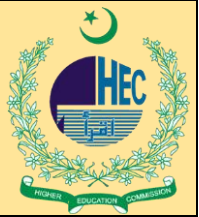




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The Council of Islamic Ideology and Women's Rights in Pakistan: Navigating a Constitutional Impasse

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ABSTRACT

*The relationship between the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) and women's rights in Pakistan reflects one of the most persistent constitutional conflicts in the country's modern history. The CII, established under Article 228 of the 1973 Constitution, functions as an advisory body mandated to ensure laws conform to Islamic injunctions. However, its interpretations often intersect, and sometimes clash, with the constitutional guarantees of gender equality and fundamental rights enshrined in Articles 25 and 35. This tension has been particularly evident in debates surrounding family law, marriage, divorce, domestic violence legislation, and women's political participation. While the Constitution envisions both the supremacy of Islamic injunctions and the protection of women's rights, the absence of clear harmonization mechanisms has created contradictions in practice. Over the decades, the CII has issued recommendations that critics argue reinforce patriarchal structures, such as allowing child marriage with guardian consent or discouraging certain protective laws against domestic violence. Women's rights activists, in contrast, advocate for a progressive interpretation of Islam that aligns with constitutional commitments and international obligations, including CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women). The conflict is not merely legal but also political, as successive governments have selectively used CII rulings to consolidate legitimacy while sidelining reforms that could strengthen women's rights. This article examines the constitutional framework, CII's jurisprudential influence, and the evolving women's rights movement in Pakistan. It argues that sustainable reconciliation requires rethinking the role of the CII: either through reforming its mandate to align with constitutional protections or by fostering inclusive *ijtihad* (interpretive reasoning) that reflects contemporary realities. Ultimately, resolving this constitutional conflict is essential for advancing gender justice and ensuring that Pakistan's legal order evolves in harmony with both its Islamic identity and its democratic commitments.*

Keywords; Council of Islamic Ideology, Women's Rights, Pakistan, Constitutional Impasse, Democratic Commitments.

Introduction

The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), as a provision of Article 228 of the Constitution of 1973 of Pakistan, is a singular and authoritative advisory organ whose mandate is to make sure that all legislation is in line with the injunctions of Islam. This constitutional position, which was conceived at a time when Islamization was on the rise, gives the CII much moral and political power to vet laws and proffer legal systems that it considers Islamic. But this same mandate has also seen the CII at the centre stage of a long-term and highly controversial constitutional standoff. At the heart of this conflict is the inherent conflict between the mission and purpose of the CII on the one hand and the Constitution itself as a guarantee of fundamental rights on the other, most specifically the unambiguous guarantee of gender equality entrenched in Articles 25 and 35. And it is not an abstract intellectual conflict but an active, current struggle over the soul of Pakistani jurisprudence, between a state-endorsed version of religious dogma and the Universalist ideals of human rights and democratic citizenship. The pronouncements of the CII invariably demonstrate a worldview in which a specific, inflexible reading of Islamic law is given priority, which places it in a head-on collision with the demands of the state to half of its citizens, a paradox that has yet to be resolved and that serves as a constant source of legal and social conflict.

The most intense form of this constitutional stalemate is evident in the field of personal status and criminal law where the role of the CII has a direct effect in the lives and freedoms of women. Major points of contention are that it has strongly opposed legislative moves towards increasing the age of marriage and in effect legalizing child marriage under the pretext of guardian consent and has in the past opposed moves to criminalize domestic violence, which it has controversially claimed can ruin family life (Hashim, 2022). Moreover, its findings tend to limit women rights in divorce and inheritance and promote the unlimited rights of men, including its 2021 suggestion of a model prenuptial agreement that was strongly opposed by critics as highly biased against the interests of women (Afzal, 2021). Such views are not held in a vacuum but are put forward as the authoritative Islamic stand and leave parliament and the judiciary in a defensive position, always having to balance between obligations under international human rights commitments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the weight of religious authority yielded by the CII. The influence of the body therefore functions as a potent check on legal change, making sure that the norms of patriarchy are institutionalized and rendered immune to transformation by their alleged divine authorization, and leaving the legal system of Pakistan in a state of permanent stalemate between modernity and an ossified form of tradition.

