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GEO-POLITICS, MILITARY RULE AND ISLAMIC EXTREMISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ZIA UL HAQ AND ZIA UR REHMAN REGIMES

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Critical Geo-Politics, Military Rule, Politicization of Islam, Islamic Extremism	Pakistan and Bangladesh have suffered a long way under the military rule where two military dictators—Zia ul Haq and Zia ur Rehman correspondingly, made the extensive use of Islam in the domain of politic, resulting into the Islamic extremism in these two countries. Bangladesh managed to overcome the issue of military involvement in politics and the corresponding Islamic extremism, Pakistan has become even more vulnerable to such undemocratic and extremist forces. This paper first briefly explores the regional and trans-regional factors involved in Islamization of these two countries. The resultant Islamic extremism in these two countries is then analyzed with the help of three major indicators: Islamization of Laws; growth of Madrassas and official patronage of the religious political parties by the two military dictators. Thus, this research is unique from the previous studies on two grounds: first it explores the interrelationship of geopolitics, military rule and Islamic extremism; second it analyzes variation in impacts of the Islamization policies in these two countries in the context of their distinct geographical settings and their corresponding importance for the big powers in diverse situations.
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INTRODUCTION

The use of Islam in the domain of politics has been a common problem with all the civil-cum military leadership of Pakistan and Bangladesh (Ispahani, 2017). The most prominent among them were the two military dictators, i.e., Zia ul Haq and Zia ur Rehman, who in their quest for legitimacy wrapped themselves in the mantle of Islam by reopening the past chapter of Islamic identity in Pakistan and Bangladesh respectively (Ali, 2003). The extensive use of Islam in the domain of politics helped both military dictators in realizing their short-term political objectives but as a side effect, it left long lasting impacts on both sides in term of Islamic extremism and

violence. Therefore, Pakistan suffered more than Bangladesh under the military rule due to its geostrategic location that has made it more attractive and vulnerable to the foreign influences than the latter (Hoodbhoy, 2016). Owing to its longest porous border with Afghanistan known as Durand Line, Pakistan has always been a place of attraction for Great powers particularly the US which has established close ties with the military-led government of Pakistan. In lieu of its cold war services, military-led government of Zia ul Haq got free pass from Washington for the ruthless suppression of the country liberal political forces by propping up religious right (Shah, 2016).

Similarly, there are some relevant studies such as Marwat, (2005), Nawaz, (2008), Rashed, (2008), and Shah, (2016) that are only focused on Pakistan. These studies provide link between religion and military hegemony. It argues that military-led government of Zia ul Haq coopted religion to fulfill his ulterior political motives. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided a blessing in disguise for Zia who with the Support of US and Saudi Arabia undertook massive Islamization agenda which led to sectarian crisis in Pakistan. It places geo strategy of a state as determine factor in formulation of the domestic and international policies of the country. This turned the North Western region of Pakistan into a training ground for Mujahideen, where the latter were not only physically trained to combat the Russian forces but were given a violent ideological orientation in Islamic faith. Paul (2014) rightly argues that like the crude oil has become a 'resource curse' for the gulf countries in term of lacking any strong political system, similarly geo-strategic location of Pakistan has become a curse for it in term of its client-patron relationship with the US. So, the present paper primarily aims to compare and analyze that why Islamic extremism under Zia ul Haq made deeper inroad in Pakistan than that of his counterpart in Bangladesh.

Objectives of Study

1. To find out the means and methods used by the two military dictators for legitimizing their dictatorial regimes.
2. To compare Islamization policies of Zia ul Haq and Zia ur Rehman regimes and its impacts on their respective societies.
3. To find out factors that paved way for Islamic extremism in Pakistan but contained similar trend in Bangladesh.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on Islamic extremism in Pakistan and Bangladesh is broadly divided into two parts. Some studies investigate issue of extremism in compartmentalize form, while the other provide a comparative study of two countries. Studies such as Hashmi (2009), Hassan (2012), Ziring (1992), Alam (1998) are focused on Bangladesh. These studies argue that religion has always been used as a tool for political power. Once come in power the leaders try to marginalize the religious forces but they often fail to do so. Authors opine that Islamic extremism in Bangladesh in not the monolithic phenomenon, however, the role played by the military dictators—Zia ur Rehman and Muhammad Irshad-- exceeds the rest of the factors. To counteract their political rivals these two military dictators as well as the BNP bolstered the Islamist forces and thus institutionalized their role in the country politics. It also highlights the role of external powers i.e. United States and Saudi Arabia in this regard. During the cold war period United States supported Islamist forces in Pakistan. JIB--a religious political party and sister organization of the JI Pakistan gained considerable power in Bangladesh. These studies provide useful insight

but are only focused on Islamic extremism in Bangladesh and do not provide its comparison with Pakistan.

