

Economic and Social Developments (1971–1999) – Contribution of General Zia-ul-Haq

Political Background and Rise to Power (1977)

After widespread allegations of rigging in the 1977 elections, Pakistan faced severe political unrest.

General **Zia-ul-Haq**, the Chief of Army Staff, overthrew Prime Minister **Zulfikar Ali Bhutto** on **July 5, 1977**, declaring martial law. He justified the coup by promising “free and fair elections” within 90 days — but later postponed them indefinitely.

Zia consolidated power, banned political activities, and governed through military rule, marking another major interruption in Pakistan’s democratic journey.

Execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1979)

Zia’s regime charged Bhutto with conspiracy in a murder case. The **trial was highly controversial**, with claims of judicial manipulation and political bias.

Despite international appeals for clemency, **Bhutto was executed on April 4, 1979**, in Rawalpindi.

The execution eliminated civilian opposition but **deepened national division** between pro-Bhutto democratic supporters and Zia’s military regime. It also set a precedent for political victimization in Pakistan.

Islamisation Policy

To strengthen his political legitimacy, Zia launched an extensive **Islamisation program**. Key measures included:

- Introduction of **Hudood Ordinances (1979)** for enforcing Islamic punishments.
- **Zakat and Ushr Ordinances** for collection of Islamic taxes.
- Establishment of **Shariat Courts** and compulsory **Islamic education** in schools.
- Ban on alcohol, gambling, and enforcement of public prayers.
- Development of **Islamic banking** and media censorship based on moral codes.

While Zia claimed it was for moral revival, critics argue it encouraged **religious intolerance, sectarian conflict, and restrictions on women’s rights**.

The Afghan Miracle (1979–1988)

The **Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979)** transformed Pakistan into a frontline state in the Cold War.

Zia allied with the **United States** and **Saudi Arabia** to support Afghan Mujahideen against

Soviet forces.

Pakistan received billions in **economic and military aid**, earning short-term economic growth — often called the “**Afghan Miracle.**”

However, this period also led to serious long-term problems:

- Massive influx of **Afghan refugees** (over 3 million).
- Spread of **weapons, drugs, and extremism.**
- Emergence of militant networks later linked to terrorism.

Thus, while Zia’s foreign policy elevated Pakistan’s global importance, it sowed seeds of **domestic instability.**

Amendments to the Constitution

Zia made several constitutional changes to legitimize his military rule and strengthen presidential powers.

He used **Legal Framework Orders (LFOs)** to amend the **1973 Constitution** without parliamentary approval.

Key changes included:

- Incorporation of **Islamic injunctions** into state policy.
- Empowerment of **judiciary and military** at the expense of elected institutions.
- Restriction of political freedoms and concentration of authority in the presidency.
These changes redefined Pakistan’s identity as an **Islamic state**, diminishing democratic checks and balances.

The Eighth Amendment (1985)

The **Eighth Amendment** was passed after the 1985 elections, during Zia’s controlled transition toward “civilian rule.”

It:

- **Legalized all actions** taken under martial law (1977–1985).
- Gave the **President authority to dissolve the National Assembly** under **Article 58(2)(b).**
- Weakened parliamentary democracy by making the Prime Minister subordinate to the President.

This amendment entrenched authoritarianism and became a **source of political instability** in the following decades, as future presidents used it repeatedly to dismiss elected governments.

Relations with Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo

In 1985, Zia appointed **Mohammad Khan Junejo** as Prime Minister to show a return to civilian rule.

However, Junejo began asserting independence by promoting democratic reforms and demanding accountability for government actions, including the **Ojhri Camp disaster** (1988).

This created **tensions between Zia and Junejo**.

Using Article 58(2)(b), Zia dismissed Junejo's government in May 1988, citing inefficiency and corruption.

The dismissal reflected the **continuing struggle between civilian authority and military dominance** in Pakistan's politics.

Legacy of Zia-ul-Haq's Era

General Zia's rule left a **deep and lasting impact** on Pakistan:

- Politically, it weakened democratic institutions and normalized military interference.
- Socially, it **Islamised society**, fostering conservative and sectarian tendencies.
- Economically, U.S. aid improved short-term growth but created **aid dependency**.
- Constitutionally, the **Eighth Amendment** distorted the parliamentary system.

Zia's sudden death in a **plane crash in 1988** ended his rule but his policies continued to influence Pakistan's politics and social fabric for decades.