

OSCILLATING BETWEEN POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY: POLITICS OF ZULFIQAR ALI BHUTTO AND THE RIGHT WING RELIGIOUS PARTIES

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ABSTRACT

The anti-Ayub movement marked a pivotal stage in Pakistan's history that could have potentially turned the polity into a genuine democracy. It was the reactionary political field during the 1970s that sabotaged the democratic project. The political parties turned reactionary, especially the socialist Pakistan People's Party (PPP) morphed into a rightist and authoritarian political force, significantly damaging Pakistan's democratic process and created an environment that helped in the rise of more reactionary politics. Religious parties heavily relied on religious populism to counter Z.A Bhutto making the political landscape fertile for anti-people polity. By using primary and secondary sources and exploring some of untapped vernacular sources the study explores why both Bhutto and religious parties turned more reactionary and missed an historic opportunity to make democracy the politics of common sense, in Gramscian terms. The study employs populism as a major theoretical grid underpinning the analysis of political landscape. It is significant to explore the politics of the 70s because it was the tumultuous decade that largely influenced the democratic trajectory of the coming decades by derailing the fledgling democracy in the country.

Keywords: Bhutto, Religious Parties, Democracy, Populism, Punjab, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Democracy has an inconsistent history in Pakistan which has seen the interference of the political elites, judiciary, and the establishment. The question of democracy has been addressed by academics but, political parties as a central agency have not been treated largely assuming that the parties are the victims of the larger structure in which they operate. This is true to an extent, but the argument has been unreasonably overstretched, paving the way for little space for analyzing the role of political parties as sole claimants of democracy. This too has historical roots because in

the very beginning, Muslim League, the founding party of Pakistan, remained trapped in the hands of military-bureaucratic oligarchy.¹ This paper will treat political parties as one analytical category bringing it to the center stage of the debate on democracy in Pakistan.

The 1970s was a decade of significant events that left a lasting impact on the 20th century not only in Pakistan but the world at large. It was the most happening decade of the last century with special reference to the Cold War, rise and conflict of different ideologies. It was a time marked by

¹ Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and authoritarianism in South Asia* (Sang-e-Meel Publications. Lahore, 1997), 37.

intense ideological wrangling and the rise of populism around the world. The Muslim world, especially Pakistan, was no exception.

With reference to Pakistan, it was the very first decade after the breakup of East Pakistan, and Pakistan had adopted a new constitution that guaranteed fundamental human and political rights. It was an important decade for Pakistan because the politics of the 70s shaped the politics of the coming years and decades in Pakistan. Pakistan during the 1970s could be seen struggling between the different ideological poles, necessitating the opposing poles of progressive politics and reactionary politics. The anti-Ayub movement was undeniably one of the most significant events in Pakistan's history which should have modeled the politics of the coming years, turning Pakistan into a democratic and people-centric polity.² It was a turning point in the history of Pakistan as it was led by the people.³ It was a fight for democratic rights, distributive justice, fundamental rights and equality of citizenship. It was indeed to be the most important movement in the history of Pakistan because it comprised almost all sections of society. It was indeed a movement for people's democracy.⁴ ⁵ It was an extensive and influential movement that compelled a powerful authoritarian military dictator to resign.⁶ Although the movement's immediate purpose was to oust a dictator, it was not the primary objective of it, it was meant to settle and fix the larger structural question of the political economy of Pakistan.. This would have brought about a democratic revolution in Pakistan by putting an end to traditional elitist politics. The movement also gave boost to Bhutto.⁷ Punjab

played a crucial role and it was an era of a new politics for Punjab.⁸

Sadly, the subsequent years, especially after the breakup of East Pakistan, saw extremely reactionary politics filled with authoritarianism and populism, hitting the very foundation of Pakistan's politics. The dreams of the people's movement during the late 1960s were burnt into ashes, and the political parties could not build a bare minimum consensus for the functioning of democracy and materializing the dreams for people's politics.

The paper aims to study how Bhutto turned authoritarian and anti-socialism and how religious parties and Bhutto both resorted to religious populism by misusing religious identities and idioms for their political interests, stabbing the democratic project of Pakistan. The 70s saw the worst political infighting, authoritarianism, onslaught of the left, and excessive religious populism in Pakistan. The concrete political issues that were raised during the anti-Ayub movement were shadowed by cultural populism and misuse of religious idioms, leaving little space for the genuine issues of the people. Religious populism was at its pinnacle, especially during 1976 and 1977, particularly during the PNA movement against Bhutto, forcing Bhutto to turn even more rightist.

Methodology

This paper tends to explore, understand, and analyze the politics of 1970 and the conflicts and the political dynamics of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the religious parties in Punjab. It will discuss how the anti-Ayub movement that promised an egalitarian democratic society, which had people-centric slogans ultimately turned more reactionary

² Shahid Javed Burki. "Development of towns: the Pakistan experience." *Asian Survey* 14, no. 8 (1974):751

³ Mahboob Hussain, *The Parliament of Pakistan: A History of Institution-building and (UN) Democratic Practices, 1971-1977*. (Oxford University Press, 2019), 50.

⁴ Manshoor, January 1969, Vol, 6.no, 1, 18.

⁵ Ibid, 37.

⁶ Manshoor, October 27, 1969, no.6, 21.

⁷ Sadia Bajwa. "Student Politics and National Education in West Pakistan: A Review Essay" *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 42, no. 5 (20 19): 331.

⁸ Philip Edward Jones, *The Pakistan people's party: Rise to power*. (Oxford University Press, USA, 2003), 139.

and authoritarian undermined the democratic process in Pakistan. Both primary and secondary sources are used, the primary sources would include autobiographies, magazines of 1960-1970', manifestos of political parties, newspapers and government reports. This paper is a significant academic contribution because it will help us understand the dynamics of deeply rooted and long-seated issues of democracy in Pakistan with reference to authoritarianism and religious populism.

