahmad Shawqi al-Fanjari highlights that the concept of liberty in Europe aligns with Islamic principles of right, fair treatment, equal status, and consultation (shura). Early Muslim works contain a compilation of democratic freedoms and rights, emphasizing justice, rights, and the country’s participation in shaping its future based on freedom and democracy. Although some philosophers disagree on the sovereignty of the people, they acknowledge that the spirit of the Islamic ruling system is democracy. Subsequent shura and the election of rulers should be based on the willingness and freedom of the Muslim majority. The Qur’an encourages peaceful resolution of differences (shurah) and grants the entire Muslim community the right to representation (khilafa) by an individual, party, or group (O. Voll, 2007). The Medina agreement, also known as the Medina Constitution, established a pattern set by Prophet Muhammad, showcasing the coexistence of democratic principles with an Islamic state. In 622 CE, Muhammad founded the first Islamic state in Yathrib after relocating from Mecca. Over a span of ten years, he served as both the political leader of Medina and the head of the Muslim Ummah. Through a tripartite agreement with Muslim immigrants from Mecca, native Muslims of Medina, and the Jewish community, he held political power (Smock, 2002).

By Some Amendments Democracy Became Islamic

Some Islamic scholars argue that democracy can be made compatible with Islamic principles through specific amendments. They stress the significance of incorporating Islamic values into democratic processes, asserting that Islam offers a comprehensive governance framework that can be seamlessly integrated into democratic systems. Renowned Pakistani cleric Muhammad Taqi argues that democracy contradicts Islamic teachings as it ascribes sovereignty to human beings, whereas in Islam, sovereignty belongs solely to “Almighty Allah.” However, if a ruling system adheres to Sharia and acknowledges Allah’s supremacy, it can be considered

Islamic democracy, wherein elected representatives act as vicegerents of Allah. Islam does not prescribe a specific form of government like khilafat, but a government adhering to certain principles can be deemed Islamic (usmani, 2022). Islamic democracy refers to a government formed based on the opinions of scholars, with the objective of seeking Allah's pleasure. In this system, Allah is the ultimate ruler, not the people or elected representatives. The Parliament does not possess the authority to modify Allah's explicit commands (G. Muhammad, 2022).

Sayyid Mawdudi, a Pakistani Islamic scholar and founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, criticized Western democracy in his book "The Islamic Law and Constitution." He argued for the sovereignty of God over the sovereignty of the people and advocated for Islamic law as the sole source of legislation, with the government's role being the enforcement of Islamic law (Maududi, 1955). Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a prominent Islamic scholar and former head of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, has expressed support for certain aspects of democracy but remains critical of Western-style democratic systems. In his book "The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam," Qaradawi contends that Islamic law should be the primary basis for legislation, suggesting limitations on democracy according to Islamic principles (al-Qaradawi, 1960).

Maududi did not outright oppose Western-style majority rule governance, despite his frequent criticism of it. Instead, he advocated for incorporating it within the framework of tawhid, where popular government would be governed and guided by God's law. This alternative perspective, which he termed "Theo-democracy," aimed to eliminate any conflicts between popular governance and Islam (Parray, 2010). According to a Fatwa by the esteemed Islamic institution, Darul Uloom Deoband, aspects of democracy align with Islamic principles, such as consultative government, power distribution, freedom of speech, and government accountability. Correcting elements contradictory to Islam would bring democracy closer to Islamic ideals, forming what can be termed as Islamic democracy (Deoband). In medieval civilizations, governmental authority lacked democracy. Monotheistic religions, with their patriarchal structures, supported the notion of divine guidance in human political systems, characterized by absolute rulers and hierarchical societies. Nonetheless, Islam possesses elements that can form the basis for an Islamic democracy theory (Enayat, 1982).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews, to explore the complex relationship between Islam and democracy, capturing participants' perspectives. A total of 12 individuals, including Islamic religious scholars, political scholars, and religion-political experts, were interviewed in person. The interviews, conducted in Pushtu and Urdu, lasted approximately 30-50 minutes each. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed promptly after.

