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An Analysis of the Politicisation of Religion and the Religionisation of Politics in Pakistan (1947-1988)

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Abstract

This paper explores the twin phenomena of the politicization of religion and the religionization of politics in Pakistan—with a focus on the intricate link between politics and religion in the country historical trajectory. It is the norm rather than the exception that leaders—both civilian and military leaders—have used religion for political purposes in Pakistan. There is evidence of the use of religion for political ends in the pre-partition era. During the British colonial rule, Muslim leaders in the Indian subcontinent struggled for an independent state by presenting themselves as a separate nation—based on religion, culture, norms, values, and rituals—from the Hindus. Nevertheless, the founding fathers of Pakistan gave little serious thought to the role of religion in the post-independence state. That is why there exists ineradicable confusion—both in the minds of the rulers and the ruled. However, the instrumental use of religion for political purposes and its integration into the state structure have allowed both civilian and military leaders to gain and prolong their stay in power. This political use of religion has affected the state and society. Theoretically, this research draws on insights from literature on the instrumentalisation of religion for multifarious political ends. Methodologically, the study is qualitative and is based on secondary sources, with data collected from books, research papers, research articles, and periodicals.

Keywords: Religion, Politics, Politicisation, Religionization, Instrumentalisation,

Introduction

The roots of the politicisation and instrumentalisation of religion can be traced back to Pakistan's state formation in the wake of its independence from British rule. The tone and tenor of the struggle for Pakistan was religious. In fact, Muslim leaders used Islam as an ideology to gain a separate state for the Muslims of South Asia. It is a well-known fact that ideology plays a key role in people's lives, as it gives structure and meaning to their struggles and aspirations—especially political ones. The manipulation of religion for political ends did not change after the creation of Pakistan. Pakistan has been facing



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challenges such as a leadership vacuum, a lack of a robust democratic political process, the absence of strong institutions, and a raging controversy over the role of religion in the state since its inception. This state of affairs provides an opportunity for the ruling class to use religion for political purposes and also impose an accountable state on its people. Not unexpectedly, the custodians of religion, i.e., the orthodox ulama, provided an ideological cover to the political elite (Khan, 1985).

As was the case in pre-partition, leaders have cashed in on the people's emotional attachment to Islam—making them vulnerable to rhetoric clothed in religion even after partition. The feudal elements in the Muslim League's top echelon greatly benefitted from turning religion into an ideological smoke screen—for personal gains (Akhtar, 2018). This self-seeking behaviour of politicians kept statecraft on the back burner. In other words, politicians left Pakistan with no strong democratic institutions in its formative years, which is why Lawrence Ziring likened its rise to “a premature, feeble offspring at birth, and although it survived a critical infancy, it never gained the strength necessary to combat its inborn ailments” (Ziring, 2003). Taking advantage of people's emotional attachment to religion and politicians' undemocratic behaviour dented the process of making an institutionally strong state in Pakistan.

Furthermore, there is little evidence that points to the existence of a well-thought-out masterplan for the new state—especially about the nature of the state and the role of Islam in Pakistan. The absence of a masterplan led to disagreements over the interpretation of the speeches of the founding fathers—whether Pakistan was to be a secular or theocratic state—between traditional ulema and other modernist leaders of the time (Rashid, 1985). Pakistan, however, took an overtly ideological color with the passage of time. The ideologization of the state is exemplified by the unequal treatment meted out to the minorities in Pakistan. This practice not only contradicts the democratic principle (equality of all before the law and equal opportunities for all), but it also goes against the Quaid's vision for Pakistan (Khan, 1985).

There is no evidence that the founding father of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam, ever hinted at making Pakistan a theocratic state in any of his speeches. His various addresses indicate that he wanted Pakistan to be a democratic state where the Muslims of South Asia would have the freedom to live their lives according to the teachings of Islam. It indicates that the founding father knew fully well that a democratic state cannot simultaneously be an ideological state, as there was an element of compulsion in the latter that goes against democratic principles. The statements of the Quaid show that his understanding of Islam and its role in public affairs was different from that of the clergy—who wanted a theocratic state. His 11th August 1947 speech clearly shows his understanding of religion and the imperatives of statecraft:

You are free to go to your mosques or any other place, belong to any religion or caste, or creed—that has nothing to do with the business. We are starting with this fundamental principle: we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state (The National Assembly of Pakistan, 1947).