Theoretical Framework: Populism and Democracy

In Pakistan, the late 1960s, and 70s were marked by instability, authoritarianism and political chaos with populism shaping the political landscape and realities for upcoming years. The conflict between Z.A. Bhutto and religious parties highlighted the deep ideological and political division. As the late 1960s witnessed a movement against Ayub Khan, which aimed for a democratic and egalitarian society. But later years saw authoritarianism and populist binaries and divides which sabotaged the dividends of people's movement. Pakistan also faced a populist streak in 1990s but Pakistan is currently facing a strong populist streak

Populism, unlike other ideologies, is a political strategy that unites people against the elite. It creates an "us vs them" dynamic and it relies strongly on emotional appeal. Laclau argues that populism can be adopted by any group to unite marginalized people.⁹ Populism is a result of demands that connect and unite the 'people' for a radical change and collective identity is shaped by a movement or political parties that advocate for a specific change. It is centred on the binary and dichotomy of 'Us vs Them'¹⁰ Müller highlights that populists sound elitists and they portray their opponents as corrupt and morally wrong. They

don't adhere to pluralism and they aren't willing to accept 'others' people since they believe that they are the only 'people'.¹¹ Though, pluralism is a foundation of democracy whereas the concept and construct of a homogeneous people may be a political fantasy and the populist leaders are prone to crush opposition by dubbing them 'others'.¹² Pakistan today and during 1970s clearly share the characteristic of the politics of populism. It remained trapped in populism which ultimately led to the collapse of democracy in 1977. Pakistan even today is facing a strong populist streak having hit the very foundation of democratic and constitutional arrangements. It is significantly important to study 1970s to understanding the populist contours, especially the religious contours of Pakistan politics.

Bhutto used such populist slogans to gain support against the elite and his party (PPP) gained that support with slogans like "Roti, Kapra, Makaan" (bread, clothing, housing).¹³ Despite being a part of elite he successfully created a people vs elite narrative. Bhutto's strategy also evolved to include religious populism, especially when religious parties grew. This led to extreme polarization where both sides used religious rhetoric and it created a binary of good vs evil, Islam vs anti Islam. Populism in the 1970s led to authoritarianism, exclusion, and polarization which severely impacted the Pakistan's democracy. This legacy continues to influence the country's politics today. Similarly, religious parties always resorted to religious populism from the beginning but during 1970s especially during the Pakistan National Alliances movement of 'Tehreek-i- Nizam-i-Mustafa' which clearly shared the binary of populism where the religious parties declared Bhutto anti-Islam and calling

⁹ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (Verso Books, 2005), 114.

¹⁰ Ibid, 117.

¹¹ Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 2.

¹² Ibid,

¹³ Ibid,74.

themselves the warriors for Islam.¹⁴ Religiously parties tactically bring about a constructed clash between Islam and Socialism for undermining Bhutto and building pressure on him.¹⁵

They made it the politics of piety and filled the political landscape with religious rhetoric and symbolism. This also dragged Bhutto to turn more right to counter the propaganda of the religious parties.¹⁶¹⁷ However, the religious parties portrayed themselves as protectors of Islam and Bhutto as a danger to it.¹⁸ This became a binary of good vs evil. Both Bhutto and the religious parties embraced religious populism, pushing aside the goals and ideals of the anti-Ayub movement. This shift led to intense polarization.

Anti-Ayub Movement: A Dream for a New Politics in Pakistan

Pakistan since its independence in 1947 faced severe crises of state formation. The First Constitution was not framed during the first nine years and it had to rely on the Indian Act 1935.¹⁹ These delays posed serious challenges and gave more power to military and civil bureaucracy in obscuring democratic rights.²⁰ These undemocratic forces did not let the democratic system evolve in the country which ultimately led to Ayub's Martial law.²¹ Ayub's era proved to be a big blow to an already fragile democracy, neglect of parliamentary democracy, fundamental right and equitable justice. During Ayub's so-called decade of development in the 60s, the question of

unequal distribution aggravated. Dr Mahbub ul Haq expressed concern about the concentration of wealth among 22 families. At that time, there was a clear difference between government and people's views about development. The public was not aware of the aggregate terms of the economy, rather they were concerned with everyday living and costs.²² While Ayub Khan was celebrating the decade of development, students protested for a week of "Hafta i Mutalbaar" (the week of demands).²³ These inequalities and Ayub's undemocratic and bureaucratic regime led to the birth of one of the greatest peoples' movements in Pakistan's political history in late 1960s. The urban areas and spaces became the fertile ground for the peoples' movement. The movement was mobilized not only by political parties but also by student body, factory workers, and the general masses.²⁴ The movement did not just demand regime change rather the focus was on the restoration of democratic rights in Pakistan. The movement demanded sweeping reforms including the parliamentary democracy, adult franchise, putting an end to emergency.²⁵ This movement began in the towns of West Pakistan, especially in Punjab in 1967. For one year, the movement was restricted to the towns.²⁶ This marked a historic victory for the marginalized and weaker segments of society and also led to the birth of Bhutto's Pakistan's People's Party in 1967. Bhutto led this movement to force the Ayub resign. Punjab especially played a pivotal

¹⁴ Ahmad, Jam 'iyyat 'Ulama-i-Pakistan..

¹⁵ Lawrence Ziring, "Pakistan: The campaign before the storm." *Asian Survey* 17, no. 7 (1977): 593.

¹⁶ *National Assembly Debates*, vol. IV, no.1-9, 13 May 1977, 297

¹⁷ Ghafoor Ahmad, *Phir Martial Law Aa Gia*. (Lahore, Jang Publisher Press, 1988), 162.

