

Zia's Islamisation policies were a unique product of the inter-discursive symbiosis of religio-political discourse and the militaristic discourse in the country. What were the consequences of these policies and discourses in terms of gender relations in the civil society? How do you think it impacts Pakistani society today?

Zia ul Haq's reign as a dictator ruling the country under Martial Law is distinguishable by the rebirth of Islamic fundamentalism which accompanied religio-political and military discourses aiming to alter the status of women in Pakistan. This change advanced persistent surveillance and, disciplining and scrutiny of women's bodies, all the while demarcating a binding boundary in legal ethics, communal life and media that further subjected them to gender discrimination on a national level. Throughout this essay, I will study the rationale behind such policy making and discuss how it impacts Pakistani society even today.

One alarming consequence of Islamization and its legal reforms on gender relations in the civil society was the segregation of society into male 'surveillance squads' and 'ill-disciplined' women. Over a series of passed laws and jurisdictions, Zia empowered men to take charge of their household affairs and 'control' women. He further initiated despotic legislation concerning women laws. Penalties for Zina were redefined to include adultery, rape and fornication as equivalent crimes. It became next to impossible for sexually assaulted women to seek out help from the authorities for they would face charges themselves. Four male witnesses had to be produced in either case which was difficult for assaulted women to conjure and this culminated in women feeling too afraid to raise their voices against the injustice they were facing.

Court cases referencing to adultery dominated court sessions while other hudood ordinances such as amputation of hands as punishment for robbery were far and few. The legal age limit for marriage was quietly reduced. Laws protecting minors were abrogated and marital rape of minors ensued. There was no law against reporting Zina - anyone could file a case against anyone. If a woman ever spoke out against her male harassers, she would be promptly shut down by a Zina counter filing and would face the wrath of the justice system instead. The working-class women - subaltern - bore the brunt of this ordinance and many women were forced into slavery inside their own homes. These legal reforms aimed not to fix the un-Islamic state of society as advocated by the ruling elite. Instead, they vied to cripple women and subjugate them under the pretext of religious reform as demonstrated by the unfair legislations that widened the ever-growing gender disparity in the country.

Another consequence of Zia's Islamization was the adjustment of meaning of how women should carry on with their civic duties and again, men would be the ones to ensure that they followed protocol and procedure. Women were seen as the embodiment of impurity and provocation of wrongdoing. This clearly alleviates men of all their brutality and shifts the responsibility of man's unjust actions on the shoulders of women in Pakistan. Support for this claim is derived from the fact that Islamic courts piled pressure on the government to equate Zina with "preparation for Zina". A woman sitting amongst a group of men without their consent would mean that she could be charged legally for Zina and might face the same punishment as that of Zina. The government refused to pass any such legislation but the efforts by the religious outlaws illustrate the vehement misogyny that dominated Zia's regime.

The notions of Chadar and Char Diwari exemplified said tyrannical misogyny where women were encouraged to not leave their houses - Char Diwari - unless absolutely crucial. The outdoors dress code for women was amended to a singular loose cloth - Chadar - that was considered 'unrevealing'. This ruling worked in unison with educational reforms to curb the spread of Hindu influence in the country in addition to suppressing the voices of women in the society. Women were not allowed to dress up as Hindus in Sarees. Instead, they were encouraged to appear more *Muslim* which further enhanced tensions and animosity across the border. Women were constantly under surveillance if they left their houses and were judged by pedestrians - men and other women alike - if they ever rebelled with a dress code violation.

The memoir of a woman existing primarily for the purpose of appeasing her man was embellished in the country where she would stay within the four walls of her home at all times and when she would go out, the Char Diwari would be there to maintain her "Taqaddus" - purity. This further pitted man against woman in civic life as these laws limited the scope of what a woman was allowed to do, all the while letting men run wild. The spirit, beauty and desires of the women in society were crushed, extinguished and her purpose was fixated by the patriarchy in the ruling elite.

