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Polarizing Pakistan: The Impact of Zia-ul-Haq's Regime on Sectarianism

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Abstract: *The essay examines Pakistani sectarian politics and bloodshed under General Zia-ul-Haq. Sectarianism is the division and struggle between religious or ethnic groupings. In contrast, sectarian politics promotes the interests of specific communities within the political system. Pakistan was formed as a Muslim state, but its identity is currently challenged, with Islam playing a major role. The Islamization efforts of General Zia are thoroughly investigated as a major factor in heightening sectarian tensions and separating Pakistani society. The article discusses how Zia's authoritarianism fueled the Shia-Sunni conflict and sectarian violence. The text investigates whether Zia's initiatives caused the rift or if other internal or external factors contributed. The paper analyzes geopolitical factors that caused sectarian violence during Zia's tenure to fill gaps in the literature. This examination will clarify the practicalities. The study seeks to explore the causes of sectarian fighting in Pakistan and shed light on religious and political issues.*

Key Words: Shia-Sunni, Sectarianism, Zia-ul-Haq, Pakistan, Geopolitical

Introduction

In the context of a political system, sectarian politics refers to the practice of advocating for the interests of a particular religious or ethnic community. On the other hand, sectarianism is the term used to describe the divide and conflict that arises between various religious or ethnic groups.

In spite of the fact that Pakistan emerged as a separate state for Muslims on the Indian subcontinent, it did not establish an Islamic government. As an alternative, the state was established on the basis of religious ideals rather than criteria such as ethnicity or language, which established a precedent that was unprecedented. Pakistan has struggled to define its identity ever since it gained its independence, despite the fact that Islam formed an essential part of the state's national character. In his vision for Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah envisioned it as a Muslim homeland that would also be a democratic state, ensuring that Hindus and Muslims would have equal rights. On the other hand, sectarian violence has had a considerable impact on Pakistan's social, political, diplomatic, and religious realms, influencing both the political and tribal systems.

The vulnerability of the centre in comparison to the periphery has been a driving force behind the large and deeply ingrained expansion of sectarianism in the country. During the first three decades after the partition of India, sectarianism and terrorism were not as bad as they are today; nevertheless, they have gained speed in recent years. As a result of events such as suicide bombings, targeted assassinations of religious leaders, and attacks on sites of worship (imambargahs) that are considered to be sacred to both Sunni and Shia communities, Pakistan is experiencing a pervasive sense of unease.

The beginning of the 1980s saw the beginning of a sectarian division in Pakistani society, which was especially exacerbated in the province of Punjab. The area is confronted with a number of issues, one of which is the proliferation of religious extremist groups. In spite of the fact that they did not have an accurate representation of the demographics, these groups, which included Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Sipah-i-Mohammad Pakistan (SMP), continue to flourish in the face of increasing opposition. There were also a number of groups that arose, each of which was led by a different religious and political

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personality. These organizations promoted sectarianism and engaged in theological debates, which increased the tensions.

Furthermore, internal disagreements among religious parties and armed groups contributed to the worsening of sectarian differences. A split occurred within the Jamiat-ul-Islam (JUI), which resulted in the formation of two groups, each of which was commanded by Fazlur Rehman and Sami-ul-Haq. These two factions were each attempting to display more anti-Shia attitudes than the other. In the same manner, militant organizations like Sipah-i-Sahaba and Sipah-i-Muhammad Pakistan experienced internal strife, which resulted in the death of opposing factions in an arbitrary manner due to a lack of efficient leadership. These militant groups gained backing from religious parties like the JUI, which in turn provided them with indirect support.

It is difficult to ascertain the level of sectarian violence that is confined to Punjab, particularly in the Jhang area, which is a region in which religious factions have traditionally lacked significant support. Because it adheres to the Barhalvi faith and does not share the anti-Shia attitudes of Deobandis and Wahhabis, the Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP) in Punjab has strong support. This is in contrast to Karachi, Balochistan, and Sindh, which have witnessed relatively less sectarian violence. Shias are seen to be fellow Muslims and part of the Islamic world by the JUP, in contrast to the latter groupings.