¹⁸ Lawrence Ziring, "From Islamic Republic to Islamic State in Pakistan," *Asian Survey* 24, no. 9 (1984): 941.

¹⁹ Ghulam Mustafa Gaho, Ahmed Hussain Shah Bukhari, and Syed Anwar-ul-Mustafa Shah. "The Process of Constitution Making in Pakistan from 1947-1954: Historical And Political

Perspective." *The Government-Annual Research Journal of Political Science* 4, no. 4 (2012): 1.

²⁰ Ibid, 3.

²¹ Mahboob Hussain, *The Parliament of Pakistan: A History of Institution-building and (UN) Democratic Practices, 1971-1977*. (Oxford University Press, 2019), 30.

²² Shahid Javed Burki. "Social and Economic Determinants of Political Violence: A Case Study of the Punjab." *Middle East Journal* 25, no. 4 (1971):466

²³ Manshoor, October 1969, Vol, 6,no. 10. 5.

²⁴ Hussain, *The Parliament of Pakistan*, 50.

²⁵ Manshoor, October 1969, Vol, 6,no. 10, 11.

²⁶ Dawn, March 26, 1969.

role and the movement extended to small towns as well.²⁷

Bhutto could not be credited for the Ayub movement since it ore exited Bhutto's rise, however, his role was crucial in mobilizing the segments of society that ultimately brought an end to Ayub's regime. He became the champion of democracy and equality through his populist slogans. The transformation of an existing movement into a popular uprising was achieved by him and he successfully made that movement a competition of Bhutto versus Ayub²⁸, a competition between capitalism and socialism.²⁹ Bhutto's PPP chose the slogan "Democracy is our Polity" and pledged to restore and revive fundamental rights as part the Interim Constitution of Pakistan.^{30 31} Ultimately, this movement led to Ayub's resignation and Yahya Khan assumed the role as the Chief Martial Law Administrator. Later in the 1970's elections, Z.A Bhutto led PPP by galvanizing the common masses. Bhutto asserted his political rhetoric through his populist slogan of Islamic Socialism and a promise for bread, clothing and shelter (*Roti, Kapra aur Makan*),³² PPP swept the elections by winning a majority in West Pakistan.³³ Philip Jones wrote that for millions of Punjabis, the PPP gave them the "first taste of active politics".³⁴ This could have paved a democratic revolution and a ground for distributive justice in Pakistan but the subsequent years saw extremely reactionary politics which sabotaged the dividends of the anti-Ayub movement. The subsequent years in the 1970s witnessed authoritarianism, anti-left politics and the height of

religious populism which pushed the people's polity to the brink.

Bhutto and the Punjab Left: A Set Back to Peoples Polity

During the early years, the PPP remained strict to its foundational ideologies and managed to outperform all political players due to its populist appeal. Unfortunately, the party gradually leaned towards the very side it was created to oppose, and Bhutto struggled to keep those loyal to him during his struggle. His closest comrades had to face his authoritarianism. The radical members of the party did not adhere to Bhutto's strategy of personalization of the party³⁵ while Bhutto began to reconcile with the landed elites he had previously denounced.³⁶ This led the ideological foundation to become shattered in the hands of reactionary politics. Jalaluddin Abdul Rahim also known as J A Rahim who first proposed the idea of a new political party and presented the theoretical foundation of the party was severely beaten by Federal Security Force (FSF) on Bhutto's order, all because of a trivial criticism regarding Bhutto being late on dinner. This ultimately led to his resignation from the party. Similarly, Mairaj Muhammad Khan who remained elected president of the National Student Federation (NSF) in 1963³⁷ faced the maltreatment of Bhutto. Despite holding key positions, upon his clash with Bhutto's policies and his criticism of the party's alliance with feudalism, he faced confinement and torture during imprisonment.³⁸

²⁷ Dawn, August 31,2014.

²⁸ Burki, "Social and Economic Determinants of Political Violence": 408.

²⁹ Ibid,

³⁰ The Interim Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1972. (Islamabad: Printing Corporation of Pakistan Press 1972)

³¹ Jones, *The Pakistan people's party*, 157.

³² Ibid, 2.

³³ Burki, "Ayub's fall":203

³⁴ Jones, *The Pakistan people's party*, 9.

³⁵ Dawn, August 31, 2014.

³⁶ Manshoor, October 27, 1969, no.6, 21.

³⁷ Zaib Azkaar Hussain, "Meraj Muhammad Khan — A name synonymous with people's struggle", *The News*, July 23, 2016 accessed from <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/136885-Meraj-Muhammad-Khan-A-name-synonymous-with-peoples-struggle>

³⁸ Rafi Raza, *Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Pakistan, 1967-1977* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 216.

This reflects the turbulent period of Bhutto with his comrades. Another founding member of PPP, Dr Mubashar Hassan who also served as finance minister in the cabinet was displeased with the way the party was being led and run.³⁹ He tried resigning several times and stopped attending sessions.⁴⁰ The constitution of the party was changed without his consultation in 1976. He had apprehensions about the changes, and he mentioned that that was not the constitution they formed in 1967, since the basic ideology was altered. Later Bhutto developed mistrust for him and kept a strict eye on his activities.⁴¹ The fate was not very much different for Sheikh Rashid, the Baba-i-Socialism (father of Socialism) who laid the foundation of the party.⁴² He remained faithful to Bhutto and his party and was a proven true socialist as he headed the Kisaan Committee and demanded that the Committee would not join PPP unless it promised to put an end to feudalism.⁴³ Despite his loyalty to Bhutto, he always struggled and faced challenges within the party. During Khar's governance, he faced tough times. With time, he was completely bypassed by the provincial organization of the party. Further, he faced resistance when he talked about reforms and Bhutto gave derogatory remarks when he spoke in favor of socialism.⁴⁴ Despite all these challenges, he still stood by the party and reiterated that *Awami Hakomat* under Bhutto's leadership would ensure all the facilities.⁴⁵

