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Institutional Decay and Authoritarian Legacy: The Impact of Zia-ul-Haq's Rule on Pakistan's Democratic Institutions (1977–1988)

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ABSTRACT

This paper has examined how the rule of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) affected the Pakistani democratic institutions, with an examination of the political, constitutional, and religious policies that the leader changed the governance system in the country. The study was intended to learn the way the regime of Zia re-invented a new political order in Pakistan with authoritarian rule and Islamization that led to institutional falling apart in the long term. The study is based on the Institutional Decay Theory (Huntington, 1968; North, 1990) and it explored how formal institutions (parliament, judiciary and political parties) lost their autonomy and legitimacy once turned into a tool of personal and ideological expediency. The research design used by the study is the qualitative research of historical analysis and descriptive analysis. The secondary sources were used in order to gather data that included academic articles, books, government documents and newspapers that were associated with the regime of Zia. The data was grouped together to form around the major themes constitutional manipulation, political centralization,

Islamization, and institutional weakening and interpreted within the theoretical framework in order to follow the patterns of authoritarian continuity. The results show that the Zia regime systematically reformed the system of democracy in Pakistan by centralizing power in the executive, legalizing authoritarianism via the Eighth Amendment, and politicizing the judiciary, as well as the bureaucracy. His Islamization project was a tool of politics to justify military supremacy and not a moral reform in actual sense and made religion a part of state institutions and quashed any opposition. The findings highlight the long term impacts of the Zia policies such as low parliamentary sovereignty, judicial reliance, weakly established political parties and the merging of religion with the conditions of governance that persist to this date to impede democratic consolidation in Pakistan. The work of political and historical literature include the connection between the Zia period and the continuing weakness of Pakistani democracy and how institutional decay can be replicated generation after generation as a result of constitutional structure and ideological domination. It highlights the necessity of institutional reform, depoliticization, and separation of state power and religion so as to bring democratic equilibrium.

Keywords: Zia-ul-Haq, Institutional Decay, Islamization, Authoritarianism, Constitutional Engineering, Democracy in Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

The tenure of the General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq rule (1977-1988) was among the most radical and controversial in the political history of Pakistan. Not only did it break the democratic process, but his regime reformed the whole institution structure of the state. Zia took over power after the toppling of Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in a military coup that given time to hold elections what was never achieved (Burki, 1988). Rather, his eleven years rule created a trend of military superiority, constitutional misuse and politics of religion that had unending and profound scars over the democracy of Pakistan (Zahid, 2011).

The policies enacted by Zia government concentrated power to the presidency, limited parliamentary powers and employed religion as an instrument of political legitimacy (Noman, 1989). His campaign of Islamization aimed at uniting the religion and government and transforming the nature and soul of democratic institutions. Zia institutionalized religion in the political life of the state by entrenching Islamic ideology in the Constitution and establishing institutions like Federal Shariat Court (Shah, 2012). Such policies erased the distinction between religion and the state, and substituted the democratic discussion with ethical domination of people and a lack of pluralism in politics (Kanwal, 2015).

Zia regime changed the 1973 Constitution, at the most fundamental level. The Eighth Amendment was introduced in 1985, and with it, the president was granted very broad powers such as the power to dissolve elected governments under Article 58(2) (b) (Noonari, 2013). This amendment legalized involvement of military in politics and undermined parliament democracy. Consequently, this political

system in Pakistan transformed to what scholars argue to be a hybrid system of controlling democracy, which still maintained forms of democracy, but no freedom (Hoffman, 2011; Shafqat, 1998).

The theory of Institutional Decay is a good theory to explain how Zia influenced the politics of Pakistani society. It is a description of the way in which official organizations become ineffectual and less legitimate when they are used to pursue personal or autocratic interests (Huntington, 1968; North, 1990). In Zia the parliament, judiciary and bureaucracy were in being but deprived of independence. The judiciary pressured to justify the decision of the military turned into a legitimizing power of the regime instead of being a check of power (Shafiq et al., 2020). Equally, political parties were either prohibited or undermined, disorganizing the political scene and discouraging the action in the group (Kamran, 2009).

Pakistan is still influenced to this date by the legacy of the Zia rule in the democracy. The dependence and patronage patterns and dictatorial actions developed by his constitutional reforms, political schemes, and religious policies have continued to be used by governments (Ali et al., 2021). The period defined a pattern in which the flow of power was through the institutions that were unelected and the dissent was silenced by religion. The interpretation of this period is important toward examining why the democracies institutions in Pakistan are still weak and why the civil-military imbalance is still prevalent in its political culture.

To put it bluntly, the rule of Zia-ul-Haq did not just freeze the process of democratization, but it transformed the way the state interacts with the concept of democracy. His combination of military dominance, religious legitimacy and constitutional Engineering changed the institutions in Pakistan into representative institutions to controlling institutions. This paper will discuss how Zia policies undermined democratic institutions and left a lasting legacy of institutional ineffectiveness, which is still threatening to the process of democratic consolidation in Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

The research is important in that it aids to comprehend why the democracy in Pakistan is not strong and stable despite the fact that it is more than 30 years since the reign of General Zia-ul-Haq. Through the lens of his regime and its reorganization of the constitution, politicization of the judiciary and the use of religion as a rallying cry to authoritarianism, the study reveals the institutional and cultural foundations of the democratic destruction. This is because these historical trends are of interest to scholars, policymakers, and citizenry to enhance democratic governance in Pakistan. It demonstrates that democracy cannot be implemented successfully when the institutions are deprived of their independence and are used against personal interests or ideological purposes. The research also adds to the overall comprehension of how military and religious authority may be combined to destroy the representative politics which makes the research an important source to future studies on civil-military relations and democratic reform in South Asia.

