

## A Political Romance of Islamic Parties in Pakistan: An Analytical Study

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PNA- January 05, 1977--- January 24, 1978.

1.	Jamat-e-Islami (JI)
2.	Tehrik e Istiqlal (TI)
3.	Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI)
4.	Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP)
5.	National Democratic Party (NDP)
6.	Baluchistan National Party (BNP)
7.	Muslim League (Qayyum) (ML-Q)
8.	Muslim League (Functional) (ML-F)
9.	Pakistan Democratic Party (PDP)



Election 1977 Party Position	Votes	%	Seats
PPP	10,148,040	60.1	155
PNA	6,032,062	35.7	36
PML (Qayyum)			1
Other parties	709,081	4.1	0
Independents			8
Women and Minority Seats	–	–	16
Invalid/votes		–	–
Total	16,889,183	100	216
Registered voters/turnout	30,899,152		–

### Abstract

It's a historical fact that Bhutto government introduced a number of reforms for the development of the country. However, as far as concentration of powers and prolonging his rule is concerned, he was no less than a dictator. His concentration of powers in his own



person even created differences within his own party. On the other hand, the rapidly increasing inflation and law and order issues particularly the murder of some well-known personalities led to anti-Bhutto sentiments among the people. It was in these circumstances that his political opponents started a propaganda against his governance style. In the start of 1977, Bhutto announced elections before the expiry of the already serving assemblies. The opposition parties formed an electoral alliance called Pakistan National Alliance<sup>1</sup> (PNA). The Alliance consisted of nine parties with a diverse set of ideologies, backgrounds, and political goals. The PNA started propaganda against the governance style of Bhutto and alleged that Bhutto would rig the upcoming elections. Despite the fact that the nine political parties adhered to different socio-political values, a slogan to Islamize the political system of the country was the most common factor among them. Thus, they promised that they will enforce Islamic laws (Nizam-e-Mustafa) and Sharia if came into power. Opposition to the autocratic rule by Bhutto and his party PPP seemed to be the main force holding the otherwise diverse nine political parties together.

**Keywords:** Politics, Agitation, Election, Parliament & Parliamentary. Operation Fair Play

### **Introduction**

On January 7, 1977, the then Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto advised the president of the country to dissolve National Assembly as well as the provincial assemblies so that fresh elections may be held. Reacting to this announcement, nine opposition parties, having little in common ideologically, formed an electoral alliance called Pakistan National Alliance.<sup>1</sup> (B. Ahmad

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<sup>1</sup> The Nine political parties are also known as Nine Starts.

2018, 37). Jamiat-al-Ulama-i-Islami's (JUI) chief Mufti Mahmud, National Democratic Party's (NDP) Wali Khan, Tehrik-e-Istiqlal's (TI) Asghar Khan, Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) Amir Maulana Abu A'ala Maududi, Jamiat-al-Ulama-i-Pakistan's (JUP) Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, and Pir Sahib of Pagaroo. PPP contested the elections with the symbol of Sword while PNA's election symbol was Plough. According to the results announced, PPP won a clear majority of seats in the National Assembly elections held on March 7 1977. While leveling rigging elections, the PNA boycotted the provincial elections to be held on March 10 and started protests.

After the elections, the then Information Minister Kasur Niazi gave details of "Operation Victory<sup>2</sup>." Niazi confessed that PNA was the major topic of discussions among Bhutto and his companions. Niazi said that while sitting with Bhutto, the later asked Hafeez Pirzada about the number of disputed seats. To this, Pirzada responded by telling Bhutto that the number of disputed seats was between 30 and 40. Hearing this, Bhutto agreed to hold by-elections on these seats without nominating PPP candidates on these seats. He directed Pirzada to hold dialogue with the opposition and asked him whether the opposition parties will be happy with this arrangement.<sup>2</sup>

Bhutto's plan was to win 2/3 of the seats so he may rule the country smoothly.<sup>3</sup> Nineteen of PPP's candidates had been declared winners unopposed. Thus, PPP won surprisingly high number of seats while PNA's seats were much below then generally expected. Therefore, PNA rejected the results of National Assembly and declared to start a protest movement against the government. It finalized its plan on 12<sup>th</sup> March and launched its protest movement against Bhutto two days later. In the initial stage, 28 people died on a single day when protests were held on Friday.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's plan for winning the 1977 elections against PNA.