Mukhtar Rana was another close aide of Bhutto, but he faced suppression from Bhutto several times. Bhutto also ordered to stop his

“adventurism” to control the party's left-wing.⁴⁶ He was arrested under martial law and sentenced to five years in prison in 1972.⁴⁷ Another companion, Ahmed Raza Qasuri was also expelled from the party.⁴⁸ Rafi Raza and Khurshid Hasan Mir also left the party. PPP earlier used to pay high regard to both these companions and had also posted their pictures on Nusrat Magazine after winning the West Pakistan Bar Council Elections.⁴⁹ Newcomers and feudal were given positions in the party and workers like Amanullah Khan who had supported Bhutto during the movement were expelled.⁵⁰ The socialist leaders like Baba Feroz Din Ansari and Taj Muhammad Langah also expressed disappointment in this misconduct.⁵¹ Bhutto also sidelined NSF and replaced it with another student organization which was not independent of Bhutto's influence. This also led to deviation from socialism. NSF had played a significant role in the rise of Bhutto still it remained autonomous. It remained uncompromising on land reforms and bureaucratic reforms. NSF later broke into groups and Mairaj group formed the Peoples Student Federation that extended unquestioned allegiance to Bhutto. This led to the division of power and resulted in the slicing of left-wing students into pieces that gave

³⁹ Ibid, 219.

⁴⁰ Mubashir Hasan, *The Mirage of Power* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴¹ Hasan, *The Mirage of Power*, 209.

⁴² Arif Azad, “Sheik Muhammad Rashid”, *The Guardian*, November 07, 2002. accessed from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/nov/07/guardianobituaries.pakistan>

⁴³ Sheikh Muhammad Rashid, *Juhd-i-Musalsal* (Jamhori Publication Lahore, 2011), 138-139

⁴⁴ Ibid, 150.

⁴⁵ Nawa-i-Waqt, 5 October, 1976.

⁴⁶ Maleeha Lodhi. "Bhutto, the Pakistan Peoples Party and political development in Pakistan: 1967-1977" (PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 1980), 133.

⁴⁷ Dawn, 17 July, 2014.

⁴⁸ Hasan, *The Mirage of Power*, 211.

⁴⁹ *Nusrat*, January 16, 1969, no.20, 21.

⁵⁰ Editorial, “Kaley Qanoor Khtm Karo Bhutto Ko Riha Karo,” *Nusrat*, January 22, 1969, no.18, 3.)

⁵¹ Lodhi, “Bhutto, the Pakistan Peoples Party”, 89.

way to a right-wing student organization Islami Jamiat-i-Talaba (IJT).⁵²

This is how he crushed the left and sidelined it, both within and outside his party. By sidelining the left, he paved the way for a new hierarchy that replaced the true party workers, ultimately undermining the promises of the anti-Ayub movement. This movement aimed for an egalitarian society but was also undermined by the erosion of democratic processes and principles. The left in Pakistan, at that time, wasn't just advocating for social and economic equality but also actively pushing for parliamentary democracy, democratic freedom, fundamental rights and adult franchise. So, it wasn't just a blow to socialist polity, it was a blow to democracy as well.

Bhutto's Authoritarianisms: A Setback to Democratic Aspiration

Bhutto's authoritarianism wasn't solely directed at the left, it had a broader scope. He exerted control over the media, press, and even within his party. He attempted to transform his party into a personal entity rather than a democratic one. He also was not willing to lift martial law unless pressurized by the opposition.⁵³ Similarly, press freedom was not restored which had been expected of him. Bhutto regime is extremely hard on the press and curtailed press freedom. The Government cancelled the print quota of newspapers, notices were issued to certain and ads were banned.⁵⁴ Ironically, earlier PPP itself faced bans and later it did the same with

others. Bhutto rather than institutionalizing the party, personalized it.⁵⁵ The political system was also built around him. PPP members also started relying on Bhutto to win the election through personal appeal.⁵⁶ Bhutto ran the party like an estate, and he performed the role of 'evangelical'.⁵⁷ He did not allow democracy in the party but rather held power around himself. This dominance was the reason for factionalism in the party.⁵⁸ He also resisted the separation of official and party positions, against the will of his comrades. He gradually started accommodating the elite in the party and for that reason, ousted the radical members.⁶⁰ Till 1967, the social base of the party was shifted to the elite in Punjab.⁶¹

Though he tried to overcome the organizational weakness of the party through patronage, that was an undemocratic strategy and wasn't suitable for a leader who claimed to be an icon of democracy. In his reorganization of the party, thousands of new people were recruited based on the feedback of the intelligence agencies. However a very small number of leftists were accommodated, this reorganization was based on loyalty to Bhutto.⁶² In the later years, he started praising the White Revolution and showed discontentment with the parliamentary system.⁶³ He also amended the constitution of the party to accumulate more power around him.⁶⁴ The new constitution of the party empowered the chairman and it led to more personalization of the party. Bhutto also started recruiting people in the party who neither belonged

⁵² Nadeem F. Paracha, "Student Politics in Pakistan: From Revolution to Restriction – And A Possible Revival", *The Friday Times*, February 12, 2022.

Accessed from <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/2022/02/16/student-politics-in-pakistan-from-revolution-to-restriction-and-a-possible-revival>

⁵³ Hussain, *The Parliament of Pakistan*, 91.

⁵⁴ Parveen and Bhatti. "Freedom of expression and media censorship in Pakistan, 11.

⁵⁵ Muhammad Abrar Zahoor, "Zulfikar Ali Bhutto: Political Behavior And Ouster from Power" *Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society* 5, no. 2 (2017): 102.

⁵⁶ Hussain, *The Parliament of Pakistan*, 76.