Research Questions

1. What long-term effects did Zia's authoritarian leadership have on Pakistan's democratic culture and institutional stability after his regime ended?
2. In what ways did Zia's Islamization agenda affect the autonomy and functioning of key democratic bodies such as the parliament, judiciary, and political parties?
3. How did Zia-ul-Haq's political and constitutional policies reshape Pakistan's democratic institutions between 1977 and 1988?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Zia-ul-Haq period (1977-1988) is one of the most radical but separate periods in the history of Pakistani politics. The authors generally come into an agreement that the military regime led by Zia transformed the democratic institution of the country based on authoritarian model, where religion, law and bureaucracy were employed as a means of control as opposed to reforms. Nonetheless, there is still a vital debate regarding the nature and the magnitude of these changes.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Institutional Decay offers a good base on which one can explain how the regime of Zia-ul-Haq undermined the democratic system and political culture of Pakistan. The theory explains the fact that the political institutions like the parliament, the judiciary, and the bureaucracy lose their effectiveness, autonomy, and legitimacy when they are controlled by an individual or group interest and not with the sole interest of the people (Huntington, 1968). Institutional decay happens when there are formal structures that are written on paper but whose essence and role are gutted out by authoritarian power, corruption, and non-accountability.

Strong political institutions according to Huntington (1968) keep the order and direct the political participation in an equal manner. The political system however becomes unstable when these institutions are skipped or substituted by informal power networks. This process was much evident in the Pakistan of Zia-ul-Haq who redefined democratic institutions to advantage the military and ideological causes. Parliament was suspended, the constitution was changed to give more powers to the president and the judiciary was coerced to authorize military ruling. These activities indicate typical signs of the institutional breakdown in which the power is made personal and the rules in question lose their neutral nature.

Others like Fukuyama (2014) and North (1990) also note that institutions rot when their initial norms are destroyed through rent-seeking behaviour, patronage and moral hypocrisy. The Islamization policies by Zia although it was introduced as a moral reform in reality formed an aspect of patronage networks among religious elite and loyal bureaucrats. This erased the distinction between religion and state, decreasing the institutional credibility. Religion employed in the defense of political power undermined the rational discussion and moral legitimacy of the state another type of institutional decay.

It is also called the Institutional Decay Theory that shows the long term

consequences of the Zia rule. When institutions lose their independence they are likely to recreate corruption across generations. An example is the Eighth Amendment that institutionalized presidential dominance and permitted recurring throws out of elected regimes even when Zia was dead. This indicates the way in which the deteriorated structures may be built in to the political culture itself. Thelen (1999) points out that institutional legacies are usually sustained by adaptations by political actors rather than reforms and this leads to the situation that is evident in the post-1988 democracy in Pakistan.

In addition, the theory emphasizes the role of the balance of formal and informal institutions to formulate governance. During the rule of Zia, there were informal powers that were exercised by the military, intelligence groups and religious alliances at the expense of formal democratic institutions. This disparity caused discriminative accountability, poor rule of law and politicization of the judiciary and the bureaucracy. Due to this fact, the institutional system in Pakistan served more as an instrument of power rather than a representation or justice system.

Summing up, the concept of Institutional Decay Theory brings forward the explanation that Zia-ul-Haq did not stop the democracy but rearranged the institutional basis of the state in a manner that accepted the authoritarian practice. His manipulation of the constitution, the judiciary and religion substituted institutional power with the personal regulation and ideological conformity. Remnants of undemocratic strength of Pakistan weak institutions, politicized bureaucracy and parliamentary insufficient autonomy can be therefore seen as persisting consequences of this age of institutional decay.

Previous Studies

According to Zahid (2011), the Zia regime dismantled democratic institutions in an organized way and substituted it with the pseudo-Islamic order, which aimed at legitimizing the military rule. The Islamic democracy slogan was applied to quash dissent and deprive representative politics. The junta consolidated authority and abused religion and law instead of bolstering participatory institutions as a way to maintain its government. As Zahid puts it, the analysis points out the political engineering left Zia with a country that is divided, distrustful, and politically weak, and this is the legacy that continues to haunt the democracy of Pakistan up to this date.

Noman (1989) also comes out with a rather critical opinion but introduces a twist to the political longevity of Zia. He notes that an initially temporary military occupation turned into a dictatorship due to institutional collusion as well as external factors especially the Afghan war. Noman reveals how Zia transformed the insecurity into political capital, which projected himself as being indispensable in the stability of the country. This semblance of order, however, was made at the expense of the development of democracy. The culture of fear, opportunism, and cynicism in politics was formed due to the obsession with power that gave rise to a state culture of fear.

