

Impact of Zia's Islamization on Pakistani Society

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Abstract

The dismissal of Bhutto regime, witnessed the advent of third Martial law of Pakistani history under General Zia-ul- Haq. General Zia-ul- Haq appeared on the political scene on the 5th of July, 1977, as Chief Martial Law Administrator who assumed power after months of country-wide agitation that was staged in demand of Nizam-E-Mustafa (The Polity of the Holy Prophet P.B.U.H).general Zia-ul-Haq had no legitimate justification for his extra-constitutional act of seizing power.

So, for the sake of legitimacy and justification for his continuation in office General Zia-ul- Haq appropriated the PNA's demand for Nizam-e-Mustafa.General Zia categorically expressed this sentiment in his public statements that Pakistan and Islam are the names of one and the same thing and any idea or action contrary to this would mean hitting at the very roots of the ideology, solidarity and integrity of Pakistan. And also without Islamic ideology the very existence of Pakistan would become meaningless. Understanding and implementation of this ideology in His opinion was the individual and collective responsibility of all Pakistanis. Therefore General Zia-ul-Haq introduced the "Islamization" programme.

In the following pages, we shall discuss the main features of Zia's Islamization and its impact on Pakistani society.

Key Words :Pakistan, Islam, General Zia-ul-Haq, Islamization.

Background Of Zia's Islamization Programme.

The 'sword of Islam's an effective weapon in the hands of a politician, and in Pakistan it is an essential weapon for anyone seeking to legitimize his claim to power¹. Almost from the beginning, General Zia recognized the tremendous potential of Islamic idiom as a political resource, which was recently demonstrated by the PNA's massive agitation against Bhutto². He expressed his Islam centered political strategy in his first address to the nation, Zia stated:

"I must say that the spirit of Islam, demonstrated during the recent PNA movement, was commendable. It proves that Pakistan, which was created in the name of Islam, will continue to survive only if it sticks to Islam. That is why I consider the introduction of an Islamic system as an essential prerequisite for the country³."

Major Reasons of Zia's Islamization Programme

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The introduction of Islamization programme by General Zia had five major reasons.

1. The wave of Islamic Revivalism.
2. Islam as the sheet anchor of all Pakistani regimes.
3. Nizam-e-Mustafa Movement.
4. Zia-ul-Haq's tilt towards Islam.
5. Crisis of Legitimacy.

1. The Wave Of Islamic Revivalism.

The question of the political role of Islam in the contemporary Islamic world has been addressed by a whole generation of scholars in the 1970s and 1980s. When the wave of Islamic revivalism caught the imagination of the Arab world after the 1973 war with Israel it found a fertile ground in Pakistan⁴. It was an age of what Bernard Lewis called "The Return of Islam"⁵ "Not that the Muslim masses everywhere turned into religious zealots overnight. The real issue revolved around the political expression of Islam, especially because in Muslim societies religious law, even if neglected in practice remains the supreme reference in the eyes of the masses"⁶. So the Islamic revivalism was one of the major reasons of Zia's Islamization programme.

2. Islam As The Sheet Anchor Of All Pakistani Regimes

Islam had been the sheet anchor of all the post-independence regimes of Pakistan which, according to public opinion paid only lip service to its cause. It means that in Pakistan 'Islamic Resurgence' remained a political than a spiritual phenomenon. General Zia also chided former rulers and politicians for exploiting the name of Islam and felt obliged to translate the Islamic idiom into concrete measures⁷. It was another major reason of Zia's Islamization programme.

3. Nizam-e-Mustafa Movement

Bhutto's desire for a massive mandate and, in particular, the two-thirds majority necessary to amend the 1973 constitution, perhaps motivated the rigging. Whatever the motivation, the rigging triggered a wide-spread protest movement led by the PNA (Pakistan National Alliance). Once again the opposition used religion as the vehicle to attack Bhutto. They named their movement as "Tehrik-e-Nizam-e-Mustafa". The Ulema and a large number of religious-minded people acquired a heightened political consciousness which the

Zia regime considered mandatory upon itself to address⁸. General Zia decided to adopt Islam as the political programme of his regime.

