Religio-political Ideology: A Comparative Study of Pakistani Political Parties’ Manifestos

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ABSTRACT

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Manifestos of political parties are considered the roadmap of any political party to work for the well-being of the people and to persuade them to vote for that party. The present research critically analyses the religio-political elements present in the manifestos published during 2013-2018 of three Pakistani political parties (PTI, PML-N & JIP). The researchers have employed Dijk’s 2004, 2009 and Wodak 2001 analytical model to analyze the discourse of manifestos of PTI, PML-N & JIP. The levels of analysis include othering, lexicalization, allusion and authority. The research finds that these three political parties have associated religion with different social and political activities to do politics. The quantification of data in terms of religious representation highlights that PTI has made use of religious aspects 40 times, PML-N 214 times and JIP 236 times in their manifestos. Additionally, the research highlights that political manifestos are among the best sites for the investment of religio-political ideology.

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1. Introduction

Manifestos are regarded as campaigning tool of political parties in general elections to persuade the people (voters). They are the roadmaps of the political parties and by introducing their political manifestos. Different political parties do their best to win general consent. Manifestos are designed focusing on particular socio-political context of any country and attention is also paid to come up with some new policies in future for the benefit of general masses. Most often, it is observed that every political party tries to represent itself as positive other among other political parties. Another significant feature of political discourses is that they reveal what has been in the past and what could be
attractive for the people in future if they vote for left or right-wing parties. The role of context is of vital significance in the coinage of political manifestos. National ideology of any country is given central position in the manifestos. Similarly, the present research critically decodes representation of religious ideology in the manifestos of PTI, PML-N and JIP. Religion is most important factor of Pakistan's ideology and hence, the present research justifies its gap because it highlights how politics has been done in the name of religion through manifestos.

2. Works Already Done

Malghani, Akhtar & Farooqi (2019) conducted a research on the manifestos of 05 Pakistani political parties. These political parties whose manifestos have been critically analyzed were selected on the basis of IRI, (International Republican Institute) surveys which were conducted in August 2012, November 2012 and gallop (2013) survey conducted in February 2013, regarding the popularity of Pakistani political parties. Furthermore, the research under analysis is based on the triangulation theories, leading to the development of analytical framework. The data was analyzed on the basis of Van Dijk, Turner & Tajfel models. The research revealed that all the political parties used the discursive strategies like Propositional structures, Formal structures, Discourse forms and Syntax structures in their party manifestos in order to enhance the positive self and negative others' image. The research contends that different political parties manipulate the political discourses to position themselves among in-group & their opponents as out-group. This is a prominent feature of political discourse to persuade the masses through the ideologically loaded discourses.

Malghani & Shafiq (2019) evaluated the discursive functioning of parts of speech in political parties Manifestos, pertaining to the general election of 2013. The selected political parties were five in number namely, PML-N, PTI, PPP, PML-Q & MQM. The parties were selected on the basis of their popularity in Pakistan. It is a corpus based descriptive quantitative study of political discourses. The research illustrated that different political parties employed different discursive moves in their manifestos but the underlying purpose was same i.e. to persuade the people for vote.

Navaretta & Hansen’s (2020) research on political ideologies propagated through the discourses of manifestos and parliamentary speeches of two left-winged and two right-winged leaders highlighted that political discourses are highly loaded the data for the research was collected from the manifestos of political parties and the speeches delivered by the persons concerned in the parliament. The data was analyzed by applying content analysis and critical discourse analysis techniques quantitative findings were supplemented qualitatively. The study showed that some of the politicians uses such lexical items and politically coined terminology which become their linguistic identity. Hence, the research contended that political discourses are never ideology free.

Peterson’s (2020) research on Political Tolerance and role of religion highlighted that basic civil rights of individuals must be safeguarded through political agendas. It was to determine relationship between political and religious tolerance. The researcher devised Standard Model of Political Tolerance which highlighted personality traits and political tolerance in democratic societies. It also suggested that supposed group threats must be reduced and integrity of democratic norms should be observed. Moreover, the research highlighted the significance of Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy (CID) limitations. The research suggested that political discourses should be designed to reduce religious intolerance and difference of opinion should be given due weightage.