The interface between religion and the state in Pakistan is a complex issue. The role of Islam in the creation of Pakistan is an undeniable truth, yet there was no clear answer to the question: was it to be an Islamic state or a state for Muslims? The issue is yet to be resolved, as there is enough material in Pakistan's



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movement for both modernists and traditionalists to justify their position on the role and position of Islam in Pakistan. Religion got politicised and the state got religionised, however. The occurrence of this phenomenon and its conceptual underpinnings are discussed in the next section.

What is the Politicisation of Religion?

Separating politics from religion and religion from politics is not easy. For Joselyne Cesari, the politicisation of religion and the religionisation of politics is a process in which religious beliefs and symbols are intertwined with political agendas and processes. This intertwining, ultimately, blurs the boundaries between the political and religious spheres. Thus, religion is used as a tool to serve political end and achieve certain political goals (Cesari, 2023). She argues that the politicization of religion is a complex and nuanced process influenced by socio-political dynamics, historical contexts, and power struggles within societies.

Jean-Philippe Platteau's theory of political instrumentalisation of religion is also important. He believes that the role and influence of religion become more significant in times of crisis due to state weakness or absolutism. Related to Islam, he observes that rulers rarely feel the need to carry out institutional reforms, as they "have the Islamic frame of reference, which provides political rulers with a cheap default option when they are contested." This method of escaping public scrutiny and accountability, he believes, gains more significance when the legitimacy of rulers is contested and they are accused of un-Islamic behaviour (Platteau, 2009). Simply put, they use religion to protect themselves and their rule when accused of irreligious conduct.

The Politicisation of Islam in the Subcontinent: The Pre-Partition Era

During the last decades of the British Empire, the well-off Muslims of India used Islam as a tool to mobilise the masses, as it served their interests. This was especially true of the well-to-do Muslims of North India, which was the heartland of the Mughal Empire. They saw their interests best served through such tactics, as they were aware of the minority status in India. As the British withdrawal became imminent, some of the propertied classes in the Muslim-majority areas also chose to align themselves with the cause of the Muslim League (Akhtar, 2018). Not only the propertied class but the salariat class also joined hands with the All-India Muslim League for a separate homeland—mainly for power and career advancement (Alavi, 1989). Ayesha Jalal persuasively argued the achievement of Pakistan was hardly the originally intended outcome of the struggle, and the subsequent confusion over the character of the new state clearly showed the interests of the propertied and salariat classes that coalesced around its formation (Jalal, 2014).

In the pre-partition era, Islam played a vital role in shaping political discourse and mobilizing communities in order to gain independence from the British Raj. This struggle marked the strategic use of Islam by various Muslim leaders to showcase their agendas of establishing a state in the name of Islam (Ahmed, 1998). The instrumentalization of Islam constituted a range of strategies, including the promotion of religious identity, the infusion of Islamic principles to justify political demands, and the mobilization of the Muslim population for the nationalist cause. Thus, the All-India Muslim League demanded a separate state



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for the Muslim of India by articulating a vision of political representation and protecting the rights of Muslims in the separate nation-state (Aziz, 1993).

However, the instrumentalization of Islam in politics can be traced back to the war of independence in 1857, known as the Sepoy Mutiny. During this rebellion, both Muslims and Hindus united for the first time to stand against British colonialism and challenge their oppressive rule. Some historians argue that this moment was a reflection of the Muslim masses confessing their religious identity and appealing to their religious psyche. Under British rule, they felt that their religious identity was under threat, and Islam was in danger (Gilmartin, 1998). This sentiment paved the way for the emergence of the idea of a separate homeland for Muslims, which came into fruition in 1947. Religious leaders and organizations played a crucial role during this period in shaping Islamic discourses and providing theological justification for the Muslim cause.