There are some rare comparative studies such as [Maniruzzuman \(1992\)](#), [Malik, \(2009\)](#), [Sheikh \(2019\)](#) that deal with different issues in Pakistan and Bangladesh such as nationalism, Islamic extremism, the politics of language, civil-military relationship. These studies explore that after the debacle of East Pakistan in 1971 both countries attempted to establish governments based on democratic principles and secular values but soon it shifted toward military rule and adopted the politics of religion. It also highlights role of international community in this regard. During cold war period United States supplied massive ammunition to the third world Asian countries to augment their defense capabilities against the impending Soviet threat. Pakistan geopolitics was once again defining international and domestic political process of Pakistan. Study basis its explanation on critical geopolitical theory which is a part of neo realism paradigm. Owing to its geopolitical importance Pakistan became frontline state in Afghan war. With US and Saudi Arabia support Zia ul Haq orchestrated Jihadi movement which ignited fundamentalism. Unlike Zia ur Rehman, Zia ul Haq benefited from changing political dynamics which brought Pakistan to spotlight of international world. Studies further argue that military has become deeply rooted in Pakistani politics while in Bangladesh it seems less inclined to hold up political power for long time.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is exploratory in nature. A qualitative research method has been used to achieve research goals. Tools used for data collection include: oral interviews, Focused Group Discussion (FGDs) and content analysis of existing literature on the subject in form of books, government files, official reports and research articles. In this connection, seven face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with different experts on the subject such as intellectuals, Senior journalists, politicians and historians. In this linking, Two Focused group discussion were held with the students of IR –one at Quaid-e-Azam university Islamabad and the other at the Peshawar University. Thematic analysis was used for analyzing the relevant data. Therefore, Apart from this, the relevant literature has been objectively analyzed to reach a meaningful conclusion.

Theoretical Framework

The variation in impacts and sustainability of Islamization policy in Bangladesh and Pakistan can be explained from the theoretical framework of Critical Geopolitics. In international and domestic politics, geography is the significant element ([Cahnman, 1943:65](#)). The relation of politics and geography is termed as geopolitics. The term was coined by Kjellen, who defined it “as—theory of state as a geographical organism or phenomenon in space” ([Hagan, 1942:485](#)). In relation to this outlook another definition of geopolitics provided by Hagan is that geopolitics is the contemporary rationalization of power politics ([Cahnman, 1943:56](#)). Both geographical settings and political processes are dynamics, and each influence and is influenced by other. Geopolitics addresses the consequences of this interaction. It was in late 1980 that new term—critical geopolitics was introduced in international politics. Fundamentally the term referred to the inter relationship of the political geography and international relations ([Toal, 1996](#)). The term—critical geopolitics was coined and inspired by the works of prominent figures in the field including geographers such as the John Agnew, Gerard Toal, Simon Dably ([Dodds, 2001:470](#)).

Dably stressed on the role of geography as a scientific approach to understand the international politics:

To hypothesis critical political geographies is to argue that we must not bound our thinking to a study of the geography of politics within pre-given, taken-for-granted, commonsense spaces but examine the politics of geographical provisions of politics. That is to practice critical geopolitics (Dalby, 1991:274).

