Anti-Americanism in Pakistan: A Study of Jamait -i- Ulama-i-Pakistan's political Role

During Gulf War I -1990-91

Dr. Zahid Ahmed

Assistant Professor-History Faculty of Multidisciplinary Studies National University of Medical Sciences Rawalpindi at-zahid.ahmed@numspak.edu.pk

Abstract

In the 20th century, which came to be known as "The American Century," the United States triumphed over communist ideology and emerged as the only superpower on earth in terms of technology, economics, military might, and social and cultural standards. The protracted Cold War had concluded in favor of the United States. Although, America and Pakistan have enjoyed amicable relations whenever American foreign policies were in line with the Pakistan's national interests especially during the Cold War era, however, America lost the zenith and popularity of its policies particularly when their foreign policies targeted the Muslim world including Pakistan. The current study focuses on Jamait-i-Ulama-i-Pakistan's strong anti-American stance as the nation's leading religio-political party in order to support Iraq and President Sadam Hussain during the Gulf War I (1990–1991), an event that was extremely significant on both a regional and global scale.

Key Words: Gulf War I, Sadam Hussain, Anti-Americanism, Pakistan, Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani, Jamait-i-Ulama-i-Pakistan

Introduction:

With the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2nd August 1990 the Persian Gulf became a theater of world tension and fear. President Ghulam Ishaq's declaration of a state of emergency in Pakistan underlined the extreme character of the situation. Besides the caretaker Prime Minister Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi declared that Pakistan could not condone the forceful occupation of one Muslim country by another. (Ziring, 1991) In response to the call of Saudi King, Pakistani government announced to send 5,000 men force to join contingents from other Muslim countries in the defense of the Holy places of Saudi Arabia. Elements of this force began arriving in Saudi Arabia in early September.

Islamabad insisting the troops would be deployed in strictly defensive positions. Prime Minister Jatoi visited Oman, Dubai and Qatar in late September to project Pakistan's staunch position in defense of the Gulf Sheikhdoms. He also used the occasion to urge Saddam Hussain to remove his forces from Kuwait. (Ziring, 1991). Earlier on 16, 17 and 18th June an international

(July-September)

Islamic Conference was held at Baghdad by the Ministry of *Auqaf* and Religious Affairs of Iraq. Round about 700 delegates of 70 Muslim countries from around the world attended the conference, which was organized to discuss the 'Jewish-Christian' alliance against the Muslim World. Maulana Noorani as the President of the World Islamic Mission was invited to the conference. On his arrival at the Baghdad international airport talking to the news persons Maulana Noorani proposed to have a combined Muslim block to defend the Muslim world against the conspiracy of Jews and Christians.

He was of the view that Saddam Hussain was successfully facing the Jews and the Christians and declared that the soil of Baghdad had given birth to another Salah ud Din Ayubi in the form of Saddam Hussain. Maulana Noorani presided over the first session of the conference while the last session was addressed by President Saddam Hussain. He made a very powerful speech highlighting the Zionist-American collaboration against the Islamic world. He brought the attention of the delegates towards the recent Jewish conference held in USA which declared his (Saddam's) government as a great threat to the world peace. Saddam Hussain revived his determination against Zionism and declared (on the behalf of those who attended the conference) that they were ready to face any conspiracy and an Israeli attack on any Islamic country would be considered an attack on whole of the Islamic world. (Ahwal, 1990)

Maulana Noorani who considered the Gulf Sheikhdoms as great supporter of the USA and a major hurdle in the way of Islamic revival around the world started mobilizing public opinion in favor of Saddam Hussain and against the Pakistani government decision to send troops in the Gulf war. Jamait –i- Ulama-i- Pakistan under the leadership of Maulana Noorani started its public support campaign in favour of Saddam Hussain in the first week of August from Lahore. When America and its allies started gathering their forces in the Persian Gulf for the upcoming first Gulf war against Iraq. Maulana Noorani along with other leaders of his party toured the country to gather support for Saddam Hussain and the people of Iraq.

