General Zia-ul-Haq, 1977-88

This handout covers Pakistan's longest period of military rule: why Zia-ul-Haq took power, his Islamisation programme, the Afghan war, the economy, the Eighth Amendment and the events of 1988. It belongs to Section 3 of the syllabus: nationhood 1947-99.

Key dates

Date	Event
5 July 1977	Zia-ul-Haq removes Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and declares martial law
1978	Zia-ul-Haq becomes President
1979	Hudood Ordinances issued; Bhutto executed (4 April); Soviet forces enter Afghanistan (December)
1980	Federal Shariat Court set up; Zakat and Ushr Ordinance
December 1984	Referendum on Islamisation
1985	Non-party elections; Muhammad Khan Junejo becomes Prime Minister; Eighth Amendment passed; martial law lifted
10 April 1988	Ojhri camp explosion
April 1988	Geneva Accords on Afghanistan signed
29 May 1988	Zia-ul-Haq dismisses Junejo and dissolves the National Assembly
17 August 1988	Zia-ul-Haq killed in an air crash near Bahawalpur

Why did Zia-ul-Haq take power in 1977?

1. **The crisis after the 1977 election.** The Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) accused Bhutto of rigging the March election. Months of strikes and riots followed, many people were killed, and talks between the two sides were not completed. Zia-ul-Haq said the army had to act to prevent civil war.
2. **The army had already been drawn in.** Bhutto had placed Karachi, Lahore and Hyderabad under martial law. Officers disliked being used against civilians.
3. **Opposition to Bhutto.** The army, the religious parties and many businessmen distrusted Bhutto's socialism and his style of rule.

Zia-ul-Haq called the takeover Operation Fair Play and promised elections within 90 days. The elections were postponed more than once. Bhutto was tried for conspiracy to murder a political opponent, found guilty and hanged on 4 April 1979. Political parties were then banned and newspapers were censored. Bhutto's supporters regarded the trial as unjust.

Islamisation

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Why did he introduce Islamic laws?

1. **Belief and background.** Zia-ul-Haq was a religious man who argued that Pakistan had been created in the name of Islam and should be governed by Islamic law.
2. **To win support.** He had no election mandate. The religious parties that had led the PNA campaign for Nizam-e-Mustafa (the system of the Prophet) were ready to back a ruler who introduced it.
3. **To set himself apart from Bhutto.** Islamisation offered a clear alternative to Bhutto's Islamic socialism and helped to justify keeping the PPP out of power.
4. **To strengthen the state.** After December 1979 the Soviet army was in Afghanistan. Islam was presented as a defence against communism.

What was done?

- **Hudood Ordinances (1979):** these laid down Islamic punishments for theft, drinking alcohol, adultery (zina) and false accusation of adultery. Punishments included flogging.
- **Federal Shariat Court (1980):** this court could examine existing laws and decide whether they agreed with Islam.
- **Zakat and ushr (1980):** zakat was deducted by the government at 2.5 per cent a year from savings accounts above a set amount, and given through local committees to the poor. Ushr was a tax of 5 per cent on farm produce. Shia Muslims protested against compulsory deduction and were allowed exemption.
- **Banking:** profit-and-loss-sharing accounts were introduced in place of fixed interest.
- **Islamic education:** Islamiat and Pakistan Studies became compulsory, Arabic teaching was promoted, religious schools (madrasas) grew in number and an Islamic university was opened in Islamabad.
- **Other measures:** respect for Ramadan was enforced by law, blasphemy laws were made stricter and a new Law of Evidence was issued in 1984.

Effects

Religious parties and many conservative Pakistanis welcomed the changes. Women's groups argued that the Hudood laws and the Law of Evidence treated women unfairly, since a woman who reported rape risked being charged with adultery if she could not prove her case. Tension between Sunni and Shia groups grew.

The Afghan war and its effects

In December 1979 the Soviet Union sent its army into Afghanistan. Pakistan became the "front-line state" for the Western countries that wanted to resist Soviet expansion.

Benefits for Zia-ul-Haq and Pakistan

- The USA under President Reagan agreed in 1981 to an aid package of about 3.2 billion dollars in military and economic help, followed by a larger one later. Pakistan obtained modern weapons, including F-16 aircraft.
- Foreign pressure for elections weakened.
- Pakistan passed weapons and training to the Afghan resistance (mujahideen).

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Costs for Pakistan

- About three million Afghan refugees came to the North-West Frontier Province and Balochistan, putting pressure on land, jobs and services.
- Weapons meant for the war spread inside Pakistan, producing what was called the "Kalashnikov culture" of armed crime and violence.
- The trade in heroin grew and drug addiction increased sharply.

The Geneva Accords of April 1988 arranged for Soviet forces to leave Afghanistan.

The economy

- The economy grew at around 6 per cent a year, among the highest rates in the world at the time.
- Bhutto's nationalisation was halted. Some smaller businesses were returned to their owners and private investment was encouraged with guarantees against future takeovers.
- Millions of Pakistanis worked in the Gulf states and sent home several billion dollars a year, which was the country's largest source of foreign exchange.

