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Author (s): Habib Ali Katohar
Mehran University of Engineering & Technology Shaheed
Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Campus Khairpur Mir's
habibalibaloch@muetkhp.edu.pk
Dr Siraj Ahmed soomro

Associate professor, Department of Pakistan studies Shah
Abdul Latif University Khairpur. siraj.soomro@salu.edu.pk

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Islamic Heritage as A Soft Power Tool: An Anthropological Analysis of The Influence of Islamic Heritage on the Changing Political Identity and Cultural Diplomacy of Pakistan

Habib Ali Katohar

Mehran University of Engineering & Technology Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto
Campus Khairpur Mir's

habibalibaloch@muetkhp.edu.pk

ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0800-8010>

Dr Siraj Ahmed soomro

Associate professor

Department of Pakistan studies Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur

siraj.soomro@salu.edu.pk

ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-7843-9675>

Abstract

The relationship between religion, national identity, and foreign policy has been a subject of widespread scholarly review, particularly in the context of Muslim-majority countries. Pakistan, as a state founded based on Islamic ideology, presents an exceptional case study in this regard. This research venture examines the influence of Islamic heritage on the changing political identity and cultural diplomacy of Pakistan. This study aims to fill this gap by adopting a multidisciplinary approach that combines historical and anthropological analysis. The findings suggest that Pakistan's Islamic heritage has been a significant factor in determining its political identity and cultural diplomacy. Still, the interpretation and application of this heritage have been the subject of continuing cooperation and debate. For instance, the country's foreign policy has dithered between a more assertive Islamic stance, exemplified by the Zia-ul-Haq regime's emphasis on Islamization, and a more pragmatic approach that seeks to balance religious and geopolitical

deliberations, as seen under the Musharraf administration's 'enlightened moderation' initiative.

Keywords: *Islamic Heritage; Soft Power; Political Identity; Cultural Diplomacy; Pakistan*

Introduction

In international relations, cultural heritage plays a dynamic role in the diplomatic realm among nations. From Greek city-states and the Roman Empire to the modern-day nation-state system, nations utilized their cultural heritages for diplomatic, political, and cultural ties. In this case, Pakistan is no exception. The creation of Pakistan in 1947 as a homeland for Muslims in British India was a pivotal moment in Islamic history that marked the establishment of a state based on Islamic principles and identity. The country's founding fathers planned Pakistan as a modern Islamic state that would maintain the values of social justice, equality, and religious freedom. Over the decades, Pakistan's Islamic heritage has progressed and overlapped with its political identity which has been determining the country's domestic policies and international relations. The recent developments and events, such as Pakistan's participation in international forums like the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the Islamic Summit, highlight the contemporary significance of Islamic heritage in determining the country's diplomatic engagements. Promoting Pakistani culture, including traditional music, art, and literature, as part of cultural diplomacy efforts, highlights the lasting influence of Islamic values on the country's soft power strategies. Additionally, the government's initiatives to preserve and promote Islamic heritage sites, such as the ancient city of 'Taxila' and the 'Badshahi Mosque' in Lahore, reflect a commitment to display Pakistan's rich Islamic legacy on the global stage.

The Islamic heritage of Pakistan is not only a source of national pride but also a defining aspect of the country's identity that has been influencing various facets of its society, politics, and diplomacy. The top Islamic heritage and cultural sites in Pakistan, such as the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, Sachal Sarmast, Baba Buleh Shah, Data Gunj Buksh, Faisal Mosques, Badshahi Mosques, and Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, serve as the tangible representation of the country's deep-rooted Islamic heritage. These sites hold religious significance symbolize the architectural and artistic achievements of Islamic civilization and signify Pakistan's cultural richness and diversity.

Furthermore, the emphasis on Islamic ideology in Pakistan has led to a strong romantic identification with Islamic culture that has been determining the country's arts, literature, architecture, and manners. The influence of Islamic heritage is evident in various cultural expressions, from traditional folk dances like the 'Bhangra', 'Jamalo', and 'Khatak' to musical forms like 'Ghazal' and

'*Qawwali*'. Pakistan's cultural landscape is enriched by its Islamic heritage, with art forms and traditions that have been passed down through generations. Moreover, the history of Islam in Pakistan, as explored in academic works and historical analyses, highlights the remnant of the religion in the region.¹

Moreover, the available academic knowledge on this topic has largely focused on the role of Islam in shaping Pakistan's domestic politics and social dynamics. However, there is a growing recognition of the need to explore the relation of religion, national identity, and international relations in the Pakistani context. The ongoing academic analysis relates to a self-motivated relationship between religion, nationalism, and foreign policy, with scholars examining how Pakistan's Islamic identity has influenced its regional and global engagement, from its role in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to its cultural diplomacy initiatives promoting Islamic art and heritage.