On 13<sup>th</sup> March, PNA leadership wrote a letter to Bhutto in which it demanded of him to resign, reconstitute the election commission, and hold fresh elections under the supervision of judiciary and army.<sup>5</sup> The government did not pay much heed to these demands and the president summoned National Assembly's session on 20<sup>th</sup> March. This further infuriated the opposition which in reaction accelerated the protest against the government. On 28<sup>th</sup> March, Bhutto took fresh oath and at the same time invited the opposition for talks. Provincial cabinets were also sworn in between April 3 and April 10. On the one hand, federal and provincial cabinets were formed, on the other hand, police started crackdown on opposition. Thus, situation went from bad to worse. In these circumstances, the armed forces on April 27 announced its support to the Bhutto Government. Bhutto responded to this development by writing a letter to the then army chief response to armed General Zia-ul- Haq in which he appreciated armed forces' role, its patriotism, impartiality and sense of responsibility.<sup>6</sup>

Now emboldened by the public support of armed forces, Bhutto offered to hold a referendum on the question of elections. However, PNA leadership rejected this offer the opposition<sup>7</sup>. Thus, the deadlock between the government and the opposition continued. In this situation, Asghar Khan on May 4 wrote a letter the chairman joint chief of staff committee urging armed forces to serve the nation only and work for the defense and solidarity of the country instead of serving the interests of specific personalities.<sup>8</sup>

The situation so much deteriorated that PNA's protests spread across the country and violation of curfew and section 144 became a normal practice. Damage to state property also became a routine matter. The government responded with much harsher approach and started arresting PNA leaders. It also leveled charges of terrorism against PNA leadership. According to some claims, one thousand people died in this movement and one lakh were sent to prison.<sup>9</sup>

Eventually; PNA Movement produced extremism across-country and violation of Curfew & Section 144 became a routine matter & damage the state property was declared a duty of public rallies. Government adopted strict policy on the arrests of PNA leaders and allegations of terrorism and intimidation were leveled against them. Professor Ghafoor Ahmad said, about 1000 persons achieved martyrdom and one hundred thousand persons were put in the prisons in PNA Movement.<sup>10</sup> When a journalist at a press conference asked Mufti Mahmud whether the movement was sponsored by foreign powers and whether they received 250 million rupees for this purpose, Mahmud with a smiley face responded by saying that the said amount has not yet been reach him and might have been snatched by Bhutto before reaching them.<sup>11</sup>

In these circumstances, the Supreme Court ordered the government to release leaders of PNA which to some extent reduced the tensions between the two camps. While foreseeing the threat ahead, Bhutto prepared a plan to enlist public support through a referendum under article 96-A<sup>3</sup> inserted in the Constitution through the 7<sup>th</sup> amendment. However, when some progress was noticed as a result of the dialogues between the government and the opposition, Bhutto changed his plan of a referendum. The progress in talks did not go further and thus once again deadlock occurred between the two sides. It was in these circumstances that the army top brass also started making a plan for the takeover of the country. Several meetings were held in this connection. When the talks between the government and the opposition

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<sup>3</sup> Article 96-A of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 (VII Amendment operational w.e.f. May 16, 1977) provided for a referendum. It stated that "If at any time the Prime Minister considers it necessary to obtain a vote of confidence of the people of Pakistan through a referendum he may advise the President to cause the matter to be referred to referendum in accordance with law made by Parliament."

saw a breakthrough and it was realized that the two sides will agree on an agreement soon, the high command of the army too had made its mind to take control of the government. The final phase of talks between the two sides was facilitated by Saudi Arab's Ambassador Sheikh Riaz and some other foreign diplomats.<sup>12</sup>

On June 12, chief of Army Staff General Zia met Bhutto and presented before him the option of enforcement of partial martial law. However, Bhutto did not agree with him on the ground that the constitution did not allow for martial law. On this, General Zia promptly responded by telling Bhutto that the constitution could be amended to make provision for martial law. General Zia further told Bhutto that they had no such intentions and that they were government's right hand always loyal to it.<sup>13</sup>

It was at this occasion that Bhutto for the first time sensed the threat. He curiously looked at General Zia and told him that he would consult his cabinet members in this regard. Responding to this, General Zia told Bhutto that the army would not be able to use force against the people in case protests intensified.<sup>14</sup> On this, Bhutto was deeply surprised and thus he cut the meeting with the army chief short. Later on, the then Attorney General Yahya Bakhtiar convinced Bhutto to opposition's demands. The months of April and May passed in opposition's protest while Bhutto tried his best to suppress the opposition by using Federal Security Force, Federal Investigation Agency, police force and the Rangers. In June, serious round of talks was resumed with opposition's main demand being fresh elections. The government was hesitant to accept this demand. Government's negotiation team consisted of Maulana Kasur Niazi, Abdul Hafeez Pirzada and Meraj Muhammad Khan. By this time, Bhutto too sensed the sensitivity of the matter and realized that country may go into deeper crises if the issue was not resolved. Thus, he directed Pirzada to resolve the issue as soon as possible.<sup>15</sup>

Though Bhutto wanted to end the deadlock but it was too late at the army's top brass had made its mind by now.

