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Final Grant Report

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My doctoral research examined the decision-making behavior of Islamist parties within the Pakistani political system. In particular, it sought to explain how and why parties decide to support or oppose new *shariah* measures that may challenge the authority of the state. These parties, while relatively small in electoral terms, often hold outsized influence in shaping public debate on matters of religion, politics, and law; influencing mainstream parties; and providing political cover for groups which operate outside of democratic norms. Utilizing archival research and semi-structured interviews with religious and political leaders, this project built on the existing literature on Islamist parties, and sought to understand the internal and structural dynamics that condition their advocacy of specific Islamic legal measures.

The research posited three independent variables which were believed to underpin Islamist party decision-making: Ideological or theological beliefs (IV₁), constituent profile (IV₂), and party organization and leadership (IV₃). Building on these factors were three intervening variables: Linkage patterns between a party and its constituents (IntV₁), party susceptibility to pressure by *shariah* advocates (IntV₂), and party susceptibility state pressure (IntV₃). In brief, the research argued that key decisions by Islamists about whether or not to support an anti-state movement are often driven not by deep ideological factors, but by the structural dynamics of the parties themselves, and the ways in which they perceive their own vulnerabilities.

I took advantage of my generous AIPS Fellowship to gather primary source materials at the National Assembly, at party offices, and at academic institutions; and to conduct interviews in Islamabad and Lahore with a wide range of politicians, academics, and government officials. I was graciously hosted by International Islamic University in Islamabad (IIUI), as well as Pakistan's National Defence University (NDU), and presented lectures on a wide range of topics, including U.S.-Pakistan relations, regional issues, Islamic politics, research methodologies, and the role of religion in U.S. foreign policy. AIPS coordinated my visits in both Islamabad and Lahore, and provided invaluable support and advice.

Ultimately, I hope that this dissertation will fill an important lacunae regarding Pakistani political decision-making in general, and Islamist parties in particular. The research can be of value to scholars, in providing data—particularly on the Jamiat Ulama-e Islam (F), which was lacking—on party structure and behavior, as well as a conceptual framework for analyzing decision-making in environments in which violence is utilized for the purposes of political competition. In addition, policymakers can benefit from a more realistic analysis of the pressures that Islamist parties face in the Pakistani political system, and the ways in which they at times legitimize violence and undermine the authority of state institutions.