Thematic analysis is employed to analyze interview transcript data in this study. Furthermore as the research is conducted in Peshawar (province of Pakistan), may limit the generalizability of findings to other regions. It focused primarily on the

Sunni interpretation and perception of Islam due to the majority Sunni population in Peshawar, potentially excluding other perspectives on the relationship between Islam and democracy.

Islamic Theology and Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination

The Islamic religious scholars were interviewed regarding the compatibility of Islam and democracy, the role of religion in politics, the relationship between Islamic principles and democratic practices, and the simultaneous adherence to both Islamic principles and democratic practices.

On the question regarding the differences in the viewpoints of Islamic religious scholars concerning democracy; some argue that democracy aligns with Islamic values, citing Quranic verses such as Surah Shura (42:38) and Surah al-Imran (3:159) which emphasize consultation and mutual decision-making.

Conversely, others believe democracy conflicts with Islamic teachings, referencing verses like Surah Ma'edha (5:44-45), Surah Nisa (4:65), and Surah Az-Zumar (39:9) that emphasize adherence to divine law and judgment. Hadith such as Sunan Abi Dawud (No. 4351), "whoever (first accept than) leaves Islam and adopts another religion, kill him", also reflect concerns about deviations from Islam. The differing viewpoints highlight the broad range of interpretations within Islamic thought regarding democracy's compatibility with Islamic principles.

On the question of compatibility, most Islamic scholars believe that democracy can be compatible with Islam if it adheres to Islamic principles, emphasizing justice, accountability, and consultation. They argue that democratic concepts should be contextualized within Islamic values and that Islamic institutions should guide the government and society.

However, some scholars view democracy as incompatible with Islam, citing challenges in reconciling democratic principles with Islamic teachings on sovereignty, individual freedoms, and social norms. They argue that democracy in Pakistan might lead to laws that conflict with Islamic values, prioritize individual rights over Islamic teachings, and potentially introduce secular ideologies that undermine the Islamic identity of the state and society.

On the role of religion in politics, some scholars have argued that religion, particularly Islamic principles, should guide political decision-making, others advocate for a clear separation between the religion and politics. It is important to carefully consider the implications and potential risks of integrating religion into politics, and to strike a balance that respects both religious values and democratic principles.

On the question of balancing the upholding of Islamic values and democratic principles in Pakistan. Some scholars argue that Islamic values and democratic principles are compatible, noting that Islam supports justice, equality, consultation, and rule of law—key elements of democracy. They suggest integrating Islamic values into a democratic system through social justice, equal rights, and economic development. Conversely, others prioritize Islamic values and advocate for an Islamic state governed by Sharia, viewing democracy as incompatible with Islam. They argue for implementing Islamic teachings in all governance aspects.

To balance these perspectives, scholars recommend that policymakers understand Islamic teachings while upholding democratic principles. This involves fostering inclusive governance that respects diverse viewpoints and aligns policies with Islamic values. Open dialogue among Islamic scholars, policymakers, civil society, and citizens is crucial for reaching a consensus and developing laws that reflect both Islamic values and democratic ideals. Transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to public needs are essential in this process.

Themes	Sub-themes	Descriptive codes	frq
Differences in viewpoint	Democracy concept existence in Islam.	Not present at all in Islam.	3
		Only in case of limited suffrage.	2
		Islam allow the existence of this system.	2
	Is democracy anti-Islamic?	Some of its components are Anti-Islamic.	2
		There is no conflict amongst it.	2
		Completely Anti and Un-Islamic.	2
	Viewing democracy as un-Islamic or disbelieving system.	There are Some reservations, but it still is not Nizam-i-kufar	3
		Completely Nizam-i-kufar.	1
		Democracy is completely an Islamic	1
		Western is Un-Islamic, while in our country it is Islamic	1
	Alternative ways of determining the ruler.	On which majority of the people agree.	2
		Islamic Shura (Consultative system)	3
		Government of Technocrats	1
	Possibilities of ruling without the people's consent.	People consent & trust are necessary	3
		Not necessary to take opinion of the people	2
People should try to remove peacefully		1	
Different interpretations	majority people's opinion and society transformation.	Change is Possible	6
	Freedom of choice	Freedom, but with certain limited	5
	Public interfere in government decisions	No freedom	1
	Democracy in Pakistan	Beneficial	2

