

Jamā't-e-Islāmī Pakistan's Role during the Zia Era (1977-1987): A Synthesis of Islamic Politics, Democracy and Pragmatism

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Abstract

The dominant perceptions about the Islamists are that of rigid, uncompromising and anti-democratic actors. The objective of this article was to ascertain the reality behind such claims. A case in point is *Jamā't-e-Islāmī* Pakistan (JI) which is blamed for its tactical support to the authoritarian regime of General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq during the years 1977-88, and resultantly being labelled as an anti-democratic force. Prominent works authored by distinguished scholars were explored to ascertain the reality behind this claim. One-to-one interviews were also conducted to cross-verify the facts. The party's decisions during this period were analytically reviewed with the help of background context. This study found that the main concerns of the party during the Zia period were the implementation of Nizam-e-Mustafa as demanded by the anti-Bhutto movement, early elections and avoidance of any confrontation with state institutions. When the party realized that the methods adopted by the incumbent regime contradicted JI's vision, the party stalwarts started criticizing the regime. Due to the Afghan issue and the previous experience of the Bhutto regime, the party did not join the opposition movement led by Pakistan Peoples Party. However, the party vehemently opposed the dictatorial stance of Zia's

sympathizers in the higher courts. Resultantly, criticism of the military regime costed the party in the form of the neutralization of its student organization (*Islāmī Jamiat-e-Talaba*) and the dismissal of its city government of Karachi. Based on these facts, claiming the Islamists as being non-democratic falls short of being convincing proofs. The study transpired that JI, through a pragmatic approach, has continuously tried to synthesise Islamic politics with democratic norms as per its own understanding.

Key Words: Synthesis, dominant perceptions, anti-democratic forces, avoidance of confrontation, criticism of the regime, convincing proof, Pragmatic approach

Introduction

A question arises for the students of socio-political development in the contemporary Muslim world about the compatibility, or otherwise, between Islam and democracy as well as the attitude of Islamists toward the issue. There are perceptions that Islamists don't believe in democracy. Their participation in the electoral process is seen as a camouflage to get power and that they believe in a one-vote one-time policy. Once elected, they will presumably cling on to power and disband democracy. However, there are many cases in which this assumption was contradicted by the attitude of Islamists such as Jammāt-e-Islāmī Pakistan (JI), through continuous participation in the democratic process for decades despite failures in the electoral process. Moreover, they have a lengthy track record of struggle for democracy against military and civilian dictators. However, at times the party co-operated with the authoritarian military regimes despite its repeated claims of an unwavering belief in democracy. Especially JI's role during 1977-1988, earned it a reputation of B-team of the Zia-Regime.¹ This study is important because JI is among the premier Islamic contemporary movements which have influenced the Islamic renaissance since the 1930s. Presently, the Muslim world is in turmoil and Islam and Islamists are frequently bracketed alongside terrorism by certain quarters. Adherents of Islam occupy a significant part of the globe with a great number of Muslim majority countries who feel besieged by the dominant world powers. Reaction from the Muslim youth varies from armed struggle to peaceful political activism. Continuous

instability in these parts of the globe and the unending war on terrorism shows that the narrative of Islamists on national and international issues cannot be overlooked for a long time. There is a strong realization among political scientists the world over to devise the means and methods for getting them involved in their countries' affairs peacefully. However, the events of the current decades did not show much progress on the issue. The objectives of this study were to evaluate the claim that JI supports authoritarianism and is against the democratic system.

Literature Review

There is an array of views on the intentions of a military takeover of Pakistan on 5 July 1977. One narrative is that it was an orchestrated move of the army to restore the military's upper hand over the political and bureaucratic institutions of the state. Nearly successful parleys among Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan National Alliance were sabotaged by the army generals which plunged the country into the longest martial law of its history.² Others argue that the Generals were scared of Bhutto and did not play their role in time, by refusing a partial martial law in three cities on the request of the government which would have forced Bhutto to agree to re-election and save Pakistan from a deteriorated situation and the imposition of martial law at the later stage.³ General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq (Zia) was not a conspirator rather he along with his generals were "reluctant coup-makers".⁴ Relations of Jamaat-e-Islami with the military regime witnessed many ups and downs during the 11 years of Zia's rule. His steps for Islamization were overwhelmingly supported by the party in the beginning but over time, the party became disappointed and fell out of sorts with him.

