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THE EVOLUTION OF DEFECTION: HOW EIGHT DECADES OF IDEOLOGICAL FRACTURE AND POLITICAL REALIGNMENT SHAPED JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI PAKISTAN'S INTELLECTUAL LEGACY (1941–2025)

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Introduction:

Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan's political and intellectual journey reflects the enduring tension between revolutionary idealism and organizational rigidity. Across eighty-four years, successive generations of scholars, bureaucrats, activists, and reformists entered its fold seeking to build an Islamic moral order—only to leave disillusioned by internal autocracy, ideological stagnation, or shifting political realities. The following chronological account of forty key departures reveals the movement's structural paradoxes and traces the intellectual evolution of Islamic political thought in South Asia.

1940s–50s: Founding Schisms in Jamaat-e-Islami

The first intellectual rupture occurred even before Pakistan's birth, when **Ghulam Ahmad Parwez (1903–1985)**—then collaborating with Maulana Maududi in Lahore—broke away

before 1947. Rejecting the binding authority of Hadith, he advanced a Qur'an-centric rationalism that birthed the *Tolu-e-Islam* movement, establishing a modernist current opposed to traditional jurisprudence.

In 1942, **Manzoor Ahmad Nomani (1905–1997)**, a founding Na'ib Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, resigned over Maududi's attempt to reorganize Islam as a political ideology. Nomani instead joined the Tablighi Jamaat, representing the first spiritualist withdrawal from Jamaat's intellectualist activism.

By the mid-1940s, **Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1914–1999)**, a rising scholar of Nadwat-ul-Ulama in Lucknow, similarly withdrew, contending that Islam's revival required purification of hearts rather than capture of the state. His later writings, including *Muslims in the West*, solidified his legacy as an apolitical revivalist.

In 1948, **Amin Ahsan Islahi (1904–1997)** resigned following severe disagreements over organizational centralization. A Qur'anic exegete of extraordinary calibre, Islahi dedicated his life to *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, constructing a spiritually grounded and linguistically coherent theology that contrasted sharply with Maududi's legalistic framework.

Meanwhile, **Chaudhry Muhammad Ali (1905–1980)**, an early sympathizer, distanced himself in the early 1950s, favouring constitutional pragmatism over revolutionary confrontation. As Pakistan's Prime Minister (1955–56), his governance emphasized moderation—illustrating an early divergence between statecraft and ideological utopianism.

The Machhi Goth crisis of 1957 exposed Jamaat-e-Islami's first mass intellectual rebellion.

Abdul Ghaffar Hasan (1913–2007) departed, favouring gradual moral reformation over electoral struggle, and later became a prominent Salafi scholar in Faisalabad. **Irshad Ahmed Haqqani (1928–2010)** resigned the same year, going on to become one of Pakistan's most influential journalists, advocating for democracy and civil liberties. **Dr Israr Ahmad (1932–2010)** joined this exodus, condemning parliamentary participation as betrayal of Islamic revolution; his later formation of *Tanzeem-e-Islami* symbolized a return to Qur'anic activism rooted in moral transformation rather than politics.

These early defections—from Pervez's rationalism to Islahi's exegetical reform—revealed an essential fault line between spiritual renewal and political mobilization that would haunt the movement for decades.

The 1960s–1970s Exposed the Fragile Balance Between Ideological Purism and Political Engagement, Turning a Revolutionary Creed into a Contest for Relevance and Control

The 1960s opened with further fractures in philosophy and method. **Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925–2021)** left Jamaat-e-Islami Hind around 1962, declaring political confrontation incompatible with Islam's peaceful message. His subsequent works, such as *The Prophet of Peace*, reframed Islam as a faith of reason and reconciliation rather than revolution.

In Lahore, **Kausar Niazi (1934–1994)** was expelled in 1965 after accusing the party of authoritarianism. He soon joined Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party and became Minister for Religious Affairs—personifying Jamaat-e-Islami's transition from ideological purity to political pragmatism.