	context.	Harmful	2
		Some reservations, but still beneficial	2
	Islam: specific system or principles priority?	Basic principles, not o system	4
		Caliphate , also some rules	1
		Any system, doesn't oppose Islamic teachings	1
	Islam: power - individual or public?	Powers with Ruler, people had to obey	3
		Authority with Ruler, also bounded to Sura	2
		Powers with Ruler, people shouldn't be ignored	1
	Correlations amidst Islam and democracy	Democracy: modern Islamic Shura?	Not at all. Huge difference b/w them.
No conflict b/w the two.			2
Best alternative of Islamic Shura.			1
How can democracy be compatible with Islam?		Possibility is there, to make compatible.	3
		In accordance to Islamic teaching	2
		Compatibility is impossible	1
Democracy compatibility with Islam?		Huge conflict b/w the two	4
		Compatibility, with some reservations.	1
		No response	1
Closest Pol-Sys to Islam?		Democratic system	5
		Any system in accordance to Islamic teaching	1
Balancing the Islamic values and democratic principles		Islam & democracy balance in Pakistan?	All the stakeholders must aware of the Islamic teachings & democratic principles
	Not possible. Both are anti.		1
	More powers should be given to CII		1
	No response		1
	Major challenges to balance	Anti- national and anti-Islamic elements	4
		External factors	1
		No response	1

In interviews with political scholars, topics such as the compatibility of Islam

and democracy, the role of religious parties in democracy, balancing Islamic values with democratic principles, and challenges to democracy in Pakistan were discussed.

On the question of diverse interpretations of Islamic religious scholars regarding democracy in Pakistan. Political scholars view it as a positive factor that fosters inclusivity and enriches intellectual discourse. While these varying interpretations can enhance democratic dialogue, they may also present challenges, potentially impeding consensus and progress.

On the question of compatibility between Islam and democracy, scholars generally agree that democratic principles align with Islamic values to a significant extent. They emphasize that while Islamic teachings influence democratic practices, both systems can coexist without needing to fully align the democratic process with Islamic laws. Ensuring public participation and incorporating diverse viewpoints are seen as essential for a balanced and representative democratic framework.

Opinions on the role of religious parties in democracy are mixed. Some scholars argue that these parties are crucial for advancing democratic values, while others believe their involvement can undermine democratic progress by exploiting religious sentiments for political gain. Despite differing views, there is consensus that religious parties play a significant role in engaging with democratic processes. Furthermore, challenges to democracy in Pakistan include corruption, political unawareness, violence, extremism, and weak institutions, compounded by external influences such as historical Western support for dictatorial regimes. Addressing these internal and external factors is vital for sustainable democratic governance.

On the question of how to balance the upholding of Islamic values with the promotion of democratic principles, scholars suggest focusing on commonalities between the two, promoting dialogue and consensus-building, and emphasizing individual rights alongside social responsibility. They agree that strengthening institutions and fostering political stability are crucial for enhancing democracy and ensuring stability and security in Pakistan.

