

Exploring the Dual Dimensions of *Tehrik-i Nifaz-i Nizam-i Mustafa*: An Agitational Movement for Islamic Law

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Abstract

Tehrik-i Nifaz-i Nizam-i Mustafa was a bifacial movement apparently launched for the establishment of Nizam e Mustafa nonetheless targeting political objectives through agitational strategies. The paper argues that the movement was launched by the nine political parties aiming at their political ambitions under religious cover. The religious slogans employed by Pakistan National Alliance popularly known as Tehrik-i Nifaz-i Nizam-i Mustafa, were used as an agitational strategy to manipulate the religious sentiments of the common people. This agitational strategy proved successful and resulted in massive public participation in the movement that was impossible to achieve, otherwise. The research also highlights that even though the movement ended into another martial law regime in Pakistan but can be counted as successful because of its both targets achieved; to end the Bhutto government and implementation of Nizam-i Mustafa.

Key Words: Islamization, Pakistan People's Party, Political Party, Tehrik-i Nifaz-i Nizam-i Mustafa, Z. A. Bhutto

Introduction

Tehrik-i Nifaz-i Nizam-i Mustafa, also known as the movement for the implementation of Prophet's system (henceforth referred to as TNNM), was started by the Pakistan National Alliance (henceforth referred to as PNA), an



electoral coalition that opposed the Pakistan People's Party (henceforth referred to as PPP), which was in power at the time. Following the 1977 elections, the alliance charged PPP Prime Minister Z. A. Bhutto of significant electoral manipulation that led to a landslide win.¹ The campaign came to an end on July 5, 1977, when Gen. Zia-ul Haq imposed the third martial law of Pakistan's history, besides the numerous dialogue meetings between the coalition and the PPP administration. In contrast to Z. A. Bhutto's socialist and popular persona, the PNA's election campaign emphasized the application of Shari'a throughout the country. Thus, in addition to calling for reelections, the PNA's TNNM also highlighted the need for the application of the Nizam-i Mustafa means system, which was introduced by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. This gave the TNNM a dual role to play—political and religious—which led to significant historical changes in Pakistan: Islamization and ten years of martial law. Interestingly, the PNA was a cooperative initiative amongst liberal, secular, religious, and democratic parties in Pakistan, and because of their disparate origins, they used religious slogans to draw attention from the people. Thus, this paper contends that TNNM was a bifacial movement that had a dual, often strange, and paradoxical goal that led to both the overthrow of Z. A. Bhutto's populist government and his own military dictatorship.

Pakistan National Alliance

Nine national political parties banded up on January 10, 1977, to challenge the PPP in the general elections. All of the major political parties, with the exception of the Muslim League (Qayyum), came together to form an alliance against the PPP at Rafiq Ahmad Bajwa's Lahore home.² Apart from discussing the topic, this meeting also finalized the distribution of seats for the PNA elections, awarding Tehrik-i Istaqlal Party (henceforth referred to as TIP) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (henceforth referred to as JUP) 50% of the seats.³ Ironically, TIP was labeled as secular party while JUP represented the religious faction of the society but both joined hands against the PPP in elections. JUP was given the right to select the secretary General of the

alliance, while the central parliamentary board of the TNNM comprised of the chairmen of all the member political parties.⁴ The alliance comprised of Pakistan Muslim League (henceforth referred as PML) known as traditionalist political party; National Democratic Party (henceforth referred as NDP) and Pakistan Democratic Party (henceforth referred as PDP) known for their leftist orientation; Jamaat-i Islami (henceforth referred as JI), Jamiat Ulema-i Islam (henceforth referred as JUI) and JUP known as religious political parties; TIP known as a secular political party comprising of retired government employees especially military and judiciary officers; and Khaksar Movement (henceforth referred as KM) and Kashmir Muslim Conference (henceforth referred as KMC), relatively less known parties.⁵ They had nothing in common other than their political hostility to Z. A. Bhutto, which was the only thing that brought this diverse coalition together.⁶ The popularity and charisma of Z. A. Bhutto, whose populist motto of "roti, kapra, and makan" (food, clothes, and shelter) gave him enormous access to public opinion and appeal, while the alliance parties lacked similar popularity, is likely one of the reasons for this eclectic partnership.⁷ Since the religious politics of JI, JUI, and JUP could never win over the Pakistani people as a whole, they have mostly targeted Karachi's economic community.⁸ The primary readers of JI's story are the immigrants who arrived in Pakistan in 1947; they are primarily from the urban class and have always associated Pakistan with Islam. The TIP stood for the urban and rural industrialists, bureaucrats, and retired army men who comprised the bourgeois and elite class of society.⁹ Right-wing politician Asghar Ali Khan, a retired Air Force Chief Marshall, led the party. The labor force, peasants, and lower wage classes in Pakistani society did not accept the TIP leadership, unlike the PPP, and they were never able to catch up to the common masses. Sherbaz Mazari, the head of a group of independent members of the National Assembly, founded the NDP in Dera Ghazi Khan in 1975. This party was founded in order to weaken the backing that the National Awami Party (henceforth

