In *Jamaat-e-Islami women in Pakistan*, the sociologist Amina Jamal explores the political and cultural activism of women associated with Jamaat-e-Islami, a prominent Islamist party established in 1941 in pre-partition India. Few scholars have looked at the position of women in this party, in spite of the fact that its founder, Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1979), considered women as guardians and symbols of the ‘Islamic system’. Jamal’s study aims to fill this gap, emphasising the crucial role of women in the expansion of the Islamisation project.

By highlighting women’s role in this party, Jamal distances herself from liberal feminists, who fail to account for women’s mobilisation in fundamentalist groups. Drawing inspiration from the works of postcolonial feminists, she challenges the liberal assumption that women’s agency can only be defined in terms of emancipation or resistance to patriarchal values. Like Saba Mahmood, she argues that agency can also be understood, for religiously-inclined women, in terms of self-transcendence and fulfilment of the ‘divine will’.

Jamal uses this postcolonial feminist framework to move beyond the opposition between feminism and fundamentalism in order to analyse women’s implication in the Jamaat’s Islamisation project. In the first chapter, she introduces the reader to the discussions on Islamic and post-Islamic feminisms, which challenge the representation of Muslim women as passive victims of religion and culture. Locating herself in the continuity of these debates, she puts forward the notion of ‘religious agency’, highlighting the efforts of Jamaat women to transform themselves as well as to transform politics and society along religious lines.

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The second chapter puts forward the ambiguous response of Jamaat women to the introduction of women’s reservations in Pakistan in 2002. As Jamaat women joined electoral politics for the first time, they became increasingly familiar with discourses of democracy, citizenship and modern nationalism. Yet, they also remained firmly committed to their Islamisation project. Jamal points out that, instead of advocating women’s rights, these women appropriated the language of citizenship and nationalism to defend their vision of an Islamic nation-state. Jamal thus argues that the entry of Jamaat women in electoral politics, far from marking their absorption in a ‘secular’ public sphere, led to the expansion of a ‘public-religious’ space in which religious motives remained prominent.

In the third chapter, Jamal goes back in time to explore the early stages of women’s mobilisation in Jamaat-e-Islami. She shows that, despite Maududi’s emphasis on strict gender divisions, women soon found ways to engage in the party’s Islamisation campaigns, through writing for instance. Jamal traces more recent evolutions, such as Jamaat women’s efforts to reach out to women of lower social backgrounds. In so doing, she underlines the expansion of women’s sphere of action, seen as a means to serve the Islamisation project rather than to enhance women’s autonomy.

The fourth and fifth chapters constitute the heart of the book. In the fourth chapter, Jamal explores the ‘processes of modernisation’ at work in Pakistani society and their impact on Jamaat women. She argues that, far from rejecting modernity, Jamaat women have appropriated the idea of modernity, delinking it from its ‘Western’ model, to subsume it instead within an Islamic framework. Jamal thus projects Jamaat women as the ‘vanguard’ of a ‘new modernity’, meant as an alternative to West-centric conceptions of modernity.

The fifth chapter adds another layer to this argument. Once again, Jamal challenges the liberal feminist discourse, which projects civil society as the ‘expression of liberal, progressive, leftist and secular ideas’ (p. 174). She underlines the role of Jamaat women in developing another conception of Muslim women’s needs and interests, rooted in the Islamisation project. Jamal convincingly analyses the complex relation between feminist groups and Islamist women. On the one hand, she argues that the emergence of the ‘woman’s question’, put forward by feminist groups, allowed Jamaat women to take a greater part in public discussions on women’s issues. At the same time, she shows that Jamaat women developed their discourse largely on the basis of their opposition with feminist groups. Jamaat women fiercely rejected the feminists’ struggle for women’s autonomy and gender equality, seen as Euro-centric ideas. This opposition to ‘alien’ feminist ideas allowed them to position themselves as the