The country geostrategic position defines politics of a country. Regional geopolitical dynamics played a vital role in Pakistan's foreign policy and its domestic politics. From its inception, the geopolitics of region placed Pakistan as bastion of capitalist block against communism under influence of hegemonic state of USA. In international anarchical political system, hegemonic state of the world determines the rules. The hegemon thus promotes and secures its interest by aligning middle or regional powers interests (Agnew, 2007). Since hegemons have the capacity to influence events at a global level, they maintain their position on top of world by integrating as much of the world as possible into their –sphere of influences (McMahon, 1994: 7). USSR invasion of 1979 again put Pakistan in line of interests of hegemon. Pakistan insecurity vis- a-vis USSR approach of getting access to warm water and US and Saudi alignment against threat of communism led to convergence of the mutual interests. Pakistan geopolitics was once again defining international and domestic political process of Pakistan. Study basis its explanation on critical geopolitical theory which is a part of neo realism paradigm. It places geo strategy of a state as determine factor in formulation of domestic and international policies of the country (Hagan, 1942:78). Unlike Bangladesh, Islamization policy of Zia was accepted by US as vital tool for prompting Jihadism over Wahabism in country and turned blind eye to mushroom growth of Madrassas in Pakistan that were recruiting centers of Jihad in Afghanistan. This convergence of Middle and Hegemon power interest is missing in case of Zia ur Rehman Islamization project in Bangladesh.

Regional and Trans-Regional Environment

On the eve of martial laws, political conditions in both the countries were different from one another. Bangladesh after the assassination of Mujeeb ur Rehman underwent great chaos and confusion. Coup after coup took place and Zia ur Rehman had a deep watch over the political atmosphere, waiting for the suitable opportunity. Unlike Bangladesh, situation in Pakistan in July 1977 appeared quite manageable (Millam, 2009). However, some influential cadres in the army saw in the street demonstration against Bhutto an opportunity to retake the power that it had lost through its own mistake seven years earlier. Like all the military regimes, Zia ul Haq and Zia ur Rehman at the outset faced with the pressing problem of establishing their political legitimacy. They tried to deal with this question through promulgating constitutional amendments that would win the support of the civil society in both countries. Both the military dictators were also supported by some regional and Trans- regional factors in their Islamization process. At regional level subjects of both the countries were not satisfied with their civilian leadership who had assumed powers in the burst of expectation and optimism but miserably failed in realizing their chanted rhetoric. Millam (2009) observed that this provided both the military dictators an opportunity to win over the sympathies of their dissident citizens through the Islamization.

International phenomenon was also conducive for Islamization in these two countries during 1970s. Radical Islamic changes were necessary to gain petro-aid from emerging Gulf countries.

Moreover, Islamization of two countries particularly that of Pakistan could serve the strategic purpose of United State, which wanted to contain the threat of communism through the forces of Islamic radicalism in this region. All these national and international factors accompanied by the political expediencies of the military dictators ultimately led to the shifting of balance towards Islamization in these two countries (Lorch,2019). Resultantly extensive Islamization took place in both countries particularly in Pakistan which Zia ul Haq wanted to make a citadel of Islam. The rising Islamic extremism, though not mono-casual phenomenon to be attributed only to Islamization, as it has profound socio-economic and geo-political stocks. Yet the role played by Islamization in this regard exceeds the rest of the factors. Therefore, this research work investigates the growing extremism in Pakistan and Bangladesh with the help of the three inter linked contributing factors i. e. Islamization of laws; growth of religious madrassas and the official patronage to religious political parties. Thus, the role of these contributory factors in Islamic extremism is further investigated through the prism of the geopolitics of the two countries.

Islamization of Laws

A new constitution introduced by Zia ur Rehman in 1977 in Bangladesh not only eliminated secularism but replaced it by complete faith in Almighty Allah. Word Socialism was replaced by the social justice of Islam and Bismillah was incorporated in preamble of constitution (Riaz,(c) 2018). For political expediency, he repealed the previous bar on religious-political parties. Jumat-e-Islami that had remained in opposition to liberation movement of Bangladesh from West Pakistan was permitted to participate in the country politics (Ziring, 1992). The previous principle of Bengali nationalism (which would include Hindu Bengalis in the West Bengal) was replaced by Bangladeshi nationalism thus emphasizing Islamic nation of Bangladesh (Alam, 1998). Moreover, it brought a notable shift in Bangladesh foreign policy and during his period relations with India were considerably cooled and tilted towards Muslim countries including Pakistan (Jahan, 1980). Similarly, Zia ul Haq, after taking over the power, undertook inclusive changes in the legal, social, economic and political system of the country by introducing Islamic system of Zakat, Ushr, the interest free banking system, Islamic Haddood Ordinance etc. and established close nexus with religious political parties. There developed a dialectical correlation between Pakistan, its army and religion Islam. It conceptualized that Pakistan would have not taken place without Islam, Military would not exist without Pakistan and both Pakistan and Islam would be at risk without the military. Commenting on Zia ul Haq's Islamization. Talbot summarizes:

Islamization appeared to have reduced a great faith, rich in humanity, culture.....to system of punishment and persecution of minorities.It left behind him atmosphere of bigotry, fanaticism and distorted values (Talbot, 1998:93).