As the Middle East was heading towards the First Gulf war, between American allies and Iraq, Pakistan had its second general elections after the end of the last military rule in the country and the restoration of democracy in 1988. During the October 1990 general elections, the Islami Jamhuri Itihad (IJI) secured a victory by obtaining 105 seats in the National Assembly. In contrast, the Pakistan Democratic Alliance (PDA) managed to capture only 45 seats. The MQM (Haqprast) and Awami National Party (ANP) secured 15 and 6 seats, respectively. Among the

remaining seats, 3 went to Jamait-i-Ulama-i-Pakistan (JUP) (Noorani), 2 each to Jamhoori Watan Party and Pakistan National Party, and 1 to Pakhtunkhawan Milli Party. Notable leaders such as Maulana Noorani, Asghar Khan, Wali Khan, Meraj Khalid, Nasrullah Khan, Fazal ur Rehman, Aftab Sherpao, Murtaza Bhutto, and Hafeez Pirzada experienced defeats in the elections. Maulana Noorani, in particular, lost both seats, NA-116 Multan and NA-190 Karachi. The JUP, PDA, and other parties accused the government of engaging in widespread rigging during the general elections. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1990) (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat,, 1990) (Ahwal, 1990) (PDA, 1990)

Securing a commanding majority, Nawaz Sharif, the President of IJI, was chosen as the Prime Minister with 153 votes, signifying a two-thirds majority in the Parliament. (Ziring, 1991) Apart from establishing a majority-based government at the central and Punjab levels, the IJI-led coalition government took office in the NWFP. However, in Sindh and Baluchistan, the IJI secured only a limited number of seats. The ability of the IJI to achieve this was partially attributed to the significant influence of the President, who was widely seen as a fervent supporter of the IJI (Waseem, 1992) Previously, on October 29th, a gathering of the JUP central committee took place in Lahore, chaired by Maulana Noorani. During the meeting, it was determined that the JUP would take its place on the opposition benches while committing to wholeheartedly cooperate with and support the government in its endeavors to implement an Islamic system in the country. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991) During an interview with the daily Jang London, Maulana Noorani emphasized that extensive rigging had taken place in the elections. However, he maintained that despite these irregularities, the democratic process should persist. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991)

The Gulf crisis took precedence as the top foreign issue for the new government. On November 19, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif traveled to Saudi Arabia, engaging in discussions with King Fahad and the Amir of Kuwait. During these meetings, he reaffirmed his government's stance against the aggression inflicted upon Kuwait by Iraq. Additionally, Nawaz Sharif announced the deployment of an additional 3000 Pakistani armed forces personnel to join the existing 2000 already stationed in Saudi Arabia. He also declared unequivocal support, assuring the Saudis of Pakistan's full commitment to the defense of their kingdom. (Ziring, 1991).

Maulana Noorani, advocating for a peaceful resolution to the Gulf crisis, suggested establishing a commission comprising representatives of the Muslim Umma. This commission would listen

to the perspectives of both parties involved, Iraq and Kuwait, and make a binding decision on the matter that both countries would be obligated to follow. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991)

[As] for most of [the] opposition groups in the Muslim world [including JUP] point in the crisis was the involvement of the United States. This led [them] to take up an anti- coalition stance. Religious concerns specially the deployment of non Muslims troops in the land of the Holy places for the first time since the time of the Prophet – were combined with the nationalist ones as the involvement of the West awakened deep-seated antipathy toward 'imperialist' intentions for the region. This combination was thrown into sharp focus by Iraq's linkage of the crisis with the Arab – Israeli conflict and its missile attacks on Israel. (Azzam, 1994)

Maulana Noorani objected to the presence of American and other non-Muslim forces in Hijaz (Saudi Arabia) and called for their immediate withdrawal. He argued that their presence posed a threat to the sanctity of the Holy places. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991) Speaking at a conference on the Gulf conflict organized by the World Islamic Mission in Karachi, Maulana Noorani commended President Saddam Hussein for challenging Israel, considering it a commendable effort. He expressed the belief that Jewish and Christian forces were conspiring against the Holy places, with American, Israeli, and Russian forces aligning against Iraq, reminiscent of the historical 'Crescent and Cross' conflict. Maulana Noorani urged all Muslims to pray for Saddam Hussein's success, lamenting the situation where a Mujahid (Saddam Hussein) was confronting the Jews while the Pakistani army was under the influence of America and Israel. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991)