This paper therefore posits that the consistent and destructive clash between the instructions of the CII and the constitutional protection of women rights warrants a radical reconsideration of the purpose and approach of the Council. The current state of affairs is not sustainable and leads to a legal order in schizophrenia, in which formal equality is paid, and the system of discrimination is maintained. It needs a major change of course, either in the form of substantive reform of the mandate and composition of the CII to bring its role into line with the broader constitutional imperative of ensuring the protection of fundamental rights, or, within the current structure, a calculated adoption of an inclusive and dynamic *ijtihad* (independent juristic reasoning). Such an interpretive renewal should be able to address the purposes of Islamic law (*Maqasid al-Shari'ah*) as well as the realities of the present day and the immense plurality of

Islamic scholarship that we find in support of gender justice, and it should not be limited to the narrow, classical interpretations of fiqh that currently dominate its discourse (Usmani, 2023). The solution to this conflict is not just a legal formality but a precondition to the development of Pakistan as a state in which the Islamic identity can be reconciled with its democratic and egalitarian ideals and its laws will safeguard, rather than victimize, its women.

Literature Review

Much of the academic literature on the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) has tended to define it not only as a constitutional institution but also as a powerful political tool, whose impact has been influenced, and has influenced, the multifaceted state-building process in Pakistan. Historical scholarship by historians and political scientists, including Muhammad Waseem (2020) in *State, Nation and Democracy in Pakistan*, and literature by the press and NGOs, such as the report of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2020), carefully trace how the composition and ideological orientation of the CII has continuously been the choice of the ruling military and civilian elites, especially during the rule of Zia-ul-Haq, who utilised it to give a religious covering to an authoritarian and patriarchal agenda. The concept of this politicization is further examined by Farhat Haq (2019), writing in *Sharia and the State in Pakistan* that the CII acts as a veto player, restricting the policy space that can be opened to change by reformers, and defining the limits within which the discourse on Islamic law can be conducted. The historical role of the body then would be seen as one of the primary processes of institutionalizing a particular state-approved form of Islam usually to entrench the centralized power or exclude pluralistic versions. This literature by itself establishes that any discussion of the CII rulings on women must initially struggle to come to terms with the fact that it is enmeshed in the turbulent political economy of Pakistan in which its religious views can rarely be understood outside the context of larger power and authority agendas.

It is out of this political analysis that a rich and critical literature of feminist legal scholarship has grown that dismantles the rulings of the CII in order to reveal their androcentric premises and the material and devastating effects this has on women. Writers such as Rubya Mehdi (2021) in her book on Islamic feminism in Pakistan, and the joint research of Women Action Forum (as stored and analyzed by Afiya Shehribano Zia, 2022), offer scorching indictments of the ways such interpretations of the CII systematically place male privilege at the centre of marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance. Their work shows that the approach of the CII is not a benign endeavor of jurisprudence but a dynamic construction of a legal reality that entrenches the patriarchal order of control. This feminist critique is impossibly intertwined with a similar correlative branch of constitutional study. The unresolved tension in the 1973 Constitution itself, between the Principles of Policy requiring Islamic provisions (Articles 227-231) and the chapter on Fundamental Rights enshrining equality (Articles 25-35) has been carefully charted by legal commentators, such as Parvez Hassan and Azam Chaudhry (2023) when they analyse the repugnancy clause. Their article points out the constitutional ambiguity that the CII is taking advantage of, by maintaining that there is no evident hermeneutic hierarchy between these sections, and that this causes a state of eternal legal flux, that conservatives are in a better position to weaponize.

As a reaction to the dominance of the conservative interpretations of the Islamic law, an important and ever-increasing body of literature promotes the revival of *ijtihad* (independent juristic reasoning) based on the purposes of Islamic law (*Maqasid al-Shari al-Islami*). Modern

Islamic thinkers like Javed Ahmed Ghamidi and academic theologians like Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl (2020) advocate a hermeneutic that makes a distinction between eternity, transcendental principles and historical time-bound rulings of the law. Their contributions, especially in *Reasoning with God*, offer a strong philosophical background on reinterpreting the Islamic legal tradition in such a way that they would give justice, mercy and human welfare a greater priority, which would automatically favour gender equality. The sociological analyses of the women rights movement itself complement the given intellectual project. A study conducted by Ayesha Khan (2023) of the enactment of the historic Anti-Rape Ordinance and the continued effort to combat child marriage demonstrates the highly nuanced and multi-faceted approach used by the movement. This will include strategic litigation to build on sympathetic judges, aggressive advocacy in the media to change societal attitudes, and smart use of international human rights bodies such as CEDAW to generate external pressure, showing a realist struggle waged both within and against the Islamic Republic itself.