Islamization of laws under two military dictators was basically a militarization of society, which had serious adverse impacts on two countries. It was one of the principal factors which fueled to violence in both these countries. In Pakistan Shia-Sunni relation remained usually calmed until beginning of Islamization under Zia ul Haq's regime in1980s. The extensive Islamization policies of Zia ul Haq finally led to the emergence of various sectarian organizations under the banners of Shia and Sunni sects enjoying national and international patronage aimed to combat each other. The target killing of the known members of the rival groups became a common practice in Pakistan (Riaz (b), 2009). Seeds of violence between two sects which Pakistan has been reaping since long time were actually implanted by Zia ul Haq through his shortsighted

Islamization policy. Bangladesh, though not so much affected by Shia-Sunni conflict because of its small number of adherents to Shiism, underwent a distinct political change. Virulent attack on Ahmadiya civic and demand to declare them non-Muslims like counterparts in Pakistan is case in point (Riaz (b), 2009). Religious bigotry of Bengali society became conspicuous when religious leaders issued fatwa's (verdicts) against Taslima (alleged for anti-religious writings) in 1994.

Since then, militant groups made various attempts to intimidate secular forces. They tried to ban overseas TV channels for alleged anti-Islamic broadcasting and launched periodic attack against the liberal writers, dramatists, columnists and the anchor persons due to the latter condemnation of radical forces. Its worst expression came in the form of alarming increase in the number of Jihadi groups there (Kumaraswamy, 2009). Both Pakistan and Bangladesh underwent Islamization during two military dictators; still, in term of radical transformation the former exceeded latter. Unlike Zia ur Rehman who brought some minor Islamic changes in the constitution of Bangladesh, – Zia ul Haq introduced a completely new structure based on fundamentalism. His implementation of Islamic penal code, legal, educational and economic system of Islam not only caused the suffering of some sections of the society but also led to the polarization of various sects in Pakistan. Zia ur Rehman had a single compulsion of legitimizing his rule through Islamization, while Zia ul Haq had dual problems i.e., to legitimize his and to prepare a team of jihadists for Afghan war in name of Islam. Unlike Zia ur Rehman, military led government of Zia ul Haq enjoyed moral and military backing of US due to its geopolitical importance.

Upsurge in Islamic Madrassas (Religious Seminaries)

Another striking reason liable for the growing radicalism in these two countries was rising pace of the madrassas (religious seminaries) under the two military dictators, although it did not draw much foreign attention before 9/11. No doubt madrassa system was not the first ever experience in Pakistan but during Zia ul Haq's regime, their number expanded exponentially. A number of new institutions were registered in Pakistan. Exact number of these establishments remains unclear; still, careful estimate reveals that number exceeds 10,000 accommodating around 1.7 million young students (Razvi, October 25, 2009). A good number of these religious seminaries that have been in close association with terrorist activities since mid-1990s were set up during Zia ul Haq's regime. Because of its hard-line approach towards Shia community the religious seminaries of Deoband and Ahl-e-Hadith not only became the top beneficiaries of Zia ul Haq's largesse but became the recipients of the generous donations gifted by Saudi Arabia and Iraq. According to Khurshid (2017), since the introduction of Zakat in 1980 by Zia ul Haq, a good number of these religious schools received regular financial support out of Zakat fund. Likewise, Shia religious seminaries also enjoyed good access to Iranian fund, networking and literature.