Around the same time, **Maulana Abdul Sattar Niazi (1915–2001)**, a traditionalist cleric from Punjab, opposed Maududi's modernist reconstruction of Islamic thought, preferring clerical authority to ideological innovation. His dissent revealed a deeper conflict between inherited orthodoxy and Islamist intellectualism.

Khurshid Ahmad (b. 1932), while remaining loyal to Maududi's vision, shifted focus by the late 1960s toward policy research and economic thought, founding the Institute of Policy Studies in Islamabad and the Islamic Foundation in Leicester. His transformation from party ideologue to policy intellectual mirrored the movement's gradual bureaucratization.

The Bhutto era of the 1970s saw increasing disillusionment. **Abdul Ghafoor Ahmed (1927–2011)**—a senior parliamentarian and signatory of the 1973 Constitution—resigned amid disputes over Jamaat's electoral strategy. His departure symbolized the tension between democratic engagement and moral absolutism.

The same decade witnessed internal academic rebellions. **Dr Rafiuddin Hashmi, Dr Rafiq Ahmad, and Dr Mubarak Ali** left Jamaat-affiliated institutions, protesting censorship and ideological conformity, and went on to enrich Pakistan's secular and reformist academia.

By the late 1970s, **Syed Asad Gilani (1935–2005)**, once a devoted ideologue, withdrew in protest over Jamaat-e-Islami's alignment with General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization agenda, condemning the regime's hypocrisy and the party's moral fatigue.

Finally, **Naeem Siddiqi (1916–2002)**, an early literary architect of the movement, gradually drifted away through the 1970s, formalizing his break in the 1990s. His *Tehreek-e-Islami Pakistan* sought to restore spiritual sincerity to political Islam, a call that found limited but lasting resonance.

Jamaat-e-Islami: From Vanguard to Factionalism

The 1980s transformed Jamaat-e-Islami from an ideologically coherent movement into a talent incubator for the state and society. **Maulana Manzoor Ahmad Chinioti (1931–2004)** left during this decade, spearheading anti-Ahmadi mobilizations that shifted focus from reformist activism to sectarian politics.

Meanwhile, a new generation of leaders trained through *Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (IJT)* began to diverge from their parent movement. **Muhammad Ali Durrani (b. 1960)** left in the mid-1980s, entering mainstream politics and later serving as Federal Information Minister under General Musharraf. **Hafiz Salman Butt (b. 1950s)** was expelled in the late 1980s for factionalism but continued civic activism independently.

In the same era, **Javed Hashmi (b. 1948)** transitioned from IJT president to a national democratic leader in the PML-N and PTI, embodying the move from Islamist idealism to pluralist politics. **Ahsan Iqbal (b. 1959)**, another IJT alumnus, left ideological politics for technocratic governance and became Planning Minister in successive PML-N governments.

Husain Haqqani (b. 1956) also departed during the 1980s, evolving from Islamist student leader to liberal diplomat and later Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.S.

Others followed similar trajectories: **Qamar Zaman Kaira (b. 1960)** entered the PPP, **Khawaja Saad Rafique (b. 1962)** joined the PML-N, and **Arif Alvi (b. 1949)** co-founded PTI and later became President of Pakistan. This dispersion of IJT-trained talent across parties diluted Jamaat-e-Islami's organizational monopoly but extended its intellectual influence into the state apparatus. During the 1990s, this generational migration accelerated. **Musadik Malik (b. 1959)**, **Asad Qaiser (b. 1969)**, **Ijaz Chaudhry (b. 1960s)**, and **Mian Mahmood-ur-Rasheed (b. 1954)** each transitioned from IJT activism to leadership roles in PTI and mainstream politics. **Saleem Safi (b. 1968)** and **Shahid Masood (b. 1965)** migrated to journalism and broadcast media, while **Wajihuddin Ahmed (b. 1938)** re-emerged as a jurist and PTI candidate.