referred to as NAP) received in Baluchistan and KPK (formerly known as NWFP).¹⁰

In addition to having antecedents that are disparate or incongruous, these parties united against the PPP in the 1977 elections. The distribution of tickets was made equally between the liberal and religious parties; the liberal parties received 51% of the seats, while the religious parties received 49%. The liberal parties obtained 36 tickets for PML, TIP 30, PDP 13, and KM for two seats; the religious parties received 31 tickets for JI, JUP 23 and JUI for 24 seats.¹¹ Z. A. Bhutto emerged victorious from the 1977 elections, with the PPP securing 155 of the 200 seats in the National Assembly while the PNA managed to capture only 36 seats.¹² The PNA was an electoral alliance before this loss, but under the pretext of protesting against electoral cheating and then announcing the demand for Islamic Shari'a, it evolved into an agitational movement against the PPP government.

Objectives of the Movement

The Workers Party, the Pakhtunkhwa National Awami Party, Mazdur Mahaz, the Sindhi People's Movement, and the Sindh Peasants Committee were among the non-PNA leftist political parties that supported and participated in the TNNM in addition to the PNA.¹³ These parties ran separate campaigns in the 1977 elections, although they also teamed up with PNA after the announcement of TNNM. These communist parties' involvement in TNNM indicates that the movement's early focus was solely on electoral tampering and ignored the implementation's religious demands. Although the alliance included religious groups who supported the implementation of Shari'a, this was not the movement's primary goal. The apparently modern parties simply allowed the traditionalist parties to use the religious card in an attempt to draw ever-greater attention to themselves, in order to successfully petition the people for support of their cause.¹⁴ The campaign was started in opposition to the PPP government's electoral cheating, and the alliance later added the slogan to implement Shari'a. Z. A. Bhutto's dominant personality garnered him significant political opposition,

which gave rise to TNNM in 1977. They also highlighted the secular aspect of Z. A. Bhutto's persona, while raising the well-known slogan of his socialism, which religious parties saw as being anti-Islamic. This slogan demanded Nifaz-i Nizam-i Mustafa, which was never endorsed by the liberal and secular parties in the alliance.¹⁵ The movement that was initiated on a democratic base ended up in demanding for the implementation of Shari'a.¹⁶ Following then, the movement was only perceived as one supporting Islamic causes.¹⁷ No one from the TNNM leadership took Prime Minister Z. A. Bhutto's promise to form an advisory council to oversee the application of Shari'a in the country, seriously or considered joining it; instead, they saw it as a ploy by the government to sidestep the crucial matter of reelection during a meeting with PNA leadership on April 17, 1977.¹⁸ The TNNM leadership made mostly political demands rather than religious ones. The TNNM leadership presented the PPP government with about thirty demands, which included the resignation of Z.A. Bhutto, the newly elected prime minister,¹⁹ re-election under military and judicial supervision,²⁰ lifting of civilian martial law, lifting of press censorship, and the release of over fifty thousand political prisoners.²¹ In response to TNNM's requests, the PPP government offered to engage in negotiations on these matters; however, the TNNM leadership refused to put their faith in the PPP government and insisted on three demands before engaging in talks with the government. Maulana Mufti Mehmud, the leader of the JUI, called for Z. A. Bhutto's resignation as Prime Minister, the removal of the electoral commission, and the postponement of the most recent elections.²² As a condition for the negotiations with the government, TIP leader Asghar Khan later added two more requests on March 20. These demands included lifting the civilian martial law and freeing the political prisoners.²³ Not one of these demands called for the application of Shari'a. Maulana Mufti Mehmud reaffirmed his demands on March 24 and turned down the government's third invitation to roundtable discussions.