Themes	Sub-themes	Descriptive codes	frq
Different interpretations	Scholars' interpretations in democratic development	Lead to confusion of the people	1
		It's not a big issue	2
		Promotes diversity	1
	Impacts of religious parties on democracy	Development of democracy	2
		Affect the process	1
	Any positive role of religious parties		
		Role in the restoration of democracy	1
	Try to strengthen the system	2	
Correlations amidst Islam and democracy	Any compatibility	Compatible to large extent	2
		Somehow compatible	1
	Compatibility to what	Largely compatible	3

	extent?		
Role of Religious Political Parties	-ve impact of Islamic teachings on democracy	Different interpretations, adversely affect it	1
		Doesn't effect it	1
		Positive effects	1
Balancing the Islamic values & democratic principles	How the balance can be achieved?	Compatible, growth of on is the growth of another	2
		Through consultation	1
	Rise of extremism & terrorism	Misconceptions	2
		To some extent	1
Challenges to democracy in Pakistan	Major challenges to democracy	Intra institution clash	3
		Systematic and societal problems	3
		External threats	2

Religio-political experts were interviewed to gain insights on various aspects, including the interpretations of Islamic scholars on the compatibility of Islam and democracy, the role of Islamic principles within democracy, the balance between upholding Islamic values and promoting democratic principles, the intersection of the Islamic state and democratic principles, and the significance of the Council of Islamic Ideology in Pakistan.

Religio-political Experts view the varying interpretations of democracy by Islamic scholars in Pakistan influence their role in promoting or hindering democracy. While some scholars actively support and promote democracy, others criticize the Western model and seek to integrate Islamic teachings. Certain militant groups, however, undermine democracy through violence, though many religious groups contribute to the democratic process peacefully.

On the compatibility of Islam and democracy, religio-political experts suggest that they can coexist if key conditions are met: respecting the rule of law, promoting pluralism, and protecting minority rights. They advocate for constitutional reforms to align with Islamic teachings, supported by recommendations from the Council of Islamic Ideology. While minor flaws may exist, they argue that Pakistan's constitution is fundamentally Islamic and should be properly implemented.

Addressing the challenge of reconciling Islamic values with democratic principles in Pakistan requires collaboration between religious and political leaders. The Objectives Resolution and the Islamic Ideological Council (CII) are key initiatives aimed at balancing these aspects. The CII plays a pivotal role by influencing policy-making and offering recommendations that integrate democratic ideals with Islamic principles. By working with parliamentary committees, the CII helps shape a framework that promotes an Islamic democratic society focused on social welfare. This collaboration strives to achieve a balance between Islamic teachings and democratic governance in Pakistan.

Themes	Sub-themes	Descriptive codes	frq	
Different interpretations	Varying interpretations of democracy	Admired the democratic system; also have some reservations.	03	
		Pakistan's democracy is not completely Western style, its amended.	03	
		Differences are positive sign for the betterment of society.	02	
		Being part of Armed struggle, weakens democracy.	01	
	Scholars and leaders' role in Pakistan's democracy	Supporters and promoters of democracy.	03	
		Negative role, being part of armed struggle	01	
Correlations amidst Islam and democracy	Islamic state and democracy; coexist?	To some extent practicable in Pakistan.	03	
		Pure western style can't coexist.	02	
	Religion's role in Pakistan's politics?	Has role in politics, can influence it.	03	
		Can enhance the democratic practice.	02	
	Democracy and Islamic teaching; compatibility.	Pakistan's system & Islam; compatibility.	02	
		Reservations with Western style.	03	
	Democracy and Islam; compatibility, how?	By removing flaws, & to deal with reservations.	01	
		Need correct implementations & acceptance of Pakistan constitution.	02	
	Pakistan's constitution and Islam, any conflict?	Yes, it has. CII recommended some constitutional reforms.	02	
		Not at all, its apparently completely Islamic.	01	
	Balancing the Islamic values and democratic principles	Pakistani system and Islam; compatibility?	Supremacy of Islam.	02
			Anti-Islamic laws are unacceptable.	02
Islamic values and democracy, upholding?		Objective resolution + CII establishment.	02	
		Ensuring the complete lawmaking process	01	
Role of Council of Islamic ideology	Role of CII in betterment?	Recommendations + maintain Islamic powers and promotes democracy	03	
	Any suggestion of CII for the betterment?	Yes, recommended various policies.	03	
		Work as policy influencer.	01	