The trend of internal dissent persisted in Karachi, where **Syed Abdul Rashid** and **Syed Sajid Naeem** resigned in the mid-1990s, citing lack of democracy and transparency—an early warning of bureaucratic stagnation.

Meanwhile, **Prof. Khurshid Nadeem (b. 1960s)** departed from Jamaat’s intellectual orbit in the 1990s to champion reasoned and pluralist Islam in print and broadcast, marking the rise of an independent reformist discourse.

Faith Reimagined and Militarized

The early 1990s also witnessed the most violent ideological mutation. **Sufi Muhammad (1933–2019)**, once part of Jamaat-e-Islami in Malakand, founded *Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM)* in 1992, promoting militant enforcement of Shariah. His movement’s eventual ban underscored how revolutionary frustration could evolve into militancy.

In contrast, **Dr Javed Ahmad Ghamidi (b. 1951)** seceded in the early 2000s, rejecting coercive enforcement of religion and establishing *Al-Mawrid* and *Daleel* to promote rationalist, ethics-based Islamic thought. His reformist philosophy resonated deeply with Pakistan’s urban middle class and diaspora communities.

Kashmir provided another front of fragmentation. **Syed Ali Shah Geelani (1929–2021)** and **Ashraf Sehrai (1944–2021)** left Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu & Kashmir in 2004 to form *Tehreek-e-Hurriyat*. Their departure symbolized a shift from Jamaat’s disciplined activism toward separatist mobilization under extreme state pressure.

Rewriting Jamaat’s Legacy: 2020s–2025

The most recent period demonstrates Jamaat-e-Islami’s fragmentation amid reform and moral protest. Under **Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman (b. 1973)**, internal polarization deepened between reformists promoting digital transparency and conservatives defending traditional command structures. His tenure (2023–2025) rejuvenated urban participation but alienated old-guard leaders.

Simultaneously, in Jammu and Kashmir, a generation of former Jamaat cadres turned toward legitimate democratic politics. **Dr Talat Majid**, **Sayyar Ahmad Reshi**, **Abdul Rehman Shalla**, **Shamim Ahmad Thokar**, and **Ghulam Mohammad Bhat** spearheaded the creation of the *Justice and Development Front (JDF)* between 2023 and 2025, transforming clandestine Islamist activism into lawful civic participation under intense state scrutiny.

This evolution reached its moral crescendo in September 2025, when **Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan (b. 1969)** resigned publicly, citing conscience, human rights, and judicial fairness. His resignation represented the culmination of a lineage of moral protest stretching from Ghulam Ahmad Parwez’s rationalist revolt in 1947 to the conscience-driven dissent of the twenty-first century.

From **Pervez’s Qur’an-rationalism** to **Mushtaq Ahmad Khan’s rights-based independence**, each departure replays a basic contradiction: a movement **too centralized to accommodate diversity yet too fissile to sustain strategic coherence**. The intellectual legacy of Jamaat-e-Islami now survives **beyond any single party—in think-tanks, universities, media, regional fronts (AJK/J&K), and reformist institutes** that inherited fragments of its original idealism and continue to reinterpret Islamic political thought for South Asia’s changing contexts.

The chronological pattern of these forty departures reveals an enduring dialectic at the heart of Jamaat-e-Islami’s history. Each generation’s exodus—whether rationalist, bureaucratic, populist, reformist, or moral—stemmed from the same contradiction: a movement too centralized to

accommodate intellectual diversity, yet too divided to maintain coherence. From Pervez's scriptural modernism to Ghamidi's rational reformism, from Nadwi's spirituality to Mushtaq Ahmad Khan's moral protest, Jamaat-e-Islami's influence now survives not within a single hierarchy but across an entire constellation of institutions, universities, think tanks, reformist movements, and political fronts that collectively redefine Islamic thought in contemporary South Asia.

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