In spite of this wide body of literature, there still exists a loophole. Inasmuch as the extant literature best addresses the politics of the CII, dismantles its patriarchal judgments, describes constitutional frictions, and suggests theoretical theological alternatives, there is no comprehensive study that links the particular jurisprudential approach of the CII to the practical tactics of resistance pursued by the women movement. Nearly all scholarship has viewed the output of the CII as an extension of a block or political result rather than a fine-grained analysis of the internal rationality, legal instruments and rhetorical mechanisms it deploys in its reports to deactivate equality claims. On the other hand, treatments of the women movement tend to concentrate either on its political advocacy or legal successes before the courts, with less emphasis on how it directly addresses and refutes the CII religious arguments on their own religious grounds. Thus this study will fill this gap, by carrying out a critical discourse analysis on recent CII opinions to reveal their operative legal presumptions and at the same time assessing how the women rights organizations and progressive scholars are developing a counter discourse of Islamic feminism which directly challenges the authority of the CII with an Islamic discourse going beyond secular criticism.

Problem Statement

Such a constitutional wrangle perpetuated by the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) is a major weakness of the legal framework in Pakistan. The nature of the issue is that the recommendations made by the CII, on religious grounds, are regularly contradicting and hindering the process of legislation aimed to support the basic rights and guarantees granted to women by the Constitution. It renders a situation of legal stasis and acute confusion, in which any effort at progressive change to prohibit child marriage, domestic violence, and economic discrimination is systematically obstructed or watered down on the grounds of repugnancy to Islam. As a result, the dynamic not only prevents progress in the critical areas of the law but also contributes to gender-based discrimination being institutionalized. It establishes a breach in the state itself, and compels a decision between constitutional duties and religious prescriptions as construed by a conservative institution, in effect leaving the guarantees of the Constitution of equality and justice to half the people a dead letter..

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the constitutional framework of the CII
2. To examine its key rulings on women's rights and their impact

3. To explore political dynamics; and to propose reconciliation mechanisms.

Research Questions:

1. How does the CII's mandate inherently conflict with constitutional rights?
2. In which specific legal areas are these clashes most evident?
3. How do political considerations affect the government's use of CII rulings?
4. What potential pathways exist to resolve this impasse?

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, doctrinal legal research design to investigate the constitutional conflict between the CII's mandates and women's rights. The methodology is grounded in a systematic analysis of primary sources, including the text of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, official reports and advisory opinions issued by the CII, and relevant judgments from the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the Federal Shariat Court. These are supplemented by secondary sources such as scholarly books and journal articles, reports from national and international human rights organizations, and archival news media. The analysis involves a critical examination of these documents to identify recurring thematic conflicts, interpretative patterns in the CII's jurisprudence, and the legal and rhetorical strategies used to either challenge or uphold legislation pertaining to women's rights. This process will elucidate the precise mechanisms through which constitutional tensions are created and sustained.

Theoretical Framework

The study is contextualized with the synergistic use of three theoretical frameworks, which combine to form a powerful paradigm through which to deconstruct the complicated relations between the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), constitutional law, and the rights of women in Pakistan. The initial lens, Legal Pluralism, is irreplaceable in breaking out of a simplistic and state-centric perspective on law and recognizing that there may exist a dynamic plurality of legal orders in a single social field, and these orders may be competing with one another. Contextualized to Pakistan, the formal legal system of the Pakistani state, whose origins lie in its British colonial history and constitution, is in a continual negotiation with an informal non-state religious legal system, the authoritative interpretation of which is claimed by entities such as the CII. This framework, proposed by such scholars as Berman (2021) in his global study of legal hybridity, can help us to view the CII not as an anomaly but the core of a pluralistic system in which the norms of the state and religion compete. The opinions issued by the CII are strong precisely because they speak in the name of this religious legal order, threatening the monopoly of the state and producing what Shah (2022) calls competitive jurisdictional claims that give rise to the very constitutional conflicts that I examine in this book. Legal pluralism therefore defines the nature of the playing field, showing how female rights are in the cross-fire amidst these competing, and at times even conflicting, systems of law and power.