4. Zia-ul-Haq's tilt towards Islam

General Zia-ul-Haq had the reputation of being a devoted and pious Muslim. He was known as 'Maulvi Zia-ul-Haq' in military circles. So there is every reason to believe that he was sincere in his belief that Islam provided the basis for the creation of Pakistan. Zia's reputation for personal piety made Islam a more effective tool for him than it had been for his predecessors⁹.

5. Crisis of Legitimacy

The Zia regime suffered from a persistent crisis of legitimacy. Zia's reputation for personal piety helped him to tackle the legitimacy crisis by using Islamization programme to gain legitimacy. General Zia made a promise to the nation that he will make Pakistan into an Islamic state¹⁰. He tried to convince the people of Pakistan at every opportunity that the 'Ideology of Pakistan' was Islam and that its divine mission was to become an Islamic state. In this context it has been observed that his various Islamic measures tended to coincide in time scale with political crisis expected to emerge at the time of postponing election, outlawing parties or executing Bhutto¹¹.

The Islamization Programme

General Zia-ul-Haq adopted a step-by-step approach to Islamization which helped him to prolong his tenure as much as possible. On the 1st of Muharram 1399 which was the beginning of the Islamic Calendar year, he addressed the nation, and uncovered for the public his views about Islamization¹². We can divide General Zia's Islamization programme into three categories.

- 1:- Punitive measures.
- 2:- Reconstruction of economic system
- 3:- General Islamization of morals, education and science¹³.

Steps Towards Islamization

1. Hadood Ordinance
2. Federal Shariat Court
3. Zakat & Ushr Ordinance
4. Diyat Ordinance
5. Qanoon-e-Shahadat Ordinance

6. Sanctity of Ramadan Ordinance
7. a: Establishment of prayers and provision of facilities for prayers in government offices.
b. Establishment of Salaat Committees and appointment of Nazimeen-e-Salaat
8. Compulsory teaching of Pakistan Studies and Islamiyat.
9. Establishment of Majlis-e-shoora
10. Establishment of an International Islamic University at Islamabad.
11. Honoring and respecting ulema and religious leaders commensurately with their status in national live.
12. Making the certificates and degrees issued by religious seminaries (Madrassahs) equivalent to those issued by other universities/ Boards and making them acceptable for obtaining jobs etc.
13. Establishing seerah committees on governmental level and holding seerah conference on national level
14. Ban on nudity
15. Banning alcoholic drinks from government houses and official mess and government receptions.
16. Promoting Arabic language and Quranic injunctions.
17. Observing Islamic etiquette during private and formal congregational assemblies
18. Trying to clean up the governmental media departments such as Radio.T.V and the press trust of atheistic and anti Islamic attitudes and making them abide by an Islamic and Pakistani viewpoint ¹⁴
19. Holding elections on non-party basis ¹⁵
20. Give dignified status to the national language and dress in the country and abroad.
21. Shariah ordiance

Impact of Zia's Islamization on Pakistani society

General Zia's Islamization programme stamped ridiculous impact on Pakistani society. The nation in consequence of Zia's Islamization seemed scattered instead of united. The major effects of Zia's Islamization on Pakistani nation and society are following.

Sectarianism

Zia's Islamization promoted sectarianism in Pakistan. Regarding Zia's opinion, Islam was the only "binding force" that could hold the nation together, but while Islam is a potential force for unity, it alone is not sufficient to hold the nation together. Zia's Islamization programme reveals the fallacy of this assumption, the more "Islam" Zia gave Pakistan, and the more religion became a divisive rather than a unifying force in the country¹⁶. Zia and his Islamization, however, could not avoid getting embroiled in that debate and soon his policies were being attacked from all quarters: by Shias for imposing Hanfi Law, by the conservative ulama for making too many concessions to the Shias, by the Jamat -i -Islami for the inadequate steps being taken towards establishing an Islamic state, by modernists and secularists for presuming a retrogressive policy that would turn the country into a theocratic state¹⁷. A legalistic approach to Islamization was bound to raise the question as to which bound to raise the question as to which and whose interpretation of the Islamic law should form the basis for public policy.