The Agitational Aspect of the Movement

The TNNM leadership saw the religious card as their only means of inciting widespread agitation inside the movement, particularly in the Punjab. Due to its size and strong influence in all spheres of government—economic, social, and military—Punjab has historically played a vital role in large-scale political movements aimed at toppling the governments. Although the political parties involved in the TNNM movement enjoyed local popularity in their own regions, the backing of the majority of Punjab's population was necessary to compel Z. A. Bhutto's populist administration to quit. And it took the deployment of a religious slogan to win their unwavering support for such a varied alliance. Mosques were chosen as the primary locations for the TNNM demonstrations in order to draw in the lower middle class of society.²⁴ Without providing context, Bhutto's infamously famous remark, "I drank wine, not people's blood," was completely misused, and the religious establishment heightened popular sentiment as though they were about to engage in Jihad against a "devil's regime."²⁵ Mosques are places of religious sanctity, and this one was used to expose the anti-Islamic views of PPP's socialist and liberal leadership. The public's outrage and violence caused by this tactic left the government with no other choice but to impose section 144.²⁶ The lives and property of the general public were at danger because these aggressive crowds would harm anyone in the name of Islam. This compelled Z. A. Bhutto to request assistance from the army in preserving the country's law and order. The well-known catchphrase "Islam is in danger" was ingrained in the public consciousness to the point where taking part in the TNNM amounted to fulfilling a religious duty to "worship God."²⁷ The PPP government initially attempted to stop the movement by using its authority and control, but this only served to inflame public unrest, leading them to start offering arrests on a voluntary basis. The public's desire for the implementation of Nizam-i Mustafa was so strong that, in an effort to emphasize that whatever they were doing was to defend Islam against the kufr (blasphemy), some volunteers while offering themselves to police arrest, even wore marigold garlands around their necks or held the Holy Quran in their

hands.²⁸ Because of the public's unwavering commitment to the cause, the TNNM protestors beat Maulana Saeed Naqshbandi, the Imam of the Data Darbar's mosque in Lahore, when he tried to stop them from using the mosque for political purposes.²⁹ The TNNM leadership defended the mosque's political use by arguing that politics and Islam are inextricably linked and that during the time of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the revered caliphs, the mosque served as the political hub. In an attempt to dissuade TNNM employees from utilizing mosques as political platforms, the administration also stirred up opposition among the populace. When police intervened on March 30 to stop individuals from screaming anti-government chants from the mosque and detained TNNM workers, including their leadership, the government was met with severe popular outrage and violent reactions. TNNM's public momentum diverged from the goals established by its predominantly liberal and secular leadership.³⁰ The TNNM leadership presented a religious front in public but made political demands in the talks with the government.

The Negotiations

The TNNM leadership's displays of agitation and public violence compelled the PPP administration to reconvene for talks. Z. A. Bhutto proposed political remedies such as re-election and referendum to fulfill the movement's objectives, which remained primarily political because the movement was started following the 1977 elections in opposition to the government's alleged manipulation of the results. However, despite six rounds of continuous negotiations, the discontent was not being subdued. Then Mr. Bhutto considered using the religious card as well. For this reason, he ordered the immediate outlawing of alcoholic beverages, outlawed gambling, and suggested the stringent application of Shari'a to make the society close to the Islamic ideal. He established a panel to amend the current legal system in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah.³¹ Bhutto reiterated his earlier political promise to hold new parliamentary elections if the opposition won, even though he was aware of the importance and impact of these religious