Therefore, this research venture examines the influence of Islamic heritage on the changing political identity and cultural diplomacy of Pakistan as the Islamic heritage of Pakistan is a multifaceted and integral part of the country's identity that has been swaying its cultural expressions, historical narratives, and societal values. The diverse range of Islamic heritage sites, cultural practices, and historical legacies in Pakistan underline the lasting impact of Islam on the country's political identity and cultural diplomacy.

Research Question

This research venture aims to explore Pakistan's rich Islamic heritage, its evolving political identity, and the country's engagement in cultural diplomacy. The study adopts a contextual analysis of anthropological dimensions to trace the religious, cultural, and historical factors that have shaped Pakistan's national narrative and its interactions with the global community. Therefore, the main research question of this research enterprise is to explore how the rich Islamic heritage of Pakistan has influenced the changing political identity and cultural diplomacy of the country, and what are the implications of this relationship from an anthropological perspective.

Research Methodology

The qualitative research approach is incorporated for the collection and analysis of data in this research venture. Since the study is based on the analysis and interpretation of secondary data, the choice of the qualitative method is obvious. Moreover, this research is primarily based on desk research. The data used in this paper consists of research journals, books, research articles, reports, and published

¹ Muhammad Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan: A History*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ; 2018).

interviews and surveys on the cultural heritage of Pakistan and its influence on the country's political identity and diplomatic maneuverability in the world.

Literature Review

The influence of Islamic heritage on Pakistan's political identity and cultural diplomacy is a dynamic field that needs an in-depth analysis of existing scholarly debates. This study reviews the academic analysis of (Iqbal 2021; Zubair 2022; Karamat 2019; Syed 2020; Malik 1999; Zubaida Zafar 2020; Bilal 2021; Philippon 2014).

Iqbal highlights the role of Islamic identity in shaping Pakistan's foreign policy, particularly with the Islamic world and major powers. Iqbal's analysis suggests that the power elite of Pakistan has managed to tread the foreign policy of Pakistan by exploiting the Islamic identity. He further adds that Pakistan's foreign policy is deeply influenced by its Islamic identity under the direction of its elite which has been impacting its ties with Muslim nations, India, Iran, and Israel, and guiding its responses to key events.²

This debate is further explored by Zubair who discusses the historical, social, and political factors that have contributed to the coexistence of religion and politics in Pakistan. His indispensable work provides an in-depth analysis of the historical and ongoing relationship between religion and politics in Pakistan and highlights the politicization of Islam during the Pakistan Movement and its continued influence on the country's political, constitutional, and legal spheres, with a focus on external and domestic factors promoting political Islam. Zubair argues that the state has used the instrument of religion at different times for different purposes in Pakistan's political and constitutional evolution since independence in 1947.³

Karamat adds to this by examining the connection between Islamic values and political legitimization, which has led to the politicization of religious identity and the rise of religious extremism.⁴ Karamat further discusses the integration of Islamic values into the country's policies, the role of Islamic political parties in Pakistan's politics, the challenges of religious extremism, and the need for cooperation between Islamic and other political parties to address religious extremism and safeguard Islamic identity and promote Islamic heritage as a part of foreign policy. She also emphasizes the impact of external powers on identity mobilization and the growing alliance between religious extremism and

² Hamid Iqbal, "Political Discourse Analysis of the Islamic Identity in Pakistan's Foreign Policy," *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* (2021).

³ Muhammad Zubair, Aamer Raza, and Saiful Islam, "The coexistence of religion and politics in Pakistan: an analysis of historical, social, and political factors," *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS)* (2022).

