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## **EVOLUTION OF THE STATE AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND THE ROLE OF ISLAM IN PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH**

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**T**HE state and political structures in Pakistan and Bangladesh have been continually undergoing complex social and economic changes collateral in the final run to the transition of society from colonial to the modern state, and explained by the complex processes of class formation, the formation of the basic classes of bourgeois society against the background of the existing numerous social and class groups of previous formations, transitory type strata, etc.

Changes in the basis of the Pakistan and Bangladesh societies led to respective alterations in the super-structure, the political alignment of forces and the composition of the bloc of bourgeoisies and landlords. As both countries follow the capitalist mode of development, groups of population associated with this mode of production keep on consolidating, as well as business interests in the government. It stands to reason that this is the leading, general trend with ramified variations, for example, increased influence on state policies in Pakistan in the eighties of landed aristocracy.

Pakistan's political history is complex and varied. Nonetheless, four basic periods can be distinguished. In the first decade of Pakistan's statehood the parliamentary system prevailed. From the late fifties and through the sixties it was

military dictatorships. A civilian government with populist aspirations headed by Z. A. Bhutto came to power in Pakistan after the formation of Bangladesh. July 1977 again saw the establishment of a military dictatorship (in recent years it has been slowly transforming, sometime with retreats, into a constitutional parliamentary system). As to Bangladesh, its political history subdivides into two basic periods – a civilian parliamentary system (from the emergence of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh and upto the August 1975 coup) and the period of alternating military dictatorships both direct and under the guise of constitutional institutes.

Islam has always played an important role in the life of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Its egalitarian ideas, the ideas of Muslim equality and unity have been used by the ruling classes to ease the inter-political tensions caused by the growing social and property inequality and to popularize the image of a "uniform and equal Muslim community". Islam has been used by the ruling circles to strengthen their positions; it has been used by the political opposition to gain power and by various groupings to overwhelm their opponents in inter-party and faction struggles. Islam has played an important role in both states' foreign policies, although their relations with the Muslim world were contingent

in the final run on economic and political interests as exemplified by Pakistan's highly improved relationships with the Middle Eastern Muslim countries in the seventies when the latter's financial and economic resources and international positions reached greater heights.

The role of Islam in Pakistani society is much more active than in Bangladesh for several reasons, primarily, because of differences in the formation of these states. The interaction of Islam and policy in Pakistan cannot be separated from the idea of a separate state for the Muslims of the South Asian Subcontinent. The emergence in 1947 of the "ideological" Pakistani state has translated this idea into a reality. It is also important to emphasize that for Pakistan, composed of varying ethnic groups, Islam has been a major vehicle to strengthen the unity and integrity of the state.

Bangladesh was born in the flames of a national liberation movement against the Pakistani rule sanctified by Islam. It should be noted that in the former Eastern province of Pakistan the political role of Islam was weakened by the national feelings of the discriminated Bengalis (98 per cent of the population of Bangladesh are Bengalis).

The new state was secular. There were no Islamic principles in its Constitution. Among the key four principles of state policy as laid down in the Constitution of Bangladesh were "nationalism" and "secularism."<sup>1</sup> The use of religion for political purposes and discrimination on religious grounds were forbidden.<sup>2</sup> It goes without saying that Islam, as the religion of the overwhelming majority of the population (85-87 per cent) with century-long traditions continued to play a notable role in Bangladesh at that period, the more so that secularism meant no infringement on religion, but banning all forms of communalism.<sup>3</sup>

No wonder that the situation in religion-based Pakistan was different. The political role of Islam was not denied; on the contrary, it was emphasized. All actions in the name of Islam were holy. The resolution of the Constituent Assembly on General Principles (Objectives Resolution) adopted in March 1949, which outlined the major provisions of Pakistan's Constitution (approved only in March 1956) proclaimed that the supreme

power over the universe belongs to Allah and the Pakistani people exercise power within the limits set by Him. The Resolution also contained principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice as stemming from Islam.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, the influence of Islam on political processes in the country at the time under review was less than at other periods. The political role of religious-communal parties, the fundamentalist forces, was also small. The above principles were declarative. In practice the state and political structure functioned basically according to its own laws. The actions of Pakistani leaders in the fifties and several decades later in similar situations seem to be very convincing proof of this.

1953 witnessed a sharp campaign against the Muslim sect of Ahmadiyyah. Participants in the movement led by religious-communal organizations demanded that the sect be officially announced a religious minority. The then cabinet was headed by Khwaja Nazimuddin, a very pious man who devotedly observed all Muslim customs and rites. He not only resisted the fundamentalists' demands, but also used force against them. The police and troops were brought into play; martial law was imposed in some districts; numerous arrests were made and the instigators were brought before court. In 1974, however, the Z. A. Bhutto government accepted practically without any resistance the demands of the new growing anti-Ahmadiyyah movement and the Ahmadiyyah sect was declared non-Muslim.

