

# ZIA-UL-HAQ AND ISLAMIZATION OF PAKISTAN : A CONSTRUCTIVIST CRITIQUE

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## ABSTRACT

*Pakistan witnessed various important changes in the social, cultural military and political domains during the regime of Zia ul Haq. This paper tries to make Constructivist interpretation of the impact of his regime. It critically analyses the identity shifts and interest alignments in his regime. His regime may have been beneficial in some ways for Pakistan like hurting India and increasing the Pakistani influence in Afghanistan. However, it proved to be costly for Pakistan in long run as it increased sectarian conflicts in Pakistan and dented its image as epicentre of Terrorism. The paper also uses hypothesis of Insignificance of Commons to denote the relative irrelevance of one identity when it is used to bind large group with great factions as that identity lacks the power of differentiation. This hypothesis points out the limit of Islam in unifying Pakistan. The paper delves into strategic aspects of regime of Zia ul Haq in context of U.S.S.R. invasion of Afghanistan followed by U.S. counter in terms of armed religious mobilization of groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan.*

**KEYWORDS :** *Insignificance of Commons, Constructivism, Strategic Depth, Sectarian Conflicts, Islamization.*

## INTRODUCTION

Zia ul Haq is one of the most the most important figures who has shaped the content and structure of social, cultural, religious and political discourse in contemporary Pakistan. He was a military general who usurped power from Zulfikar Ali Bhutto through political coup that was later justified by Supreme Court of Pakistan on basis of Doctrine of Necessity and he remained the ruler of Pakistan from 1977 to 1988. He has been regarded as the ruler who strictly enforced the Islamist dictates in Pakistan. He even transformed the code of conduct for the army that was now required to give up drinking, keep long beards and attend religious discourses. The attempt of Zia is even more significant because he did not write an Islamist Constitution for Pakistan from the scratch. Rather, Islamist ideology was already accepted as the key ideology of Pakistan by the Objective Resolution and Pakistani Constitutions of 1956, 1962 and 1973 all had important provisions related to establishment of Islamic State. The novelty with Zia was that he wanted and attempted true implementation of the provisions of the principles of Shariat. He introduced number of laws that may seem outdated, poorly formulated and not in tune with rational faculties of human life, but they had the sanction of Shariat. Islam, with all the notions of Ummah and common identity, is a very big religion, the practices of its adherents is not uniform. Islam, as practiced in South Asia, also Pakistan, is greatly influenced by Sufi traditions and great respect is attached to the tombs of Sufi saints in Islam that is practiced in Pakistan. Wahabi or Salafi Islam, as followed in Saudi Arabia, is opposed to the importance attached to Sufism. It believes in strict adherence to letters of Quran and Hadith. Zia ul Haq adopted this model of Islam.

The policies of Zia ul Haq, no doubt, were influenced by the strategic realities of the time defined in geopolitical terms. His reign was tense period in the Cold War era when U.S. and U.S.S.R. were confronting each other in the region of Afghanistan. Actually, U.S.S.R. had invaded Afghanistan in 1979. U.S. , in order to counter Afghanistan, had encouraged the formation of Mujahiddin groups in Pakistan. The U.S., Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were closely aligned in this strategy in Afghanistan. The recruitment of fighters who were trained in discourses of Islamism and Jihad were encouraged to fight against the atheistic cult of Socialism supported by U.S.S.R. Number of militant organizations developed in Pakistan in this process, though seven became very important. The militants were made to believe that they were waging a great war for the protection of Islam. Even if they were to die in the war, heaven was guaranteed to them after their death. They were trained in guerilla strategy and this style is very effective in tough geographical terrains as it becomes difficult for the enemy, not well versed with the region, to counter surprise and effective attacks. The U.S. strategy proved to be successful and it was also good for Zia as he was able to hold on to the power for 11 years, overcoming all the internal pressures.

## CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

An effort is made in this paper to make Constructivist critique of the major political, religious and cultural developments that happened in Zia's time. Constructivism is very important approach in International Relations that seeks to develop a fine balance between subjectivity and objectivity. It has respect for the impact of objective, concrete facts that happen in political affairs. But, it reserves a lot of autonomy for the actors and institutions to influence the

shaping and moulding of the reality process. The final reality is contended by the approach of Constructivism as inter-subjective, i.e. determined by the interaction of actors and institutions that are inter-related and inter-dependent. The sharing of common meaning among the members of given society leads to the development of an identity. There is presence of both static and dynamic elements in working of a given identity in a political system. There is tendency for an identity to remain same over a long period of time and there is also strong feature of change in identity due to impact of various internal and external factors. In case of Pakistan, we find that the identity of Islam has defined the polity since the Pakistan Movement when idea of two nation theory was applied in practice to demand the separate homeland for Muslims and once Pakistan was achieved, every effort was made to establish and spread Islam. There have been both civilian and military rule in Pakistan, though the military has remained very powerful even when the civilian government has been in power in Pakistan. But, both the regimes have respected the Islamic values in the Constitution. This is static aspect of Islamic identity in Pakistan. But, there is very strong dynamic aspect related to Pakistan as not all regimes have supported same level of support for the Islamic values and have also varied in treating different sections of Islam. There has been difference in Islam practiced in the times of Ayub Khan which was not so strict and the highly normative and literal implementation of Islam in Zias time. During reign of Pervez Musharaff, the emphasis on Islamism was relatively less. Thus, the nature and magnitude of implantation of Islam is dynamic affair that is influenced not only by the personality of a given head of government or military general wielding great power, but also by the opportunities and challenges opened by geopolitical realities, economic conditions and the pragmatic aspects of religious politics in Pakistan vis-à-vis its potential to act as both centripetal and centrifugal force. Islam is not an a cakewalk for Pakistani rulers as there are always number of Islamic groups that express dissatisfaction over given interpretation of religion, law or policy. The control over the actual resources of state may be in hand of rulers, but the role of religious clerics in maintaining as well as disturbing peace is substantial.

#### CONSTRUCTIVIST INTERPRETATION OF ISLAMISM ENFORCED BY ZIA-UL-HAQ

Constructivist interpretation of major changes introduced by Zia ul Haq has to be done in light of some assumptions, propositions and logical conclusions that flowed in the entire discourse set up by Islamism in the era of Zia ul Haq. Islamism is related to the formulation of a political identity based on the principles of Islam with emphasis on inclusion of Muslims and exclusion of Non-Muslims. It is related with mobilization of people on religious terms. It may be suggested that there is no need of binding religious

discourse on the lines of rational argumentative analysis as these acts (like religious values, emotions and attitudes and preferences); have scant respect for the rational faculties of human life. It is contended that this argumentation against use of rational analysis is not much correct as there is great presence of internal consistency in religious thoughts and themes, so integral to rational analysis. Then, the structure of defining religious concepts and deriving important values related to law, codes and practices happens through following a roughly logical method. The logic and its play occurs in a closed environment, but it still remains logic and argumentation. The reason is not much absent from religious doctrines as they were developed and implemented for some purposes related to the fulfilment of basic values important for the given society.

A very important assumption or rather postulate related to Islamist thought is the belief in common interests of all Muslims in the world without any major contradictions. This implies that all the Muslims can live together, progress and advance through mutual cooperation and form alliance against the Non-Muslim states as the need may come. There is some truth related to this assumption. The Islam is a religion of book and its basic value system and norms, rules and regulations have been defined in the Quran and Hadith. So, there are some basic values, rites, rituals, practices and festivals that are observed by Muslims throughout the world. There is some unity displayed by Muslims on matters in which injustice has been believed to be done on Muslim population by Non-Muslim ruling elite of some Non-Muslim state. The case of Pan Arab unity on Palestine issue and the support given to the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar are important instances in this regard. However, the world is much more than a fairy tale of desired alliances and groupings into one preferred identity. Factionalism has ruled the roost in all major civilizations that have taken birth and developed in human history. This is because the space required by human ambitions is too big to be filled by the precepts of given idea or concept and Islam is no exception. There have consistent wars and events related to bitterness between Shias and Sunnis in many Islamic countries. They have developed many concepts and principles that tends to strongly exclude the other. The importance of *sectarian conflicts* in increasing wedge among the members of community that is difficult to bridge can be understood only through proper application of constructivist perspective. The sects see themselves as an important member of given identity. When there is conflict between two sects about the truth of given faith, there is tendency to develop an epistemological and ontological framework by the sects that is powerful enough to exclude the members of other sects from being labeled as member of given faith. Thus, sectarian conflicts do give rise to strong identity crisis in the members of rival sects and this leads to