In the first address to the nation, Zia declared that his sole aim was to organize free and fair elections in October 1977.⁵ He declared that Islamization was the main objective of his government. It enabled Zia to not only allay the fears of Pakistani *shurafa* but also to neutralise the Pakistani fundamentalists in the Pakistani polity.⁶ Jamaat-e-Islami announced in September 1977 that based on Zia's announcements, the party was expecting the ushering of an Islamic era soon.⁷ Initially, the military regime did not ban political parties. The detained political leaders, who were under their custody since the 5th of July, were released on the 28th of July. The Ex-Prime Minister

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (Bhutto) in one-to-one meetings with Zia, and also in public, repeatedly asked for his accountability before the elections so that he could prove his innocence.⁸ Pakistan Election Commission announced the election schedule on 2 August 1977 and fixed 18 October 1977 as the date for national and provincial assemblies' elections.⁹ Clogged streets of Lahore with a welcoming crowd of Bhutto's supporters on the 8th of August, conveyed a warning to Zia and the Pakistan National Alliance leaders that their assumption of dethroning Bhutto was misplaced.¹⁰ The Pakistan Peoples Party workers were ruthless, teasing passengers at the airport and entering unlawfully in the prohibited premises. They misbehaved even with the PNA leaders. Instead of apologising for the unruly attitude of his party workers, Bhutto boasted it as proof of his popularity.¹¹ He took the advice of exercising restraint by the authorities as a sign of the government's weakness.¹² He began to defy the martial law authorities and publicly threatened them with retribution, once he was elected.¹³ Perhaps these happenings were the decisive events for Bhutto's fate.¹⁴

Zia, in his address of 14 August, warned that political leaders would be held responsible for the unruly behaviour of their party workers and it would be better that they reign them in. It was the first time that he used strong words while repeating his promise of timely elections.¹⁵ Along with these assurances and election preparations, the General adopted ways for avoiding the elections.¹⁶ Some suspicious happenings created an impression that Bhutto might be arrested at any time. Among these were the attitude and ruddy behaviour of Pakistan Peoples Party workers especially during Bhutto's receptions at Lahore and Islamabad airports; press conferences of J. A. Rahim and General Gul Hassan, against Bhutto; arrest of three Federal Security Force officers from Lahore on 19 August in connection with the FIR of 11 November 1974 for the murder of Nawab Mohammad Ahmed Khan; and their statements that they were deputed on the order of Bhutto to kill Ahmed Raza Kasuri.¹⁷ Prominent opposition leaders demanded the arrest and trial of Bhutto for the crimes committed by him during his premiership.¹⁸ Bhutto was arrested on 3 September 1977 on the charges of conspiracy to murder his political opponent.¹⁹ On 13 September, Lahore High Court released Bhutto on bail.²⁰ Bhutto made a belligerent speech at Leghari house Lahore on 13

September which added to his problems, thereafter and presumably, the military rulers decided to get rid of him.²¹ Bhutto and his colleagues were again arrested on 17 September under section 12 of martial law and Zia stated that Mr. Bhutto and his colleagues will be tried in the court on his demand and will be given the full opportunity to plead their innocence.²² Pakistan National Alliance initially demanded general elections be conducted on the announced date of October 1977, however, the impressive welcome of Bhutto, by a large and cheering crowd in Lahore on 8 August, and the prospects of his return to power, sent shock waves through the ranks of the opposition. Zia had already told them that the gallows had awaited them all, had the military not intervened. Now, doubtful of their capacity to face Bhutto in elections they, including Jamaat-Islami, quickly fell in line with Zia and raised the demand of retribution before elections.²³ Many of the political leaders including Sardar Shaukat Hayat and Asghar Khan asked for a delay in the elections.²⁴ Wali Khan, time and again declared that Bhutto and Pakistan cannot go together and accountability must be done before the elections.²⁵ Syed Mawdudi suggested that Pakistan Peoples Party must be barred from taking part in elections due to the debacle of 1971, implying that the country would be further broken.²⁶ On 25 September 1977, the central council of PNA proposed a resolution, asking the martial law administration to postpone elections and complete the accountability process first.²⁷ Ms. Nusrat Bhutto in her furious statements announced that if Mr. Bhutto was not allowed to participate in the elections then PPP will not let any assembly work and Zia will be removed as soon as PPP comes into government. The PPP activists damaged many of the PNA election offices.²⁸ On 29 September, the martial law authorities issued a warning to Mrs. Bhutto on her statements and asked her to refrain from the types of statements she had made during the last few days.²⁹ On 30 September, at a function in the Rawalpindi club, Zia revealed that many political leaders were asking for the postponement of the elections.³⁰ Finally, he announced the cancellation of the elections on 1 October and extended the martial law for an indefinite period.³¹ All types of political activities were banned.³² He said that it was his responsibility to first and foremost carry out a program of "accountability" as he had unexpectedly found many serious irregularities in the previous regime.³³ Though critics

termed the act a result of Zia's PPP phobia³⁴ and the latent strength of the PPP,³⁵ the PNA however tactically approved the postponement.³⁶