3. Research Questions:

The present study answers the following research questions.

3.1 Main Question:
How are religious ideologies propagated discursively through the manifestos of PTI, PML-N & JIP published during (2013)?

3.2 Sub Question:

How do these political parties vary from one another in propagating religio-political ideologies through their manifestos during 2013?

4. Research Methodology

The Methodological perspectives used in the present research have been devised by drawing upon Van Dijk (2009) and Wodak’s (2001) research models. The emerging analytical categories from the data (collected from the manifestos of PTI, PML-N & JIP parties about representation and propagation of religious contents). For this purpose, the researchers have sorted out religious contents from the manifestos which were published by these parties during the elections (2013). The prominent analytical categories of Dijk’s (2009) model include

- Context as mental model
- Context as model of social Communicative Situation
- Context models are culturally variables
- Context Control discourse Variation
- Othering

Whereas, Wodak (2001) deals with historical perspectives of discourses. She argues that discourses are deeply rooted in history and cannot be understood without having sound knowledge of history. The emerging analytical categories from the data about religious ideology include

- Allusion
- History as lesson
- Political discourse
- Knowledge as common ground component of contexts

These categories have been located and analysed in the following section.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 PTI’s Manifesto Analysis

Allusion is one of the significant devices of Dijk’s (2004) model which has been used in the present study to analyze the data. Here, in the manifesto of PTI regarding the representation of religio-political ideology which sees that there are number of references from Islamic history and here the manifesto clearly states that the vision of party and its leader to make Pakistan a modern Islamic Republic that advocates tolerance, moderation and freedom to practice the religion of one’s choice.

The manifesto of the mentioned contains references to make Pakistan a modern state based on Islamic values. In this way PTI represents itself positively because it is inclined in making Pakistan Islamic republic. This political discourse highlights that Islam never forbids modernity rather it believes that Islam is a most modern religion of the world.

Another significant feature of PTI’s manifesto about religious ideology is that it will allow every minority to observe its religious practices with complete freedom exactly following the footsteps of Prophet (PBUH). When he laid the foundation of republic state of Madina all the minorities were fully allowed to observe their religious rituals. Besides, this particular party believes in sovereignty of Allah and a bond of trust between the government and the people will prevail. It believes that no government can work without the proper participation from the people. It implies that PTI is fully determined togrant equal rights to the citizens including Muslim and non-Muslim because it fully believes that masses
are responsible for making any country strong and great.

Then we see the use of 1st person pronoun in the form of “Our Ideology” which means that  this ideology is all about unity, faith and discipline as has been propounded by the Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and same has been repeatedly addressed by various religious personalities including Prophet (PBUH).

Another important feature of religious ideology of PTI is justice to all. Which is one of the strongest features of the manifesto of this political party? The very name of the party “Tahreek-e-Insaf” (justice movement) implies that this party is meant for providing justice to the people which are again directly associated with the religious ideology. This is obvious from the history of Islam that during the reign of Prophet (PBUH) and the four Caliphs every individual whether rich or poor had full right to challenge any decision of the Prophet (PBUH) or Caliph. In this way the concept of power, unity and nationhood has been imparted. PTI claims through its manifesto that it is their goal that every individual in the state of Pakistan should enjoy complete religious freedom and equal chances to make progress. At the same time, it is obvious that no nation can make progress until or unless its institutions are fully active. The very first reference from the manifesto of PTI is to reform the judiciary system which is exactly in accordance with the teachings of Islam because without justice no country can make progress. It will set up judicial commission to provide justice to all. It implies that PTI is fully determined in bringing reforms in the society, by establishing justice systems, trust system, religious independence and equal opportunities for everyone to make progress in the Welfare State of Pakistan.