The study revealed a complex relationship between Islam and democracy in Pakistan, with most participants acknowledging compatibility between the two, citing shared principles such as justice, equality, and accountability. Democracy, they argued, is rooted in Islamic history, jurisprudence, and political philosophy. However, challenges like corruption, poverty, violence, and lack of awareness hinder its full realization in Pakistan. The study also highlighted how religious and sectarian conflicts have disrupted democratic processes, contributing to violent outcomes that weaken the democratic framework.

Additionally, the study emphasized the need to reconcile Islamic values with democratic principles by promoting pluralism, civic education, and democratic institutions while respecting Pakistan's Islamic heritage. Collaboration among government, civil society, religious leaders, and citizens is essential to fostering a balanced and inclusive society. Policy recommendations suggest that Pakistan's democratization should focus on maintaining a balance between religious and secular forces, promoting dialogue and tolerance, and addressing inequality to enhance political participation and create a more equitable society.

The Complex Relationship Between Islam and Democracy

Islamic scholars have varying views on the relationship between Islam and democracy, reflecting the tradition's acceptance of diverse interpretations. Some scholars believe that integrating Islamic values with democratic principles can harmonize justice, equality, and accountability within a democratic framework. They advocate for an "Islamic democracy" that adapts democratic practices to fit Islamic values and cultural contexts.

Conversely, other scholars caution against directly applying Western-style democracy in Islamic societies due to cultural and social differences. They suggest a partial adaptation of democratic practices that align with Islamic principles, aiming to balance democratic governance with Islamic values while avoiding conflicts and challenges.

The Role of the Council of Islamic Ideology

Religio-political experts in Pakistan have differing views on the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Some scholars support democracy but seek a system that integrates Islamic teachings rather than adopting a purely Western style. Meanwhile, certain religious groups face criticism for opposing democracy through violence, which contradicts peaceful coexistence and acceptance of diverse ideologies. Experts argue that the compatibility between Islam and democracy can be achieved by upholding the rule of law, promoting pluralism, safeguarding minority rights, and protecting fundamental human rights.

The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) plays a crucial role in bridging Islamic values with democratic principles in Pakistan. Collaborating with parliamentary committees, the CII influences policy-making by aligning democratic ideals with Islamic teachings. This approach includes constitutional reforms to integrate Islamic principles, alongside the correct implementation of the existing constitution. The goal

is to create a society that respects Islamic values while promoting democracy and the rule of law, fostering an Islamic democratic and welfare-oriented society in Pakistan.

Future Research Directions on Islam, Democracy, and Political Change in Pakistan

Future research could examine how diverse interpretations of Islamic scholars on democracy in Pakistan influence the nation's democratic development, determining whether these differences lead to political polarization or foster consensus. Studies could also explore the specific roles religious parties play in promoting democratic values, focusing on their internal dynamics, electoral strategies, and impact on the political landscape.

Additional research might analyze strategies to address challenges facing democracy in Pakistan, such as enhancing political awareness, combating extremism, and strengthening democratic institutions. Investigating external influences, including international support for dictatorial regimes, and examining how other countries balance Islamic values with democratic principles, could offer valuable insights for Pakistan's democratic evolution.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the relationship between Islam and democracy in Pakistan, emphasizing the compatibility of Islamic values—such as justice, equality, and moral accountability—with democratic processes. It argues that by prioritizing these core Islamic principles, democracy in Pakistan can be aligned with ethical Islamic values, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. While further progress is needed, this research provides an initial perspective on how Islam and democracy can coexist in Pakistani politics.

The study concludes that integrating Islamic values into democratic processes is essential for promoting inclusivity and equity. By recognizing the compatibility between Islam and democracy, Pakistan can build a robust democratic system that aligns with Islamic goals. Future research should further explore this intersection to deepen our understanding of these key aspects in shaping Pakistan's political landscape.