On 1 Jan 1978, Zia announced that the superior courts have been authorised to strike down all the country's laws that were repugnant to the Quran and Sunnah and the law ministry had been advised to review and make all laws as per the Islamic teachings. The year 1978 was declared as the year of the Islamic way of life.³⁷ The founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, Syed Mawdudi welcomed the military initiative and argued that the objectives of Islamization were the same as that of the restoration of democracy.³⁸ He hailed Zia's efforts as welcome first steps in bringing Islam to Pakistan's judicial and political system.³⁹ Following his rhetoric, JI called Zia's initiatives of implementing the demands of the Nizam-i Mustafa movement as the renewal of the pristine covenant between the government and Islam.⁴⁰ Zia invited Pakistan National Alliance to join the government through the JI *Ameer*.⁴¹ The party acted as a broker between PNA and the military rulers.⁴² After long negotiations, PNA joined the federal cabinet on 23 August 1978. Out of the 24 ministers three were from JI.⁴³ At the time of joining the government, the JI leaders declared that it was a golden opportunity to establish the Islamic system and must not let it go un-availed.⁴⁴ Following points were agreed between PNA and the martial law authorities:⁴⁵

1. The foremost purpose of the proposed Government was to hold elections before October 1979 and the Islamic system was to be implemented on priority.
2. The federal cabinet was to be fully empowered.
3. 1973 constitution will not be amended.
4. Within a month, provincial governments on the same pattern were to be established.

It is said that Jamaat-e-Islami joined Zia government in 1978 to strengthen its position in Karachi against Pakistan Peoples Party and the Sindh nationalists. People started calling the party the B-team of Zia, which damaged its reputation.⁴⁶ Zia took over the charge of the president of Pakistan on 16 September 1978 and announced on 2 December that the next year will be the year of implementation of Islam in the country.⁴⁷ JI was so enthusiastic about this change that Syed Mawdudi while addressing the Islami

Jamiat Tulaba students, said that very soon the responsibility of the country's governance was coming on their shoulders.⁴⁸

Mr. Bhutto's trial was conducted daily. On 9 October 1977, his bail was cancelled and on 11 October he was formally indicted in the case. Ex-director general Federal Security Force told Lahore High Court that Mr. Bhutto had instructed him to finish Ahmed Raza Qasuri.⁴⁹ The court on 18 March 1978 declared Bhutto and four others as the murderer of Mohammad Ahmed Khan and sentenced them to death.⁵⁰ On 25 March 1978, his lawyers appealed in the Supreme Court of Pakistan. However, the court turned down their appeal and on 6 February 1979 announced the confirmation of his death sentence. A review was also rejected on 24 March 1979 and Mr. Bhutto was hanged on the 4th of April.⁵¹ Throughout the court hearings, the attitude of Mr. Bhutto and his lawyers remained defiant and they tried to handle the case politically rather than legally.⁵² Zia before rejecting the appeal of clemency for Bhutto discussed the matter with all his military and civilian aides. Almost all of them suggested enforcing the court decision.⁵³ The Jamaat-e-Islami ministers also supported the execution.⁵⁴ There were perceptions that Zia had no other options, as either he and his aides or Bhutto was destined to be removed from the scene of the Pakistan polity.⁵⁵

After the execution of Bhutto, the martial law entered the 2nd phase. Pakistan National Alliance was lured into joining the interim government through concerted efforts and promises made to them in 1978 and it was said that this government would manage to win the next elections. However, after Bhutto's execution, Zia told the top PNA leaders that the interim government will be dissolved before elections.⁵⁶ Despite the opposition of the political parties, on 15 October 1979 Zia postponed the elections for an indefinite period, banned all political parties, prohibited any political activities, censored newspapers, declared strikes illegal, and announced the purge of educational institutions from all types of political activities.⁵⁷ According to Mian Tufail, the elections of November 1979 were postponed by the military regime due to the announcement of a boycott by the political parties.⁵⁸ Others insist that the election cancellation came after seeing the results of the local bodies and the success of the PPP surrogates in those elections.⁵⁹ When, despite Bhutto's execution, the elections planned for November 1979 were postponed on 15

October of that year, relations between the JI and the martial-law regime strained noticeably.⁶⁰ The party's leadership thenceforth began to show signs of restlessness with the General's refusal to change his attitude. JI's Central Consultative Assembly reassessed the party's policy to date, issuing strong denunciations of the martial-law regime's agenda, its tampering with the Constitution, and its strong-arm tactics in dealing with the opposition.⁶¹ From 1979 to 1984 the JI remained in uneasy opposition to the policies of the military regime. It warned the government of the dire consequences of further delaying the promised elections, repeatedly asking the regime to lift the martial law but refrained from joining the opposition's movement to restore democracy.⁶²