In the first years under Ayub Khan the situation remained practically the same. The General fully relied on the army: to realize his plans he made use of the military bureaucratic machinery and wartime laws; he did not practically need the political support of religious forces. Moreover, the then military leaders of Pakistan had been educated in the spirit of Western military and political doctrines. Under the 1962 Constitution the official name of the country was the "Republic of Pakistan" and not the "Islamic Republic of Pakistan" as was the case with the 1956 Constitution and the future Constitutions.

The social and economic reforms, as well as those in education, the judicial system and the family laws designed to modernize the Pakistani

society and cleanse it of the elements of the past were opposed by the traditionalists. Their pressure especially mounted after 1962 when martial law was lifted and they were a success in many fields. In December 1963 the first amendment to the Constitution was passed to change the country's name again to be the "Islamic Republic of Pakistan". New Islamic principles were inserted in the Constitution and the old provisions reinforced. For instance, the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology was instructed to study all existing laws to make them consistent with the principles of Islam.<sup>5</sup> The traditionalists continued their offensive. They succeeded either in rescinding "too modernist" laws or in immobilizing them (as, for example, was the case with the family and marriage law adopted in 1961).<sup>6</sup> The government itself began to make more frequent use of Islam for political ends and for strengthening its position. For instance, during the 1965 Presidential elections the official mass media sought to discredit from orthodox positions the Opposition's candidate who was a lady. Ayub Khan's conflict with the traditionalists, however, continued and happened to be a cause of his fall.

The situation was complicated in the seventies when the Z. A. Bhutto-led government was in office. This government carried out the greatest reforms of Pakistani society to speed up its social and economic development. The reforms were fiercely opposed by the traditionalists. They especially resented Bhutto's attempts to create a sort of symbiosis of Islamic and socialist ideas in the form of "Islamic Socialism". It ought to be borne in mind that those years witnessed an "Islamic boom" in most Muslim countries (we shall discuss the problem later). In Pakistan Islamism gained more ground as the result of the separation of the Eastern province.

In this situation the government sought to make active use of Islam for political ends, for strengthening its position, weakening the pressure from the right and for social and national integration of Pakistani society. Z. A. Bhutto called Islam "the principal cementing factor of the country's unity".<sup>7</sup> Islam was used also to extend relations with the rich Middle and Near Eastern countries which were not only becoming in the seventies

major financial sources and industrial goods sales markets for Pakistan but also places for export of Pakistani manpower.

In the said conditions, the Z. A. Bhutto government disassociated from the ideas of fundamentalism, put into practice (probably it is more accurate to say, had to put into practice) a series of measures demanded by the traditionalists. As mentioned above, the latter succeeded in what they had failed before – in having the Ahmadiyyah community proclaimed non-Muslim. For the first time the Constitution declared Islam a state religion and absorbed a series of Islamic principles.<sup>8</sup> Later on, other Islamic traditions, such as banning gambling and alcohol drinking and declaring Friday the official weekly holiday instead of Sunday, were also legalized.

These measures, however, did not ease the traditionalists' pressures; on the contrary, they served to encourage them. In the later part of the seventies, the economic situation in Pakistan grew worse as the result of recessions and energy and monetary crises in the capitalist world which had adversely affected the living standards of the Pakistani population. Its dissatisfaction was used by the religious communal forces for launching a strong anti-government movement in 1977 under the slogan of "defending Islam". The resultant instability paved the way for M. Zia-ul-Haq's military coup in July 1977.

Apart from making use of growing Islamism M. Zia-ul-Haq's government actively encouraged religious sentiments. During the period of its office the political role of Islam reached its greatest heights. The government's declared aim was to establish a "genuine Islamic society" (*Nizam-i-Islam*) and it actively propagandized the egalitarian ideas of Islam promising to create a society of "general prosperity", to overcome "poverty, hunger and the gap between the poor and the rich". This policy was aimed at winning over the population suffering from poverty and misery to the side of the government. Islamization was used to legitimize the regime that came to power through a coup. The closely interwoven policy and religion tolerated no opposition: any opposition was regarded as an anti-state act and as religious heresy. The army was no longer a cor-

porate group; it was an integral part of the single state-religious structure; its declared mission was to defend Pakistan's borders and ideology. Such policies enjoyed the support of a large share of traditionalists. Influential ulema and the religious communal parties became the military's political allies. Their representatives were involved in the country's administration and were appointed members of the cabinet. For the first time in Pakistan's history the communalist "Jama'at-i-Islami" party was directly and formally admitted to office. The policy of intense Islamization enabled Pakistan to extend and diversify its co-operation with the rich Muslim countries in South West Asia and largely pre-determined its attitude towards Afghanistan.

Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization policy has affected many a sphere of Pakistani society's life, including the educational and judicial systems, the family laws, the establishment, economics and culture. The ideological activity was centred on popularizing the "values of Islam" and "Islamic re-orientation of humanities", etc. A religion-based system of separate elections as well as traditional punishments for certain crimes (stealing, robbery, perjury, etc.) were enforced and a Federal Shari'ah Court to administer Islamic justice was set up. In the field of economics a system of creditor-debtor partnership was substituted for interest on credits; equal sharing of profits was instituted. The Islamic *zakat* and *ushr* taxes were introduced respectively on savings exceeding the established minimum level and on agricultural produce. Part of the funds raised through *zakat* was diverted to help widows, orphans, and the disabled, etc. who annually received small sums of several dozen rupees. Of course, for very poor this money is meaningful, but otherwise such an arrangement makes charity for millions a regular unavoidable feature.

After 1975 coup all governments in Bangladesh sought to heighten the role of Islam. Several years after the coup, secularism, a leading principle of state policy, was renounced and replaced by "absolute loyalty to Islam". Officials began to take part in organizing Muslim holidays. An Islamic University was opened up and action taken to Islamize the training and some civil

ceremonies, to introduce the Arabic language, etc.

However, the Islamization of Bangladesh society was greatly hampered by the strong national feelings of Bengalis, their original national culture and language. As distinct from Pakistan, with its practically homogeneous religious population, 15 per cent of Bangladeshi citizens are non-Muslim which naturally stands in the way of Islamization. And, finally, the relations of Bangladesh with the Middle Eastern countries are not as extensive as those of Pakistan.

In Bangladesh, like in Pakistan, Islam has been used to legitimize the changing ruling regimes and to strengthen their positions. In the hope to improve its position, the government of Husain Muhammad Ershad railroaded in June 1988 an amendment to the Constitution through the National Assembly (whose elections in March had been boycotted by most political parties in the country) to make Islam the state religion. Yet this, in the opinion of many observers, has only aggravated its position.<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, it caused great disappointment in the country and added momentum to the opposition movement; and, on the other, it did not provide any support from the religious communal forces either. Fundamentalists continue to increase pressure on the government; they maintain that notwithstanding the amendment, the Constitution remains secular and stands in need of including Islamic postulates to the effect that the supreme power belongs to Allah and that all laws must conform to the Quran and *Sunnah*, etc.

Thus, the role of Islam in Pakistan's and Bangladesh's political life is not a constant value. Increasing of this role which reached the highest point in the late seventies/mid-eighties has been the main trend (of course, not without significant deviations). The reasons were many. Some of them specifically peculiar to one of the countries or even one period in its history. Others were more generally characteristic of many Muslim countries. The following ought to be emphasized in view of the latter.

The developing countries used to be dominated at different periods of their development by sets of ideas which affected the basic trends of their political life and oppositions, the

India Officer Library and Records which would continue to be of crucial importance to researchers on history of Muslim nationalism. The publication of this *Handbook* is, however, a commendable effort and poses a challenge to researchers to come forward to make full use of the materials so meticulously organized by the Archives of Freedom Movement of Karachi University.

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*It seems pertinent to mention here that the work on the restoration and listing of documents held in the Archives of Freedom Movement is continuing with unabated zeal even after the publication of the Handbook. The archival material which, for one reason or another, could not be noticed in it, the Archives of Freedom Movement plans to publish its lists in the shape of supplements. The first supplements of this series, spread over 4 pages, and dealing with 27 volumes altogether, mainly dealing with the All-India Muslim League (1906-47), classified series, has already been published and can be obtained from the Archives of Freedom Movement, University of Karachi, Karachi.*

Editor

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## EVOLUTION OF THE STATE AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

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nature of disappointment with the existing situation and the forms of its demonstration. In the colonial period the dominant ideas were those of national liberation and the entire political and public activities in these countries were focussed on achieving these aims. After winning the independence the national feelings of the victorious peoples motivated the ideas of "state" or "new" nationalism which were used by the ruling circles for pursuing their own state policies. Decades of "own" state caused disappointment among the masses which hoped for a better life after the termination of foreign rule. So, hopes were increas-

ingly began to be pinned on Islam, in the first place, on its egalitarian principles, on creation of *Nizam-i-Islam*, an Islamic society free of the vices of modern society which led in the seventies, especially, in the late seventies, to the growing political role of Islam and its active use for political purposes in Pakistan and Bangladesh (where the euphoria over independence was quick in passing away).