Kanwal (2015) provides another aspect that revolves around the Zia using

Islam as a political tool. She points out that Zia was unlike the military leaders of the past in the level and scope of his Islamization agenda. To an extent never seen before, the policies of Zia merged religion and politics unlike in the case of Ayub Khan or Musharraf. His reign can be characterized by scholars like Altaf et al. and Kanwal (2015) as despotism and manipulation and even by his own generals such as K. M. Arif and F. A. Chishti as a criticized political ramification of his agenda of Islamization. The review by Kanwal summarizes the contradictory accounts about Zia; somebody who is considered by some as a religious reformer and by others as a political activist who used religion to gain legitimacy.

Ali, Khan, and Zahra (2021) delve into the idea of how Zia as an authoritarian destabilized the federal relations of Pakistan. They say that his centralized government destroyed the autonomy of the provinces and diluted the parliamentary democracy. Article 58(2) (b) as introduced by the Eighth Amendment gave the president the power to dissolve elected governments, which would be exploited several times in the 1990s. These authors relate the Zia legacy in institutions to the repetitive instability of the democratic system of Pakistan, demonstrating how the structural frailties that he brought forth kept on stalking the successive civilian regimes.

Shafiq et al. (2020) also present the theme of institutional decay, claiming that Zia reversed the institutional development of Pakistan to the zero point of the established policies. His regime instead of reforming weak institutions abolished or falsified them to be a source of personal authority. These institutions became politicized through Islamization of the bureaucracy and judiciary thereby reducing their independence and professionalism. Their research echoes the views of several other researchers that the Zia regime did not just break the chain of democracy but has been using a different logic of governing the people.

The very phenomenon of the Islamization process has undergone a lot of academic criticism. Both Shah, Waris, and Basit (2016) and Butt, Jaffar, and Mehmood (2020) point out that the so-called Islamic reforms of Zia were not so much based on the faith, as they were on power. These policies intensified the sectarianism, limited the rights of the women and undermined judicial impartiality. Equally, earlier on Qureshi (1980) had foreseen that such Islamization under the state would result in economic and political centralization, rather than moral revival. His evaluation came to pass as under Zia, the political system of Pakistan was repressed and economically unequal.

On the constitutional level, Noonari and Noonari (2013) depict that Zia made significant amendments to the Constitution of 1973 in Pakistan, which significantly changed the original document. The 8th Amendment entrenched presidential domination, which made the system less parliamentary-democratic. Such manipulation of the constitution legalized the subsequent removal of elected regimes, which made the use of the military in politics normal. Others such as Hoffman (2011) and Kamran (2009) build up on this argument by arguing that the democratization process adopted by Zia in 1985 was just a strategy rather than a serious effort to

restore democracy among the civilians. The so-called partyless elections and referendum were aimed at justifying military rule in the democratic mask.

There is also discussion of the wider social and ideological impact of the Islamization of Zia. According to Shah (2012) and Ahmed (2023), Zia combined religion and the state power, radicalizing the Pakistani society, which gave way to extremism and intolerance that are still present in a certain form decades later. The latter is supported by Arshid, Ejaz and Ahmed (2023), as they demonstrate that his policies promoted sectarianist tendencies and distorted education and human rights systems. Baxter (1985) on the other hand believes that one of the factors that stabilized Zia was his tactical alliances with the urban elites and religious entities - a coalition that ensured that his regime remained socially grounded despite the people being restless.

This criticism has been extended by recent scholarship (ur Rahim, Mehmood, and Khan, 2025), which outlines the idea of religious authoritarian enclave. They claim that Zia institutionalized religious power in politics such that even the later civilian regimes could not part with religion and state power. This amalgamation of religion and state they propose, still limits pluralism and parliamentary sovereignty.

Shafqat (1998) and Nasr (1992) offer a long-term approach to the same issue by connecting the legacy of Zia with the post 1988 democratic failures in Pakistan. Despite the re-emergence of elections, the culture of controlled democracy, political opportunism and elite manipulation etc. continued. The constant overthrow of governments and poor party discipline was an indication of the serious institutional perversion that was formed under Zia. His reign adopted the culture of authoritarianism in the disguise of religious morality, and democratic culture was shallow and weak.

To sum up, the evidence presented by the literature community as a whole depicts the rule of Zia-ul-Haq as a transitional period that cemented the authoritarian practices into the democratic system of Pakistan. Researchers come to the point that his attempt at Islamizing and his constitutional engineering reinvented the politics and political institutions of the country in long-term terms. However, there is a difference in the way they perceive his intentions as a religious ideologue or a strategic survivor or a political manipulator. What is still evident is that the democratic shortcomings of modern day Pakistan such as poor federalism to manipulated elections can be traced back to the structural and ideological legacies of the Zia era.