⁴ Sidra Karamat, Muhammad Riḍa Muẓaffar, and Ali Shan Shah, "The Politics of Religious Extremism in Pakistan: An Analysis," *Review of Economics and Development Studies* (2019).

government nationalism. Therefore, Karamat concludes with the view that Islamic political parties should cooperate on federal or provincial levels with national and local political parties to eliminate religious extremism in Pakistan and utilize Islamic heritage as a part of its diplomacy.

In response to these challenges, Syed et al. suggest that cultural diplomacy can be a powerful tool for reshaping Pakistan's international image by drawing on the country's rich archaeological, historical, and cultural heritage.⁵ Malik elucidates different aspects of political Islam, challenges dichotomous views, and addresses topical issues and their regional linkages. He argues that both the Islamic ruling elite and dissidents make great use of Islamic symbols to gain wider legitimacy across the globe.⁶

Zafar and Javaid provide a historical analysis of Islamization in Pakistan. They discuss the exploitation of religion in politics, the role of different parties and leadership, and the challenges in establishing a Democratic Islamic state. Their findings suggest that the vision of a democratic Islamic state has been waiting to be true for the last 72 years since its inception.⁷ On the other hand, Bilal explores the overemphasis on militarization, Shariat, and movements like the Taliban as representative of Islam in Pakistan, the lasting influence of Sufi dynamics on Pakistani Muslims, and the limited understanding of outsiders regarding the Sufi attributes of living Islam in the country. He argues that the general unfamiliarity of people outside the subcontinent with the Sufi attributes of living Islam limits their understanding of the land of Pakistan.⁸

Philippon further discusses this point and the role of Sufism in Pakistani Muslim symbolic politics, stressing its ambiguous nature, political utility, and significance in ideological debates surrounding Islam in the country, especially post 'War on Terror'. His analysis suggests that Sufism has often been tapped as a political resource by both state and non-state actors in Pakistani politics.⁹ The cited work

⁵ Areej Syed, Sohail Ahmad, and Muhammad Makkey Bhutta, "Cultural Diplomacy: A Tool for Pakistan's Positive Image Internationally," *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)* (2020).

⁶ Iftikhar Haider Malik, *Islam, Nationalism, and the West: Issues of Identity in Pakistan*, (Palgrave Macmillan; 1999).

⁷ Zubaida Zafar and Umbreen Javaid, "Religion and Politics in Pakistan: A Historical Analysis of Islamization," *Journal of History Culture and Art Research* (2020).

⁷ Muhammad Bilal, "The Politics of Popular Islam: An Ethnographic Exploration of Islamic Revivalism in Pakistan," *Politics and Religion Journal* (2021).

⁹ Alix Philippon, "A Sublime, Yet Disputed, Object of Political Ideology? Sufism in Pakistan at the crossroads," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 52 (2014): 271 - 292.

of academicians has provided an ample analysis of existing literature on Islamic ideology and its utilization as a tool of international relations such as the promotion of cultural heritage as a part of soft power and diplomatic engagement with nation-states. Therefore, the study seeks to address the gaps found in existing literature about Pakistan's Islamic heritage and its implementation in its international relations with Muslim powers, regional nation-states, and great powers in maintaining and enhancing its diplomatic ties.

Understanding Pakistan's Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage, according to Shaheen, transcends inherited material possessions. It has been the legacy of customs, practices, places, objects, and artistic expressions passed down through generations.¹⁰ This concept can be categorized as tangible or intangible. Tangible elements encompass physical artifacts like buildings or art, while intangible aspects include traditions, languages, and values.¹¹ The concept of cultural heritage is not static, as Rehana et al. argue. Globalization, migration, and technology continuously reshape it.¹²

In the South Asian region, Pakistan represents a rich cultural heritage, a vibrant and long history, diverse ethnicities, and, undeniably, its Islamic identity. Amjad is of the view that Islam forms the cornerstone of Pakistani culture and shapes its social norms, artistic expressions, and even cuisine. From the majestic mosques of Lahore to the traditions of Sindh, Islamic aesthetics are deeply ingrained.¹³ However, scholars like Gregorian remind us that Islamic Heritage is a mosaic not monolithic. This way, scholarly debates rage regarding the interpretation and implementation of Islamic principles, with some advocating for a more progressive approach and others favoring a stricter adherence to religious law. This ongoing contestation adds a layer of dynamism to Pakistan's cultural landscape. This dynamism extends to the interpretation of core aspects like religion. Gregorian highlights the multifaceted nature of Islamic heritage in Pakistan, emphasizing ongoing debates about religious principles. Islam, according to Gregorian, provides a unifying thread and Pakistan's cultural heritage is far richer than a single strand.¹⁴