In addition the manifesto religious ideology claims that crimes cannot spread if there is proper system of accountability. The implied message is that in the past nothing like this was done. Another element about religion mentioned in the manifesto states that this party will do its best to bring positive reforms in the Madrasahs. The syllabi of Madrassahs will be revised and the students there will be taught religious syllabi along with scientific education to meet their spiritual and worldly needs in future. It will bring them at par with the students who get education in privileged schools. PTI will do its best to bring closer all the Islamic states to strengthen Muslims the world over. The discursive moves which have been used frequently in the manifesto are 1st person pronoun, actor description, metaphors, and lexicalization and number game to convey its religious ideology to the masses in a persuasive way and to win their consent and make them vote this party in the elections.

5.2 PML-N’s Manifesto Analysis

As far as propagation of religious ideology through the discourse of manifesto of PML-N party in concerned on page# 4 of manifesto published in 2013 there are several examples in this regard. Such as, Sovereignty and supremacy would be there and social justice will be maintained in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Similarly, national dignity, equality, fairness and justice would be there for every individual in the state of Pakistan. Another significant feature in this regard which is worth mentioning is the observance of principles of Islam. This implies that PML-N is fully determined in implementing Islamic values, religious tolerance and the spirit of bearing others as has been advised by the Prophet of Islam (PBUH). Another significant feature of the manifesto regarding the representation of religious ideology is that every possible attempt would be made to make Pakistan a modern Welfare State based on Islamic values. The discursive move of allusion based on religious history has also been used in the manifesto of this political party on page# 68. The reference from the Holy Quran has been cited which is as under:

“If you do judge, judge between them justly. Allah loves the just”. (Surat Al-Maida, 42)
The use of second person pronoun “you” is both inclusive and exclusive. It implies that every individual is bound to do justice and follow the principles of religion Islam. The citation of this particular verse selected from the Holy Quran implies that if PML-N is elected in the elections of 2013 their entire focus would be to bring healthy reforms. This is how, this party is trying to be prominent in terms of its religious ideology. Some of the verses regarding religious ideology have been mentioned here. For example Allah loves the just people as has been propagated through this verse. Similarly, on page# 73 we find some examples illustrating speedy and inexpensive justice for all. This is the sole motto of PML-N’s religious manifesto. Moreover, the manifesto of the party claims that no peace and harmony can be established in the country unless poor masses are provided with speedy and inexpensive justice. The page# 77 carries examples in this regard.

“May the curse of Allah be upon the briber, the bribe recipient, and the mediator between them”. (Hadith)

The saying of the Prophet (PBUH) mentioned above illustrates that no nation can make progress until every individual is held accountable for his/her deeds before law. The manifesto claims that this political party claims that it will do its best in observing Islamic code of conduct and would seek guidance from religious history to ensure progress in the country in all domains. In this regard social and human rights of individual will be safeguarded. Integrity and honest policies would prevail everywhere to make Pakistan a strong country based on religious foundations.

The overall impression which emerges after critically analyzing the manifesto of PML-N (2013) in terms of implementation of religious codes of conduct highlights that this party has attempted to single itself out by highlighting the significance of religious values. A complete harmony will be created between religion and modernity. This is how, different linguistic and stylistic devices have been used to propagate religious ideology through religio-political discourses in the manifesto of PML-N published in 2013.

5.3 JIP’s Manifesto ANALYSIS

Dijk (2009) argues that Political Discourses are replete with ideological stance. Every political party tries to manoeuvre the things by using different devices and reference either from the history or from the religion. As far as representation of religio-political ideology in the manifesto of JIP (2013) is concerned, there is a picture of Baitullah and underneath it a verse is written from Iqbal’s poetry: (Ek hu Muslin haram ki pasbaani k liye).

(The Muslims must be united to protect Baitullah)

The underlying ideology behind imprinting the picture of Khana Kaba or Baitullah and a verse from Iqbal’s poetry is that the sole aim of every Muslim is to be obedient to Allah’s will and his or her life should revolve around the teachings of the Quran and Allah. At the same time, Muslim unity all over the world has been stressed by the verse (Ek hu Muslim haram ki pasbaani k liye). All the Muslims of the world should be united to protect Baitullah. In order to support its stance this party has used the verse in the very beginning of its manifesto. A verse from Surah Nissa is also a continuity regarding the theme of Muslim unity. The translation of the verse is as under:

“Indeed, Allah commands you to render trust to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever hearing and seeing.” (58:4)
It implies that everybody must not be trusted. A Muslim should be skeptical enough to know whom to trust and whom not to trust. There are many political parties in Pakistan but JIP is the only religio-political party which is doing politics in the name of religion to help the people and to implement Islamic laws. Other parties are otherwise. Only this political party should be voted. Moreover, the semiotic (in the form of scale/Trazu) on the title page implies that the sole aim of this political party is to do justice (Adal). It is the duty of every Muslim and the public to select the people who are just and Allah likes those who do justice. Allah is ever hearing. People are persuaded that they should never feel that their each and everything is hidden from God. Rather the last part of verse stresses that Allah is everywhere and seeing whatever we do. On one hand people are persuaded to do justice and to select the good people which possibly are the member of this political party and on the other hand, they are threatened as well. Here is another example in this regard,

“If they gave you authority in the land, establish prayer and give zakah and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters.” (41:22)

As far as representation and propagation of Islamic ideology in the manifesto of JIP is concerned on the very first page of manifesto it is clearly written that peace and fundamental need of a society will be secured irrespective which province the people belong to. Similarly, here, in the manifesto of this political party it is written that religious terrorism will not be tolerated. It is the duty of state to protect mosques, shrines, markets and other such places of worship. At the same time, we find that no dictation will be received regarding the matter of religion from any outsider i.e. America and its cronies. The Implicature of the example under discussion is that America has been involved in doing religious terrorism in the state of Pakistan. This is how, she has been getting benefit by involving the innocent people of Pakistan in religious terrorism but no such things would be there, if this particular political party is elected in the upcoming elections. Moreover, the manifesto of JIP clearly states that the commandment of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) will be followed in true letter and spirit and no violation would be tolerated. Another example in this regard is as under:

“I do not ask of you any reward from thee; my reward is with Allah”.

Dijk (2004) argues that everything is said against something us-said and un-said are the real meanings. Same trick has been done here because the manufacturer of ideology detaches himself totally from the reward in this world rather his sole aim is to win the sympathy of the other people. He says that he will only ask for reward from Allah. This is another persuasive technique often used by the religio-political leaders to win sympathy and vote from the people by politicizing religious discourses. Another Quranic verse has been cited here to support the stance.

“Why do you say what you do not do?” (61:3).

Which is exactly in accordance with the previously mentioned verse that JIP’s leadership is not concerned in seeking any benefit from the people rather their sole concern is to please Allah. They will seek its reward only and only from Allah in this world and the hereafter. The implied message which is being propagated to the masses is that Pakistan cannot make progress unless JIP is elected in the elections. This is another persuasive technique usually employed in the religio-political discourses to win sympathies. Another important feature that has been highlighted in the manifesto is justice for all. At the end of the manifesto implied message of the leadership of this political party is that they are
thankful to Allah, who has granted them the opportunity to serve the people and they will continue serving the people if they are given chance. Their role model state would be state of Madina and they will do justice like the Caliphs of Islam and especially Hazrat Umar Bin Khattab did. The analysis of data reveals that JIP has made use of different discursive moves in the form of lexicalization, allusion and the use of different pronouns to make its stance more persuasive.

6. Conclusion

The present study was initiated to locate discursive construction of Religio-political ideology in the manifestos of PML-N, PTI and JIP. The data collected from the manifestos of these parties has been analyzed by applying Dijk and Wodak's analytical frameworks. The findings of the research highlight that manifestos of the selected political parties use discursive moves to propagate religio-political ideology. Politics has been done in various shades under the umbrella of religion. However, the frequency of occurrence of religio-political themes varies in the manifestos of the three political parties. The research contends that the frequency of religio-political articles in the manifestos of JIP is 236, in PML-N 214 and in PTI is 40 times. The higher ratio of religious articles in the manifesto of JIP implies that this party relies much on religion to gain power and same is the case with other two parties as well. However, PML-N associates economic progress with religion and PTI is more inclined towards modernization and establishing Pakistan exactly in accordance with the concept of Madina charter of democracy. This is how politics has been done in the name of religion through the discourses of manifestos.

References