development of very strong tendency to exclude each other from membership of the larger faith. The history of conflict has tendency to breed upon itself and this makes it difficult for the members of the community to come out of the shadow of its past conflicts. This is very relevant in case of Pakistan as the ruling establishment must have sought to know the impact of promotion of Wahabism on the already fragile relations between Shias and Sunnis. This had to be interpreted by Zia regime in the light of the fact that 20% of the Muslims in Pakistan are Shias. Thus, Shia-Sunni fracture is an important aspect of good relationship in Pakistan.

Another important assumption on which Zia ul Haq regime carried forward its policy was the utility of the pro American policy in maintaining his own rule. This is because support of America was necessary to quell all the necessary pressure in domestic spheres of policy. The supply of large economic aid also strengthened his position in comparison to his political rivals. This was very important factor that led support of Islamization as Islamization was rightly perceived by the strategists of U.S. as an important weapon to free Afghanistan from Russia. This required setting up of training camps in Pakistan and recruitment of youths for this objective. There was supply of large amounts of arms and ammunitions to such camps and this helped in creation of strong network of militant organizations throughout Pakistan. The U.S. policy failed to estimate the damage that may occur to global security by radicalization of Islam with more than 20% of the World population being Muslims. The U.S. policy may have been beneficial in short run, but it was destined to prove highly disadvantageous in the long run as these groups have been directly or indirectly linked in numerous terrorist attacks in Europe and U.S., besides the attack on World Trade Centre in United States on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001. The definition of U.S. interests in the 1980s is an important aspect of Realist attitude towards time. Realism has tendency to protect its national interests and its analysis for such purpose is excellent, except for the fact that it is short sighted. The foreign policy makers and diplomats are realists in true sense as they have to justify their acts in terms of fulfilment of National Interests in relatively short span of time. Thus, construction of time involving great depreciation of the future, has tendency to make strong successful policy in short run but the cost of which may exceed all the earlier benefits in the long run.

Zia ul Haq had done important calculation related to the fulfilment of national interest of Pakistan in Afghanistan. Pakistan had very tense relationship with Afghanistan as there was strong sense of resentment among the Afghans, against the Durand Line which was drawn in 1893 by the British. Afghanistan had contended that Durand line makes the Pashtun regions to go in British India and later Pakistan, while the Afghans have greater claim over this region as the

people are culturally and linguistically linked to Afghanistan, rather than with any other ethnicity of Pakistan. By rise of Mujahidins, Zia wanted to develop a strong segment of Muslim groups in Afghanistan that would be allied with Pakistan against the interests of Afghan government. He wanted to achieve what has been called in Pakistan as *Strategic Depth* in Afghanistan. Zia erred in thinking about the potential of leveraging plurality of warlords who share religious identity and territorial contiguity over long period of time. This is because warlords have their own goals and interests and they are not bound to follow the principles of Islamic solidarity against the rival warlord who also was a Muslim. This is an instance of application of hypothesis of *Insignificance of Commons* which implies that in case of very common identity factor defining a large group with great factions, that very factor of identity tends to lose its value as it becomes obvious and lacks the potential to develop differentiation among the members of different factions. Thus, Muslims in conflict in Afghanistan and Khyber Pakhtunwa region of Pakistan would not have combined only because of their Islamic identity.

Zia had the sense of opportunity in Islamism as he felt that the war against the Soviets would strengthen the image of Pakistan among the Gulf States and other Muslim states, as a protector and preserver of Islam. He wanted to use this image to corner the image of India that had large following among the developing countries on the principles of Non-Alignment Movement. Zia ul Haq wanted to use Pan-Islamism for the benefits of Pakistan. Zia erred in overlooking the heterogeneities inherent in Islam and strong differences, tensions and conflicts that were still happening in the Muslim world. He should have learnt about the limitations of Pan-Islamism when two Shia majority states of Iraq and Iran, the former under Sunni ruler Saddam Hussain and the latter under Shia leader Ayatollah Khomeini, indulged in eight years long war from 1980 to 1988 resulting in loss of lakhs of lives and loss of great amount of property.