The weakness was that growth depended on remittances and aid, not on new industry or exports. Government debt and defence spending rose, leaving difficulties for later governments.

Return to civilian government: the Eighth Amendment and Junejo

Pressure for democracy grew, especially from the MRD, an alliance led by the PPP. Zia-ul-Haq moved in stages:

1. In December 1984 a referendum asked voters whether they supported Islamisation. A "yes" was taken as electing Zia-ul-Haq President for five more years. The opposition said few people had voted.
2. In February 1985 elections were held without political parties. The MRD boycotted them. Zia-ul-Haq chose Muhammad Khan Junejo of Sindh as Prime Minister.
3. Later in 1985 the Assembly passed the **Eighth Amendment**. It confirmed all the laws and actions of the martial law years so that they could not be challenged in court. It also gave the President power, under Article 58(2)(b), to dismiss the Prime Minister and dissolve the National Assembly, and to appoint the heads of the armed forces and provincial governors.
4. Martial law was lifted on 30 December 1985.

Junejo acted more independently than expected. Benazir Bhutto returned from abroad in 1986 to large crowds. Junejo tried to limit military spending and privileges, and his government signed the Geneva Accords although Zia-ul-Haq wanted agreement first on a future Afghan government.

The Ojhri camp disaster and the events of 1988

On 10 April 1988 an army store of weapons at Ojhri camp in Rawalpindi, used for arms going to the Afghan fighters, blew up. Rockets and shells fell on Rawalpindi and Islamabad, killing many civilians and injuring far more. Junejo ordered an inquiry and it was expected that senior army officers would be blamed.

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On 29 May 1988 Zia-ul-Haq used Article 58(2)(b) to dismiss Junejo and dissolve the Assembly and promised new elections. On 17 August 1988 the military aircraft carrying him crashed soon after leaving Bahawalpur. He was killed with senior generals and the American ambassador. The Chairman of the Senate, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, became acting President, and elections in November 1988 brought Benazir Bhutto to office.

How successful was Zia-ul-Haq?

Successes: he ended the disorder of 1977; the economy grew quickly; Pakistan gained aid, weapons and international importance from the Afghan war and helped to force a Soviet withdrawal; supporters valued his Islamic reforms.

Failures: he broke his promise of early elections and ruled without consent for eight years; opponents were jailed and flogged and the press was censored; some Islamic laws were seen as unjust to women and minorities and sectarian tension grew; the Afghan war brought guns, drugs and refugees; the Eighth Amendment weakened later elected governments; growth rested on aid and remittances.

Judgement: Zia-ul-Haq was successful in holding power and in using the Afghan war to strengthen Pakistan's position abroad and its economy at home. But many of the gains were temporary, while the problems his rule left behind, especially weapons, drugs, sectarianism and an unbalanced constitution, lasted for many years.

Key terms and people

- **Islamisation:** bringing laws and public life into line with Islamic teaching.
- **Hudood Ordinances:** 1979 laws setting Islamic punishments for certain offences.
- **Zakat and ushr:** the religious charity tax on wealth and the tax on farm produce.
- **Mujahideen:** Afghan fighters resisting the Soviet army.
- **Article 58(2)(b):** the power given to the President by the Eighth Amendment to dissolve the National Assembly.
- **MRD:** Movement for the Restoration of Democracy.
- **Muhammad Khan Junejo:** Prime Minister 1985-88.

Exam practice

1. Describe the Ojhri camp disaster of 1988. [4]
2. Why did Zia-ul-Haq introduce his Islamic reforms between 1977 and 1988? [7]
3. "The Afghan war was the main reason why Zia-ul-Haq was able to stay in power for eleven years." How far do you agree? Explain your answer. [14]

> **Outline answers**
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> **1.** An army weapons depot at Ojhri camp, Rawalpindi, exploded on 10 April 1988; it held arms for the Afghan war; missiles fell on Rawalpindi and Islamabad and many civilians were killed or hurt; Junejo ordered an inquiry; the dispute was one cause of his dismissal in May 1988.
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> **2.** Three explained reasons: (a) he believed Pakistan was founded for Islam and wanted its laws to

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reflect this; (b) as a military ruler without a mandate he needed the support of the religious parties and the public who had demanded Nizam-e-Mustafa in 1977; (c) Islamisation countered Bhutto's Islamic socialism and, after 1979, presented Pakistan as an Islamic barrier against Soviet communism.

3. Agree: the war brought American aid and weapons, ended foreign criticism, pleased the army and helped the economy. Other reasons: Islamisation won religious support; economic growth and Gulf remittances kept people content; martial law, censorship and the banning of parties silenced opponents; the opposition was divided and Bhutto had been removed; the referendum, non-party elections and the Eighth Amendment gave his rule a legal form. Judgement: the Afghan war was very important because it supplied money and outside backing, but he had already held power for over two years before it began by using force and Islamisation, so it was one of several linked reasons.

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