Islamic conferences advocating for Iraq, as mentioned earlier, were counterbalanced by conferences held in Saudi Arabia supporting the coalition. The Mufti of Saudi Arabia went to the extent of asserting that even non-Muslims involved in the war were engaging in a jihad. (Azzam, 1994). Maulana Noorani embarked on a tour of the Punjab province alongside other leaders from his party. During this tour, he addressed various religious and political gatherings in different cities and towns, shedding light on the questionable role of the Saudi government in the Gulf conflict. He criticized the Saudi rulers for banning the celebration of Milad-i-Mustafa (the Holy Prophet's Birthday), stating that their actions had led to such humiliation by God Almighty that now Christmas was being celebrated by Christians in Hijaz. Maulana Noorani asserted that the immoral deeds of the Saudi rulers had resulted in the establishment of sex-free zones, along with the consumption of pork and liquor in Hijaz. He emphasized that the Saudi

government had already paid 49 billion US dollars to the American and Jewish armies as part of their salaries. Maulana Noorani highlighted that had this substantial amount been utilized to address the economic challenges of Muslims worldwide, the entire Muslim Ummah would have experienced prosperity. Besides his criticism "the Arab regimes in the coalition carried little respect among the people of the region at large. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, for example, was seeing as completely exposed as being a client of the United States." (Azzam, 1994) (Kechichian, 1986)

[Similarly]... the popular pro-Saddam sentiment that was found in many.... places were fueled by the distinct unpopularity of the Gulf monarchies. Ostentatiously wealthy and often arrogantly claiming that God had chosen them for special favor, the "Gulfis" have incurred the envy, and more often the enmity, of poorer Arabs and Muslims ...[They] have become widely synonymous with corruption, insincerity and licentious, un – Islamic conduct...[As] one observer typically commented, "We Muslims in China are twice as devout as the Saudi and Kuwait Sheikhs who spend their money in the brothels of Southeast Asia and Bahrain". (Piscatori, 1991)

Addressing to a reception held in honor of JUP Parliamentary leader Syed Hamid Saeed Kazmi, Maulana Noorani affirmed that the JUP intended to enlist former military personnel and Mujahideen for the Jihad against America and the defense of Baghdad Sharif, Harmain Sharifian, and Bait-ul-Muqadis. He announced that the supervision of JUP recruitment centers would be handled by Lt. General (R) K. M. Azhar and Maj. Gen. (R) M. H. Ansari. Criticizing the IJI government's role, Maulana Noorani expressed disapproval of its involvement in the Gulf conflict, asserting that it should have played an impartial and reconciliatory role between Iraq and Kuwait. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991) . Maulana Noorani's call for Jihad against America received a highly positive response from the general public. According to JUP sources, within just a few days of the announcement, approximately 25,000 volunteers had registered at various JUP recruitment centers. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991)

An International Islamic Conference, gathering around 2000 delegates from 20 countries worldwide to deliberate on the ongoing Gulf situation, took place in Baghdad. Maulana Noorani, in his capacity as the head of the World Islamic Mission, was extended an invitation to attend the conference. In his inaugural address, Saddam Hussein proclaimed that in the event of war, Iraq's first target would be Israel, referring to it as the "Um-ul-Maraik" (Mother of all wars). He

attributed the addition of "Allah-o-Akbar" (God is Great) to the Iraqi flag to underscore this stance. Saddam Hussein clarified that his preference was for peace, not war, emphasizing that achieving peace required resolving all issues in the Gulf region. He asserted that the primary concern in the region was the Israeli occupation of 'Al-Qudis.' Saddam Hussein called for Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights, Gaza, and areas of Jordan, along with a similar withdrawal by the United States from Hijaz. (Ahwal, 1991)

In his address, Maulana Noorani emphasized that it was a time of Jihad and a historic moment, urging all Muslims to actively participate. He declared that Pakistani Muslims were ready to join the Jihad, asserting their commitment to stand alongside their Iraqi brothers in case of war. Maulana Noorani emphasized a willingness to sacrifice lives and provide financial support to aid Iraq. He stated that for peace in the Gulf, America must withdraw its forces from Hijaz, and similarly, Israel should withdraw its forces from Al-Qudis and other occupied regions. (Ahwal, 1991). Following the US-led coalition's assault on Iraq on January 17th 1991, JUP, led by Maulana Noorani, initiated an active campaign in solidarity with Iraq and President Saddam Hussein. Jihad rallies and public gatherings were arranged nationwide, predominantly featuring addresses by Maulana Noorani and other key leaders of the party. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991)

Speaking at a significant Jihad rally in Lahore on January 26th, Maulana Noorani stated that these Jihad rallies and public gatherings were not driven by political motives but rather aimed at liberating Bait-ul-Muqadis from the Jew occupation (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991). Naming Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's 'peace mission' (Nida –i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991) as an 'American mission', he referred IJI as an 'Islamic American Alliance'. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991) He believed that the era of 'loose character and licentious' Muslim rulers would come to an end with the Gulf war. He asserted that Saddam Hussein was, in essence, waging a war for Islam and Pakistan, which explained the strong support from the people of Pakistan. He highlighted that the deployment of the Pakistan Army in Harmain Sharifain was not for the defense of these Holy places but rather for safeguarding the Saudi monarchy.