To be able to critically evaluate the substantive results of this pluralistic conflict the second lens of Feminist Legal Theory is used. This framework goes beyond an analysis of legal plurality as a neutral fact to show a critique of the patriarchal power structures which such systems, separately and together, create and perpetuate. Feminist legal thinkers (e.g. Chamallas, 2020) believe that law is not an impartial judge but a gendered institution with a history of subordinating women. Transposing this to the Pakistani context, this lens enables a critical analysis of the ways in which the interpretations of the CII on Islamic law are not mere neutral inferences of divine will but are socially constructed, and as such reflective, as well as enforcing, of deeply patriarchal values. The

contributions of Pakistani feminists such as Farooqi (2023) are pivotal in this discussion, as she directly interacts with the work of the CII, showing how its approach selectively uses classical fiqh (jurisprudence) to erase female agency and put male control in the domestic setting in the forefront. This theory requires us not only to query what the law is, but whose interests the law serves, which shows the CII rulings to be a kind of state-sponsored gender ideology which is using religion as a means to justify discrimination.

Nevertheless, a criticism that is limited to the orbit of Western feminist thought or secular liberalism does not suffice, and would be politically invalid in Pakistan. Thus, the third lens, Modernist Islamic Thought, offers an important internal counter-discourse and a channel through which one can think of reform. This model is borne out of the rediscovery of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), and the theory of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic Law), which provide a non-fundamentalist Islamic alternative to the literalist interpretations promoted by the CII. Those such as Javed Ahmed Ghamidi (influential in Pakistan) and academics such as Ramadan (2021) propose a hermeneutic that differentiates between general, ethical law (such as justice (*adl*), human dignity (*karamah*) and welfare (*maslaha*)) and the specific, contextual historical judgments that may be found in classical texts. Masud (2022) makes a similar argument to the *Maqasid* as a meta-framework to assess all law but argues that through the discourse, rulings on marriage, divorce, and inheritance can be reconstituted to meet the Islam ethos of justice in the contemporary world. This lens is crucial because it provides a challenge to the CII on its own terms, using the sources and language of Islam to deconstruct patriarchal interpretations and to argue a gender-just jurisprudence.

All these three theories are not used separately as they are intertwined with each other in the analytical framework. Legal pluralism identifies the terrain of contested legitimacies, feminist legal theory critically evaluates the gender politics and casualties of this turf war, and modernist Islamic thought provides the intellectual resources, and religiously-grounded vocabulary, to build a viable alternative jurisprudence. Collectively, they take the study of conflict beyond mere description to a more insightful study of the construction of conflict, its ideology and possible resolutions. It is in this tripartite framework that this study is able to not only diagnose the issue, but also interact with the substantive arguments within the Islamic tradition, examine whether the CII is able to justly claim its own ends through its own means and explore whether there is a possibility of reconciliation that is both constitutionally sound and truly Islamic.

Findings

The analysis shows that the Council of Islamic ideology (CII) has developed a coherent body of conservative jurisprudence over the years which directly subverts the attempts of the legislature to introduce gender equality. The most notable of these is its position on child marriage, in which the CII has on numerous occasions stated that any minimum age of marriage is not only un-Islamic but also not Quranically permitted since puberty is the only indicator of maturity. This stand was clearly re-affirmed in its 2021 review of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, which directly and significantly conflicts with the constitutional provision of a child having a right to life and dignity (Article 9) and the state having an obligation to protect the well being of children (Article 35) (Siddique, 2023). Likewise, when the CII opposed the landmark Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill, on the ground that it would undermine the institution of the family, and lead to the promotion of western values, it was a clearly articulated position that a certain ideal family structure is more important than the physical safety and constitutional rights