Other factors also contributed to this process. Both in Pakistan and Bangladesh the important reforms of the Z. A. Bhutto and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's governments caused stronger traditionalists' movements as in these two countries, like in a number of other, there was a sharp increase by the reviewed period in the political role of petty bourgeoisie, largely a traditionalism-bearing stratum. As mentioned above, the military dictatorships which came to power through coups used Islam for legitimization. And, finally, both countries at the said period were extremely interested in expanding co-operation with the rich Middle and Near Eastern countries where the "Islamic wave" was in full swing. It is important to note that the line for Islamization coincided with the basic trends of the conservative home and foreign policies of Pakistan and Bangladesh; subjective factors also played a certain role: by virtue of their education and training the present generation of military leaders is more open and receptive to religious ideas as some of them have various links with the clergy.

In recent years Pakistan, as well as a number of other Muslim countries, have witnessed a fall in the "Islamic boom". The main reason is the inability of the Islamization policy to achieve the proclaimed aims. The position of the masses has not, in fact, improved. Corruption, speculation and trade in contraband items have increased; use of narcotics has reached dangerous levels; growing crimes have become a real threat.<sup>10</sup> All this has caused mass discontent with Islamization and its results.

The rising "Islamic wave" in Pakistan and Bangladesh, as well as in other countries, stemmed largely from the respective policies of the dictatorships. It stands to reason that although slow and inconsistent the transformation of such

dictatorships into constitutional parliamentary forms entailed waning of the previous policies in respect of Islam and its political role.

One of the reasons for the declining "Islamic boom" is the resistance of the public, of the progressive-minded forces. A stubborn resistance to the introduction of fundamentalist principles was put up by those sections of society whose interests were directly affected by Islamization. For example, very active in their opposition are numerous influential lawyers for whom Islamization of the judicial system meant loss of job. There is a general discontent with the Islamic taxation also, which adds to existing state taxes. Islamization is strongly opposed by religious minorities who are reduced by it to the status of second-rate citizenship.

As Islamization in Pakistan follows the Sunnite principles, it affects economically the influential Shi'ite community (roughly 20 per cent of the population) who oppose *zakat* and *ushr* taxes, some criminal punishments, abolition of the banking credit, etc.

It is important to bear in mind that the "Islamic boom" in Pakistan was not pre-conditioned: it did not lead to a greater religiousness of the population as was testified by various factors, including the 1981 field studies conducted at the "peak" period of Islamization. These studies indicated that no changes have taken place in either the attitude of the believers towards their Muslim duties, or in their religious behaviour.<sup>11</sup> In other words, the "Islamic wave" has not reached the depths of Pakistani society: it just raged on its political surface. One cannot help agreeing with Mumtaz Ahmad's opinion that the "Islamic revivalism" in Pakistan means increasing politicization of Islam since the mid-seventies. He is also just in estimating Islamic revivalism as the result of the union between the state and religion.<sup>12</sup>

The ebb of the "Islamic wave" (like its rise in the past) is irregular and uneven, and is marked with delays and sometime with occasional tides. The most significant attempt to galvanize Islamization was President Zia-ul-Haq's proclamation of the *Shari'ah* as the supreme law of the country in June 1988. This decision was followed

immediately by the dissolution by the President of the National Assembly and the legislative assemblies of the provinces, and the resignation of Muhammad Khan Junejo's cabinet. The gesture was intended to get over the dissatisfaction caused by his actions in respect of the representative bodies, to split the Opposition and to consolidate his position, but its pragmatic aims were so obvious that it failed to win the support even of the religious communal parties.

In conclusion, it may be said that although the political role of Islam is currently weakening in Pakistan, it is still very strong. It is no doubt stronger than before the beginning of the "Islamic boom". Correct and complete assessment of many phenomena of Pakistan's domestic life and foreign policy is out of the question without understanding this role. As to Bangladesh Islamic revivalism there has not probably reached yet its acme.

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ards, its cultivation of learning; and the modernists responded by noting the corruption, political instability and illiteracy in Muslim societies. The ulema saw their society as spiritually superior to the West and the modernists called it an excuse for continued poverty. The ulema recalled Islam's medieval splendour while the modernists pointed to its contemporary plight and misfortunes. The ulema selected the most attractive ideals of Islamic history while the modernists chose the autocratic rulers. The ulema disagreed with the modernists' viewpoint. Hence, it was not surprising that they fully backed the anti-Bhutto agitation in 1977 and contributed to his downfall and the rise of General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq.

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## METHODOLOGY OF ISLAMIZATION IN PAKISTAN

(Continued from page 40)

Islam's concern with justice, its high moral stand-