Maulana Noorani expressed hope that the Pakistani Army would refrain from firing upon their fellow Muslims. He urged the Pakistani government to declare its support for Iraq by withdrawing its forces from Saudi Arabia, where they were stationed alongside the American-led coalition forces. Other JUP leaders also delivered speeches at the rally. In his address, Gen.

(R) K. M. Azhar announced that a minimum of 200,000 volunteers had enrolled at various JUP recruitment centers to support Iraq. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991). In his endeavor to shield the innocent population of Iraq from the indiscriminate and intense aerial bombardment by the American coalition, Maulana Noorani dispatched telegrams to various world leaders, urging them to take action and prevent the American coalition from engaging in such actions. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991)

Under the guidance of Maulana Noorani, the JUP took a leading stance in strongly opposing not just the American coalition's assaults on Iraq but also the Pakistani government's choice to deploy its troops to Saudi Arabia. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991) It actively participated in the All Parties Conference (APC) convened on February 3rd in Lahore, with Prof. Shah Farid ul Haq (Senior Vice-President of the party) representing the JUP. During his address, he urged the government to align its foreign policy with public opinion. Emphasizing the party's stance, he called for the withdrawal of American forces from the Gulf region, asserting that Muslim countries should independently address the Kuwait issue.

The APC concluded by issuing a joint declaration that condemned the IJI government's approach to the Gulf crisis and criticized the aerial bombardment by the American coalition on the Iraqi people. The declaration appealed to the people of Pakistan to support their Iraqi brethren during this challenging period. Furthermore, the declaration demanded an immediate ceasefire in the Gulf war, simultaneous withdrawal of foreign forces (American coalition forces) from the Gulf region and Iraqi forces from Kuwait. It proposed the deployment of a force consisting of Islamic countries in the region, acceptable to both parties (Iraq and Kuwait), to permanently restore peace in the Gulf region. The declaration also called for the UNO's intervention for the permanent resolution of the Kashmir and Palestinian issues, along with a change in Pakistan's foreign policy to align with public opinion and foster friendly relations with neighbors and Islamic countries. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991)

Demonstration solidarity with Iraq and in protest against the American coalition forces, a nationwide general shutter-down strike took place on February 10th, following the appeal of the APC. Across the country, extensive public demonstrations were organized, with wholehearted participation from JUP workers and leadership. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991) (Ahwal, 1991). A notable aspect of these and other demonstrations, especially those arranged by the JUP, was the widespread showcasing of a picture depicting Maulana Noorani warmly interacting with

Saddam Hussein, expressing mutual respect and affection. (Noshahi) It evolved into a significant bond connecting the populations of Pakistan and Iraq.

It became an important source of attachment between the peoples of Pakistan and Iraq. Speaking at a large public gathering arranged by the APC in Karachi, Maulana Noorani conveyed that Saddam Hussein wasn't standing alone in this war, as Allah, His Prophet (Peace be upon him), and the Pakistani Muslims were standing by him. He expressed the opinion that the actions of the Arab Sheikhs had brought disgrace to Islam. (Nida-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991) (Ahwal, 1991) Likewise, Maulana Noorani spoke at numerous Jihad Conferences held in various cities of southern Punjab. These conferences were organized by his party and other Ahl-i-Sunnat organizations, including Anjuman-i-Tulaba-i-Islam (ATI), Anjuman-i-Nujaulanan-i-Islam, Jamaat-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat, and several local organizations. (Nida -i- Ahl-i- Sunnat, 1991). During a Jihad Conference in Dera Ghazi Khan, Maulana Noorani emphasized the deceptive role played by the Wahabis throughout Muslim history.