⁵⁷ Hasan Askari Rizvi. *The military & politics in Pakistan, 1947-1997*. (Sang-E-Meel Publication, 2000), 231.

⁵⁸ Salman Taseer, *Bhutto: a political biography* (New Delhi: Vikas Pub, 1980), 93.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 156.

⁶⁰ Nusrat, April 27, 1969, no.31, 1.

⁶¹ Lodhi, "Bhutto, the Pakistan Peoples Party", 207.

⁶² Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A New History*. (Hurst Publishers, 2022), 102.

⁶³ Jones, *The Pakistan people's party*, 271.

⁶⁴ Zahoor, "Zulfikar Ali Bhutto", 106.

to the PPP nor were socialists. Many of them were anti-left.⁶⁵ He relied upon bureaucracy to win the elections in 1977 whereas the genuine party workers were separated from the campaign.⁶⁶ Bhutto also established the Federal Security Force in 1972.⁶⁷ The force became known for its use in suppressing opposition and silencing dissenting voices⁶⁸ including members of his party and other political groups such as the National Awami Party (NAP) and Jamaat-i-Islami.⁶⁹ The FSF was involved in violent incidents, including the disruption of rallies and the arrest and torture of opposition leaders. This further raised questions about the legitimacy of Bhutto's democratic credentials.⁷⁰

Further, the elections in 1977 were rigged and PNA announced a boycott of the elections of provincial assemblies. PPP used coercive measures to win elections.⁷¹ Many of the PPP candidates won unopposed.⁷² Bhutto set the stage for rigging when he was elected unopposed against Jan Muhammad Abbasi. He also put restrictions and banned the National Awami Party (NAP) and many opponents were arrested.⁷³ The opposition was not consulted in the constitution-making process and later it boycotted the sessions of parliament in protest.⁷⁴ The opposition claimed that the govt wanted to impose an undemocratic constitution. The further amendments in the constitution invited criticism from the opposition that it was a violation of parliamentary norms.⁷⁵ Black Day was observed by the opposition in March 1973 against this undemocratic attitude.⁷⁶

The students who had been his biggest supporters were also not spared from Bhutto's use of power.

Later, the students from both the right and left-wing protested against the brutalities of Bhutto. This repression was a serious deviation from the very fundamental principles of democracy as well as the foundational promises of his party. Z. A. Bhutto could have played a historic role by bringing a democratic revolution to the country but unfortunately, he failed in doing it and tried to grab more power, personalized the party, and weakened the democratic institutions ultimately resulting in the demise of both Bhutto and democracy in Pakistan.

So, when examining various democratic indicators like press freedom, allowing political opposition to operate freely, and fostering an environment for student unions, it becomes apparent that his attempts to build his party on democratic principles fell short. In fact, they often contradicted the very essence of democracy. Despite expectations for a flourishing democracy in Pakistan, his actions deeply undermined democratic values and the democratic project as a whole.

Religious Populism and Democracy: Peoples vs High Politics

Along with Bhutto's authoritarianism and anti-left politics another important feature of reactionary politics of misuse of religion both by Bhutto and the religious parties. Religious populism, religious symbolism and idioms that were used during 1970's both by Bhutto and the religious parties during later years undermined the democratic project and people's polity since anti-Ayub revolved around peoples oriented slogans such as adult franchise, fundamental rights, and

⁶⁵ Hasan, *The Mirage of Power*, 143.

⁶⁶ Maulana Kausar Niazi, *Aur Line Kat Gai*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Jang Publisher, 1988), 22.

⁶⁷ Tahir Kamran, *Democracy and governance in Pakistan* (Lahore: South Asia Partnership-Pakistan, 2008), 89.

⁶⁸ Zahoor, "Zulfikar Ali Bhutto", 105.

⁶⁹ Talbot, *Pakistan: A New History*, 106.

⁷⁰ Anwar H. Syed, "Pakistan in 1977: The "Prince" is under the Law." *Asian Survey* 18, no. 2 (1978): 121.

⁷¹ Lawrence Ziring "Pakistan: The campaign before the storm." *Asian Survey* 17, no. 7 (1977): 589.

⁷² Niazi, *Aur Line Kat Gai*, 41.

⁷³ Jalal, *Democracy and authoritarianism in South Asia*, 220.

⁷⁴ *Musawaat*, 29 March, 1973.

⁷⁵ Surendra Nath Kaushik, *Pakistan under Bhutto's leadership*. (Uppal Publishing House, 1985), 80.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 81.

egalitarianism. Later the politics turned to be more reactionary and those people-centric slogans were replaced by religious symbolism, religious idioms religious populism. Ironically, religious populism was not only used by religious parties, but it was also blatantly used by Bhutto who heavily relied on religious slogans and religious idioms and turned the political landscape highly reactionary.

Islam had central role play in the making of Pakistan and remained significant even after the partition. It also had been a political mobilization tool.⁷⁷ In the making of the religious outlook of country, Punjab played a significant role, with religious leaders in the region actively participating in the Pakistan movement and supporting the All India Muslim League. Ayub introduced religious reforms that portrayed comparatively a modernist view of Islam which was more like a liberal view of Islam. He faced opposition from different segments of society.⁷⁸ Islamic features were not included in the 1962 constitution, which was then dissented by Maudaudi's Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), Nizam-e-Islam, Khaksar, and Ahrar parties. This resulted in the ban on JI.⁷⁹ This led to the opposition of religious parties against Ayub Khan. They also resisted the family laws introduced by Ayub.⁸⁰ Despite the fatwas against Fatima Jinnah from a few *ulemas*, these parties stood with her against Ayub, later they played a key role in the anti-Ayub movement.⁸¹

JI also remained against Ayub's regime. It joined the opposition alliance of Combined Opposition

Parties (COP) which nominated Fatima Jinnah as its presidential candidate in the 1965 presidential elections.⁸² JI later hoped to lead the post-Ayub movement, but it couldn't due to its anti-socialist approach and it was unsettled by the rise of Maoism and Socialism in Punjab.⁸³ During this period, JI and the left were divided over Islam versus Socialism.