#### IMPACT OF ISLAMIZATION OF PAKISTAN

Zia ul Haq may also have overestimated the potential of Pakistani state to contain the rise of religious leaders. Definitely, the religious leaders sound more nationalistic as they have no leniency towards the perceived arch enemy of Pakistan, i.e. India. But, hatred towards an enemy can never become very strong reason of nationalism as there is lack of focus on positive development related to welfare based on balanced approach to modernity and technological development in such discourse. The religious leaders were more eager to shape the entire legal system and socio-cultural value set as per the dictates of Islam. They wished to live in 7<sup>th</sup> century while the world was moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They failed to appreciate the importance of modern

legislations that requires removal, modification and adjustment of traditional laws of different societies, religions, tribes and ethnicities.

The reign of Zia ul Haq also transformed Pakistani Military that changed its nature from primarily a British institution of relatively western manners and tastes to more of an Islamic institution with strict adherence of Islamic norms, values and principles. The inculcation of Islamic values was aimed to increase the discipline in the Army. The result was positive in the sense that it increased their motivation against India and they were ready for even greater sacrifices. However, it lessened their focus on military aspects of their service and shifted it to religious aspects. This caused decline in efficiency of Pakistani army. It also increased the value of religious clerics in the army and number of soldiers became inclined to one group or the other. This has led to strong nexus of fundamentalist forces and the military in Pakistan.

The condition of Hindus have become even worse in Pakistan due to reforms introduced in Zias regime. It is taught that Hindus are ethically and religiously inferior to Muslims and the task of Pakistan is to capture India and convert it into Islamic state. The Hindus suffer from great discrimination and there have been numerous cases of forced conversions of Hindus and abductions of Hindu females who have been converted by being married to Muslims. The angry spirit of revenge generated due to many defeats suffered by Pakistan from the hands of India seems to be deflected to innocent Hindus living in Pakistan as Hindus are often clubbed as Indians in Pakistan.

Constructive interpretation of impact of Zia ul Haq regime is very important as the changes introduced during his regime continue to cast its impact on the contemporary political discourse of Pakistan. The Islamization of education, military and civilian institutions that occurred during his regime still flourishes in Pakistan. The militants trained in Afghanistan have been deployed by Pakistan against India in Kashmir. The Pakistani establishment thought that it would put substantial pressure on India by using such militants in Kashmir. Though Pakistan has been able to cause loss of thousands of lives and great damage to property, it has not been successful in altering the stated position of India on Kashmir. Pakistan has suffered from increasing fissures in its own domestic policy as there has been increase in tensions between Shia and Sunni elements in Pakistan. The introduction of Wahabi Islam has caused tremendous upheavals in the traditional Sunni society as the Sufi saints have been sidelined in the Wahabi interpretation of Islam. There is thus increased conflict between Deobandi School that supports Wahabi interpretation and Barelvi School that has high level of respect for the Sufi saints. The Wahabi interpretation strongly contends that the textual interpretation

of Islam alone matters while the Sufi tradition lays great focus on the mystical elements inherent in Islam. There is greater scope of accommodation and flexibility with changing times in Sufi tradition as opposed to the Wahabi tradition.

The position of women in Pakistani society has declined to great extent with the advent of strong implementation of Islamic doctrines, laws, rules and regulations. The code related to strict adherence on traditional Islamic dress for women has been strongly implemented since the times of Zia ul Haq. The implementation of Huddood ordinance has increased the trouble in lives of Muslim women as there is no practical redressal for rape victim. The woman who has alleged that she has been raped is required to have 4 male witnesses who must testify in her favour. If she fails, she is committed guilty of adultery and punished. The requirement of such testimony is simply not fulfilled in many cases as rape is mostly committed in private and not in public.

The greatest impact of Zia ul Haq regime in contemporary context is the ever rising temperature of religious discourse that has scant respect for other sects, leave asides minority Non-Islamic groups. The terrorist organizations like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi specialize in attacking other Islamic sects and this has resulted in loss of numerous lives in Pakistan. The rising tensions among sects of Pakistan are cause of great concern for Pakistani establishment.