Zia considered the parliamentary system being anti-Islam and constituted committees comprising scholars of repute to deliberate on this issue. Majlis-e-Shura, formed in 1982, was constituted on the recommendations of such committees. The body was unrepresentative and had no powers of legislation. It served merely as a tamed debating body.⁶³ Zia's orthodox religious advisers proposed a presidential system. It was close to his heart but the logic could not convince his other colleagues.⁶⁴ Justice B.Z. Kaikaus' petition of October 1979 in Shariat Bench of Lahore High Court pleaded that the parliamentary system's repugnancy to the Islamic teachings was backed by many prominent judges, politicians and religious scholars.⁶⁵ Mian Tufail was also among those who favoured this opinion by stating that the real task was to establish an Islamic system whether it was done by the politicians or dictators.⁶⁶ However, the most comprehensive arguments given in the favour of parliamentary system were also from a JI stalwart, professor Khurshid Ahmed. He contended that the political parties and the existing election system was not repugnant to Islam rather it was beneficial in achieving the goals set out by Islam, and the need was just to weed out some minor elements in this system which conflicted with Islamic principles.⁶⁷

In February 1981, twelve political parties of different ideologies established the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) and demanded the withdrawal of the martial law and the free, fair and impartial elections to the National and Provincial assemblies be held within three months. All parties of ex-PNA except Jamaat-e-Islami and Muslim League (Pagaro Group)

joined MRD.⁶⁸ JI clarified that it did not want to be a part of any movement which was meant for the rebirth of the secular and fascist Pakistan Peoples Party.⁶⁹ By 1983, the masses were tired of martial law. Army officers interacting with the masses conveyed to Zia the shame they felt wearing their uniform in the public. His colleagues favoured the idea of holding elections and transferring power to the elected representatives of the people.⁷⁰ When MRD announced to start a countrywide movement from 14 August 1983, to defuse this move, the government made a strategic decision and announced an action plan of 18 months on 12 August, which included a schedule of the local, provincial and national level elections.⁷¹ Govt. arrested Mr. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, the head of MRD. MQM, however, remained unperturbed, meaning the cities remained aloof and the disturbances subsided to the rural Sind only which were easily taken care of by the government.⁷² Consequently, MRD suffered from internal discord and the adverse impact of a plane hijacking by Al-Zulfiqar.⁷³

Zia planned a referendum, following the precedent set by former military dictator Ayub Khan.⁷⁴ Before the referendum, Zia requested Mian Tufail for his support in the referendum. He was informed by the JI leadership that the party's endorsement of the referendum was contingent, first, on lifting the ban on student activities, and second, on promising a sovereign future National Assembly. Zia accepted both conditions. The decision to support Zia's referendum was not free of dissent in the JI Shura and was bitterly resented by some of its members.⁷⁵ Later, Zia reneged on the first point immediately after the referendum and then violated the second point in May 1988, when he dismissed the Muslim League government and dissolved the assemblies. Zia's breach of faith greatly undermined the position of Mian Tufail, who had overridden the objections of the Jamaat members and Jamiat leaders to Zia's policy, promising to deliver on their demands through his liaison with the regime.⁷⁶

Party-less elections held in 1985 had the twin objective of blocking the PPP's comeback and creating a king's party of political lightweights in the new National Assembly.⁷⁷ The elections transpired that the JI popularity had reduced in the 1977-85 period, hence, Zia looked to the Muslim League and the ethnic parties for support.⁷⁸ A thin turnout of voters in the 1984

referendum already indicated that Islamization had lost its appeal of 1977. Concerns were echoed among a wider segment of the JI workers and it reflected symbolically in the decision of Ghaffoor Ahmed who chose not to run for the 1985 elections.⁷⁹

Throughout 1979-1985, Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba and the JI Karachi contested with the central leadership that supports to Zia must be withdrawn and the party should join hands with opposition to struggle for the return of the civil rule. However, Mian Tufail pointed to the danger posed by the Afghan war and the anti-state activities of Al-Zulfiqar and dissuaded the JI workers from agitational activities against the Zia regime. But this policy failed to satisfy the workers when, after the 1985 elections, the civil rule returned to Pakistan in the form of the secular Muslim League government.⁸⁰ Muslim League believed that JI was the last defence line of Zia and termed it as the B-team during martial law.⁸¹ Muslim League planned to adopt a policy that ultimately helped the party institutionalize civilian rule. The party was sure of a showdown with Zia but later decided to neutralize JI. Once in power, it attacked JI's support base, i.e., the city government of Karachi. It was a watershed moment for the party as it was struggling to distance itself from Zia and his martial-law regime.⁸² The JI's mayor, Mr. Abdussattar Afghani, demanded that the income from taxes be distributed among the Sind province and Karachi city equally. This issue became a bone of contention between Afghani and the Sind Chief Minister, who successfully manoeuvred to remove Afghani from his prestigious post. He also conspired politically to reduce the influence of JI and encouraged Mohajir Quomi Movement (MQM) to help him fulfil his designs.⁸³ However, the close circles of Zia claimed that he had no role in this episode.⁸⁴ Till the mid-80s, the majority of Mohajirs backed Jamat-i-Islami (JI) and Jamiat Ulema Pakistan (JUP). After the rise of MQM in 1985, however, most of the members went on to become MQM aficionados.⁸⁵ In the local bodies' elections of 1987-1988, MQM succeeded in getting charge of the Hyderabad and Karachi local councils.⁸⁶

Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi was not comfortable with JI's alliance with Zia for long. By the time of the 1985 elections, the Karachi leaders were being openly critical of Zia but the Punjab leadership remained positive about him. JI never

went fully with the MRD, but this internal division gave the impression that the party had gone with the MRD. Zia manipulated the things so, that all Karachi JI leaders lost their seats while Punjab crowd won. Of the ten seats in the NA won by the party in that year, only two were from Karachi, marking the beginning of its decline. Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (IJT) increased its political activism when Zia was moving Pakistan towards Islamization.⁸⁷ However, the authoritarian style of Zia damaged IJT's reputation. Zia's appeal to the religious sensibilities antagonized the politically conscious urban students which resulted in an effective division in the Jamiat's constituency as it began to lose elections at one campus after another. By 1984, to protect its turf, IJT got embroiled in a vicious battle with rival student organizations of various religious, ethnic, and secular orientations. Zia was determined to restore law and order and proceeded to ban all student union activities in February 1984, leading to nationwide agitations by IJT. This episode further affected the JI's image and rapport with Zia.⁸⁸ By this time, JI had already been increasingly critical of what they perceived as the regime's exploitation of Islam to consolidate its power. The party condemned this ban and in April announced its willingness to cooperate with other parties to end the military rule, but stopped short of joining the MRD.⁸⁹

The Muslim Student Federation (MSF) was launched by the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) in 1985 to protect that party's government from Jami'at.⁹⁰ MSF managed to unseat Jami'at in many of the Lahore campuses. Worst yet, Jamaat had developed doubts of its own about the Zia regime which were manifested in meetings between Laghari and Qazi Husain and in the Jamiat's vociferous agitations against the military regime since 1984. Zia, therefore, deemed the Karachi-based MQM more favorable to his interests than Jamaat. It was for this reason that the army and the Sind ministry argued with the Jamaat leaders whilst encouraging and arming the MQM.⁹¹

The internal division of opinion in the Jamaat-e-Islami ended only when Mian Tufail completed his term as Amir in 1986 and was succeeded by Qazi Hussain Ahmed (Qazi),⁹² who had been in favour of joining the MRD since 1983.⁹³ When he replaced Mian Tufail, JI joined hands with PPP in the opposition's campaign against General Zia.⁹⁴ Qazi denounced Zia for undermining the People's Party-Pakistan National Alliance talks in 1977, his

excessive reliance on the United States, promoting corruption, creating ethnic dissension in Sind, and sowing the seeds of discord among the Pakistani political parties.⁹⁵ He declared that during Zia-ul-Haq's eleven years there was only deceit and deception.⁹⁶ To him, Islamization and democratization must go hand in hand; hence, demanded that the president should dismantle the military regime and organize fresh elections to install a civilian government. He threatened to mount an anti-government movement in cooperation with all the opposition forces, including the Pakistan Peoples Party. Qazi Hussain encouraged dialogue with Benazir's PPP to establish an alliance which, however, did not materialize because of active opposition from Mian Tufail and his followers.⁹⁷

Methodology

This study is conducted to ascertain the reality of the approach of the Islamists towards democracy. It is claimed by many international and national political scientists that the groups striving for the implementation of the Islamic system in Muslim countries mostly adopt coercive means and are considered anti-democratic forces. The most severe objection on Jammat-e-Islami Pakistan is on party's policies of Zia era of 1977-88. Hence, the same period was selected for this study. The nature of the research is qualitative as it tells how different scholars view and explain certain happenings. The study involved textual analysis of policy documents of the party, tracts, articles, essays and chapters of different books related to the topic. Moreover, the writings of a few actors who were directly concerned with the events as well as those of independent scholars are explored. The JI leaders' views and observations are also considered. One-to-one interviews with the party activists were conducted to double-check the facts. The selection of these interviewees was made on the background knowledge of the researcher with the party's activists. Only those people were selected who had knowledge of the situation and were confident in expressing their views. Their expressed consent for the interview was sought in advance. Interviews were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere. Moreover, an exhaustive review of the literature was carried out, thereafter the findings were cross-checked with the responses of the interviews.

Findings

The relations of the Jamaat-e-Islami with the military regime between 1977 and 1988 remained cordial at the beginning but strained with time. Following findings came to the fore through the analysis of the documents as well as through one-to-one interviews with the JI leaders and activists.