On the other hand, Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) remained divided against Ayub Khan. Some of its cadres and leaders opposed Fatima Jinnah in the elections of 1965 and some of them supported Ayub Khan as a presidential candidate. The reason was that 'according to them, women's political leadership for the war against Islamic injunctions.⁸⁴ Later when Ayub Khan did not fulfil the promises made, they turned anti-Ayub and joined the movement against him. However, JUP was the last to join it⁸⁵.

In the elections of 1970, the political landscape was filled with ethnic and ideological slogans. Bhutto's party was riding the wave of socialism, democracy and Islamic sloganeering and populism. On the other hand, religious parties were in the field as a major contender of PPP. It was a contest of Islam vs socialism. At that time Islam and Socialism were the major political currencies.⁸⁶ *Ulemas* gave fatwas against Socialism declaring it *Kufr*.^{87 88} This opposition of parties against socialism and Bhutto was so strong that he had to adopt different strategies. He tried to convince people that

⁷⁷ Sidra Karamat and Ali Shan Shah "Evolution of religious political parties in Pakistan during military regimes." *Evolution* 6, no. 1 (2021): 47.

⁷⁸ Sarfraz Husain Ansari, "Forced modernization and public policy: A case study of Ayub Khan era (1958-69)," *Journal of political studies* 18, no. 1 (2011): 45.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 53-54

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 56.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 57.

⁸² Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1994), 123.

⁸³ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1994), 126.

⁸⁴ Mujeeb Ahmed, *JamiyyatUlama-I-Pakistan, 1948-1979*. (Islamabad: NIHCR, 1993), 23-24.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 32-33.

⁸⁶ Hasan, *The Mirage of Power*, 187.

⁸⁷ Maulana Mansha Tabish Qasuri, *Tehreek-i-Nizam-i-Musstafa Aur Jamia Nizamia Rizvia, Lahore*. (Raza Academy, Lahore), 161.

⁸⁸ Safir Akhtar, "Pakistan since independence: The political role of the 'ulama'." (PhD diss., University of York, 1989), 474.

socialism was not anti-Islamic.⁸⁹ Maulana Kausar Niazi, who was earlier part of right wing JI, became an icon figure for countering right wing religious parties.⁹⁰ He also told the senate about the planning of the formation of a Ministry of Religious Affairs. Bhutto adapted his position quickly in response to religious propaganda. He sought to demonstrate his commitment to Islam by reframing socialism with Islamic idioms and making public gestures such as barefoot visits to shrines.⁹¹ This explains the strength and power of religious idioms in Pakistan especially in Punjab. Even Sheikh Rashid had to defend himself against Jamaat-i-Islami by using religious idioms when he was contesting Mian Tufail of JI.⁹²

Bhutto took steps to address religious sentiments by incorporating Islamic provisions into the constitution and officially declaring Ahmadis as non-Muslims. He also facilitated a significant number of people to perform Hajj, hosted an Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore⁹³ and defended his stance against criticism from religious parties. PPP also hit back at the *ulemas* and stated that those very *ulemas* had turned against the All India Muslim League during the Pakistan movement and had attacked the faith of Quaid-i-Azam.⁹⁴ PPP's slogans were Islamic Socialism and they promulgated their ideology through "Islam is our Faith" and "*Meian La Ila Ka Naara Laga K Meidaan Mein Utron Ga*."⁹⁵ They termed Islamic socialism as equivalent to '*Musawaat-i-*

Muhammadi'.⁹⁶ Further, Nusrat Magazine attacked JI by pointing out that Maulana Maududi had always been pro-dictatorship while Bhutto always stood with Pakistan's movement.⁹⁷ JI tried to counter secularism by calling it a 'foreign agenda'. It also demanded land reforms.⁹⁸ JUP was allotted a key symbol and they presented it as a 'key to paradise'.⁹⁹ Just like JI, it also focused on welfare programs.¹⁰⁰ Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) demands were not much different. However, it introduced a relatively progressive manifesto that was more closely aligned with socialism. Although this term was not particularly used. It focused on the Islamic constitution with 22 points of *ulemas*¹⁰¹

In the elections of 1970, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) dominated elections in West Pakistan, particularly in Punjab and Sindh. In Punjab, it defeated all right-wing political parties, winning 81 out of 141 National Assembly seats and 113 out of 180 Punjab Assembly seats.¹⁰² Religious parties struggled, securing only seven Punjab Assembly seats and five National Assembly seats.¹⁰³ PPP's success indicated that voters favored its pragmatic social program over religious-based campaigns. The right wing suffered a significant defeat, and the

⁸⁹ Rahat Zubair Malik, "Political Shift or Electoral Drift: A Study of Winners and Runners in 1970 Elections." *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 59, no. 3 (2022): 97.

⁹⁰ Philip Edward Jones, *The Pakistan people's party: Rise to power*. (Oxford University Press, USA, 2003), 281.

⁹¹ M. Rafique Afzal, *Political parties in Pakistan: 1969-1971*. Vol. 3. (National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 2018), 166-167

⁹² Rashid, *Juhd-i-Musalsal*, 158.

⁹³ Salman Taseer, *Bhutto: a political biography*. (New Delhi: Vikas Pub, 1980), 151.

⁹⁴ Jones, *The Pakistan people's party: Rise to power*, 298.

⁹⁵ Nusrat, *November 16, 1969, no.60, 19*. Also *Presidential Adrees in Haiderabad*

⁹⁶ Zeeshan Khalid and Mahboob Hussain. "Politics of Symbols & Slogans: Its Impact on Elections of 1970". *Journal of Historical Studies* 3 no.2 (2017):7

⁹⁷ Nusrat, *November 16, 1969, no.60, 3*.