Furthermore, Dutta underscores the significance of ethnicity within cultural heritage. Each Pakistani ethnic group contributes its unique language, traditions, and customs, creating a vibrant cultural symphony. In the case of Pakistan, the

¹⁰ Mubashra Shaheen, "Impacts of the Partition on Cultural Heritage of the Subcontinent," *UOS Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* 7, No. 1 (2022).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey, and Amina Yaqin, eds. *Culture, diaspora, and modernity in Muslim writing* (Routledge; 2012).

¹³ Junaid Amjad, "The Question of Pakistan's National Identity: A Study of Islamist and Secularist Narratives," PhD Diss., *Western Sydney University* (2022).

¹⁴ Vartan Gregorian, *Islam: A mosaic, not a monolith*, (Rowman & Littlefield; 2003).

vibrant festivals of Balochistan, the soulful Sufi music of Punjab, and the elaborate wedding ceremonies of Sindh, all contribute to the symphony of Pakistani culture.¹⁵ Additionally, there is fusion and friction in the identity of Pakistani society. The relationship between Islamic heritage and diverse ethnic identities has not always been smooth in Pakistan. Tensions can arise as communities steer the space between their religious beliefs and their unique cultural practices.¹⁶

This discussion of identity is a continuous process, reflected in contemporary debates about curriculum development, language policies, and the role of religious institutions in society.¹⁷ Therefore, Pakistan's cultural heritage is a dynamic field of study as it has a long historical tradition with Islamic and diverse ethnic identities. The nation's ideological, cultural, and political identities are shaped and reshaped by the principles based on Islamic cultural heritage including changing dynamics of globalization, technological advancement, and contemporary academic debates. As scholars like Rehana, Morey, and Yaqin highlight an understanding of how Pakistan has been negotiating its heritage amidst these changes is essential for knowing its cultural environment.

Contextualizing the Concepts of Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy

In a world increasingly interconnected, the concept of national influence has evolved beyond traditional notions of military and economic dominance. Joseph Nye, a prominent American political scientist, introduced the concept of "Soft Power" to highlight a nation's ability to attract and persuade others through its cultural appeal, ideology, and institutional structures.¹⁸ Unlike 'Hard Power', which relies on military might or economic sanctions, Soft Power operates through the dissemination of values, ideas, and cultural assets. For instance, the concept includes a country's cultural exports, diplomatic initiatives, educational exchanges, and global engagement in areas such as humanitarian aid and environmental stewardship. Further, Soft Power is instrumental in shaping global perceptions, building alliances, and advancing foreign policy goals signifies it is a crucial component of contemporary international relations.¹⁹

Meanwhile, the term 'Cultural Diplomacy' is a subset of Soft Power that emphasizes the use of cultural resources and exchanges to promote understanding,

¹⁵ Madhumita Dutta, *Let's Know Music, and Musical Instruments of India*, (Star Publications; 2008).

¹⁶ Mohammad Waseem, *Political Conflict in Pakistan*, (Oxford University Press; 2022).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Joseph S Nye, "Soft Power and Public Diplomacy Revisited," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 14, no. 1-2 (2019): 7-20.

¹⁹ Ibid.

cooperation, and influence between nations.²⁰ It involves the strategic deployment of cultural assets, such as art, literature, music, film, cuisine, and language, to foster cross-cultural dialogue and enhance a country's image abroad.²¹

Cultural Diplomacy seeks to build bridges between societies, transcend political divides, and cultivate mutual respect and appreciation for different cultures. It often involves government-sponsored initiatives, cultural festivals, exhibitions, educational programs, and people-to-people exchanges.²² Modern-day nation-states can build lasting relationships, bridge cultural divides, and promote peace and stability on the global stage through the implementation of cultural diplomacy as a soft power tool.