Furthermore, the struggle of Muslim leaders also aimed to gain independence from Hindus, as they feared Hindu dominance after the British left India. The victory of the Congress party in the 1937 elections and their assumption of power increased insecurity among Muslims regarding Hindu domination. In response, the leaders of the Muslim League and other Muslim groups mobilized the masses and penetrated their psyche through the use of Islamic notions to achieve their political end of a separate nation-state based on the ideology of Islam. This ideology can be traced back to the 1930 speech of the national poet and president of the All-India Muslim League, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, who called for the establishment of an independent Islamic state. This vision was realized when Pakistan emerged as a new state on 14 August 1947.

The Politicisation of Islam for Political Gains: The Post-Partition Era

In the tumultuous aftermath of the partition of British India and the emergence of Pakistan on the map of the world in 1947, the role of Islam took on a new dimension, being utilized as a tool for political purposes in both civilian and military regimes throughout Pakistan's historical trajectory of independence. While Islam serves as the cornerstone of the Pakistani state, its place within the new nation remains a challenge. According to Christophe Jeffrelot, the founding fathers of Pakistan attempted to turn religion into an "ethno-territorial ideology" that could be used for political ends (Jaffrelot, 2015). Prior to partition, the utilisation of Islamic symbols, exemplified in slogans such as 'Pakistan ka matlab kya? La illahaillallah,' indicated that Muslim leadership—with a nationalist bent—regardless of its politico-religious disposition, manipulated religious polemic in their struggle for a new state (Akhtar, 2018).

In the post-partition period, there was no blueprint prepared for effectively governing the new country. What happened in the formative years was contrary to what was envisioned by Quaid-e-Azam. There was no clear explanation about the structure of the state and the role of Islam in the new state; thus, it was used for political purposes by the corridors of power (Ziring, 2003). The founder of Pakistan aimed to establish a state where all communities would have equal rights, as reflected in several of his speeches which envisioned a democratic, pluralistic, and progressive state based on the egalitarian tradition of Islam rather than a theocratic one. This dichotomy emerged after partition when religious leaders and fundamentalist groups, rejected the multiethnic and multi-religious dimension of the country and argued in favor of an Islamic state.



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However, during the formative years of Pakistan, the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) under its founder Maulana Maududi, who opposed the creation of Pakistan, became a chief advocate for an Islamic state. Maududi envisioned the JI as a global vanguard—for providing leadership from above and keep apart from the ignorant (*jahil*) masses (Nelson, 2015)—rather than a political party in the usual sense of the term. Despite his theological opposition to the concept of a separate state, which he deemed contrary to the universalism of the Islamic ummah, Maududi believed that a religious organization like the JI would thrive in a state that shows allegiance to Islam. This political force, Jamaat-e-Islami, has consistently sought to interpret Pakistani politics through the lens of Islamic character. They have opposed many popular movements launched for progressive politics in Pakistan, often raising the slogan of 'Islam in danger' and portraying themselves as the custodians of Islam (Omand, (1997). Maududi's political theory—of an Islamic state—presents a monolithic concept of the *Ummah* (Muslim community) and has the seeds of an authoritarian state (Ahmed, 1985). There is a justification for coercion in the name of religion if Maududi's concept of the head of state as the vicegerent of God on earth—who can intervene in every sphere of life, i.e., social, economic, and political, as well as in thought and conscience—is accepted (Ahmed, 1985). This tendency led to Maududi's views on economic and social matters, which are considered retrogressive.

Mohammad Asghar Khan, in his book titled "Islam, Politics, and the State", has cogently explained the phenomenon of the politicisation of religion and the religionisation of politics in Pakistan. He asserts that after the death of Jinnah, the ruling elites and military dictators interpreted Islam to justify and maintain the status quo. The military-bureaucratic elite—in alliance with feudal lords—presented themselves as the guardians of Islam. The military-bureaucratic elites found an ally in the person of Maulana Maududi, the founder of the Islamic party Jamaat-i-Islami, to further their agenda, including legitimising repression against political opponents. After the military coup in 1977, Pakistan ruling classes gradually transformed the country into a feudal-comprador regime, increasingly subservient to international monopoly capitalism. These ruling elites devised an Islamic ideology to conserve and justify social and economic relationships based on a decadent status quo of feudalism and comprador-capitalism (Khan, 1985).