The religious parties proved of immense importance for General Zia to capture political power. As implementation of Sharia was a main slogan of the opposition parties in their struggle against Bhutto, General Zia saw in them prospective supporters for his future plans to rule the country with the slogan of Islamization. General Zia tried to cash the PNA's slogan of implementation of Tehrik-e-Nifaz-Mustafa<sup>4</sup>. General Zia, after taking political power in his hands, postponed elections on the pretext that he was fulfilling his duty to Islamize the system. He declared that his government would fulfil the responsibility of enforcing Sharia. He also wanted amendments in the 1973 constitution to Islamize it. Asghar Khan was considered to be much closer to the establishment and that he received huge money from the establishment to confront PPP. It was also he who urged the army to take over and hang Bhutto. After the Martial law, Asghar Khan stepped back and the front line. It was a known fact that General Zia was not in favor of western democracy. Thus, he increased powers of Council of Islamic Ideology, the Federal Shariat Court, issued Zakat Ordinance and held a convention of and Islamic scholars.<sup>16</sup> Because of these measures, general Zia was able to attract some religious figures toward himself and created a positive image of himself among religious circles. General Zia faced opposition from PPP but the PNA welcomes his religious policies. When political parties realized that General Zia was not going to fulfil his promise

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<sup>4</sup> The implementation of Islam was its primary election slogan. They promised to enforce Islamic laws "Nazam-e-Mustafa" and the Shariah Laws the PNA's parties were a conglomerate of diverse views and of contradictory causes and united by common dislike of PPP's autocratic policies. Contesting the 1977 elections jointly the PNA launched a national campaign against the government after the controversial and allegedly rigged results showing the PPP with an overwhelming victory in the General Elections.






of holding elections within 90 days, they started protest against him. Though martial law was in place, still politicians were to some extent allowed to criticize General Zia. General Zia's inclination toward the Saudi style Islamic system was also criticized by different schools of thought. The military regime formulated policies of its own liking but this damaged the structure of political parties in the country. He also started accountability through military courts and victimization of politicians. It was in these circumstances that there emerged Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) on the political horizon. MRD's demands were lifting of the martial law and holding of fresh elections and for its demands it also held demonstrations from time to time. However, General Zia remained busy in the state affairs and was not much worried about MRD's activities. In 1981, General Zia announced his handpicked consultative body called Majlis-Shura. Furthermore, he appointed Islamic minded figures on key positions. Similarly, he formed a special committee under Fida Muhammad Khan to present recommendations for political reforms. The committee presented recommendations in July 1982. According to this committee's recommendations, 60% of the members of the Majlis-i-Shura were to be directly elected, 20% will be technocrats and intellectuals, while 15% will be persons nominated by the president.<sup>17</sup> After the approval of Majlis-i-Shura, the report, called Fida Hussain Report, was submitted to the president for approval. However, the president rejected it and formed a new commission under Maulana Zafar Ahmad Ansari. This commission was criticized by various political and religious circles on different grounds.<sup>18</sup>

This commission basically paved the way for the introduction of presidential system in the country. It faced criticism from different quarters. Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) alleged the commission report to be based on incorrect interpretation of the Islamic principles.<sup>19</sup> Other political parties too rejected the Ansari Report. General Zia's real aim was to prolong his rule by

appointing different commissions and committees. Thus, in the light of recommendations of the Ansari Report, General Zia presented an eighteen-month long roadmap for reforms. He announced to hold non-part-based elections thus exposing his own political designs.<sup>20</sup>

General Zia also announced to amend the constitution so that elections may be held according to the Islamic system.<sup>21</sup> Zia claimed that his government enjoyed complete legal authority to make amendments in the constitution. Introducing amendments in the constitution was a long standing desire of General Zia and for fulfilling his desire he engaged Syed Shariffudin Pirzada and A.K. Brohi. Zia wanted to amend the constitution in a way to strengthen the office of the president.<sup>22</sup> It was also confirmed by Gen. Khalid Mahmud Arif who was a close aid of Zia and his cabinet member. The plan was to also give some constitutional role to the armed forces.<sup>23</sup>