Recommendations

Balancing Islamic Values and Democratic Principles in Pakistan

Promoting open dialogue among scholars, policymakers, civil society, and citizens is vital for understanding the compatibility between Islam and democracy. Encouraging research on this intersection can help dispel misconceptions and foster a nuanced understanding of how Islamic principles and democratic practices can coexist.

Furthermore, adapting democratic practices to Pakistan's cultural and social context is essential. Principles like justice, equality, and consultation should align with democratic values while accommodating Islamic teachings without compromising core democratic ideals.

Likewise, balancing religion and politics requires respecting diverse beliefs while upholding pluralism and individual rights. Policymakers must find a middle ground that honors both Islamic values and democratic principles to create a just and

equitable society.

More importantly, education and awareness campaigns are crucial for promoting informed decision-making. Political awareness initiatives and educational programs should target policymakers, religious leaders, and the public to enhance understanding of both Islamic teachings and democratic principles.

Strengthening Democracy in Pakistan

Strengthening democracy in Pakistan requires promoting inclusivity, appreciating diverse interpretations of Islamic scholars on democracy, and fostering an environment where multiple perspectives are heard. Encouraging dialogue and consensus-building ensures that all segments of society feel represented. Addressing challenges such as corruption, weak institutions, and violence is key to enhancing democratic institutions through reforms, transparency, and capacity-building. Balancing Islamic values with democratic principles demands recognizing commonalities, respecting individual rights, and fostering cooperation among scholars and leaders. Moreover, addressing external influences is vital by advocating for international support of democratic principles and promoting political stability through cooperation among leaders and social cohesion efforts.

Strengthening Compatibility Between Islam and Democracy

Enhancing compatibility between Islam and democracy requires constitutional reforms that align with Islamic teachings. The Council of Islamic Ideology has recommended reforms that address existing gaps in the constitution, which should be carefully considered and implemented. A multi-faceted approach is necessary, involving collaboration between religious and political leaders to foster dialogue and mutual understanding, allowing Islamic values and democratic principles to coexist harmoniously.

Active participation of religious scholars and political leaders in the democratic process is crucial. Their peaceful engagement can promote inclusivity and representation while upholding Islamic values. The Council of Islamic Ideology plays a key role in shaping policies that merge democratic principles with Islamic teachings, and its recommendations should guide the establishment of an inclusive society where both Islamic values and democracy thrive.

Recommendations for Policymakers

Policymakers should focus on revising the constitution to better reflect Islamic values while preserving fundamental democratic principles. This process must involve diverse stakeholders to ensure that the rights and freedoms of all citizens are maintained. Strengthening civil society is equally important, as these organizations can advocate for political reform, human rights, and institutional accountability. Addressing sectarian tensions, which hinder democratic development, should be prioritized through initiatives that promote unity, social cohesion, and conflict resolution. Empowering local communities by decentralizing power to provinces and districts will also enhance democratic governance and allow for more inclusive decision-making.

Recommendations for Civil Society

Civil society has a critical role in promoting interfaith and intra-faith dialogue

to reduce prejudice and foster mutual understanding between different religious and sectarian groups. Strengthening collaboration and capacity-building among civil society organizations will enable them to effectively advocate for democratic values. Civil society should also play a key role in monitoring elections to ensure transparency and fairness, thus safeguarding democratic processes and promoting public trust in governance.

Recommendations for International Partners

International partners can play a significant role in supporting Pakistan's democratic journey by providing financial and technical support to promote interfaith dialogue and address sectarian tensions. Socioeconomic challenges, such as poverty and inequality, must be tackled through development initiatives that empower marginalized communities. Furthermore, international advocacy for human rights is essential to press the government to revise laws that restrict freedom of expression and other fundamental rights, contributing to a more inclusive and democratic society.

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