1. JI Amir Mian Tufail hailed the views expressed by General Zia in his first address to the nation after the promulgation of the martial law on 5th July 1977.⁹⁸
2. JI demanded accountability before the election and supported the postponement of the October 1977 elections.⁹⁹
3. JI supported the decision of the rejection of the clemency appeal and the hanging of Bhutto.¹⁰⁰
4. There were visible differences among the top leadership on supporting Zia's regime after the postponement of the 1979 elections. Even the party's Amir later expressed his frustration by saying that some of the effective elements in the JI did not allow him to co-operate fully with Zia.¹⁰¹
5. The party's decision to support the 1984 Zia referendum was not unanimous. It was announced by the party's supreme leader after certain assurances by Zia but there were strong dissenting voices in the Shura against this decision.¹⁰²
6. Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba was not happy with the JI's policy of cooperation with Zia especially after the 1984 banning of student unions and even defied the suggestions of the top leadership of JI on the matter.¹⁰³
7. Cooperation with the Zia regime benefited JI but there were considerable damages to the party's democratic credentials. In the end, when the party tried to distance itself from Zia, it found it difficult to convince the masses.¹⁰⁴
8. Zia considered that politics and theology must go together and separation of mosque and state was as if the soul was separated from the body. Being the head of state was an opportunity to serve Islam. He was firm, sincere and outspoken in his commitments towards Islam.¹⁰⁵

9. Zia faced an ideological barrier on the question of the elections.¹⁰⁶ He considered that the parliamentary system based on a multiplicity of political parties was against Islam. His orthodox religious advisers proposed a presidential system, with the election of only one Amir. This logic could not convince Zia's other colleagues.¹⁰⁷
10. The JI and, later, other religious groups who agreed to cooperate with Zia, saw Islamization from a different prism than that of Zia.¹⁰⁸
11. The JI intellectuals pleaded in the court in the favour of a parliamentary system based on political parties' participation and insisted that it was very close to the system based on Islamic principles.¹⁰⁹
12. In the end, the JI felt deceived by Zia in the name of Islamization.¹¹⁰
13. Even today there is no unanimous opinion within the JI regarding the party's cooperation with Zia's regime of 1977-88. Some consider it a right decision that benefitted the party, Pakistan and Islam, while others differ.¹¹¹

Discussion

Jamaat-e-Islami was caught in a very complex situation during Zia's Era of 1977-88. Since 1947, the party was trying mainly for two goals: first, to preserve the solidarity of the country from internal and external threats, and second, to make Pakistan an Islamic state. During the 1947-1969 period, the party opposed unwaveringly every type of dictatorship, faced the wrath of incumbent regimes and when the situation demanded, joined hands with other political parties, even those aligned with the left, to strive for the restoration of democratic order in the country along with a sustained intellectual as well as a political struggle for making Pakistan an Islamic state. However, during the 1965 war with India and the 1971 insurgency in East Pakistan, the party cooperated with Pak Army to unconditionally defend the territorial borders of the country. After the 1971 tragedy, stability in the country was an added concern for the party. During the Bhutto regime of 1971-1977, the party continually opposed his authoritarian and fascist style of governance and severely criticized his left-leaning policies. Another important narrative of the party was Bhutto's negative role in the

disintegration of the country in 1971. The party remained suspicious of his loyalties to the country and Islam.

The constitution of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) to challenge the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the 1977 election was a result of the significant efforts of the JI. Particularly, the implementation of Nizam-e-Mustafa as a central point of the PNA manifesto was a very welcoming sign for the party. After the promulgation of the martial law on 5 July 1977, Zia announced early elections and the implementation of Nizam-e-Mustafa as the regime's goal, with the party fully supported him. The JI expected the implementation of an Islamic way of life from the military regime, for which the party had struggled for the last 30 years. Although all the foundational literature of the party negated the idea of the implementation of an Islamic system by authoritarian injunctions without a public agreement, nonetheless, the party considered the impressive mass movement against the Bhutto dictatorship as a sign of the peoples' desire for the enforcement of Nizam-e-Mustafa, i.e., an Islamic system of life-based on Quran and Sunnah. It was for the first time in history that the JI's ideological demands were finally reflected in the Islamization programme of Zia, but supporting a martial rule was also against the party's political interests and contradicted their historical stand.¹¹² However, Zia's pronouncements were taken at face value as a real opportunity of using the state resources (media, education, etc.) to build public opinion in favor of an Islamic system and ensuring its implementation with the support of state institutions such as the courts, the administrative departments, etc. The party leadership was quite clear that the implementation of the punitive injunctions of Islam was only after exhausting all the efforts for the reformation of society and the fulfillment of the basic needs of the people. These were part of a complete package and were not to be applied without the necessary prerequisites.¹¹³