This not only exacerbated regional conflicts primarily in the form of theological discrepancies; but later on, it took violent manner when it was fueled during Afghan war. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a chain of madrassas built by Zia ul Haq for Afghan refugees on the northern border of Pakistan came in close association with Jihad in Afghanistan against Soviet Union. These madrassas provided children of Afghan refugees with free of cost rations, asylum and basic military training alongside the Islamic education. These institutions were basically military training schools but were labeled as madrassas (religious seminaries) in order to give a

lawful religious cover to their militant operations as well as to raise funds in the name of Jihad from almost all the Muslim countries of the world (Razvi, 2009). During the Taliban rule in Afghanistan many Ahle-Hadith and Deobandi madrassas in Karachi, Punjab and KP supplied their students to Afghanistan to fight alongside Taliban and on their home coming they were enlisted to Pakistani base militant organizations (Javed, 2011). In Bangladesh too, a powerful incentive for religious extremism could be found in expedited expansion of madrassas (religious seminaries).

To strengthen his power base among the public Zia ur Rehman promoted madrassa's education alongside the secular education. During Zia ur Rehman rule, total number of Aliya madrassas controlled by government amounted to 1,976 with an enlistment of 375000 students. The number of religious seminaries augmented up to 15, 661 by the end of 2002 and the enrollment increased to around 28, 24672 (Millam, 2009). Most of these madrassas flourished under the military regime. The establishment of private madrassas known as Qumi madrassas were also encouraged which usually never accepted any government donation. During seventies, these madrassas enjoyed good sponsorship from Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and also accepted private donations from overseas Bangladesh. Moreover, the Zia ur Rehman formally approved some elementary level madrassas known as Maktabs or Ibteda, which currently serve as a primary supplier unit for the above mentioned two kinds of madrassas. In this connection, despite the growth of religious seminaries Bangladeshi government has strict watch over these madrassas and its activities. In this post factor analysis, they are looked at as the major causative factor, though; political expediency always comes to their rescue and prevents political parties to take any serious action against them. The link between militancy and madrassas should not be overestimated.

The survey of International Crisis Group (ICG) reveals that only ten to fifteen percent of the madrassas have in fact involvement in the militant activities in both these countries and the rest of the institutions are only imparting conventional religious education (ICG, 2009). Even so if we assume that all the terrorists do not have madrassa's origin, these religious seminaries have played key in promoting violent phenomenon through influencing the susceptible minds to generate an environment of hate, favorable for the polarization and radicalism of the frail sections of the civil society in both countries. The number of madrassas considerably increased in both the countries under the two military dictators but in term of Islamic extremism it made more serious inroads in Pakistan as compared to Bangladesh. It was because that most of the madrassas built by Zia ul Haq on northern border of Pakistan were used as military training camps supplying Mujahideen to Afghanistan. After withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan the culture of violence and Islamic extremism shifted to Pakistan along with the Mujahideen which became a cancer for the already fragile society. Bangladesh however, escaped of its side effects to the considerable extent partly because of its vibrant civil society but largely due to the fact that it had fortunately no hinterland like Afghanistan to engage her madrassas there with. Thus, the relationship between the geopolitics and Islamic extremism is clearly justified by this phenomenon.

Patronization of Religious Political Parties

The patronization of the religious political parties is another factor contributing to the Islamic extremism in these two countries. Although religious parties of Pakistan and Bangladesh are not in a position to gain dominance through their ballot power, their role in promoting Islamic extremism cannot be disregarded because they were not only revived but equally patronized by the two military dictators in both countries. Until the decade of 1980 there were three major

religious political parties in the Pakistan: Jamiatul ulama-e-Pakistan (JUP), Jamiatul-ulama-e-Islam (JUI) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). However, due to the extensive Islamization policies of Zia ul Haq and his pro-Mujahideen activities in the Afghanistan, there not only emerged new sectarian parties on the surface but factionalism in the existing religious political parties also took place which gave birth to the new set of militant groups. Jamaat-e-Islami with the support of military regime emerged as the most beneficial of all this process and its current role in the country mainstream politics owes much to Zia ul Haq's largess. With the support of Pakistan army, mainstream religious political parties patronized newly emergent militant groups (Shah, 1996).