⁹⁸ Khalid and Hussain, "Politics of Symbols & Slogans: Its Impact on Elections of 1970", 9

⁹⁹ Ahmed, *JamiyyatUlama-I-Pakistan* ,64

¹⁰⁰ Khalid and Hussain. "Politics of Symbols & Slogans: Its Impact on Elections of 1970", 9-10

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Government of Pakistan, *Report on General Elections of Pakistan 1970-71*, vol.II. (Islamabad: Election Commission 1972).

¹⁰³ Ibid

religious political parties nearly vanished from the electoral landscape.¹⁰⁴

The opposition against Bhutto was weak and fragmented that made Bhutto strong to get harsh on them. Opposition parties soon realized that it was nearly impossible for them to counter Bhutto separately, hence they decided to get together for this cause.¹⁰⁵ The first alliance was the United Democratic Front (UDF)¹⁰⁶. Mufti Mahmud of JUI was elected as the president and Professor Ghafoor as elected as the secretary-general of this alliance.¹⁰⁷ Among other religious parties, the religious parties dominated its formation. This alliance gave tough time to Bhutto in 1973s constitution-making process.¹⁰⁸

After the breakup of Pakistan, for framing a new constitution, there was an eleven point's accord and the religious parties were a part of that. Islam was not mentioned in ten points, except article 29 and 30. These articles were enough to appease the constituency of the religious parties. During constitution making, lots of conflicts arose. Such as JUP rejected the constitution presented by Hafeez Pirzada.¹⁰⁹ Another public campaign was initiated by Maulana Noorani that demanded Islamic provisions in the constitutions. His party took the credit for the Islamic Constitution later.¹¹⁰ JUI also emphasized drafting a constitution according to the much famous twenty two points of *Ulema*.¹¹¹ Several Islamic provisions were added by Mufti

Mahmood on the appeal or request of Bhutto for drafting the constitution.

Pakistan was proclaimed an Islamic Republic and Islam was declared the official state religion in the 1973 Constitution. It created the Council of Islamic Ideology and mandated the study of Islam.¹¹² The constitution of 1973 included many articles that aligned with the demands of religious parties. Both religious parties and Bhutto took the credit for adding Islamic provisions. It had a significant religious content.¹¹³

Similarly, the 1977 election campaign and the post-election movement by the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) against Bhutto clearly indicate that the political landscape had been completely reversed. It was overwhelmed by religious symbolism, slogans, and idioms, which replaced the concrete and people-centric demands that were previously prominent in anti-Ayub movement. In the elections of 1977, the PPP had to rely heavily on tactics and state power since that was not the 1970's when it appealed to the masses.¹¹⁴ The opposition also formed an alliance a much popular alliance of Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) against Bhutto, Mufti Mehmood was appointed as the president of the alliance, while Rafique Ahmed Bajwa from Jamia-i-Ulema Pakistan served as the Secretary-General, and Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan held the position of Vice-President.¹¹⁵ The alliance was primarily composed of right-wing

¹⁰⁴ Rahat Zubair Malik, "Political Shift or Electoral Drift: A Study of Winners and Runners in 1970 Elections." *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 59, no. 3 (2022): 98.

¹⁰⁵ Ulfat Zahra and Javed Iqbal. "Politics of alliances and its effects during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's rule in Pakistan," *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)* 5, no. 1 (2021): 97.

¹⁰⁶ Muhammad Azeem and Tahir Tabassum, "Role of Opposition Parties in Pakistani Democracy: A Case Study of United Democratic Front (UDF)," *Journal of Politics and International Studies* 4, no. 1 (2018): 61

¹⁰⁷ Zahra and Iqbal. "Politics of alliances and its effects during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's rule in Pakistan", 97.

¹⁰⁸ Dawn, April 7th, 1973

¹⁰⁹ Maryam Siddiqi and Husnul Amin, "Institutionalization of Islamic Political Parties in Pakistan: A Case Study of Jamiat Ulama-e-Pakistan" *Hazaraislamicus* 10, no. 02 (2021): 18.

¹¹⁰ Anwar-i-Raza, 2012, vol, 4.no,6. 55.

¹¹¹ Pirzada Sayyid AS, *The Politics of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Pakistan, 1971-1977*. (Oxford University Press, 2000), 74.

¹¹² The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973. (Islamabad: National Assembly Government of Pakistan, 2012).

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Marvin G. Weinbaum, "The March 1977 Elections in Pakistan: Where Everyone Lost," *Asian Survey* 17, no. 7 (1977): 605.

¹¹⁵ Zahra and Iqbal. "Politics of alliances and its effects during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's rule in Pakistan", 99.

parties and positioned itself as the defender of Islam. It framed the PPP as a threat to an Islamic System.¹¹⁶ ¹¹⁷ The main element that brought the majority of the parties together was their dislike towards Bhutto.¹¹⁸ The religious and other parties in the alliance had to set aside their differences to emphasize their unity. During this period, the alliance leaned more strongly towards religious orientations. Asghar Khan stated that there was no need for any ideology in the country since Islam provided solutions to all problems.¹¹⁹ Mufti Mahmud wanted the PNA to focus on establishing an Islamic legal system and promised a quick implementation of Islamic laws if they won. He participated in communal prayers to show unity and counter religious tensions, while around 150 *Ulama* agreed to keep their differences apart.¹²⁰ PNA's manifesto was quite rich and it covered all aspects including religion, democracy and protection of workers' rights. It also mentioned the restoration of democratic rights.¹²¹