Furthermore, the economic, social, and political linkages that exist between Shia and Sunni populations in Punjab are partly responsible for the prevalence of sectarian violence in the region. In areas such as Jhang, where sectarian violence is widespread, the bulk of the population is Sunni, and they occupy the lower socioeconomic and political strata. On the other hand, the Shia group maintains positions of power and controls large real estate. As a result of advancements in education and remittances, the Sunni middle class expanded in 1970, which further fuelled tensions between the two groupings. In 1985, Maulana Nawaz Jhangvi established Sipah-i-Sahabah, a Sunni organization that possessed significant social and political influence. The group's primary objective was to address the issue of Shia landowners. Regrettably, in the year 1990, extreme Shia individuals were responsible for the assassination of the organization's founder, which resulted in increased opposition from the Shia community against their efforts to achieve equitable social and political influence.

Problem Statement

This research subject examines the sectarian wars that took place during the dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq and explores the origins of sectarian violence in Pakistan. The paper elaborates on the role of Zia's regime in fragmenting Pakistani society into distinct sects and highlights his contentious policies of Islamization that acted as a catalyst for the proliferation of the 'Shia-Sunni' sectarian divide. In this research paper, the primary aim is to examine the causes and origins of sectarian war during Zia's government from a macro-level viewpoint. Specifically, the focus is on analyzing the geopolitical elements that contributed to this conflict. Were Zia's Islamization initiatives the sole cause of the sectarian rift, or were there other foreign or internal causes that also played a role? Furthermore, the study aims to address the deficiency in current literature by comprehending the practical aspects of the situation.

Research Question

- How did the Iranian Revolution of 1979 play a significant part in the escalation of sectarian violence in Pakistan?
- Estimation of the current state of conflicts in Pakistan with regard to the sectarian violence that occurred before the Zia regime?
- Which of the most important elements led to the escalation of this conflict, and to what extent did Zia's policy contribute to the escalation of the conflict?

Hypothesis

The purpose of this study is to investigate the hypothesis that the controversial Islamization policies of General Zia-ul-Haq have contributed to the development of sectarian violence in Pakistan, notwithstanding the fact that those who commit acts of sectarian violence may bring holy artefacts into their possession.



Methodology

In terms of methodology, the research endeavours to address the fundamental factors that contributed to the rise of sectarianism during the time of General Zia-ul-Haq. Consequently, in order to carry out this research, both analytical and descriptive methods will be utilized. The paper focuses mostly on the analysis of Zia's policies regarding Islamization and attempts to answer the question of how those policies contributed to the sectarian strife that occurred in Pakistan.

Zia's Involvement in Sectarianism

The steps that Zia-ul-Haq took to Islamize Pakistan were a contributing factor in the increase in sectarian bloodshed. On the other hand, a more in-depth investigation indicates that these attempts were essentially superficial and did not have any effect on the entrenched bureaucratic military aristocracy or the antiquated social system. Rather than posing a threat to the social and economic institutions that were already in place in Pakistan, these measures were designed to strengthen the legitimacy of those institutions. There were negative consequences for both Sunni and Shia people as a result of the adoption of Islamization efforts, as both groups wished for distinct kinds of changes.

A potential that generated concern among Shia communities was the active pursuit of a Sunni-centric transformation of Pakistan by Sunni religious groups, who were led by the Joint Union of India and the Joint Union of Pakistan. As a consequence of this, Shia community members took a protective position and started supporting the PPP.

In the meanwhile, Zia's reforms sparked serious confrontations among various Sunni sects, mainly Wahhabis, Deobandis, and Bareilvis, all of which were competing to impose their own interpretations of Islam on the state. The fact that they were opposed to Shias did not prevent them from working together to promote Islamic law. The Shia population, on the other hand, has voiced their concern about the Islamic reforms that Zia and Jihad have brought about in Afghanistan, particularly in relation to the legal system.

TNFJ, which stands for Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqh-i-Jafriya, was founded in 1979 with the purpose of maintaining and preserving the Jafria fiqh, which had already been formed before its foundation. During the same year, Zia made a commitment to support the Sunni population, which prompted the Shia community to respond politically. Since the beginning of its existence, the organization has constantly pushed for particular privileges, such as the exemption of Shias from paying Zakat and payments for Ushr.

Effects of Zia's religious policies

The Concept of Jihad in Afghanistan

The Shia community expressed profound concern over the Afghan jihad, particularly with regard to its ramifications for the legal framework. As a reaction, in 1979, they formed the Shia movement called Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqh-i-Jafria (TNFJ) with the aim of preserving the principles of Fiqh i Jafria. This movement originated immediately after Zia's commitment to adhere to the Hanafi fiqh earlier in the same year. The foundation of TNFJ was a political response by the Shia community to these events. At first, TNFJ supported the idea of granting special privileges to the Shia population, such as being exempted from zakat and ushr payments.