Religious Extremism

Under the rule of General Zia – ul – Haq, religious revivalism became associated with religious extremism, the reason was that the "Islamization" agenda which he pursued was synonymous with "Shariatization" as its primary emphasis was on the enforcement of shariah and not on the implementation of Islamic principles of democracy, freedom, tolerance and social justice¹⁸. The emergence of religious extremist and militant organizations like *Sipah- e-Sahaba* and *Sipah-e-Muhammad* took place during Zia's era. These organizations were affiliated with Sunni (*Deobandi*) and Shia school of thoughts respectively. These organization believed in an eye for an eye and exerts their activities to seek martyrdom by "Eliminating the *dushmanan - e- Sahaba-o-Ahl- e - Bait*". Those militants were well armed with sophisticated automatic weapons and remote – controlled bomb arsenals, those militants were swift to settle accounts with each other. A bombing of Shia mosque means that a bombing of a Sunni mosque is not far away. An assassination of a Shia leader is soon reciprocated by an assassination of a Sunni religious leader¹⁹.

Threat To The Status Of Women

The women constituted the most vocal opposition towards Zia's Islamization measures women Action Forum(WAF) was created as a result of the perceived injustice inherent in the Haddood ordinance and subsequent resistance to the other laws was also spearheaded by WAF with other women's organizations. The Zia regime introduced such laws and acts which were perceived as a threat to the status of women in the country. They brought women out of home in increasing numbers as they felt suffocation in Pakistani society²⁰. Increasing education and exposure to the feminist movements in other parts of the world seemed to enforce this awareness. It was, however, certain Islamization steps which were considered attacks upon women by the Zia regime that caused this awareness to mature and take an organizational form i.e the formation of WAF. The successful mobilization of women. Although mostly in urban areas, to contest certain Islamization measures can be considered a great social change occurring in Muslim country.

Promotion of Irrational and Conservative Theories in Modern Science

Another impact of Zia's Islamization was promotion of conservative and irrational theories and views in modern science. As a general policy government exercised its patronage in favor of the explicit conservative elements in the educational institutions and information infrastructure²¹. Some scientists seeking the regime's patronage produced exotic theories under the rubric of Islamic science. For example , they claimed that heaven is running away from the earth at a speed of one centimeter per second less than the speed of light; that the seven heavens are like quantum level of an atom; that services of Jinn's (genies) as fiery beings, Commanding Vast energy, can be utilized to offset the energy crisis of Pakistan; and that the force between protons and electrons is spiritual in nature²². Such views were considered irrational by the "modern" scientists who felt insecure with the prospects of government patronage flowing in that direction²³.

Undemocratic Trends Set In Pakistani Politics

General Zia's regime finally conducted general elections for National and Provincial assemblies on 25th and 28th February 1985 respectively on a non party basis. Non- Party

elections set undemocratic trends in Pakistani politics. Just as in absence of parties, only local issues could come to the surface, while national issues such as foreign policy, economic programme, federal politics, provincial autonomy and various aspects of Islamization were conspicuous by their absence. It was an election without issue and ideology and most importantly local influence in terms of financial hold over peasants, politics of baradris (Politics of Families), relations with local bureaucracy and cash expenditure to buy votes emerged as the deciding factors²⁴.

Conclusion

Zia's Islamization was largely a function of political dynamics. Zia and his colleagues were using Islam only as an instrument to achieve legitimacy for their rule. Islam is a unifying force and in Pakistan it is considered necessary for national integration. But the way, in which Zia tried to enforce Islam, it became divisive rather than a binding force. Zia's Islamization promoted sectarianism, religious extremism and intolerant behavior in Pakistani society. Zia's policies during eleven years long tenure strengthen feudalism, ethnicity, introduced militancy and undemocratic culture in Pakistan. Ban on Political parties paved the way for bradarism which further weakened the national integration. Zia regime introduced such laws and acts which were perceived as a threat to the status of women in the country. They brought women out of houses in increasing numbers to launch a massive protest against such laws and acts. Reflecting on the course of Pakistan's intellectual history, it appears that the modernists failed in creating an atmosphere where the spirit of modernism could be developed. Modernism does not mean the introduction of a westernized administrative structure. Rather it should suggest creation of an environment in which modern thinking is possible so, we can say that Zia's tenure was ridiculous for Pakistan as its consequences are still jolting Pakistan.

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