In the media, the essence of what roles a woman would take were stipulated by the government. Over 90% of men in Pakistani TV shows were depicted as heroes, politicians and men in power while 79% of working women were portrayed as combative, unfamiliar and 'bad' women. State monitored censorship had existed for a long time in educational institutions, political statements, news reports and other political agendas. However, this censorship pivoted towards controlling women in media under the pretext of Islamic reforms and religio-political discourse. PTV female newscasters were advised to cover their heads with Dupattas and women in general were discouraged from appearing on TV since their existence was an embodiment of "obscenity", even in advertisements. Writers were instructed to formally tackle the debacle of unfaithful men of the house by writing scripts depicting ideal female code of conduct in response to such actions by male leads in TV shows - silence - further suppressing women under Zia's regime.

The recent murder of Noor Makhdoom, the sexual harassment charge against Ali Zafar cited by Meesha Shaafi, the sexual assault of a TikToker at Minar - e - Pakistan by four hundred men, the misogynistic narratives portrayed on social media by rape apologists such as Waqar Zaka, honor killings by the dozen a week, acid attacks on women by disgruntled men, the police arresting popular twitter handle Zulfi- Zulfiqar Mannan- for taking pictures with a Jinnah statue while being 'inappropriately dressed' and the never ending list of crimes too gruesome to mention here are testament to the misery of women in our society today.

The effects of Zia's patriarchal endeavors reverberate through time and pose a significant danger to the LGBTQ community and other religious minorities as a whole in the present. If the state cannot protect the rights of women - 48% of the population, how do we expect it to safeguard the rights of the Ahmadi community who are being persecuted and vehemently executed through target killings? How do we expect to save our Shia family whose genocide has been a prevalent concern since the Afghan invasion and is yet to be addressed by the ruling elite?

The minorities in Pakistan are not safe. Pakistan is safe, only for Sunni, Punjabi males. For the rest, this country is a nest of criminals and misogynists who may as well have the state's blessings to do as they please. How the state tackles criminals today will set a precedent for our leaders, years from now. Empowering women and taking back control of the country from the establishment are the two foci of any prospective leader of today. These times shall pass but shall not be forgotten. Zia's history has only resulted in exacerbating bigotry and disunity. The ruling elite must ensure that future religio-political and social discourses address these concerns so as to not repeat history.

Did all Muslims of India vote for Muslim League in 1946 Indian elections because they wanted an Islamic state?

The Muslim League had to succeed in the 1946 elections if its popular support of its demand for Pakistan was to be credible. It had to win in Punjab because without Punjab, there would be no Pakistan. In the elections of 1937, the League lost disastrously. It had put forward a mere seven candidates for eighty-five Muslim seats and only two had been successful. But in 1946, the League won seventy-five of the Muslim seats from Punjab. Historians often attribute this overwhelming victory to religious influx and Islamic sentiments. In recent times, researchers have delved deeper into the intricacies of the context of partition and uncovered a methodical, almost mechanical political backbone in the Muslim League's push towards the tail end of the 1946 elections. A sophisticated system of organizational development, political masterstrokes, Sufi and Pir assistance and a fortunate abrupt end to the Second World War paved the way for the League's success instead of the sentiment that all Muslims merely wanted an Islamic State.

The Muslim League had to break the Unionist Party's stronghold in Punjab. The Unionists were influential landlords and *jagirdaars* who provided patronage to the Pirs and *zamindars* of Punjab to retain their loyalty and 'buy' their vote. They had the vested interests of the British at heart and were merely a tool for the British to extend their rule over Punjab. The British had installed puppet rulers during the annexation of the states of the subcontinent in the 1800s and found remarkable success in controlling the citizens of said states. However, Punjab was another entity entirely. The myriad of regional tribes, traditions and cultures were used to the level of autonomy they had already enjoyed in the past. As long as they provided sufficient yield from the crops, contributed soldiers to fight for the British and protect against invaders from the North and controlled the river trade, the British were happy to oblige them with their choice of rulers. The Unionist Party was the face of the operations and the Punjabi community was satiated by the better-than-average living conditions bestowed upon their province.