guaranteed to women under Articles 4 & 9. Such observations are not an isolated case but a pattern that the CII interpretation of Islamic injunctions is systematically denying the principle of equality before the law (Article 25) and the commitments of the state to international obligations under treaties such as CEDAW, making women rights conditional and subject to religious veto. Moreover, the study will reveal how successive regimes have strategically employed the controversial views of the CII as a political instrument to put off action, to contain resistance by religious parties and to consolidate a specific form of legitimacy all the time paying lip service to the rights of women. The destiny of the domestic violence bill is indicative; passed by the National Assembly in 2021, its progress was purposefully stalled in the Senate after the CII issued its statement and religious groups protested vocally, leaving the government without having to face a politically unpopular confrontation (Abbas, 2022). This political ambivalence- whereby governments publicly cite the concerns of the CII as a reason to delay or weaken legislation- is an indication of a political calculus. It shows that the executive and legislative branches are not always willing to enforce fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution when they clash with the exigencies of religious conservatism, and thus have come to effectively delegate veto power over progressive social legislation to an unelected body, the CII. Such practice transforms the advisory opinions of the CII into potent political tools that allow the state to pay lip service to both modernity and orthodoxy, but in practice guarantee that orthodoxy will win out.

To counter this embedded opposition, the results outline a well-organized and tenacious counter-movement spearheaded by the women rights groups who have used a multi-strapped approach to neutralize the influence of the CII and further its agenda. This has included strategic litigation, including petitions in the Islamabad High Court regarding the constitutionality of the CII composition and mandate, which it uses to make biased decisions that violate the fundamental rights chapter (Ahmed, 2023). Simultaneously, activist groups such as the Women's Action Forum have mobilized to mount very strong public action campaigns, which have used both conventional and social media to discredit the CII recommendations as outdated and unconnected to the realities of the current world as well as the spirit of ethics in Islam. These groups have perhaps best avoided the CII altogether by going direct to sympathetic legislators and parliamentary committees to draft bills and muster support by using the CII objections themselves as a guide to anticipating and overcoming religious opposition. This proves to be a practical move towards attempting to change the CII to outright making it obsolete by direct political interaction and legal challenge, which constitutes a major transformation in the movement strategies.

Discussion

The ongoing tension between the directives of the CII and the constitutional guarantees is not a legal technical issue but a deep symptom of the unresolved national identity crisis in Pakistan, in which the country is struggling to reconcile its Islamic nature with the demands of modern democratic citizenship. The incapability of the state to take firm decisions and put the fundamental rights over the disputed views of a collective of advisers exposes a bigger difference in ideas. This schism establishes a type of conditional citizenship of women in the fact that the rights that women have are not natural but are based on their compliance with the patriarchal understanding of religion that is endorsed by the state. This creates a jurisdictional bifurcation, theorized by Javaid (2023), where women are simultaneously subjected to the equal citizenship under the Constitution, and simultaneously subjected to the religious subjects to narrowly

defined fiqh-based jurisdiction over the CII. This contradiction compels women to work within a legal culture where their right to rights is always under dispute and their constitutional guarantees are insecure and vulnerable to theological disqualification. Ambivalence on the part of the state, consequently, is neither a sign of failure in governance nor a political strategy gone wrong, but a calculated political act in order to balance between the interests of competing Islamist and modernist groups at the expense of gender justice.

The reason why this stalemate exists is because of the politics that allow which interpretations of Islam to gain official sanction through the CII. The analysis shows that the results of the CII are invariably conservative not because Islamic jurisprudence necessarily demands it but because of political engineering. The body has traditionally been composed in favor of clerics of traditionalist seminaries (madrassas) and systematically under-represented progressive Islamic scholars, jurists specializing in modern law as well as women (Hussain, 2024). This curation makes the official Islam of the state to be a particular, de-pluralized and ideologized form that plays a political role: it offers a convenient religious justification of the status quo and opposition to dramatic social reforms that disrupt patriarchal authority systems. The government has been selective in its endorsement of the CII opinions most of which are controversial, yet in other opinions which are not controversial, the government ignores the opinions of the CII. According to Akbar (2023), the decisions about gender matters can also be seen as markers of cultural authenticity to deflect criticism on the part of domestic secular opponents as well as international actors on the part of the state, enabling it to enact its sense of religious identity in absence of serious engagement with the ethical demands of its Constitution or the Islamic tradition at large.