The concepts of 'Soft Power' and 'Cultural Diplomacy' offer compelling alternatives to traditional methods of wielding influence in the international arena. With the implementation of these two cultural assets and by promoting a cross-cultural understanding, nations such as Pakistan can build lasting relationships, promote cooperation, and ultimately contribute to a more peaceful and interconnected world. As globalization continues to accelerate, the importance of Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy will only continue to grow. In the meanwhile, effectively incorporating these concepts in foreign policy has become essential for understanding and accelerating contemporary international relations in the 21st century.

Cultural Diplomacy and Utilizing Islamic Heritage as a Soft Power Tool

Islamic civilization has made substantial contributions to human civilization in various fields, including science, mathematics, medicine, and philosophy. This historical legacy enhances the Soft Power of countries associated with Islamic heritage by demonstrating their intellectual and scientific achievements, which continue to influence global knowledge and progress. Pakistan has been actively utilizing its cultural diplomacy in its interaction with nation-states to project its Islamic heritage and enhance its soft power on the growing scope of the diplomatic field on the international stage. The government, along with cultural organizations, educational institutions, and artists, has implemented various initiatives to promote Pakistani culture and Islamic heritage worldwide. For instance, Pakistan organizes cultural festivals, exhibitions, and events to display its diverse heritage and artistic traditions.²³ First, Cultural events such as the

²⁰ Mariano Martín Zamorano, "Reframing Cultural Diplomacy: The Instrumentalization of Culture under the Soft Power Theory," *Culture Unbound* 8, no. 2 (2016): 165-186.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Samantha Dols, *Agency, Emotion, and Imagination: Theorizing Connection in Public Diplomacy*, (American University; 2019).

²³ Laila Prager, "Displaying Origins: Heritage Museums, Cultural Festivals, and National Imageries in the UAE," *Horizons in Humanities and Social Sciences: An International Refereed Journal* 1, no. 1 (2015).

'Lahore Literary Festival' and the 'Pakistan Film Festival' held overseas serve as significant platforms for Pakistani artists, writers, and filmmakers to engage with global audiences and foster cultural exchange. These events facilitate cross-cultural dialogue and provide opportunities for Pakistani creatives to showcase their work on an international stage. Additionally, such events not only help in promoting cultural diversity but also provide a gateway for Pakistani artists to establish themselves in the global market. Therefore, it is imperative to encourage and support such cultural events that promote Pakistan's rich heritage and talent on a global scale.²⁴

Second, Pakistani universities and cultural institutions such as Quaid-I-Azam University, NUST University, Peshawar University, and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) have been collaborating with international partners to facilitate educational and scholarly exchange programs. These initiatives promote cross-cultural understanding, academic collaboration, and the dissemination of knowledge about Pakistan's Islamic heritage and cultural contributions.²⁵ Third, Pakistani artists, musicians, dancers, and performers participate in international tours, residencies, and collaborations to share their talents and display Pakistani culture. For instance, cultural dances in Pakistan such as Punjabi 'Bhangra', Sindhi 'Jamalo', Balochi 'Chaap', and Pashtun 'Attan' have been the source of the country's affluence in culture globally.²⁶ The diaspora organizations in the West like the Sindhi Association of North America (SANA) have been crucial in representing cultural dances in America that help Pakistan improve its soft power image in the West.²⁷ Additionally, cultural exchange programs such as Pakistan-EU Cooperation, UGRAD, and Fulbright Scholarships also facilitate dialogue, promote connections, and promote cultural diplomacy through the universal language of art and creativity.²⁸

Fourth, the country works to preserve and promote its cultural heritage sites, including historical monuments, archaeological sites, and religious landmarks.

²⁴ Khurram Nawaz Sheikh, *The Local at a Global Scale: The Role of the Film Talents Workshop in Shaping Emerging Film Cultures of Pakistan*, (Indiana University; 2021).

²⁵ Muhammad Asif, "Confucius Institute as an Instrument for the Promotion of Chinese Public and Cultural Diplomacy in Pakistan," *Asian Journal of Management, Entrepreneurship and Social Science* 2, no. 03 (2022): 39-69.

²⁶ Muhammad Salman Khan, "A spatial history of local dance and the dancing girls in the Swat Valley of Pakistan," *South Asian History and Culture* 13, no. 2 (2022): 197-214.

²⁷ Mohammed Khalid, "Indian Diaspora and Culture in the Indian Ocean: a basis of cultural diplomacy in the Region," *Indian Ocean Digest* 54 (2014): 1-34.