From the 1980s to the 1990s, Pakistan experienced an increase in sectarian violence as a result of its participation in Afghan policies. The widespread distribution of tiny firearms, combined with their convenient availability in Pakistan, worsened the problem. The Afghan insurgency against the Soviet Union in the 1980s had a direct impact on sectarian violence, as different factions within Pakistan provided support to different Afghan forces.

The emergence of the Taliban during the 1990s exacerbated sectarian tensions. The Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, a Sunni organization, provided support to the Taliban, which resulted in heightened tensions between the Taliban, Sunni terrorists, and Shia communities in Pakistan. A significant number of individuals from Sipah-i-Sahaba received training in Afghanistan and subsequently participated in armed conflicts against both the Taliban and Shia factions within Pakistan. During this period, the interconnection between Afghan and Pakistani dynamics heightened sectarian violence within Pakistan.

Kashmiri Jihad

Pakistan's active participation and endorsement of Kashmir led to a significant increase in sectarian bloodshed. General Pervez Musharraf, who came to power in October 1999 through a nonviolent takeover, maintained these practices. Pakistan's supportive position towards the Taliban exacerbated the problem by facilitating the construction of Islamist training camps in Afghanistan. The purpose of these camps was to train mujahideen, who were subsequently sent to Indian-controlled Kashmir disguised as defenders of Kashmiri rights.

Nevertheless, Pakistan's position suffered a substantial change after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. Following the US declaration of war on the Taliban and its attribution of responsibility for terrorist acts, Pakistan joined the international coalition against terrorism, therefore changing its stance. While organizations such as Lashkar-e-Toiba and Hizbul Mujahideen abstained from participating in sectarian bloodshed within Pakistan, other jihadi groups did not demonstrate the same restraint.

The Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and its successor manifestation, the Jaish-e-Mohammed, were prominent instances. Although they had certain goals in mind, they were unable to uphold the same level of self-control, which led to an increase in sectarian conflicts within Pakistan.

Causes of the Increase in Sectarianism

The Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqh-i-Jafriya (TNFJ), acting as the voice of the Shia community in Pakistan, vehemently opposed these developments. In an attempt to curb Tehran's influence during the conflict, Baghdad backed the formation of the Savvad-e-Azam organization in Karachi. This intervention sparked a significant escalation of sectarian violence in Karachi, resulting in numerous casualties, arson attacks targeting residences, and extensive property damage amounting to millions of dollars.

The participation of conservative Gulf Sheikhdoms in this conflict shed light on the existence of a proxy war within Pakistan. This proxy war manifested in clashes between the TNFJ and opposing factions, exacerbating sectarian tensions and further destabilizing the region.

The "Islamic Revolution" in Iran

The "Islamic Revolution" in Iran had a significant impact on the relationship between Shia and Sunni Muslims in Pakistan. Under the leadership of Khomeini, the Islamic Revolution aimed to extend its influence to adjacent nations. Iran utilized its existing institutions to distribute books in Pakistan, promoting the merits of the revolution, the concept of jihad, and Khomeini's ideology. Iranian authorities reached out to Shia leaders, expressing religious unity and providing them with support. Pakistani Shia Muslims, in contrast, sought spiritual guidance from Iran and held Ayatollah Khomeini in great esteem.

Iranian media, especially films with a concentration on jihad, sought to incite the Shia population in Pakistan to revolt against their government. Shias were given cassette recordings with Khomeini's messages. As a reaction, Shia communities in Pakistan arranged processions, assembling in circular formations following congregational prayers to recite "Allah o Akbar" and demonstrate their unity.

Nevertheless, the manifestation of Shia identity and unity elicited resistance from Sunnis. Sunni assemblies and dialogues started to explicitly focus on Shias, publicly criticizing and rejecting them. Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, the ex-leader of the SSP, openly branded Shias as "Shi'a kafir" (Shias are non-believers). Stickers with offensive content that belittled Shia Muslims and criticized Khomeini were distributed and publicly shown. Mosques, which have traditionally served as hubs for religious instruction, have now become spaces where individuals engage in discussions and disputes, intensifying the existing sectarian tensions that are fueled by conflicting ideologies.