After Jinnah's death, Pakistan deviated from the path and vision of the Quaid. The deviation began under the first Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, and Governor General Khwaja Nazimuddin, who incorporated religious scholars into the constitution-framing body with the aim of making the constitution adequately Islamic. Moreover, a heated debate ensued on the nature of the constitution—especially its Islamic character—in the following session of the Constituent Assembly. The Jamaat-e-Islami and other religious groups convinced the Muslim League-led government to make Pakistan an Islamic state and succeeded in making the Objective Resolution a preamble to the 1956 Constitution of Pakistan. Maulana Maududi and other *ulemas* incessant struggle to meet their ends ensnared the Islamic state in the 1956 constitution.

During the formative years of constitution-making, its Islamic content was used against minorities to undermine its democratic character, and religious clerics hijacked the constitution to create disturbances in Punjab in 1953. Street agitation and violence arose on religious grounds against the Ahmadi



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community. This led to the declaration of temporary martial law by Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad in Punjab to counter the violent mobs and control the situation. The use of religion as a tool of politics followed a common pattern in the trajectories of both civilian and military dictators.

The Politicisation of Religion During the General Ayub Khan Regime

The regime of Ayub Khan can be divided into two phases. In the first phase, he ruled over the country as the Chief Martial Administrator following the abrogation of the 1956 constitution from 1958 to 1962. In the second phase (1962-1965), he governed the country, putting in place a sham democracy ("controlled democracy"). After the military coup, Ayub Khan embarked on a mission to modernize Pakistani Islam. He initiated several measures to marginalize traditionalists and fundamentalists, publicly opposing the obscurantism of the ulema. Additionally, he banned Jamaat-e-Islami and other parties, confiscating their assets. During the first phase, he introduced various changes to the constitution, including removing the adjective "Islamic" from Pakistan official name. However, this move faced backlash and was reversed through an amendment in 1963 due to pressure from religious clerics and the masses. Ayub Khan also established the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology to make recommendations to the central and provincial governments, aiming to ensure Islamic provisions and uphold the principles of Islam in the laws and lives of the people (Jaffrelot, 2015).

During the second phase of his regime, General Ayub Khan changed his policies from an authoritarian pattern of governance and modernist interpretation of Islam to controlled democracy and used religion as a tool of legitimacy and allied with the religious clergy, the 'Ulemas'—to help him win the presidential election held in 1965 (Pardes, 2004). Ayub Khan gained the support of religious clergy and convened them to issue a fatwa (religious decree) prohibiting women from contesting election and becoming head of state. This was done to stop his opponent, Miss Fatima Jinnah, the sister of Quaid-e-Azam, from becoming an elected head of state through a puritanical interpretation of Islam. Not expectedly, Ayub Khan won the 1965 election and his regime gained political legitimacy through the support of traditionalist Pirs and Mashaiks. During his initial phase, Ayub Khan targeted JI and sought to bring Islam under state control, as described by Jamal Malik as the 'Colonization of Islam'. However, in a subsequent phase, he utilized Jamat-I-Islami and Pirs as significant sources of influence in which legitimize his regime (Jaffrelot, 2015). It shows that Ayub Khan made good use of religion for political ends even though he is considered to be a secular leader.

The Instrumentalisation of Islam During the General Yahya Khan Regime

The Ayub Khan regime ended in 1969 when he resigned, transferring power to his successor, General Yahya Khan. Yahya Khan became the first head of state who sought support from the conservatives. He wanted to counter the growing influence of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at a time when the Bengali question and identity crisis were in full swing. Yahya Khan started negotiations with the JI after he assumed power. The Islamisation of the state and the restoration of democracy topped the JI's agenda for negotiations. Additionally, the JI insisted on the



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restoration of the 1956 Constitution with its Islamic character intact. On March 23, 1969, Yahya Khan's information minister, Nawwabzadah Shair Ali Khan, met with the JI chief (Maududi) in the presence of Mian Tufayl in Lahore. They agreed, according to Mian Tufayl, on the fact that Yahya Khan was a "champion of Islam"; that the Legal Framework Order (LFO) would help transform Pakistan into an Islamic state—and eventually power was to fall into the hands of Jamat-i-Islami (Jeffrelot, 2015).