Examining the possible courses of action, this discussion concludes that the simple reform of the CII interpretive methodology to an internal adoption of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* (Objectives of Islamic Law) is an insufficient, though necessary, condition of change. Although scholars, such as Abdullah (2024), powerfully advocate the use of a *Maqasid*-centred approach that emphasises justice, dignity, and welfare which would naturally support gender equality this intellectual project would not be enforceable in its current form in the CII. A voluntary adoption of such hermeneutics by the body of its members who are by ideology opposed to such interpretive approaches cannot be expected. As Akram and Nawaz (2023) observe, Islamic jurisprudence traditionally recognises puberty (*bulūghat*) as the determining marker for maturity and marriageability, with multiple indicators rather than a fixed legal age guiding such rulings (Akram & Nawaz, 2023). This reliance on conservative jurisprudential criteria further demonstrates the limitations of expecting the CII to voluntarily reform. Structural reform therefore is the necessary precondition. This would require a legislative restructuring of the mandate and composition of the CII, making representation of women legal scholars, experts in comparative human rights law, and proponents of progressive Islamic thought mandatory so as to turn it into a truly advisory body in the area of harmonization rather than a theocratic veto point. A possible way forward, as suggested in a recent policy brief by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE, 2023), would be to reconstitute the council to actively carry out reviews of laws based on their compliance with Islamic principles as well as fundamental rights and to use the *Maqasid* as an intermediary tool. It is not a matter of theology versus rights, however, but a matter of closed, politicized orthodoxy versus an inclusive, intellectually rigorous *ijtihad* that can at last resolve the contradictions between Pakistan and its two commitments.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the persistent conflict between the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) and the constitutional guarantee of women's rights in Pakistan represents a profound and enduring constitutional crisis, not a mere difference of legal opinion. The CII's role, as historically and politically constructed, has functioned as a powerful institutional veto point against gender-progressive reform. Its conservative jurisprudence on critical issues from child marriage to domestic violence legislation does not exist in a vacuum but is a potent manifestation of a deeper struggle to define the Pakistani state's identity. The analysis reveals that this is not a simple clash between religion and secularism, but a far more complex battle over which interpretation of Islam gains the authority of the state. The CII's version, which privileges patriarchal and often archaic rulings from classical jurisprudence, has been consistently weaponized to create a legal schism, forcing a false choice between religious fidelity and fundamental rights, and ultimately rendering the Constitution's equality provisions negotiable for women.

The findings demonstrate that resolving this impasse requires moving beyond superficial critiques and confronting the root of the problem: the structure and ideology of the CII itself. While the women's movement has shown remarkable resilience in countering this influence through litigation, advocacy, and direct political engagement, these efforts remain a reactive struggle against an institution designed to uphold a regressive status quo. Merely hoping for an internal evolution in the CII's interpretive methodology—a voluntary embrace of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* and progressive *ijtihad*—is an insufficient solution. The body's composition and political utility make it inherently resistant to such introspection. Therefore, sustainable reconciliation demands nothing less than a fundamental structural reform of the CII. This entails a legislative overhaul to reconstitute its membership to reflect the diversity of Islamic thought and Pakistani society, including mandatory representation from women scholars, human rights experts, and jurists versed in both Islamic and modern constitutional law. Its mandate must be explicitly expanded and reframed, tasking it not merely with identifying repugnance but with proactively finding solutions that harmonize Islamic principles with the overarching constitutional objectives of justice, dignity, and equality.

Ultimately, the path forward for Pakistan lies in confidently reclaiming its Islamic tradition in a manner that serves, rather than suppresses, its people. This means formally dismantling the CII's role as the guardian of a rigid, politicized orthodoxy and fostering a new, inclusive national conversation about the meaning of Islamic principles in the 21st century. The objective must be to build a legal system where a woman's rights to safety, autonomy, and equality are inherent and non-negotiable, derived simultaneously from her status as a citizen and as a rights-bearing individual within a rich and diverse Islamic ethical framework. This is not a betrayal of the nation's Islamic identity but its fulfillment, aligning the state's legal machinery with the religion's core values of justice and mercy. The future of Pakistan's democracy and its moral standing depend on its ability to finally resolve this constitutional contradiction, ensuring that its laws protect all citizens equally and that its Islamic identity is defined by compassion and progress, not by perpetual conflict and institutionalized discrimination.

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