Another purpose of this support was the assurance of timely elections. In previous elections of March 1977, the party had won the highest number of seats among the PNA parties. With Bhutto already dethroned, the party was expecting a leading role in the next government. The JI wanted to help the martial law authorities maintain the law and order situation to ensure a conducive environment for timely elections. When asked about the

repercussions of not holding the elections, Syed Mawdudi expressed the hope that the martial law authorities would not commit such a mistake, as it will be wrong, whosoever did it.¹¹⁴ The party was amazed to note the Islamic rhetoric of the martial-law regime and its favourable attitude towards the Pakistan National Alliance, hence, it sought to salvage its fortunes by lobbying with the army for early elections.¹¹⁵ Subsequently, signs of disintegration within PNA, Bhutto's impressive reception rallies, and the martial law authority's apprehensions of the revengeful steps by Bhutto in the case of victory created a testing situation for the party when the elections of Oct 1977 were postponed. Despite all this, JI cooperated with the martial law authorities till the end of 1979. The party originally envisaged that the martial law authorities would initiate a comprehensive media campaign to mold public opinion in the favour of the Islamic system and as a result, there would be an overwhelming urge among the masses for an Islamic system. The courts were expected to strike out all the laws repugnant to Islam and in the coming elections the people of Pakistan, who were charged during the anti-Bhutto movement, would vote for the candidates who will ultimately utilize all state resources to implement Nizam-e-Mustafa which was the mission of JI.¹¹⁶ This was the meaning of Syed Mawdudi's statement when he said that Islamization and restoration of democracy was one and the same thing. However, the postponement of elections again in 1979 and the non-cooperation of the bureaucracy with the JI ministries' 9 months with the government, created doubts among the party leaders over the intentions of the military government.

During 1979-1985, although the Jamaat-e-Islami supported the regime on the Afghan issue whole-heartedly on the external front, on the internal front it remained uneasy with the martial law policies. In due course of time, a strong opinion within JI against martial law and in favor of the opposition appeared. Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (IJT) was also not happy with the strong-arm tactics of the military regime to curb the students' activities in the academic institutions. There were many within the party in favor of joining MRD to put pressure on the government to restore the civilian rule, however and despite repeated demands for early elections, the party abstained from joining the opposition, apprehending it might create a law and order situation

in the country. The party also had a grudge with PPP due to the treatment meted out to them during the Bhutto era. The JI supported the 1984 referendum on the condition of an early return to civilian rule. The party leaders opposed the point of view of those people who tried to get the court verdicts against the parliamentary system based on political parties, claiming that it was against the Islamic principles.

The dismal performance of the party in the 1985 elections and the formulation of the civilian government headed by the Muslim league further strained the party's relation with Zia. The patronization of MQM by the Sind provincial government and the dismissal of JI's headed metropolitan government of Karachi was a clear message for the party to reconsider its policies. Zia's tactical approval of such anti-JI moves also played its role. Finally, the change of guards of the party in 1987, when Qazi Hussain Ahmed became the Amir of JI, increased the party's criticism of the military authorities. Consequently, the party joined the opposition, demanding the lifting of the martial law and terming the eleven years of martial rule as a period of deception. The challenge to gain and retain popular political support overrode the commitment to Islamization and prevented the party from identifying too closely with the Zia regime.¹¹⁷ Certain quarters opined that by distancing from Zia and becoming the outspoken advocate for the restoration of democracy in the country, the JI overrode its commitment to Islamization to retain its political support which attested the continuity and change within the Islamic movements.¹¹⁸ However, calling it an overriding of commitment to Islamization is perhaps a misconception. Despite split opinion within the party, the cooperation with Zia was with the hope that it would result in the implementation of an Islamic social justice system along with the punitive injunctions. However, Zia had his standing in the Islamic system as well as his ulsions due to the forceful secular tendencies of the military and civil establishment. He found many orthodox supporters of his style of Islamization as well as the one-man rule, and the opponents of democracy. The party was hard-bitten with 30 years (1947-1977) of betrayal and hypocrisy of the Pakistani ruling elite which tested its limits to compromise on its utopian goal of ideal Islamic rulers. The regime's maneuvering in Karachi to break the hold of JI as well as the curbs on students' activism,

deprived the party of options other than severance of relations with the ruling elite. Finally, it ran out of patience and decided a transition to pragmatic advocacy of restoring democracy, despite this change being arduous and fraught with thertnal tensions.

According to another side of the story, the JI could not deliver what was expected from the party in spite of the placement of the party intellectuals in charge of sensitive cabinet portfolios. The party could not provide any comprehensive and coherent framework of the economic and political operations for implementation. Therefore, General Zia decided to diversify the basis of his regime after realizing the JI's incapability.¹¹⁹ Moreover, he was pinning his hopes on the continuity of his Islamization project on a credible win of the JI in the 1985 elections. The failure of the party to get any significant public support in the elections convinced him to look for an alternative. Zia is said to have no role in the destabilization of JI in Karachi and build the ng of MQM. This narrative, however, has certain flaws, such as the non-formation of the provincial civilian governments as was agreed with PNA, as well as having the alliance's ministers only for 9 months whereas, according to the agreement the cabinet was to continue until after the elections. Expecting a marvellous job from the interim federal ministers in only 9 months and without any support to overcome the resistance of the bureaucracy as well as working under the provincial governors who were serving generals was too much to ask for. The non-involvement of Zia in the anti-JI steps of the Sind government is hardly believable, as his interference in such matters is evident from his role in the failure of a no-confidence movement against Chief Minister of Punjab, Nawaz Sharif. He personally went to Lahore and declared his opposition to such a move.¹²⁰