Yahya Khan utilized Jamat-i-Islami to legitimize his regime and extend its tenure. Consequently, they entered into a formal alliance to counter the resurgent Bengali nationalism and the socialists in both East and West Pakistan. However, upon assuming power, Yahya Khan proclaimed that he would not tolerate any opposition to the ideology of Pakistan, and the LFO ensured the Islamic nature of the state. This proclamation strengthened the mission of Jamat-i-Islami and reassured them that Yahya Khan supported the role of Islam in the state. Jamat-i-Islami demanded the suppression of the Awami League and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) as they viewed it as critically important for the survival of the regime and to make political space for itself—Jumaat-e-Islami (Khan, 2019).

Furthermore, Jamat-i-Islami, after joining hands with the martial law administrator Yahya Khan for the pursuit of its interests, launched a campaign against Zulfikar Ali Bhutto with the aim to suppress the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in West Pakistan. They based their anti-Bhutto campaign on the claim that Islam, not Bhutto's Islamic socialism, was the solution to the challenges encountered by Pakistan (Bilal, 2004). Jamat-i-Islam launched a propaganda campaign in East Pakistan and several anti-Bhutto campaigns in West Pakistan to strengthen its bond with Yahya regime. The JI assumed that Yahya Khan would hand over power to them once he successfully subdued the leftist forces and the Bengali nationalists. However, they faced harsh resistance and counteraction from Maulana Bhashani workers in East Pakistan and from the mainstream religious political parties, i.e., the JUI (Jamiat-i-Ulama-I Islam) and the JUI-P (Jami at-i-Ulama-Pakistan) in West Pakistan.

The Instrumentalisation of Islam During the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Regime

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to power after winning the 1970 general election—from West Pakistan. He peppered his speeches with reference to the doctrine of "Islamic Socialism." Islam played a crucial role in Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's political discourses; it was used ostensibly to imbue the masses with Islamic culture—but his real purpose was to prolong his regime and lend legitimacy to his struggle for power. He rose to power on the basis of populist slogans to mobilize the masses such as "roti, kapra, makan (food, clothing, and shelter)". Bhutto came up with a slogan "Islam is our faith, democracy is our polity, Socialism is our economy" (Jaffrelot, 2015). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, with a feudal mindset and clientelist orientation, resorted to patrimonialism to administer the state. Bhutto wrested power from military dictators Generals Ayub Khan and General Yahya Khan, bringing a temporary shift in Pakistan historical trajectory from military to civilian rule. Yet, his undemocratic attitude and alliance with Yahya Khan during the Bengali struggle for equal rights led to brutalities in East Pakistan that resulted in the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign state. It is, however, apt



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to note here that holding only Bhutto responsible for the creation of Bangladesh is not a fair judgement, as too many structural factors were responsible for the fall of Dhaka.

Historians argue that his regime failed to meet the expectations of the people and became victim to flawed policies, including an autocratic style of governance, and the failure to bolster his political party and civilian institutions (Wolpert, 1993). Moreover, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, upon assuming power, manipulated Islam and capitalized on Islamic sentiments to rebuild the country integrity and restore unity. Bhutto utilized the Islamic card to appease the Islamist forces such as Jamat-i-Islami, promising to make Sharia the supreme law of the land within nine years. The founder of Jamat-i-Islami, Maududi, convinced Zulfikar Ali Bhutto not to extend formal recognition to Bangladesh until all Pakistani prisoners are released. Additionally, Maududi insisted on removing socialist elements from the Pakistan People Party in return for supporting Bhutto's draft constitution (Raza, 1997). Under the 1973 Constitution, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto not only declared Islam as the state religion (Article 2) but also changed the name of the ACII (Advisory Council for Islamic Ideology) to the CII (Council of Islamic Ideology), ensuring the spirit and role of Islam in Pakistan (Jeffrelot, 2015).