He criticized the Saudi rulers for inviting Christians and Jews (American Coalition forces) to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, instead of seeking assistance from the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Countries. (Nida –i- Ahl-i- Sunnat, 1991). In a similar manner, while addressing the annual convocation of Jamia Faridia Sahiwal, Maulana Noorani stated that the Saudi King Shah Fahad, by seeking assistance from the US coalition forces, demonstrated an inability to defend the Holy Kaaba. Consequently, Maulana Noorani argued that he had no right to remain in power. Maulana Noorani put forth the suggestion of establishing a World Muslim Council dedicated to the protection and defense of the Haramain Sharifain and the Bait-ul-Muqadis. Additionally, he urged that these sacred places should be designated as protected cities, following a model similar to Vatican City, in case of any war. (Nida-i- Ahl-i- Sunnat, 1991)

At the end of his Punjab tour (Nida-i- Ahl-i- Sunnat, 1991) on March 4th, Maulana Noorani held a press conference in Multan where he criticized the role of the IJI Government during the Gulf war. He expressed the opinion that the Pakistani Radio and Television's (PTV) conduct during the Gulf war was comparable, if not worse, than that of CNN. Maulana Noorani dismissed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's accusation that some religious and political parties had received foreign funds for supporting Iraq. He declared that instead of making such allegations, the government should have initiated judicial proceedings against the culprits.

Maulana Noorani challenged Nawaz Sharif to present any evidence against his party (JUP) in this matter.

He pointed out that allegations were made against Nawaz Sharif for receiving funds from the governments of Saudi Arabia and the UAE against PPP during the no-confidence motion in 1988 and in the elections of 1990. Maulana Noorani proposed the establishment of a Judicial Commission, headed by a Supreme Court Judge (either serving or retired), to investigate political parties and individuals receiving foreign funds. Those found guilty would be disqualified from contesting elections. (Nida-i- Ahl-i- Sunnat, 1991). During and after the Gulf War, Maulana Noorani and his party played a pivotal role not only in garnering public support for Iraq but also in assisting the Iraqi people. They established relief camps to collect goods such as clothing and medicine and recruited volunteers. Maulana Noorani reported a very positive public response to these efforts. By the end of February 1991, more than 2,000,000 volunteers had registered at various JUP recruitment centers. However, talks between the JUP leadership and the Iranian Government regarding the use of a land route via Iran to send these goods and volunteers to Iraq did not materialize, as Iran refused to allow its land route to be utilized for this purpose. Conversely, feeling the pressure of public support for Iraq, the Pakistani Government announced that it would not impose restrictions on any such initiatives. (Nida -i-Ahl-i- Sunnat, 1991)

In an address to JUP workers in Karachi, Maulana Noorani asserted that Muslim supporters, especially the rulers of Islamic countries, aligned with Jews and Christians (the American Coalition), were accountable for the Iraqi retreat in the war. He expressed the belief that had these Muslim entities supported Saddam Hussein, the state of Israel would not have existed on the world map. Further, emphasized the treacherous role of Iran against Iraq in this context (Nida –i- Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991). In his distinct Eid-ul-Fitar message, Maulana Noorani urged the people of Pakistan to observe the occasion with simplicity, keeping in mind their Iraqi brothers. He encouraged them to contribute donations to the JUP's account so that relief goods could be expeditiously sent to Iraq. (Nida –i- Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991)

Similarly, to express solidarity with the people of Iraq, Maulana Noorani visited the country and criticized both the UNO and the Muslim Ummah for their failure to assist the Iraqi people against the American coalition embargo. This critique was made despite the Iraqi Government's compliance with all UNO resolutions. (Nida –i- Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991) . The IJI

government faced severe criticism from Maulana Noorani for its Gulf policy. For example, he characterized Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's state visit to Kuwait, following the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from the country, as not in the interest of Pakistan but rather aimed at safeguarding American interests in the region. (Nida –i- Ahl-i-Sunnat, 1991)

Conclusion

The political landscape in Pakistan and reactions during the Gulf War I, were extremely anti-American. Maulana Noorani and the Jamait-i- Ulama-i-Pakistan were critical of the Pakistani government's involvement in the Gulf War, advocating for Iraq and condemning the American-led coalition's actions. They strongly opposed the presence of non-Muslim forces in Saudi Arabia, viewing it as a threat to Islamic sanctities. Their efforts included organizing Jihad rallies, recruiting volunteers, and establishing relief efforts to support Iraq, despite facing challenges such as Iran's refusal to allow passage for aid. Despite criticisms and disputes over foreign funding allegations, Maulana Noorani maintained a strong stance against the Gulf War and actively worked to support Iraq, emphasizing the need for Muslim unity and standing against imperialist forces. His positions on the Iraq conflict and his efforts to mobilize support for Iraq underscore his commitment to Islamic principles and global solidarity within the Muslim ummah. Maulana Noorani and the JUP's position resonated with public sentiment in Pakistan, and their actions were rooted in both religious and nationalist motivations, emphasizing solidarity with Iraq and opposing what they saw as Western imperialism in the region.

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