The Iranian-Iraq war

On numerous occasions, the enormous influence that the Khomeini dictatorship in Iran has had on the country has been forgotten. The sectarian split became more obvious as a result of the fact that the majority of the population in Iraq was Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims. In 1979, the Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqh-i-Jafria (TNFJ), a significant Shiite political organization, was purposefully established in Pakistan. This was



not a circumstance that occurred by chance but rather by design. As a result of the struggle between Iran and Iraq, the Muslim world grew increasingly split, with states assigning themselves to either side of the fight.

Because of this alignment, there was a considerable increase in the amount of foreign capital that entered the region. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran, which exerted influence over Pakistan, provided help to Pakistan either directly or indirectly. As a result of the emergence of numerous organizations and their respective theological schools, organized resistance and aggressiveness were developed. This war between Iraq and Iran was not just a confrontation between two nations; rather, it was a struggle between Sunni and Shia sects simultaneously. In contrast to the United States and Gulf countries, which supported Sunnism, Iran obtained backing for Shi'ism, which was further strengthened by Khomeini's assistance.

The Iranian Revolution, which is often referred to as the Islamic Revolution, had the specific intention of establishing a government that adhered to Islamic principles. In addition to further polarizing the Muslim world, this ideological movement also exacerbated the sectarian tensions that were already there.

Some of the neighbouring countries have implemented a variety of methods in order to combat the expanding influence of Iran. During the overt confrontation between Iran and Iraq, Arab Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America expressed their opposition to Iran and extended their support to Iraq. When it came to countering Iran's expanding dominance, one of the most important strategies entailed politicizing the Shia community and utilizing its influence.

In April of 1979, a revolutionary organization known as the Tehreek Nafas Fiqh Jafariya (TNFJ) developed as a reaction to the efforts of Zia to Islamize the country as well as the intellectual impact of Iranian influence. Mufti Jafar Hussain was the leader of the TNFJ, which was an organization that worked for the rights of Pakistan's Shia people. The implementation of the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance in 1980 stood out as a significant turning point in this movement. An agreement known as the "Islamabad Agreement" was reached between Zia and Mufti Jafar Hussain in July of 1980 as a result of this move, which spurred negotiations. On the other hand, Allama Arif Hussain al-Hussaini became the leader of the TNFJ after Mufti Jafar Hussain passed away in November 1983.

In the month of July in the year 1980, the Shia community gathered in Islamabad to call for a statewide demonstration against what they saw to be injustices. Zia eventually met with Shia leaders, which resulted in an important agreement being struck on July 6, 1980, between Mufti Jafar Hussain and Mohammad Haroon, the minister responsible for religious matters. This occurred despite the fact that Zia had attempted to stifle opposition.

At a meeting held in Islamabad in July 1980, members of the Shia community demanded a demonstration across the country. The efforts of the authorities to suppress it were futile despite their best efforts. Eventually, Zia held a meeting with Shia leaders, and on July 6, 1980, the Islamabad Agreement was signed jointly by Mufti Jafor Hussain, the leader of the TNFJ, and Mohammad Haroon, the minister for religious affairs. An important success for the Shia community in the face of Islamization efforts was achieved with the signing of this agreement, which ensured that concerns pertaining to the Shia would be handled in accordance with their own fiqh.

As a result of the Saur Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan's weak religious parties discovered a wealth of prospects for expansion. Pakistan was provided with financial and military assistance by other governments, such as the United States and Saudi Arabia, in order to provide support for the Afghan mujahideen militia. However, a significant portion of this funding was diverted to Sunni extremist groups, which contributed to the escalation of sectarian violence.

Afghanistan's Saur Revolution and Soviet Intervention

Pakistan's sectarianism became even more intensified as a result of the civil war in Afghanistan, which occurred after the Soviet Union was defeated. Hazarajat served as a safe haven and training site for Pakistani Shia militants, whereas Khost and Kunar in Afghanistan were used as training grounds by

extremist Sunnis. Shia militant activities were dealt a major blow when the Taliban took control of Hazarajat, which resulted in an upsurge in the radicalization of Pakistani Sunni groups.

The formation of sectarian organizations in Pakistan during the conflict between Afghanistan and Russia was a crucial factor that contributed to the sectarian menace that exists in Pakistan. The risk posed by these groupings, which sprang from mainstream religious parties, was significantly higher than that posed by their individual parent organizations. These organizations were able to easily obtain firearms in Pakistan, and they disseminated sectarian literature that was provocative, which incited their adherents to engage in violent behaviour.

An example of such an organization is the Imamia Students Organization (ISO), which was established in 1972 with the purpose of providing financial assistance to Shia students and protecting their interests. ISO, which had connections to other organizations in Iran that were similar to it, was an active participant in the demonstrations against Zia's efforts to Islamize the country.

Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)

It is Sipah-i-Sahaba that is considered to be one of the most famous anti-Shia organizations in Pakistan. On September 6, 1985, in Jhang, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, a Deobandi religious leader linked with JUI(F), created Anjuman Sipah Sahaba Pakistan. This organization was then renamed Sipah-Sahaba Pakistan following its establishment. The principal goals of this organization were to protect the prestige of the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and to counteract the effect of what was seen to be Iran's "Islamic Revolution." Jhangvi was a staunch supporter of the idea that Shias should be classified as non-Muslims. He also worked toward the establishment of Pakistan as a Sunni state, which would be comparable to Iran's position as a Shia state due to the fact that the majority of its population is Shia.

The placid existence of SSP, which had been a member of JUI at one point, was thrown into disarray when Jhangvi left the organization, which ultimately resulted in a split. Jhangvi was murdered in February of 1990, which was less than a year after the breakdown of their relationship. For a short period of time, Maulana Eisarul Haq Qasmi took over as leader of the organization. After that, Maulana Zia-ul-Rehman Farooqi took over, but he was killed in a bombing in January 1997.

Immediately after Pakistan gained its independence, the SSP began a protracted guerilla campaign directed against Shia leaders. Furthermore, it was involved in the development and spread of anti-Shia literature, which included condemning what they considered to be unpleasant information from Shia history books and advocating cleansing from those who were considered to be "blasphemers." The government asserts that the SSP receives major financial and weapon support from the intelligence services of both India and Iraq.

A significant number of its leaders have been implicated in major felonies, such as instigating religious violence, kidnapping, and murder. It was in March of 1995 that the Milli Yekjehti Council (MYC) was established. This council, which is comprised of eleven religious and sectarian parties, was established with the intention of promoting interfaith harmony and reducing mistrust between Shi'as and Sunnis. In May of 1995, the council decided to establish a seventeen-point code of conduct, which ultimately resulted in a conspicuous improvement in the situation over the years 1995 and 1996. However, the deal was met with criticism from radicals on both sides, who accused their leaders of veering from their convictions. This led to an increase in sectarian violence in the middle of 1996, which highlighted the failure of the MYC.

The government and the leader of the SSP, Maulana Zia ul Qasmi, brought forward the idea of writing two pieces of legislation in April 1998. In order to accomplish this goal, the Ulama Committee was established on April 1, and Dr. Israr Ahmad was appointed as its leader. The committee reached a consensus on the importance of enacting a national law that would impose heavy punishments on anybody who offended the Companions and Women of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW), also known as Umm ul Mommineen. Sajad Ali Naqvi, the president of the TJP, was opposed to these measures because he was concerned that they would upset the order of society. Furthermore, the SSP criticizes the Brehlvi, a Sunni



sect, for what it considers to be "un-Islamic" ideas, despite the fact that the Brehlvi do not subscribe to the philosophy of the SSP.

Sipah-i-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP)

Another Shia splinter group known as Sipah-i-Mohammad had its beginnings in Thokar Niaz Baig, which is a neighbourhood in Lahore that is home to a sizeable Shia population. Sipah-i-Mohammad, which is aggressively opposed to both Deobandis and Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), was formed as a result of dissatisfaction with the performance of Tehreek Nifaz-i-Fiqh-i-Jafria (TJP), which led to the foundation of another political party. It was Murid Abbas Yazdani, who was known for his liberal stance on SSP and served as the organization's first patron-in-chief throughout its history. In 1995, Yazdani gave his approval to the code of ethics that was developed by the Milli Yekjehti Council (MYC). This code acknowledged Imam Mehdi and Khulfa al-Rashideen as fundamental components of Islam. On the other hand, Ghulam Raza Naqvi, another founder, was opposed to this option. He said that it compromised Shia values by uniting with Sunni Islam. As a result of this conflict, the party was divided into branches led by Yazdani and Naqvi.

Following the murder of Yazdani in September 1996, there was a growing suspicion that Naqvi was implicated in the crime. Following the confession of an SMP activist to the murder, Naqvi was taken into custody. Because of his radical views, the party evolved into a militant organization, and Naqvi resorted to engaging in criminal operations, such as robbery, with the assistance of young people. The stronghold that Naqvi maintained in Niaz Baig became a no-go zone for the police, which resulted in a violent clash in December of 1994 that resulted in injuries and vehicle fires.