The relationship between Pakistan and India has suffered much more due to growing Islamism. India and Pakistan did not have good relationship since the creation of Pakistan in 1947. There had been 3 wars and all three were lost by Pakistan. Pakistan has spirit of strong resentment against India. But after dawn of Zias era, the relationship has been further degraded by the rise of Islamist groups that have advocated the doctrine of consistent struggle against India. These groups maintain that the task of Pakistan is to fight against India and convert all of its population into Muslims. India is mentioned as Dar-ul-Harb in these texts and the aim is to convert it into Dar ul Islam which is the region where Islam is observed. There can be no question of peaceful relationship with India on such terms. The attacks by Pakistan on Indian soil have further soured the relationship as India has very low level of trust in Pakistan.

#### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND CHINA**

The post Zia ul Haq era has been marked by continued good relationship between Pakistan and China. China believes that it can contain India by supporting Pakistan as it will increase the pressure on the borders of India. China has consistently supported Pakistan when other states have tried to increase pressure on Pakistan for taking steps against the terrorist groups that are established in Pakistan and operate their activities from Pakistan. China also sees Pakistan as an opportunity for investment and an

important part of development of One Belt, One Trade route. The development of such a trade route will reduce transportation cost and time for Chinese goods to reach West Asia and Europe. This will further enhance the competitive potential of China. China also aims to encircle India through development of ports in neighbouring states of India. The ports like Sittawe in Myanmar, Chitagon in Bangladesh, Hambantota in Sri Lanka and Gwadar in Pakistan. This policy has been called as *String of Pearls*.

Though these are strategic dimensions of Chinese policy, an important factor is the reluctance of Pakistani religious clerics to criticize China for strong measures against Islam in Xinziang province. Xinziang is a Muslim majority province, but China has allowed settlement of large number of Han Chinese in the state. It has also imposed strict restrictions against Muslims as they are forbidden to observe fasting during the month of Ramadan and adoption of Arabic names by the Muslims who are required to have only Chinese names. Pakistani clerics, so vocal about the Muslim community in the world called as Ummah, are quite silent on such matters. Its claim of representing Muslims against any encroachment of their rights and aim to spread Islam are all made to recede into the background. This is because the Muslims of Pakistan cannot lose a strong friend like China that has supported it in all its endeavours since 1963. China has very large economy and boasts of an economy five times greater than that of India. Its support is crucial in framing any policy against India. This shows the impact of external forces on the ability of actor to shape an identity and construction of identity like many other political development, is influenced by the notions of compromises for the sake of self-interests defined in strategic, economic and diplomatic terms. Thus, constructivist analysis is evaluation of role of an actor and an institution in development of some self-concepts and labelling of other groups and states by means of interaction of different players and actors in complex dynamics of economy, culture, religion, ethnicity and polity.

## CONCLUSION

The regime of Zia ul Haq is very important in locating the dynamics of Islamic identity in Pakistan in the contemporary times. The regime shows the operation of Construction of identity due to interaction of ideational and material factors. The role of geo-strategic, economic, religious, political forces and leadership of given individual is crucial in understanding the fluidity of identity, i.e. potential of identity to acquire new shape with changing times. The Islamization of Pakistan may have created benefits in short run as it assured great economic assistance from U.S.; increased the image of Pakistan in Gulf countries; developed an army of religious fighters who were mobilized against

India and there were indeed many cuts given to India under Pakistani strategy of bleeding India through thousand cuts and it gave additional advantage in Afghanistan. But, it has proved to be very costly in the long run as it has made Pakistan into epicenter of Global Terrorism; created tensions and conflicts among different Islamic sects in Pakistan; further weakened the institutionalized aspects of Pakistani polity as it led to penetration of fundamentalist forces and also affected the relation of Pakistan with other Gulf states because of disturbance created in such states by terrorist groups that have some link or the other in Pakistan. Thus, Islamization has proved to be roadblock in successful evolution of Pakistani polity and it has even failed to command respect among the Muslim states mainly due to lack of appreciation of the fact that Pakistan, with just 13% of the global Muslim population and not being the place of origin of Islam, cannot write the rules of Islam. Islamization has proved to be futile effort of fitting in all the modern development of science, technology, law and culture of the previous two to three centuries within the framework of Islamist Jurisprudence of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century.

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