METHODOLOGY

The research paper is guided by a qualitative research design since the primary objective of the research is to comprehend the way in which the rule of Zia-ul-Haq influenced the Pakistani democratic institutions politically, constitutionally and socially. However, instead of working with numerical data, the study deals with the interpretation, sense, and history. The qualitative approach is useful in investigating not only what occurred during the Zia time but how and why changes

are still affecting the Pakistan democracy. The research relies on historical and descriptive research. It looks at the time between 1977 and 1988 during which Zia-ul-Haq was in power and relates this to the events that unfolded in the years thereafter. The study design will enable a detailed examination of the political processes, government policies as well as institutional reactions in this period. It also aids in tracking the long-term effects of the policies of Zia on the constitution, judiciary, parliament and political culture.

Primary sources of information were used to collect data in this research study. These consist of academic books, journal articles, government documents, speeches, as well as reports concerning the rule of Zia. The review of reputable newspapers and archives was also done to know the opinion of people and political speech of that period. Theoretical literatures on the concept of institutional decay were framed with the help of the works of Huntington (1968) and Fukuyama (2014), although Pakistani specifics were also described by Zahid (2011), Kanwal (2015), and Noman (1989). The inclusion of various sources was used to make the study balanced and credible. It concentrated on those documents that talked of the process of Islamization, constitutional amendments, military politics and institutional performance before and after the period of Zia.

The thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. The texts have been closely read to reveal the main aspects of the authoritarian control, religion and politics, constitutional manipulation and weakening of institutions. These themes were then correlated with the Institutional Decay Theory in explaining how the actions of Zia changed the political system in Pakistan. The patterns that the analysis sought included; the way Zia employed Islamization to legitimize military rule or the way his reforms to the constitution undermined parliamentary democracy. All findings were contrasted with various sources in order to be reliable and to prevent unilateral considerations.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The eleven years of Zia-ul-Haq in power altered the way politics, law and people life were conducted in Pakistan more than he disrupted democracy. These impacts are manifested in three broad and interactive areas including constitutional and institutional change, political culture and party life, and social/ideological legacies. All of this has lowered the institutional resilience and complicated democratic recovery.

Zia redefined the rules which would live beyond his death. The shift in real power off parliament and into the presidency and the security establishment was the most tangible of the changes, which was driven by the legal and constitutional engineering. The Eighth Amendment (and adding Article 58(2)(b) to it) provided the president with a constitutional weapon of dissolving elected governments; that single amendment was applied many times in the 1990s and established extra-parliamentary removal of governments as a matter of course (Noonari & Noonari, 2013; Ali et al., 2021). In brief: the constitution started securing not the rule of

representatives but the politics of political escape of non-democratic players. Zia politicized the state institutions as well. He created loyalists within the bureaucracy, bought off parts of the judiciary, and remodelled regulatory institutions to serve regime stability instead of dispassionate functions of the people (Shafiq et al., 2020; Zahid, 2011). Having lost their independence, these institutions could hardly become fully independent again. Institutional corruption followed: the institutions were still there but the norms availed by them such as impartiality, predictability and accountability were compromised (Zahid, 2011; Shafiq et al., 2020).

The model introduced by Zia made political elites understand that to survive sometimes it is even outside the ballot box. He conducted controlled and partyless elections, encouraged political maneuvering and rewarded conforming politicians and local power brokers (Rais, 1985; Kamran, 2009). This provided incentives to patronage and clientelism and short term bargaining against programmatic politics. In 1988, parties came back to power, however, they could not find organizational roots and lacked internal discipline. They turned into personality and patronage machines, rather than agencies of inculcating leaders to democratic practices (Shafiq, 1998; Taylor, 1992). This culture of rejections, unstable coalitions, and politics of threats of the extra-constitutional has led to what some scholars refer to as controlled democracy or temporary democracy - forms of democracy with no seriousness or devotion of elites to its provisions (Hoffman, 2011; Nasr, 1992). Such culture promoted waves of distrust between civilian politicians and security actors that are still present.

The Islamization of Zia was a two-fold legacy. To begin with, it institutionalized religious authority in the state organs (e.g., Federal Shariat Court, Hudood laws) and made the usage of religious discourse acceptable in order to gain legitimacy normal (Shah, 2012; Kanwal, 2015). Second, patronage of the religious groups by the state, especially at the time when the state was engaged in the Afghan jihad, reinforced militant networks, sectarian fragmentation, and changed the social norms (Qureshi, 1980; Burki, 1988). Those changes undermined the principles of pluralism and politicized institutional change as a threat to the institution and a social risk (ur Rahim et al., 2025). When the government relies on religion to rationalize authority, it reduces the latitude of neutral rule making and the rights-based bargaining. The rights of minorities and women, along with other non-majority voices, are no longer under protection; the judicial and administrative reactions to them are politicized (Shah, 2012; Raina, 2014). These effects lowered the credibility of the institutions and made the constitutional change more difficult to follow without creating severe social resistance.

Centralizing tendencies by Zia undermined the federal institutions and provincial autonomy. His regime made inter-provincial grievances and institutional suspicion worse by concentrating the power in the center and politicizing resource and administrative decisions. These tensions subsequently manifested themselves in the form of water, resource, and jurisdictional disputes - matters that further caught the attention of energy in order to promote democratic deepening and institutional

rebuilding (Ali et al., 2021; Shafiq et al., 2020).