**A comprehensive view of political parties' alliance with General Zia Govt.**

PNA Divergence				
Political Parties	Top leaders	Position	Color	Fate
Jamaat-e-Islami	Abu Ala Maududi. Muhammad Tufail	Right-Wing		In alliance with Zia
Pakistan Muslim League (PML)	Zahoor Elahi & Pir Pagara	Centre-Right		In alliance with Zia
Tehrik-e-Istiqlal	Asghar Khan	Right		In alliance with Zia
Jamat Ahle Sunnat	Ahsan Elahi Zaheer	Right		In alliance with Zia
Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan	Shah Ahmad Noorani	Right		In alliance with

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JUP				Zia
Milli Awami Party (MAP)	Mahmood Achakzai	Left		In alliance with Zia
Baluchistan National Party BNP	Akbar Bugatti	Left-Wing		neutrality with Zia
Awami National Party ANP	Abdul Wail Khan	Left		In opposition to Zia
Pakistan Democratic Party PDP	Nawabzada Nasrallah Khan	Centre-Right		In alliance with Zia

#### **Tehrik-e-Istiqlal:**

Air Marshal retired Muhammad Asghar Khan remained an opposition leader from 1969 to 1977. In the 1977 election, Tehrik-e-Istiqlal was a part of the electoral coalition called Pakistan National Alliance. It was Asghar Khan who in April 1977 wrote a letter to the army chief in which he urged the armed forces to capture political power due to the prevailing situation. Some political observers are believe that this letter might have emboldened General Zia to over through Bhutto's government and impose martial law. In July 1977, Asghar Khan addressed another letter to General Zia urging him to conduct a strict accountability of Bhutto government. He told General Zia that if he could not hold Bhutto to strict accountability then he (Bhutto) should be handed over to him (Asghar Khan) to hang him at the Attock Bridge.<sup>24</sup>

General Zia invited Asghar Khan to become part of the interim government but the later declined the offer. Asghar Khan then became critical of General Zia and would criticize him. Resultantly, he was put under house arrest for five years. He also joined MRD and kept criticizing General Zia's policies like the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) of 1981, the local bodies' elections, the referendum. He also boycotted the non-party based elections

under General Zia regime. Later, Asghar Khan also developed differences with his other political allies and thus left PNA and MRD.

There were two major reasons for the differences between General Zia and Asghar Khan. The first was the appointment of the caretaker prime minister. Asghar Khan wanted to be appointed the caretaker prime minister while General Zia was not ready for this. The second reason was that General Zia provided more positions to religious parties such as Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam and Jamat-e-Islami than Tehrik-e-Istiqlal. When his party failed to capture enough positions in the Zia administration, Asghar Khan blamed Zia of making joke with the people. He alleged that General Zia was using Islam for increasing his own powers.<sup>25</sup> Asghar Khan accused that the Zia government was black mailing political parties in the name of accountability. He termed the political reforms by General Zia to be exclusively for securing his own position rather than the good of the people or country. He blamed Zia for using resources and armed forces for perpetuating his own rule. He questioned whether Zia had any mandate to stay in power and whether his continuation in power was in the interest of the country. He also complained against the suffering of the country at the hands of generals.

#### **Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP)**

Allama Shah Ahmad Noorani was the chief of JUP. He opposed General Zia because the later was inclined toward Wahhabi Islam. Similarly, JUI also did not support the so-called anti-Soviet Jihad in Afghanistan after USSR invaded Afghanistan. In 1977 elections, JUP was a part of the PNA. It won seats from Karachi and Hyderabad. In the beginning, JUP welcomed General Zia but soon sensed his real plans and thus distanced itself from his government. It also demanded fresh elections in the country. When General Zia did not hold elections after long time, Noorani said that now General Zia had lost trust of the people.<sup>26</sup> Noorani complained that General Zia had promised general elections in the country but he held just local bodies'

elections. He further complained that they welcomed General Zia for ending Bhutto's government but now he started promoting his own agenda. He also accused General Zia of using Islam for political gains and as an armor.