The leadership of the organization was taken over by Syed Jabbar Hussain after Naqvi was imprisoned. He condemned Naqvi's policies and reestablished cooperation with law enforcement institutions. This did not stop the group from maintaining its harsh attitude against SSP and Deobandis, which contributed to the continuation of sectarian hostilities.

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)

The Sipah-i-Sahab In the year 1996, Pakistan established its very own military branch known as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), which is a Sunni-DeobandT militant organization. The name Maulana Jhangvi, who was the founder of the SSP, was used to popularize LeJ. In light of the fact that the company's co-founder had been slain, LeJ stated that the parent corporation had strayed from their beliefs. Both Riaz Basra and Akram Lahori were among the first members of the organization. A ban on the LeJ was issued by President Pervez Musharraf on August 14, 2001, making it one of the two sectarian terrorist groups that were prohibited. Reportedly, the SSP established LeJ as a separate terrorist arm when it was first established. After considering this line of reasoning, it is possible that militants would operate under a different moniker, while the SSP platform will be reserved for political action.

It has been reported that Muhammad Ajmal, in his capacity as Akram Lahori, would take over as the next supreme head of the LeJ. In the year 1990, Lahori became a member of Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), and he has remained a member ever since. Later on, he established the. During the year 1996, Malik Ishaque and Riaz Basra were both members of the LeJ organization. Both of them were involved in the terrorist acts that took place in Punjab. Following Riaz Basra's death on May 14, 2002, Lahori assumed control of the situation. On June 17, 2002, Lahori was taken into custody by the police after being captured in Orangi Town, which is located in Karachi. In addition, five of Lahori's associates were taken into custody on the same day. It was reported on July 2, 2002, that senior police personnel indicated that Lahori was the mastermind behind 38 sectarian killings that occurred in Sindh territory.

Shoukat Riaz Mirza, Director of Pakistan State Oil Management, and Ehtishamuddin Haider, brother of Moinuddin Haider, Minister of the Federal Interior, were both suspected of being involved in these homicides. The slaughter that took place at Imambargah Mahmoudabad and the murder of Iranian cadets in Rawalpindi were also some of the atrocities that were committed. There was a connection between these incidents and Riaz Basra, who was a precursor in Lahore. In December of 1990, he was also implicated in the assassination of Sadiq Ganji, an Iranian diplomat. In addition, he was involved in approximately 300

incidents that were sectarian in nature. Basra was taken into custody by the authorities and held accountable for the murder of Ganji. On the other hand, he was able to evade capture in 1994 when he was being carried to court.

It has been reported in the media that Riaz Basra, along with three other individuals, was deceased in a gunfight that took place on May 14, 2002. Prior to this, Basra had taken command of one of the wings of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), while Qari Asadullah Alias Taiha was in charge of the other wing, which was governed by the Supreme Council of the organization. According to reports, their disagreements came from the fact that they were concerned about the recurrence of ethnic hostilities following the military takeover of Pakistan in October 1999. While Basra called for increased terrorist attacks against Shi'as in order to exert pressure on the government, Taiha was opposed to the idea because she was afraid of the consequences that would result from military authority. Taiha was of the opinion that resorting to violence would be detrimental to the collective unity of the country as well as the organization itself. According to reports, members of the LeJ were believed to have contacts with both the Taliban and Hizbul Mujahideen inside of Afghanistan.

Conclusion

The paper offers a comprehensive account of the sectarian politics and violence that occurred in Pakistan during the government of General Zia-ul-Haq. The distinction between sectarianism, which refers to the division and conflict that exists between different religious or ethnic groups, and sectarian politics, which advocates for particular community interests inside the political system, is brought to light by this. Although Pakistan was established as a Muslim state, the country's identity continues to be a contentious issue, with Islam having a prominent but divisive role in the country.

The Islamization tactics implemented by General Zia are being investigated as a potential contributor to the escalation of sectarian tensions, in particular, the struggle between Shia and Sunni. The purpose of this study is to determine if Zia's actions were the sole cause of the rift or whether other internal or external variables were also contributors to the conflict.

The purpose of this research is to fill up some of the gaps in the existing literature and gain a better understanding of the practical dimensions of sectarian violence by evaluating geopolitical elements that occurred during Zia's term. The findings of the study, in the end, shed light on the theological and political complications that continue to have an impact on Pakistan. They provide insights into the complex roots and reasons for sectarian strife in Pakistan.

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