²⁸ Ibid.

The cultural heritage sites like 'Mohejno-Daro' (an archaeological site of the Indus Valley civilization in Larkana, Sindh), 'Taxila' (an important city on the ancient trade route connecting Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent), and 'Takht-i-Bahi' (Buddhist monastery in Mardan), are just a few names.²⁹ The efforts to safeguard these sites not only contribute to cultural diplomacy but also promote tourism and economic development in the country. *Fifth*, Pakistan's Islamic heritage provides a common ground for its diplomatic engagement with Muslim-majority nations. Through the exhibition of its mosques like the 'Faisal Mosque' and 'Badshahi Mosque,' Pakistan seeks to cultivate a sense of shared identity and cultural affinity.³⁰ This initiative promotes its gestures of goodwill and strengthens its diplomatic ties within the Islamic world.³¹ This strategy aligns with the concept of 'soft power' where a nation uses its cultural appeal to influence others politically and diplomatically.

Sixth, Pakistan's cultural diplomacy often emphasizes a moderate and tolerant interpretation of Islam. This approach aims to counter destructive stereotypes associated with Islam in the West and project an image of Pakistan as a progressive Muslim nation. Cultural initiatives demonstrating Sufi music, calligraphy, and scientific advancements from the Islamic Golden Age contribute to this image. These initiatives include 'Lahore International Sufi Festival' renowned Pakistani 'Qawwali' groups like Sabri Brothers and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's disciples alongside international Sufi performers like Abida Parveen or the Whirling Dervishes of Turkey.³²

Finally, Pakistan's cultural diplomacy initiatives using its Islamic heritage have had a significant impact on international relations in developing goodwill, building relationships, and enhancing the country's soft power. These initiatives also contribute to facilitating dialogues and mutual understanding between Pakistan and other nations, enhancing the global positive perception of Pakistan, strengthening people-to-people ties, and promoting cultural exchange programs. Therefore, cultural diplomacy provides a non-political platform for engaging with other nations, adding traditional diplomatic efforts, and building trust and affiliation between governments.

Therefore, Islamic heritage serves as a potent source of Soft Power and enables countries and organizations to project influence and promote connections mutual understanding, and respect on the global stage. Through cultural, intellectual, and

²⁹ Dallen J. Timothy, and Gyan P. Nyaupane, (eds) *Cultural Heritage and Tourism in the Developing World*, (New York: Routledge; 2009).

³⁰ Gemma Sharpe, *Minor Forms, Dismantled Norms: Mediums of Modernism in Pakistan*, PhD diss., (The City University of New York; 2019).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Arshdeep Khaira, "Exploring the Impact of Sufi Music for Reconciliation Between East and West Punjab," *Education & Research Archives* (2020).

ethical dimensions of Islamic civilization, nations, including Pakistan, can enhance their Soft Power and contribute to a more interconnected and harmonious world.

Political Identity in Pakistan: The Influence of Islamic Heritage

Islam, the very reason for Pakistan's creation, has been serving as a foundational pillar of its political identity. The historical roots of Pakistan's political identity can be traced back to the pre-independence era when the demand for a separate Muslim state in British India gained momentum. During this phase, the poet of the East and Muslim philosopher, Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), was considered a political intellectual of the Indian Subcontinent. He envisioned a separate Muslim state in his 1930 address and argued for a political entity that had to be based on a shared Islamic identity. This echoed with Muslims facing marginalization in a Hindu-majority India.³³ Similarly, the political struggle of the All-India Muslim League (AIML) led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was based on the idea of Pakistan as a homeland for Muslims where they could practice their religion freely. The available literature suggests that this vision was deeply rooted in Islamic ideology, with Jinnah famously declaring that Pakistan would be a state based on the principles of social justice, modernity, and Islamic ethics.