The Politicisation of Islam Under the Zia ul-Haq Regime

General Zia Ul Haq was an orthodox Muslim and belonged to a religious family. He came to power on 5 July, 1977, to establish military rule and toppled the elected government of Z.A. Bhutto—after suspending the 1973 Constitution. General Zia Ul Haq used religion for political purposes, and he garnered the support of the clergy to help erect a theocratic political order. This not only allowed him to prolong his stay in power but also paved the way for exploiting the masses in the name of religion. His puritanical interpretation of Islam and Islamization policies served as instruments that provided legitimacy and opened doors for political allies. Zia Ul Haq provided justification for the continuation of his regime by terming it a “divine mission” to Islamise Pakistan and transform it into an Islamic state. Therefore, through this mission, “the state’s ideological and coercive apparatuses were thus brought into full play” (Khan, 1985).

Analysing Zia’s Islamization Policy

During his regime, General Zia Ul Haq manipulated Islam for political gains. He drew inspiration from the works of the founder of the Jamat-i-Islami, Maududi, and formed a close alliance with them to prolong his stay in power and seek legitimacy for his rule. Upon assuming power, he altered Jinnah’s motto from “Faith, Unity, Discipline” to “Iman, Taqwa, Jihad-fi-sibilillah (Faith, Piety, Holy War in the Path of God).” Joining the Tablighi gathering was a taboo for heads of state in Pakistan, but Zia ul Haq He attended the gathering at Raiwind, so he became the first head of state to do so. His promotion policy and assessment criteria were based on piety and religious practices (Hussain, 1994). Zia Islamization policy is reflected in his integration with the CII, increasing its numbers from 15 to 20 members. In July 1979, he pressured the CII to address whether the prevailing election system was un-Islamic. Initially, they claimed the question was not within their purview, but ultimately, they decided against Zia. However, he appointed new members of CII in 1983, the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) declared elections based on political parties as invalid and un-



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Islamic in light of the Quran and Sunnah. Zia capitalized on this decision, enabling him to conduct elections on a non-party basis (Jaffrelot, 2015). Moreover, Zia injected elements of Islamization into every aspect of state and society, profoundly impacting educational, cultural, social, and economic systems.

Moreover, General Zia introduced a plethora of religious reforms in various institutions, thereby legitimizing his rule. Zia Ul Haq infused religiosity into the machinery of the state by introducing Islam into the legal and judicial system for the first time. He established “special tribunals” staffed by ulema and military personnel, which gave weight to an Islamic legal system. He introduced Sharia benches in each regular court consisting of three qadis (judges of Sharia law), tasked with ensuring that no law or provision would be contrary to the teachings of Islam. The primary mission of Zia’s Islamization of the legal system was to reform so that its reflect Islamic values and principles. Sharia benches were also established in the Supreme Court and High Courts to confirm the compatibility of laws and provisions with Islamic principles as enshrined in religious scriptures, i.e., the Holy Quran and Sunnah (Hussain, 1994).

In short, the key reason behind the reforms implemented in the judiciary was to establish the Islamic order, namely, Nizam-e-Islam, in Pakistan. Under the guise of Islamic rule, Zia introduced Hudood Ordinances into the Pakistan Penal Code, which included Islamic provisions ensuring strict penalties such as the Theft Ordinance (Saraka Ordinance), Extramarital Sex (Zina) Ordinance, Prohibition Order of Al-Sharab (Alcohol), Qazaf (False Accusation) Ordinance, the Ehteram-e-Ramazan Ordinance (1981)—to respect the sanctity of Ramazan during fasting hours—and the Whipping Ordinance. He introduced strict punishment for different offences under the Hudood Ordinances, including lashing, the practical implementation and detailed execution of which were explained in the Punishment of Whopping Ordinance (1979), amputation of the right hand for theft, and stoning to death for zina offences (Kennedy, 1987). These ordinances aimed to ensure Islamic rule in the state and shape the mindset of the populace accordingly.