The Muslim League used this support to its advantage and launched a counterattack after the embarrassing defeat in 1937. It set up branches in rural areas to enlist the assistance of the working-class and peasants who had not enjoyed the luxuries the urban class did during the Unionist Party's rule of Punjab. The League sent representative to every city, town and village and convinced the lower middle class to vote for the League. Their vote would entail supplies, economic growth, better living conditions and representation in the assembly. The League sent students to these branches who were skilled in persuasive and coercive techniques and managed to convince the working class that under the Muslim League, their lives would matter. Their families would be taken care of and they would not spend their entire lives at the bottom of the food chain, thereby winning a large number of votes from the working class.

The Second World War came to an abrupt end with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Sure there was some futile resistance but the Allies put a swift end to proceedings. The Unionist Party had encouraged the Muslims of Punjab to join the military force of the allies in the war

against the Nazis and promised plentiful harvest, lands, riches and gifts for the veterans and their families after the end of the war. The British had their hands full and treasury empty owing to the expenses of the World War and was unable to entertain the Unionist Party's request for the promised incentives on time. As the war came to a sudden halt, the victorious Punjabi soldiers returned to Punjab, jubilantly awaiting their promised gifts – only to find out that the promises were empty and the Unionist Party's pockets, bare. The Muslim League organized protest meetings, passed resolutions on clothing, rationing and resource distribution and publicly called out the Unionist Party on its failure to deliver on its promises made to the Punjabi soldiers. The League promised the soldiers free medical aid, free education for their children and remissions of land tax and revenue. This opportunistic play further garnered votes for the Muslim League from the disgruntled soldiers and veterans.

Another avenue for congregating voters for the Muslim League in the 1946 elections was the support of the Pirs, Sufis and elders in Punjab. The League made it a point to hold meetings in mosques where they would perform recitation of the Holy Quran before every protest in order to appear more religious. There was a sentiment that the Muslim League was working for its selfish interests instead of for representing the Muslims of Punjab and the League wished to change that. 1800 students from the Aligarh School and the Punjab Muslim Student Federation were trained in religion and sent to the rural areas of Punjab as representatives of the Muslim League to inculcate the spirit of Islam in the working class and remind them that the Muslim League was the only representative of Islam in the subcontinent. The League convinced them that they were working against the Hindu led Congress for all the Muslims in the subcontinent and would represent Muslims in the Parliament. Many Muslims flocked behind the League after this initiative and support for the League's elections increased manyfold.

Punjab operated under the pretext of *baradari* loyalty with elders of the community holding more influence than most political leaders. The mentor's word was bond and binding on the students. The Pir and Sufi elders had not been disturbed by the Unionist Party during their rule of Punjab, for there had never been a need to control the population. The Muslim League recognized the untapped potential of these leaders and sent representatives to approach every elder in the rural areas. The League recognized that the Pirs held overwhelming authority and influence over the communities and convinced them to turn the loyalties of their mentees for Islam, for Pakistan and for the League. Allegiances shifted and the Pirs were offered seats in the Muslim League cabinet for the 1946 elections. Pirs, Sufis, elders of the tribes and landlords were all given seats in the council and the League made sure that they felt respected and important. Thus, under the flag of traditional campaigning, smart target identification and religious sentiments, the Muslim League collected the necessary votes to deliver a crushing blow to the Unionist Party's hopes for victory in the subsequent elections.

The Muslims who voted for the Muslim League in the 1946 elections wanted to be heard. They wanted representation and a promise of a better life under the League's rule. To them, Pakistan was a dreamland where their previous positions on the social ladder would be deemed

meaningless. Pakistan was a fresh start, a new hope. It signified protection of interests, rights to representation, a platform to voice opinions, financial security, freedom from foreign rule and socio-economic uplifting. For many, it was the only chance at a better life. Religion was an afterthought – a welcome reprieve and added perk for voting for the Muslim League. The League put on a master class of isolating and identifying the vested interests and demands of a target population as it orchestrated a political masterstroke to remove the Unionist Party from power and take over as the only, dominant Muslim voice of the subcontinent. Whether or not it managed to live up to the expectations of its voters is a different case entirely but it did prove to the Congress and the British that it was a force to be reckoned with and was there to stay.