The influence of Islamic heritage on Pakistan's political identity was further solidified with the adoption of the Objectives Resolution in 1949, which laid down the foundational principles for the country's constitution.³⁴ This resolution proclaimed that sovereignty belongs to Allah and that the state should enable Muslims to live according to the teachings of Islam as enshrined in the Quran and Sunnah. Moreover, the subsequent constitutional amendments and legal frameworks reinforced the Islamic character of the state by incorporating provisions derived from Islamic law (Sharia) into the legal system.³⁵

Additionally, Pakistan's first constitution (1956) declared the country as an Islamic Republic. The move hardened Islam's central role in the state's identity, though the interpretation of Islamic law remained a point of contention.³⁶ Afterwards, former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977) a populist leader, implemented '*Islamization*' policies like banning alcohol and

³³ Rebecca Lynn Faulkner, *Muhammad Iqbal and the Meanings of South Asian Islamic Modernism*, (Princeton University; 2021).

³⁴ Akmal Safi, "Relationship between religion and nationalism in Pakistan: a study of religion and nationalism in Pakistan during the period 1947 to 1988," *Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences* (2021).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Arsalan Bilal, "Islam and politics in Pakistan (1906-1985): a political perspective," *Conflict and Peace Studies* 1, no. 1 (2014): 71-84.

enforcing Islamic punishments. This aimed to appease religious conservatives and consolidate his power. However, his policies also contributed to ethnic tensions in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), which ultimately led to secession.³⁷

The incorporation of Islamic principles into Pakistan's governance structure has had significant implications for its political landscape. The concept of "Islamization" became a central tenet of state policy during the 1980s under the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq. This period witnessed the promulgation of laws inspired by Islamic jurisprudence, such as 'Hudood Ordinances' and blasphemy laws, which aimed to regulate personal conduct and societal norms according to Islamic precepts.³⁸ However, the attempt to Islamize Pakistan's legal and political framework also sparked debates and controversies regarding the interpretation and application of Islamic law. This way, many critics argued that certain laws enacted in the name of Islam were regressive and discriminatory. The laws had breached individual rights and freedoms. This tension between religious orthodoxy and modernity continues to shape Pakistan's political discourse, with competing visions of the role of Islam in public life.³⁹

Pakistan's vibrant ethnicities, each with its cultural heritage, also present both opportunities and challenges for its political identity. These ethnic groups, such as the Punjabis, Sindhis, Baloch, and Pashtuns, offer a unique cultural expression and perspective to the national narrative. This diversity can be a source of strength that improves inclusivity and a sense of shared identity. However, it can also be a source of political tension, as ethnic groups compete for resources and representation within the political system.

The rise of religious extremism and militancy has posed significant challenges to Pakistan's political identity. Extremist groups have exploited Islamic heritage to advance their agendas. The exploitation led to the emergence of sectarian violence, and terrorism, and posed challenges to the rule of law. The government's response to these challenges has often involved a delicate balance between maintaining Islamic principles and preserving democratic values and human rights.

Conclusion

In recent years, the concept of soft power has gained prominence in international relations, particularly through the influence of culture, values, and heritage on determining a nation's global image and diplomatic strategies. This paper addressed the anthropological dimensions of Islamic heritage as a soft power tool mainly by focusing on its impact on Pakistan's evolving political identity and cultural diplomacy. The analysis began by contextualizing Pakistan's rich Islamic

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Daniel P. Collins, "Islamization of Pakistani law: A historical perspective," *Stan. J. Int'l L.* 24 (1987): 511.

³⁹ Ibid.

heritage within its historical, social, and cultural framework. With a population predominantly Muslim and a history deeply knotted with Islamic civilization, Pakistan possesses a unique reservoir of Islamic heritage that extends beyond religious practices to incorporate art, architecture, literature, and traditions. This heritage serves as a foundational element of Pakistani identity and promotes a sense of unity and shared values among its people.

Furthermore, the paper examined how Pakistan can strategically utilize its Islamic heritage to enhance its soft power on the global stage. Through cultural diplomacy initiatives, such as promoting Islamic art exhibitions, subsidizing educational exchanges, and hosting international conferences on Islamic studies, Pakistan can project itself as a progressive Islamic nation committed to peace, tolerance, and cultural dialogue. Moreover, by displaying its dynamic cultural heritage, Pakistan seeks to counter negative stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam, thereby strengthening its international standing and forging closer ties with other nations. The study also highlighted the dynamic nature of Pakistan's political identity and cultural diplomacy in response to changing global trends and domestic challenges. In an era marked by globalization and rapid technological advancements. Therefore, the study acmes the need for a dynamic approach that balances tradition with modernity, religious values with secular principles, and national interests with global ambitions.