Path dependency is probably the most harmful legacy. When rules become skewed to centralized, extra-constitutional authority, political players change and institutionalize such arrangements. The self-reinforcing system was created by the Eighth Amendment, patronage networks, and the tradition of applying non-democratic levers to overcome political crises (Thelen, as explained by historical institutionalism scholars). These institutional incentives did not disappear with the death of Zia; they rendered the long-term democratization challenging since elites could easily manipulate it in the short term as opposed to the long term, which was still uncertain (Hoffman, 2011; Shafiq, 1998).

The majority of the scholars are unanimous on this point: Zia undermined the democratic bodies and transformed the political incentives (Zahid, 2011; Noman, 1989; Shafiq et al., 2020). They also accept that Islamization was also connected not with spiritual reform, but with political ones (Shah, 2012; Butt et al., 2020). Debatable spheres revolve around intentions and the relative weight. Other authors emphasize the survival instinct of Zia and geopolitical possibilities of Zia (Noman, 1989; Burki, 1988), whereas other authors attach more importance to ideological motives and the active establishment of a religiously-legitimized state (Kanwal, 2015; Shah, 2012). Both readings are important: ideological engineering explains institutional redesigns which have endured whereas survival politics explains short-term maneuvers.

The Zia long shadow implies that reformers cannot consider institutions as an apolitical machine. Any significant reform will have to deal with the incentives that perpetuate politicized institutions: judicial autonomy, bureaucracy restructuring, constitutional protection against extra-constitutional exits, where possible depoliticization of religious adjudication and strengthening of party organizations to provide people with real alternatives to patronage (Noonari & Noonari, 2013; Ali et al., 2021). It may not be as easy to change laws as it is to rebuild trust.

Zia did not simply give democracy a break, in other words, he rewired Zia. The rewiring increased the possibility of institutional failure and democratic restoration more difficult. It takes a conscious, stratified effort to restore healthy democracy, through legal Band-Aids, institutional tensile, and other cultural efforts to re-enforce democratic principles in politics.

The Islamization project of Zia-ul-Haq was not merely a moral or a religious reform, it was a political initiative to justify his military regime and undermine democratic checkpoints to his authority. Zia transformed the frame of state institutions, particularly parliament, judiciary, and political parties, to his own end of authoritarian objectives, as opposed to democracy, under the pretext of the Islamic revival (Shah, 2012; Zahid, 2011).

In 1977, Zia suspended the 1973 Constitution of the country after assuming power and reigned many years without having an elected parliament. He has only managed to restore a legislature when he conducted non-party elections in 1985, which retain political opposition divided and loyal to individuals and not political

ideas (Kamran, 2009). This action had created a parliament which lacked political power and unity- a parliament that would not fight the presidential dominance. This process of Islamization assigned this parliament with a somewhat small role: to endorse the religious ordinances instead of debating and legislating on their own. Zia brought about the Hudood Ordinances (1979), Qanun-e- Shahadat Order (1984) and Zakat and Ushr Ordinance (1980)- all of legal nature but the ordinances under the guise of a moral reform were enacted without democratic consultation (Burki, 1988). These measures marginalized the parliamentary discussion and substituted the legislative system by executive decree, which was defended by religion. Religion, according to Noman (1989), was utilized to suppress criticism - to criticize the regime was to criticize Islam. Zia also redefined the role of parliament by encouraging Islamization at the top. It ceased being a place of plural voices, but a place of validation of state-identified religiosity. Such a change compromised the independence of the institution and made the political culture of debate and dissent in Pakistan weak (Noonari & Noonari, 2013).

The Zia judiciary became its target as well as its instrument of his Islamization agenda. At the beginning of his reign, Zia had removed the judges who doubted his coup and installed those who agreed with the Doctrine of Necessity that offered a legal basis to military overthrows (Zahid, 2011). This formed a judiciary that was used to justify the authoritarian rule instead of upholding the constitution. Zia changed the setting of the judiciary through Islamization. In 1980, the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) was instituted to review whether the laws were in agreement with the Islamic injunctions (Shah, 2012). Although it could have seemed to advance Islamic justice, it actually weakened the power of the Supreme Court and provided the regime with another arm of authority. The FSC erased the line between religious interpretation and constitutional law, thereby establishing parallel jurisdictions that made the issue of the independence of the law more difficult (Raina, 2014). Further, the moral legitimacy of the judiciary was politicized by Zia by permitting religious clerics to interfere in the process of making legal decisions. Courts were at the risk of being declared un-Islamic in case they did not support the agenda of the regime. This pressure destroyed judicial independence and created self-censorship among the judicial bodies (Shafiq et al., 2020). As a result, the judiciary was no longer charged to protect the rights of the citizens rather it just acted as a protector of the Islamic image of the regime.