After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the role of religious parties took a new turn. Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiatul Ulama-e-Islam actively participated in Afghan Jihad against Soviet Union by providing fresh recruitments. This brought religious parties along with their militant outfits further close to military. The honeymoon period between the Islamic parties and the military did not end with the Soviet withdrawal because same Mujahideen were diverted towards the eastern border. A number of young Pakistani recruited by these religious parties received their regular military training in tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan (Hayat, 2009). Training schools received young combatants from almost all the Mujahideen parties were duly backed by the intelligence agencies of Pakistan. In this process close links developed between Saudi Arabia and religious political parties like JUI (Fazal ur Rehman); JUI (Sami ul Haq) and JI as former provided direct funds to leaders of these parties for mushrooming Mujahideen in the madrassas. This provided so much strength to the religious political parties that even in post Zia ul Haq's period the liberal political parties could not dare to change political direction set by military dictator in name of Islamization. During second tenure of Benazir Bhutto, JUI head Maulana Fazal ur Rehman was appointed as Chairman of National Standing Committee for foreign affairs.

In that capacity he visited USA, Europe, Saudi Arabia and Gulf States to lobby for the support of Taliban (Marwat, 2005). Installation of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan which provided much sought after strategic depth to Pakistan vis-à-vis India was creation of some segments of the Pakistan military establishment with help of these religious political parties. It was there in Afghanistan that these militant outfits established their contacts with international militant groups. The militants supplied by these religious parties were coached in the military camps that were used for Al- Qaida, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Tayba, Hizbu Tahrir, Harkatul Mujahideen, and Jamaatul Furqan which paved way for their future alliance in Pakistan in the post - Taliban period (Nawaz, 2008). During the US attack on Afghanistan, religious parties of Pakistan not only protested but supported Taliban with their men and money. The supply of large number of young militants to Afghanistan from Malakand division under the leadership of Sufi Mohammad was glaring example in this regard. With overthrow of Taliban government in 2001, Afghanistan became temporarily unsafe for militants; hence many of them returned to Pakistan and took asylum in safe haven of tribal regions. Government of Pakistan, though, reluctant had to take action against them under the intense US pressure. Interestingly most of Pakistan's military operation launched against Taliban in Ex- FATA ended with truce (Rashid, 2008).

Instead of curtailing militants' influences these deals further legitimized their actions and helped them consolidate their position. The case of Bangladesh however, is not much different from Pakistan in this regard. Soon after coming into the power General Zia ur Rehman who desperately needed constituency to legitimize his rule, wanted to appease leaders of religious

political parties by relaxing ban on activities imposed by Mujeeb ur Rehman. Jamaat-e-Islami was not only revived but was steadily recognized as a major stakeholder in the country politics. The revival of Jamaat-e-Islami led to the emergence of several militant factions, some of which have affiliation with religious political parties while other has not (Riaz (a), 2003). Therefore, religious parties in Bangladesh not only thrived but have often managed to become coalition partners of the mainstream political parties in order to firm their power base. On the other hand, the political expediency of two mainstream political parties—Awami League and BNP—have forced them to have a soft corner for these religious parties while the latter conversely managed to capitalize on the intense rivalry between the earlier two and to exploit the existing political vacuum to best of its advantages (Mubashar, 2012). The participation of Jamaat-e-Islami in the country politics has offered a very hospitable environment for the growing of the militancy.

Under its umbrella several fundamentalists groups have successfully managed to craft rooms for themselves in power structure without any noticeable resistance from government. Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh most forceful militant organization in Bangladesh was actually a fragment group from Jamaat-e-Islami and has developed close associations with the leading member of the Jamaat. Jihad became a catchword against oppression and tyranny, particularly after the Soviet withdrawal (Sumit, 2009). Some of the religious political parties and militant groups played important role in imparting training and dispatching Jihadists to Afghanistan, while some of them have been in good contacts with their Pakistani counterparts. According to Marwat (2005) there held two clandestine meetings among Jamaat's leaders of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan at Multan and Peshawar during Zia regime in which leaders arrived at the unanimous decision to function under overall supervision of Pakistan JI. The sustenance and promotion of these militant groups was ensured by victory of Islamic parties like JI and Islamic Okya Jote (IOJ) in general election of 2001, as result of which became coalition partners with BNP.