General Zia's mixture of Islam and autocracy created serious tensions between the party's commitment to Zia's style of Islamization of Pakistan and adherence to political interests.¹²¹ There is considerable truth in the views expressed by certain quarters that Jamaat-e-Islami saw Islamization from a different prism than Zia's.¹²² This factor was reflected in the comments of JI's senior leader who elaborated this difference by disclosing that JI was interested in *siratal nabi* [the path of the Prophet], while Zia was content with *miladal-nabi*.¹²³

Conclusion

After 30 years of hectic efforts, Jamaat-e-Islami succeeded in organizing a mass movement in 1977 in the favour of party's declared mission of implementation of Nizam-e-Mustafa (Islamic System of Life). Admittedly it was the most successful right-wing political movement in Pakistan, just as Bhutto's 1968-69 movement was Pakistan's most successful popular movement. Support for the movement came not only from the religious segment of society but from the seculars as well as leftists. It was an alliance of a broad spectrum of left-leaning, centrist and rightist parties with their main focus on giving opposition to Bhutto, however, it acquired an Islamist hue from the very early days. The basic cause of this unprecedented alliance was the hopeless performance of the Bhutto regime of 1971-1977. He was supported by the masses as well as the leftist intellectuals in the 1970 elections with the hope of establishing social justice and rectification of economic imbalances created during the ten years of Ayub Khan (1958-1968) during which the fruits of industrialization and economic progress were stolen by a few industrialist families. The general public felt deceived and deprived. Bhutto promised to rectify these wrongdoings, hence, the people supported him wholeheartedly. However, within the short period of PPP rule, its fascist policies antagonized most sectors of the society. It was commented by certain political analysts that conceit and authoritarianism were central to Bhutto's achievements as well as his downfall.

As a result of the PNA movement and after the tainted 1977 elections, the situation got out of Bhutto's control and the military dethroned him on 5th July 1977. As the movement against Bhutto adopted the slogan of Nizam-e-Mustafa the masses saw in it the solution to their chronic problems of poverty as well others. The military regime promised elections within 90 days and announced steps for the implementation of Nizam-e-Mustafa (Islamic Way of Life). When the martial law administrator used the same terminology used by JI for steps for Islamization, the party felt that the scheme of implementation of such a process will be as suggested in their literature, i.e., gradual enforcement of Islamic injunctions after ensuring the fulfillment of basic needs of the masses accompanied by a comprehensive reformation programme of the bureaucracy and the people at large through education,

training and media propagation. The party's basic theme was that public support was a pre-requisite for the success of Islamization. However, the military leadership had its own limitations as well as perceptions of an Islamic system. One of the major differences among these views was regarding the parliamentary system of government in Islam. Another threat to the regime was the comeback of Bhutto through elections. However, up till 1979, the regime managed to retain the full support of the party. By that time they had got rid of Bhutto and successfully maneuvered the disintegration of PNA.

When the November 1979 elections were postponed, in spite of Jamaat-e-Islami and other political party's opposition, the military regime felt confident that they could ignore JI and manage support from other religious and orthodox elements for their narrative. Military authorities also knew JI's hate for PPP and of little chance of joining the opposition led by Bhutto's decedents. However, they kept the party engaged from 1984-1985. By that time, they neutralized JI as well as Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba by banning student unions, supporting MQM, the nationalists as well as Pakistan Muslim League (PML Pagaro Group). JI felt constrained in opposing the martial law authorities openly and actively due to the party's stakes in the Afghan Jihad, its previous shocking experience with the 1970's PPP government and the dangers of Sindhi separatists' activities. Although JI aspired for democracy as depicted in their leader's detailed arguments in the B.Z. Kaikause case in the Shariat bench of Lahore High Court but could not confront the martial law authorities because of the above-mentioned constraints. This conflict caused a lot of discontent within the party and as soon as the situation in Afghanistan took a positive turn and the law and order situation in Pakistan improved, the party openly joined the opposition in 1987-1988. It is rightly said that during this period JI, which vied for an Islamic System in Pakistan, opposed Zia's Islamization. However, even in such a situation the party continuously criticized the authoritative style of the military ruler though the party did not involve itself in an open confrontation with the regime as done from 1947-1977 due to certain reasons of their own. This study concludes that JI has its own understanding of a gradual Islamization which is not in contradiction with democracy. Even the feeling of the top leader of JI that the strong resistance in the party did not allow him to cooperate with Zia and the severe

opposition by the party towards Zia's narrative of an Islamic system in the court supports this conclusion. It also points towards the party's sensitivity toward anarchy in the country, as it was also one of the major factors in not challenging the military regime due to the precarious situation in Sindh and Afghanistan. Although the opponents time and again blamed the party as a B-team of Zia, the party refrained from creating a law and order issue in the country in spite of glaring differences with the regime and knowing well that it will damage the party's political fortune.

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