Political parties were also the focus of Islamization by Zia as he considered them as a challenge to his power. He soon after ascending to power banned any party-based politics claiming that party politics caused division among the Muslim community (Kamran, 2009). Zia also used religion as a device of delegitimization by making political opposition un-Islamic (Hoffman, 2011). The regime endorsed a non-political type of Islam that emphasized on individual morality and obedience as opposed to political participation. Meanwhile, Zia also formed alliances with such Islamic parties as Jamaat-e-Islami that favored his Islamization agenda in return of state sponsorship and power (Nasr, 1992). This alliance pushed secular and liberal

political forces to the periphery, which reduced the political spectrum in Pakistan and redefined the ideology. By the time that Zia permitted a little political action, parties had been undermined, divided and no longer in touch with the society. The patronage system which developed promoted individual loyalties rather than organization. This was the legacy that survived the death of Zia - poor institutionalization of parties and political engineering has been the primary issue in the Pakistani democracy (Shafqat, 1998).

Through the Islamization, Zia obscured the distinction between religion and government. He made political dissent in silence of the state to be the same as religious dissent by employing religion as the justification of state power (Shah, 2012). This complicated open political discourse and chastised the institutional discourse. The religious legitimacy became more potent than democratic legitimacy. With time, this mentality was adopted by the culture of governance in Pakistan, where leaders still use Islam to justify a policy or to shut down critics (Ali et al., 2021). Political advancement of Islam also contributed to the increased sectarianism, with the patronage by the state being directed to some religious groups to the exclusion of others. Such divisions weakened nationhood and the weakening of democratic institutions that depend on inclusiveness and agreement (Qureshi, 1980).

The Islamization agenda by Zia created a twofold legacy by emptying the institutions of democracy and deepening religion in the state apparatus. Through this, parliament no longer enjoyed its independence in law making, the judiciary its interpretive power and political parties their organization foundation. These institutions are yet to overcome that distortion. Religion-political intertwining that Zia initiated is still present in Pakistan, affecting the overall governance, impacting the law, and restricting pluralism (Shafiq et al., 2020; Shah, 2012). Concisely, Zia was not merely Islamizing Zia, but he was controlling. It substituted the legitimacy of democracy with the one of the religious one and reformed the institutional DNA of Pakistan, which continues to create a challenge to democratic consolidation.

The rule of Zia-ul-Haq became one of the most radical -and harmful periods in the political life of Pakistan. His policies on politics and constitution not only disrupted democracy, but also repackaged the machinery of power in such a manner that it contributed to authoritarian governance rather than democratic engagement. Zia undercut the parliament, judiciary, and political parties systematically between 1977 and 1988 by engineering the constitution, constitutional amendments, and using religious justification. His government established a political system in which institutions were being maintained in structure, but not in spirit of democracy (Zahid, 2011; Noman, 1989).

Upon Zia taking power in July 1977, he suspended the Constitution of 1973 and dissolved parliament in the name of restoring order following the case of political instability. This was the initial huge strike at institutional democracy. The suspension put all the authorities, legislative, executive, and to a certain extent judicial, in the hands of the Chief Martial Law Administrator, with which title Zia acted by decree (Burki, 1988). He had given a promise of elections within ninety

days yet it never materialized. Rather, Zia used military ordinances and executive orders to rule making Pakistan more of a constitutional dictatorship as Noman (1989) termed it. There were democratic structures in form but the military establishment was in the true sense of the term the powerhouse. This generated a culture of politics where authority generated legitimacy rather than popular consent.

This action by Zia to introduce a new Local Government system in 1979 was brought as an attempt to ensure that there was an application of the grassroots democracy. In practice, it was a control mechanism that was done top-down. The military supervised the local bodies that had little autonomy. Zia also employed them to circumvent the political parties and create a group of trusted administrators and local elites that wielded their authority not to the electorate, but to the regime (Kamran, 2009). This construct made what Shafqat (1998) describes as depoliticized participation - a controlled form of democracy that was perceived to be participatory but in reality was enhancing the central authority. It diluted the political institutions of a country and disintegrated the political scene, making it hard to oppose the regime collectively.

One of the most significant changes in the history of the constitution in Pakistan was the Eighth Amendment (1985). It made legal everything done under martial law and added Article 58(2)(b) to the Constitution according to which the President had the right to disband the National Assembly at any time (Noonari & Noonari, 2013). This amendment permanently changed the balance of power between the Prime Minister and the parliament to the Presidency. It has turned the parliamentary system into a quasi-presidential one and had institutionalized the dominance of the executive over the representative politics (Ali et al., 2021). By so doing, it legitimized the notion that the non-elected sources of power could stamp over the elected ones, which waned way beyond the demise of Zia. The safety of his decrees provided by the constitution allowed Zia to disguise his military rule as being lawful. What started as an extra-constitutional coup slowly turned into a constitutional dictatorship, in which even the Constitution itself was used as the instrument of dictatorial power (Zahid, 2011).

The policies of Zia were based on his Islamization policies. He put religious ideas into the state law through constitutional amendments and ordinances and transformed the character of the governance. In 1985, the Objectives Resolution was incorporated as a substantive part of the Constitution that provided Islam with formal legal role (Shah, 2012). This action created a blur in religion and politics. The regime of Zia and her takeovers portrayed itself as the Islamic identity guardian and faith was her means of legitimacy and censorship. The establishment of the Federal Shariat Court (1980) and the law-enhancing role of the Council of Islamic Ideology enabled the religious interpretation to prevail in the legislature. The law making authority of the parliament was reduced and religious legality was a political instrument. This process redefined the purpose of the state, as Raina (2014) argues, which was not to represent the citizens but to impose the religious morality. It made constitutional Islamization a political tool that undermined democratic

accountability.