DISCUSSION

Military regimes are usually thought more prone to violence by the proponents of Democratic Peace Theory. After overthrowing civilian government, the first and immediate problem faced by the military dictators is to seek political legitimacy. They employ various tools to win over the public sympathies. One of most effective tools employ by the military dictator in this regard is to assume role of religious reformers mainly in those societies where religious sentiments prevails. The military-led government of Zia ul Haq and Zia ur Rehman did the same in their respective countries. In their quest for political legitimacy they wrapped themselves in mantle of Islam. This research work analyzed correlation between military rule and Islamic extremism in Pakistan and Bangladesh with the help of three major indicators. In this connection, it was found that both military dictators incorporated different Islamic provision in their respective constitutions; bolstered the Islamist parties against their political rivals and encouraged the growth of new Masdrassa (religious schools). In this linking, the Islamization policy, though, had political objectives, it promoted Islamic extremism in both the countries. Consequently, religious tolerance, secular mores, liberal values and democratic norms underwent profound changes.

The above analysis was found in line with existing studies such as Riaz (2003), Millam (2009), Javed (2011) and Khurshid (2017). It was also confirmed from the existing literature on both countries that Islamic extremism in the post military era in Bangladesh has been considerably

controlled while the case of Pakistan in this regard was found quite contrasting. Their presence in the government not only provided hospitable environment to these militants' groups but also helped them in deterring any action against them (Hashmi, 2009). Both military dictators of Pakistan and Bangladesh provided official patronage to their respective religious parties along with their militant off-shoots. But the role of Pakistani religious parties and its militant factions in promoting Islamic extremism has been far deeper than its Bangladeshi counterpart because the former were duly supported and funded by ISI for realizing its so-called strategic depth policy in Afghanistan. After the Soviet withdrawal these so-called Mujahideen supplied by religious parties with the nexus of ISI & CIA, turned back to Pakistan. So the militant groups nurtured in lap of Zia ul Haq's administration during Afghan war proved more sophisticated in term of growing Islamic extremism in Pakistan than its Bangladeshi counterpart whose functions were largely confined to the provision of mere political support to the military regimes in the Bangladesh.

In the post military period, the civilian regimes of Bangladesh have considerably controlled the Islamist parties, particularly JI. Several country-specific studies like Marwat (2005), Nawaz, (2008), Ziring, (1998) and Alam, (1998) were analyzed and it was found that variation in impacts of Islamization policy in these two countries was due to their distinct geopolitical settings and their corresponding importance for the big powers. Moreover, relation of geopolitics with the country socio-economic, political and religious conditions was found in line with some western studies such as Cahman (1943), Dalby (1991), and Hagan, (1942). While analyzing variation in impacts of the Islamization in these two countries it was found that Pakistan's longest porous border with Afghanistan augmented its geopolitical importance for the US particularly after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. With external support of US and Saudi Arabia, Zia ul Haq not only expedited Islamization policy but launched Jihadi movement that helped boosting Islamic extremism in Pakistan. On contrary Islamization policy of Zia ur Rehman in Bangladesh did not get any significant external props from big powers and thus, its impacts were relatively mild.

CONCLUSION

Ideology of Islam was equally politicized by two military dictators of Pakistan and Bangladesh. By declaring themselves as custodians of Islam, they not only exploited religious sentiments of their innocent people but also pushed their countries into the state of religious extremism. The soft and lenient attitude of the two dictators towards the radical elements of their respective societies not only made these elements too strong to be controlled by coming civilian regimes but also led to the shrinking of space for liberal democracy. In the early days of military rule Zia ur Rehman policies closely resembled to those of Zia ul Haq in their Jacobin crushing of the political parties but unlike his Pakistani counterpart he steadily inclined towards democratic political structure. While comparing their policies in term of promoting Islamic extremism, the role of Zia ul Haq exceeds his Bangladeshi counterpart in this regard. It was partly because that Zia ul Haq's Islamization was more comprehensive than latter, covering almost all aspects of Islam.

However, geo-strategic location of Pakistan, particularly its porous border with Afghanistan (a war ridden country) was the most conducive factor which helped the militants to grow here faster than Bangladesh. The US geopolitical interest in Pakistan and its support to the military led government of Zia ul Haq clearly indicate that geopolitics has close relation with the Islamic

extremism. Unlike Pakistan, the military dictator in Bangladesh has not been supported by the US as the latter had no immediate geopolitical interest in the region. This considerably helped the civilian regimes of Bangladesh to isolate its military from politics and overcome the Islamic extremist forces. So, the balance sheet for Zia ur Rehman though it shows some minuses is essentially positive. While the balance sheet for Zia ul Haq in Pakistan shows the long list of negative.

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