### **Pakistan Democratic Party (PDP)**

The PDP was led by Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan. Its importance was because of its chief who had been an active player in politics since the creation of Pakistan. Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan started his political career from the office of Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam which was in the beginning inclined toward the Congress. Later, it developed nationalist tendencies.<sup>27</sup>

Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan was a very respectable name in the politics of Pakistan. He remained in Pakistani politics for more than half century. He joined politics during the 1946 elections. In 1977, he was a prominent figure in the Pakistan National Movement and was also part of its negotiation team. When General Zia proclaimed martial law in the country, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan joined hands with other democratic forces and became part of the MRD which was launched for the restoration of democratic system in the country.<sup>28</sup> The main objectives of the MRD were to restoration of the Constitution, ends of military courts and lifting of ban on political parties. Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan was among the main critics of General Zia. He first decided to boycott the 1985 elections under the Zia regime. However, he then realized that leaving the field empty for General Zia will hurt interests of MRD. He termed the whole political setup under General Zia as a fraud because as the constitution had been suspended. To him, holding of referendum, local bodies' elections, non-party-based elections, and the passage of the 8<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment were illegal and unconstitutional. It was the 8<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment which transferred political authority from the office of prime minister to that of the president.<sup>29</sup>

He questioned the legality of actions taken by General Zia after his martial law. He even accused General Zia of serving American interests. He equated

the 8<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment with the introduction of a new constitution. He said that presidential system was General Zia's personal desire.<sup>30</sup> He was of the view that there would be no need for martial law in case the constitution provided for balance between the president and the prime minister. For Pakistan, he preferred parliamentary system over the presidential one. Like many other politicians, he accused General Zia of using Islam for political gains.

### **Jamat-e-Islami (JI)**

Jamat-e-Islami was one of the most influential Islamist organizations during Zia regime. JI's Maulana Maududi and Mian Muhammad Tufail Ahmad enjoyed very cordial relations with General Zia and his team. JI also actively supported General Zia's Afghan policy. JI was the only major party which publicly supported the Afghan Jihad and even tried to take credit for it. In General Zia administration, JI got enough share. It also took part in the local bodies' elections and joined Zia's Majlis-i-Shura. JI also fully supported General Zia's referendum and the general elections to the National Assembly and provincial assemblies. JI's members also joined Muhammad Khan Junejo's cabinet. The 8<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment was also supported by JI and Mian Muhammad Tufail claimed that the amendment actually created a balance between the office of the prime minister and the president.<sup>31</sup>

Tufail said that people of the country voted for General Zia in the referendum and then he assumed powers through constitutional amendment, so he was the true representative of the people. JI's Naib Amir of JI, Ch. Rehmat too appreciated the passage of the 8<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment. He said that the amendment actually brought a balance between the powers held by the president and the prime minister. He rejected the criticism on JI by other parties. He said that other parties were terming JI as the B-team of General Zia but those parties too were the creation of a previous martial law. He added that there was no solution for the restoration of democracy other

than the 8<sup>th</sup> amendment. He blamed other political parties to be working on hypothesis without understanding the ground realities.<sup>32</sup>

Rehmat Ali said that implementation of Islamic system in the country was their main goal, so they worked closely with General Zia. He added that liberal and secular parties did not want Islamic system in Pakistan that is why they criticized JI. JI leaders claimed that imposition of martial law damaged the country and its reputation and a proper way to avoid it in the future was the passage of the 8<sup>th</sup> amendment. They said that political parties confront each other and then a third force takes advantage of the tense situation. They further claimed that they supported Zia regime and took part in referendum, Majlis-i-Shura elections etc. to avoid future martial law.<sup>33</sup> Their stance was that being a political party, they could not leave political field open for others as doing so would have enabled non-political forces to capture the space. They even said that they were not happy with the system but supporting it was the need of the day.

#### **National Democratic Party**

The National Democratic Party (NDP) was actually the new name given to of the National Awami Party (NAP) which was banned by the government of Bhutto. NAP leaders like Wali Khan had played an active opposition role in the National Assembly.<sup>34</sup> Wali Khan was always very critical of PPP's top leaders like Bhutto and in 1977, Bhutto Government had put under trial dozens of top PNA leaders including Wali Khan in Hyderabad jail. As the in-camera proceedings were taking place in the Hyderabad jail, so the trial came to be known as Hyderabad Trial. After the takeover, General Zia withdrew the charges against opposition leaders and released them from prison.<sup>35</sup>

During the Hyderabad Tribunal proceedings, Wali Khan was admitted in CMH for treatment. When General Zia visited the hospital to see Wali Khan, the later told him that there are two men and one grave. It is believed

that this phrase of Wali Khan also alerted General Zia against Bhutto in case he returned to power.<sup>36</sup> Later when General Zia prolonged his rule, Wali Khan joined the MRD against General Zia.

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