After attaining power, Zia prohibited political parties on grounds that they were dividing the country. It remained eight years without a political activity. Finally, elections took place in 1985, during which the elections were partyless, thus, making sure that the new parliament consisted of people who were loyal to Zia instead of party agendas and ideologies (Kamran, 2009). This action disintegrated the political arena. In the absence of parties, there was no structured opposition and there was no platform on which to put a check on the executive. No party formations also equated to the fact that the parliament was no more a place of national policies but a place of individual alliances and patronage networks (Shafiq, 1998). The net effect in the long-term was the creation of politicians less concerned with institutional reform and more concerned with personal existence. Zia managed to create a political generation that worked under authoritarian constraints, which weakened the already crumbling democratic Pakistan.

The judiciary was also important in ensuring that Zia survived politically. He applied the Doctrine of Necessity which the Supreme Court defended in *Begum Nusrat Bhutto v. Chief of Army Staff* (1977) that made the military takeover lawful (Zahid, 2011). It was a dangerous precedent that provided constitutional protection to martial law. Zia then scoured off or marginalized judges who did not yield to his regime, and referred to those who did. This established a culture of judicial reliance on the executive that undermined the separation of powers (Shafiq et al., 2020). The combination of Islamization and executive control to make the judiciary support instead of curtail his authority was achieved by Zia.

The institutions of democracy at Pakistan had changed in a fundamental way by the time of Zia's death in 1988. The parliamentary powers had been deprived of their legislative independence, the judiciary had become timid politically and the political parties had lost their organizational dimensions. The electoral legitimacy was replaced by military and religious legitimacy as the basics of power (Shah, 2012; Noman, 1989). The Eighth Amendment survived Zia and went on to make the Pakistani democracy unstable through the 1990s when the elected governments were over and over again ousted by presidents by Article 58(2) (b). The centralized power, moral control and administered democracy modeled by Zia entered the political DNA of Pakistan. According to Ali et al. (2021), the policies of Zia did not only form a regime; it set a blueprint of authoritarian regimes in the future.

The political and constitutional policies by Zia-ul-Haq transformed the democracy in Pakistan to a controlled system- a democratic system that seemed constitutional but run on a military and religious bias. He transformed the state and citizen relationship through the suspension of the Constitution, amendments manipulation, and Islamization. The institutions that were created to protect democracy were used as instruments of control, a heritage that still dominates the political instability in Pakistan up to date.

Findings of the study

In this part, the outcomes of the three research questions are united. It

elaborates on how the Zia-ul-Haq government (1977-1988) transformed the democratic institutions of the country by manipulating politics, engineering the constitution and using Islam as an instrument. The discussion relates to the Institutional Decay Theory which contributed to the understanding of how the formal structures become ineffective as the power becomes personal, rules are violated and the accountability norms are lost (Huntington, 1968; North, 1990).

The most significant observation is that the political and constitutional policies of Zia transformed the system of business governance in Pakistan so that executive and military powers could dominate. When Zia suspended the 1973 Constitution and declared martial law, he put the entire power under his office. His assertion of restoring stability covered a long term undermining of institutional balance. Under the Eighth Amendment (1985) and the Article 58 (2) (b) was introduced, Zia legitimized presidential absolutism and provided future presidents with the constitutional authority to dissolve elected assemblies (Noonari and Noonari, 2013). This undermined the parliamentary system, not mentioning the fact that it established a tendency towards institutional dependence on non-elected centers of power (Ali et al., 2021). In the perspective of the Institutional Decay Theory, this stage marks the formalization of decay institutions which were still experienced but their autonomy was lost. The government led by Zia turned the Constitution which was originally a democratized right into a power tool. This eventually became standard executive overreach and diminished the parliament to a ceremonial institution (Zahid, 2011).

The second important observation is that the program of Islamization put forward by Zia was not about the moral change at best but rather about the political survival and legitimacy. The absence of the electoral legitimacy made Zia pursue the religious one, as he could use Islam to silence the opposition and legitimize the authoritarian regime (Shah, 2012; Raina, 2014). Incorporating religion into the Constitution and the creation of such institutions like the Federal Shariat Court (1980), Zia transformed the government that was not based on democratic approval but on the religious authority. Parliament was marginalized, the laws were passed via presidential ordinances as Islamic reforms like the Hudood and Zakat Ordinances - without debate (Burki, 1988).

Independence of the judiciary was also lost. It also approved the Doctrine of Necessity, a justification of military rule, under pressure to be in conformity with the moral narrative of the regime in *Nusrat Bhutto v. Chief of Army Staff* (1977) (Zahid, 2011). Any judge who resisted was changed and this laid down a culture of obedience as opposed to integrity in the judiciary. The political parties were also limited. The prohibition of the party-based politics and the 1985 elections without party split the political class into pieces that all had to be at the mercy of the regime (Kamran, 2009; Shafqat, 1998). This destroyed collective organization and substituted ideology with patronage. Concisely, Zia employed Islamization to undermine the institutional autonomy and form an alliance of loyal bureaucrats, clerics and politicians. Religion worked as a tool of dictatorship and any opposition

was viewed as blasphemy or betrayal. Within the context of the Institutional Decay Theory, this indicates that regimes employ ideology to cover and further the decay that turns moral discourse into a political instrument (Fukuyama, 2014).

