

**AIPS Fellowship Application - Omar Sarwar**  
**From the Classroom to the Nation and Beyond: The Rise of Islamism Among**  
**Students and Youth in Pakistan, 1971—1989**

**Abstract**

My project fulfills the goals of the AIPS—to support research on the history and culture of Pakistan and to disseminate knowledge about Pakistan—by examining the growth of Islamism among *madrasa* (religious school, pl. *madaris*), university, and secondary school students and youth in Pakistan between 1971 and 1989. Seeking to Islamize the new nation, the two leading Pakistani Islamist organizations, the *Jama'at-i Islami* and the *Jami'at Ulema-i Islam* (JUI), relied on students and youths to urge society's leaders to bring Islamic values and laws to bear on the Pakistani political order through the state and to support transnational militant struggles in the defense of Islam in Kashmir and Afghanistan. The *Jama'at* used a university-based student organ (the *Islami Jami'at-i Tulabah* or IJT) and the JUI sponsored various *madaris* to recruit and mobilize students and youth against secular nationalism and to move them beyond the classroom into the realm of national politics and transnational militancy, especially in the 1970s and 80s. Scholars have documented some of the ideological connections between these organizations and the contemporary militant outfits derived from or affiliated with them, such as the *Jaish-i Muhammad*, *Hizb ul-Mujahideen*, and the *Sipah-i Sahaba Pakistan*. Equally important but less well understood is the extent to which these descendant militant groups have drawn on the strategies for recruiting and mobilizing students and youth adopted by their political forebears, the *Jama'at* and the JUI. My research, then, foregrounds the rich prehistory of transnational (and increasingly global) Islamic militancy—namely, the success of Pakistan's foremost Islamist movements in deploying students and youth in the service of a revivalist project which sought to protect religion from secularism within the nation-state and military aggression outside it.