Similarly, he implemented educational reforms with the aim to infuse students with religiosity. E.g., he Islamised the curricula, which led to the radicalisation of the society. These policy measures backfired, as they brought polarisation to Pakistan rather than unity. Zia established the Al-Sharia department at Quaid-e-Azam University in 1979 to produce specialists in Sharia (Islamic law) and paid adequate attention to the restructuring of Islamic schools (*dini madaris*). The number of *dini madaris* rapidly increased by 160 percent during Zia Ul Haq regime from 1979 to 1983. The growth of *dini madaris* occurred mainly in Sindh, with the largest number of students located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, then North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The increasing number of *dini madaris* became a hotbed of extremism and terrorism, as the state trained those madrassa students who fought against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan—by aligning its policies with the US in its Cold War efforts to contain communism (and defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan). America provided significant aid to support Pakistani and Afghan mujahideen in their fight against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia and Iran provided generous aid to Sunni and Shiite Islamic seminaries, respectively (Jaffrelot, 2015). During Zia Ul Haq regime, the project of Islamization reached its peak with the implementation of blasphemy



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laws. All these policy measures fueled tendencies of extremism and radicalization among the masses. In the name of Islamizing the state and society, he put in place an authoritarian regime in Pakistan.

One can see General Zia Ul Haq's dictatorial tendencies in banning all political parties and democratic activities—his goal was to become the de facto president. His mission was to give longevity to his rule and keep civilians out of power as long as he could. To achieve this end, he decided to conduct a referendum in 1984 and instrumentalised religion to maintain his grip on power. General Zia went to every corner of the country to mobilise people in support of Islamic democracy. Zia manipulated Islam to win the referendum, injecting elements of religiosity to win the hearts and minds of the people. The question was framed in a way that implied support for Zia initiatives to bring the country's laws into conformity with religious scriptures, i.e., the Holy Quran and Sunnah, and to protect the ideology of Pakistani. Putting a tick on "yes" meant electing Zia as the president of Pakistan for a five-year term. On December 20, Zia announced that more than 60% of eligible voters had cast their ballots, with 97.71% of the cast votes being affirmative, resulting in Zia election as president of Pakistan for a five-year term. Therefore, Zia's Islamisation policy destroyed the fabric of society in Pakistan, as it deviated from the path of improving the conditions of the people and undermined the ideals of a truly democratic, pluralistic, inclusive, and welfare state.

Conclusion

The Muslims of the subcontinent fought the struggle for Pakistan on the basis of the Two-Nation Theory. This theory highlighted the fact that there were no similarities between Hindus and Muslims, and the differences included religious, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic grounds, and therefore they could not live together in a single state. As a result, Pakistan emerged as a new state on August 14, 1947, gaining independence from British rule. Pakistan was established in the name of Islam, with the primary aim of allowing the Muslims of the subcontinent to profess and propagate their religion without any hindrance. The instrumental use of religion to achieve political goals and for legitimacy has been the norm in Pakistan's historical trajectory, with both civilian leaders, including Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and military dictators (Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, and Zia ul-Haq). The dilemma of secularism led to the politicization of religion in the early years of state formation, resulting in a confrontation between secularists and Islamic fundamentalists over whether Pakistan should be a democratic state or an Islamic state. This issue was addressed in the Objectives Resolution and the 1956 Constitution, which declared Pakistan an Islamic Republic. The making of the constitution and the role of Islam was a challenging task for policymakers, especially after the abrogation of the 1956 Constitution and the declaration of martial law by General Ayub Khan. He removed the word "Islamic" from the 1962 Constitution, only to later restore it in his own drafted constitution, renaming the country the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto politicized Islam as notions of Islamic nationalism garnered popularity and brought him to power. In 1977, General Zia-ul-Haq toppled Bhutto regime and declared martial law. Zia implemented Islamization policies and a puritanical interpretation of Islam, including Hudood ordinances, etc., turning Pakistan into a theocratic state. Zia ul Haq tried to turn Pakistan into a Sunni state with the



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help of presidential ordinances. He sought the help of the clergy—and of Islam by extension— to gain legitimacy for his otherwise illegitimate rule. He also made use of religion to stay in power. It is tenable to argue that the seeds of extremism in Pakistan were sown in the 1980s during Zia's regime.

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