The third significant observation is that the rule of Zia long-term impacted the democratic culture and performance of the Pakistani institutions. He transformed the functioning of power by redefining political legitimacy in terms of religion and security, impacting on the way power functions even post his downfall. Those constitutional changes that he instigated remained after his passing. In the 1990s, elected governments were repeatedly disbanded by the Amendment of the Eighth, which demonstrated that the rot had grown self-perpetuating (Ali et al., 2021). The culture of institutions that were created in the context of Zia military interference, judicial compromise, and political opportunism remained invulnerable over decades. At the cultural level, Zia reduced the distinction between religion identity and citizenship with his Islamization which diminished the toleration of pluralism and the democratic dialogue process (Shah, 2012). All the manipulations of Islam by him as a political tool also gave strength to sectarian groups and increased social polarization (Qureshi, 1980). This complicated the efforts of subsequent governments to foster an inclusive or secular agenda without being attacked by religious groups.

The reason why these trends persist can be explained with the help of the Institutional Decay Theory. Instead of the institutions opposing the decay, they adjust to it once the rules and norms are redefined to serve the needs of authoritarianism (Thelen, 1999). Players in politics discover how to survive and sustain in a system that is broken, as opposed to transforming it. That is why, the democracy in Pakistan is still grappling with the instability, poor accountability, and political fragmentation all based on the institutional legacy of Zia. The trend cuts across all the three dimensions political, constitutional, and religious: the regime of Zia substituted institutional power with a personal one. In the case of Institutional Decay Theory, the drift takes place when institutions have lost their coherence, legitimacy and their trust by the people (Huntington, 1968; North, 1990).

The Pakistan of Zia was to be used as a textbook of this process. The Constitution was manipulated to support the executive power. The parliament was turned into a figurative building. The courts were made to serve as an instrument of confirmation of illegality. The political parties were divided and depoliticized. Religion was politicized to quash dissent and moralize the governance. These transformations canned out institutional roots of democracy without sacrificing their superficialities. What came out was a constitutional hybrid system which was authoritarian in essence. Zia therefore institutionalized the rotting of democracy in terms of structure and spirit.

The politics of engineering by Zia shows that authoritarianism may have democratic labels. It was not only the weakening of institutions but also the reconstructing of political consciousness that was left to him. Many actors in politics including civilians came to know how to play with informal power structure,

patronage, and religious symbolism after his reign. This legacy is why in Pakistan democracy is always oscillated between democracy and military control. The centralized authority, the ideological power and the poor responsibility practiced in Zia system became the default environment of the state. Consequently, institutional mistrust is one of the largest challenges that Pakistan has to tackle.

To conclude, the Zia-ul-Haq regime (1977-1988) changed the democracy in Pakistan into an autocratic regime that was disguised in constitutional and religious terms. His political and constitutional intrigues diluted parliament and judiciary and the Islamization offered moral justification to the centralization of power. Besides institutional decay that these policies created during his days, they also led to structural habits that are still used to destabilize democracy in the present day. The legacy of Zia demonstrates that when ideology is used by authoritarianism to justify power, it does not only destroy institutions, it transforms political culture itself. The continuing democracy struggle in Pakistan is in most respects a struggle to reverse the institutional and moral perversions of Zia era.

CONCLUSION

The tenure of Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) was the breakthrough in the history of the democratic development of Pakistan. His authoritarian ambition with support of religion destroyed the institutional balance and reinvented the political order to ensure military dominance. He manipulated the Constitution, the judiciary and parliament as his tools of control instead of institutions of representative governance in the pretext of Islamization. The Eighth Amendment and Article 58(2) (b) changed the parliamentary system to the quasi-presidential system that incorporated the executive dominance and made it a matter-of-course to have extra-constitutional interference.

The research exposes how Zia decimated the democratic institutions of Pakistan as he left the formal organization of the institutions unchanged through the Institutional Decay Theory. The parliament was deprived of any legislative autonomy, the judiciary was turned into a legitimizing section of the regime, and political parties were divided by prohibition and election without party. Religion has been politicized such that it can suppress the opposition, and the culture of obedience, sectarianism, and intolerance, long haunting the Pakistani people, remains.

The effects of this institutional corruptness are reflected in the series of periods of poor governance in Pakistan, politicization of bureaucracy and lack of consistent rule of law. The process of Islamization that Zia initiated made the boundary between moral reform and political dominance unclear and made religion an irrevocable element of state legitimacy. Consequently, the post-democratic revival following his death has been slow and unpredictable and limited by structures he has created.

Essentially, Zia did not simply destroy democracy he transform it. His military dictatorship and religious policies transformed the constitutional and

political identity of Pakistan, instilling into it ideas of authoritarian norms which are still prevailing decades later. To have a serious democracy back again, both legal and cultural and institutional renovation would be necessary to undo the profound moral and structural deformities of the Zia period.

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