declarations on the populace.³² Throughout his negotiations with the leadership of TNNM and in his public remarks, Bhutto consistently pledged to enact Islamic laws.³³ To show his sincerity Bhutto government introduced a measure banning wine on 11 May. However, the TNNM leadership felt that these actions by the PPP government were insufficient, and they flatly refused to reach a consensus with the government on these issues.³⁴ Despite the PPP government's best efforts, they were unable to hold fruitful talks with the TNNM leadership because of the public's religious wrath. The government thus sought to play more religious cards in order to achieve this political purpose. For example, it removed the word "socialism" from the PPP manifesto and other publications and substituted it with the phrase "Musawat-i Muhammadi," which translates to "equality of Muhammad (PBUH)." Though Bhutto had to make these adjustments because they were necessary at the time and went against the campaign slogan that said "socialism is our economy, Islam is our religion, and democracy is our constitution."³⁵ In addition, he carried on some of his earlier religious pledges to the people, such as establishing the Federal Ulema Academy and other institutions of a similar nature to further the research and Ijtihad (the Arabic word for striving) culture;³⁶ declaring Friday a weekly holiday; and bringing the teachings of the Holy Quran to the forefront of social life agendas through education and the media. It's odd that these religious concerns were all restricted to talks in public. During their dialogue, the government and the leadership of the TNNM both kept quiet about religious matters and concentrated on issues like PM Bhutto's resignation, the date of the next election, the creation of the interim government, etc.³⁷ The administration was prepared to call new elections, but both parties were primarily concerned about the date. The leadership of TNNM desired immediate elections in less than 30 days, but Mr. Bhutto aspired to extend his term to regain popular favor. It's interesting to note that while religious leadership like Professor Ghafoor Ahmad and Mufti Mehmood sought to effectively conclude the political

dialogues with the government guaranteeing re-election, liberals like Asghar Khan took a strong stance about the election schedule. The opposition's demand for new elections in November was granted by the administration.³⁸ It was decided to leave minor electoral machinery matters up for discussion. The TNNM leadership decided to back down from their desire to temporarily replace Bhutto on June 14.³⁹

On June 16, after all issues had been resolved by both parties, it was decided to draft a formal agreement.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Mr. Bhutto made a public announcement to call fresh elections in response to demands from the opposition. The government and TNNM representatives continued to process the signed agreement on June 24.⁴¹ The final written agreement was available for both parties to sign until July 2nd, at which point Mr. Bhutto and TNNM leader Mufti Mehmood were expected to sign it.⁴² However, the Asghar Khan-led group was not happy with the outcome.⁴³ The circumstances changed as a result of this antagonism within the opposition. Asghar Khan complained, saying that their requests had not been followed when it came to the release of political detainees. In response, PNA Secretary-General Ghafoor Ahmad stated that all major issues had been resolved through discussion and agreement. The movement's primary goal was to hold free and fair elections, which the government had promised in writing.⁴⁴ The public processions did not reflect religious concerns; rather, the controversy revolved around political matters. The National Assembly's dissolution, which the administration wanted in June while the opposition remained in place for the next week, the army's return to its barracks from Baluchistan, and other outstanding concerns between the sitting government and the TNNM leaders, the opposition insisted on for the following month, but the administration desired in November.⁴⁵ These were actually trivial concerns; the real win for the TNNM leadership would have been a re-election on the desired date and under their prescribed conditions, but because of needless stubbornness, the movement was unable to accomplish its objectives and martial law was imposed. Following the imposition of martial law, the PNA

parties fell apart on matters like as foreign policy, privatization of the industrial and educational sectors, election schedules, and Islamization. The first party to leave the PNA was TIP, followed quickly by JUP, and later on, PML and NDP divided into divisions.⁴⁶

Conclusion

Regarding the usage of religious slogans, the TNNM movement was not an exception, but 1977 marked a very significant turning point in its political evolution. The year saw an early election, which was called because Mr. Bhutto was confident his party would win handily. But the outcome was not in his favor; an organized agitational campaign was enough to topple his administration and, unfortunately, bring about the declaration of yet another round of martial law. This third, and ultimately most significant martial law, fundamentally changed the course of the nation's history. To this day, the military government's Islamization and Jihad strategy are the most hotly contested initiatives. Although the movement used the motto "Shari'a implementation," its true goals were political rather than religious. The movement is bifacial because of the discrepancy between its true motivation and its outward claim. Regretfully, neither political nor religious issues are treated fairly by Pakistan's religio-political movements. Their hypocrisy simply serves to further muddle the public's understanding of the nation's religio-political objectives.

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