The PNA was a more united alliance compared to the UDF. While the UDF concentrated on forming a parliamentary coalition, the PNA began as an electoral alliance and eventually developed into a full scaled opposition movement against Bhutto.¹²² But this united opposition could not fight against Bhutto and won merely eight seats in Punjab, none from Lahore and Rawalpindi.¹²³ The reason for

this defeat was vague sloganeering and religious promises¹²⁴ since PNA's parties were not true representative of Punjab politics. Their orientation was only religious¹²⁵ and relied on Islamic idioms, rhetoric and bans on liquor, coeducation and family planning etc.¹²⁶ Bhutto also had to face *fatwas* against him and he could not deliver as he promised despite winning 155 seats.¹²⁷ PNA alleged that elections were rigged and Bhutto exploited state resources for victory. There was a protest and the opposition boycotted Provincial assembly elections.¹²⁸

The three religious parties JUI, JI and JUP mobilized masses against Bhutto. JI along with its student wing gave tough time to Bhutto under the leadership of Maulana Maududi. It threatened a rebellion if Maududi was arrested. Mufti Mahmood of JUI was the first who allege rigging¹²⁹, he also presented the demands of the PNA for reconstitution of the election commission and demanded the resignation of Bhutto.¹³⁰ JUP, took a hard stance and its leader Maulana Shah Ahmed Norani faced the atrocities of Bhutto.¹³¹ It was JUP who remained instrumental in mobilizing the movement on Islamic grounds.¹³² Maulana Norani also named the movement '*Tehrik-i-Nizam-e-Mustafa*'.¹³³ Protests and strikes were observed

¹¹⁶ National Student Federation Pakistan (Karachi Zone): *Aghraz-O-Maqasid* (Pak Parcham Printing Press: Karachi).

¹¹⁷ [Faisal Syani](#), "Bhutto and the NSF", *The Friday Times*, September 21, 2021.

¹¹⁸ Bashir Ahmed, "The PNA'S movement." *Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society* 31, no. 1 (2018): 40.

¹¹⁹ *Nawai-i-Waqt*, October 5, 1976

¹²⁰ Ahmed, "The PNA'S movement, 41.

¹²¹ Manshoor: Pakistan Qaumi Ittehad, Lahore, 1977,4-5.

¹²² Marvin G Weinbaum, "The March 1977 Elections in Pakistan: Where Everyone Lost." *Asian Survey* 17, no. 7 (1977): 601.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 613.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 614.

¹²⁵ Lawrence Ziring, "Pakistan: The campaign before the storm." *Asian Survey* 17, no. 7 (1977): 590.

¹²⁶ Weinbaum, "The March 1977 Elections in Pakistan: Where Everyone Lost", 613.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 613.

¹²⁸ Ulfat Zahra and Javed Iqbal. "Politics of alliances and its effects during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's rule in Pakistan," *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)* 5, no. 1 (2021): 100.

¹²⁹ Pirzada Sayyid AS, *The Politics of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Pakistan, 1971-1977*. (Oxford University Press, 2000), 171.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 176.

¹³¹ Anwar-i-Raza, 2012, Vol,3,no.4. 645-646.

¹³² Ahmed, *Jamiyyat Ulama-I-Pakistan*, 142

¹³³ Zahra Ulfat, and Javed Iqbal. "Politics of alliances and its effects during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's rule in Pakistan." *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)* 5, no. 1 (2021):100.

against rigging and all attempts of negotiations from Bhutto were rejected by Maulana Noorani.¹³⁴

Despite using authoritarian tactics, large protests erupted in Lahore on April 9, resulting in around thirty deaths and two hundred and fifty injuries. Many were imprisoned, including religious leaders who were mistreated. Riots also occurred in Hyderabad and Islamabad, with multiple deaths. The movement grew more religious, with *ulemas* issuing *fatwas* supporting the movement and condemning Bhutto. They declared the struggle as Jihad.¹³⁵ Movement grew stronger and it put the country on a standstill. Under this pressure, Bhutto had to accept the demands. Accepted demands included a Muslim president and prime minister, promotion of Arabic, also a commitment for the printing of the Holy Quran.¹³⁶ He also put bans on liquor and gambling and implemented moral standards of Islam.¹³⁷ This also resulted in the elimination of word "socialism" in PPP's literature, and it got replaced by the term '*Musawat-i-Muhammadi*'.¹³⁸

With the growing pressure from religious parties and to appease the religious constituencies of Punjab, Bhutto rapidly fell prey to religious populism. By doing this he helped the political landscape turn reactionary and the victims of religious populism. The religious parties perhaps had dragged him to their field and defeated him on their own terms. He tried to turn more right than the rightest themselves and more religious overtly than the religious parties. Bhutto often used religious rhetoric and idioms in his speeches. During a National Assembly session, he attacked

his opponents, accusing them of supporting foreign conspiracies and anti-Islamic forces. He advocated for the welfare of the Islamic world and Pakistan. Bhutto held an Islamic conference, referring to Pakistani soldiers as "soldiers of Islam."¹³⁹ In the Punjab Assembly, a PPP member from Rawalpindi used religious rhetoric to attack the opposition through criticism. He also highlighted the PPP's adherence to '*Musawat-i-Muhammadi*. and alleged the opposition of going against Quranic teachings.¹⁴⁰ Chaudhry Ahmad Saeed, a Provincial Assembly candidate from Gujrat, criticized the opposition by claiming that self-proclaimed religious leaders were not genuinely interested in the Islamic system.¹⁴¹ The PPP started to take credit for its Islamic initiatives, asserting that the entire Islamic world supported Bhutto. Bhutto also declared Friday as the official weekly holiday, replacing Sunday.¹⁴² In the meetings with *ulemas*, he reaffirmed PPP's commitment to serve Islam.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁴ Earlier, Bhutto had also invited leaders of all three major religious parties to join the Advisory Council for the implementation of Shariah Law. He also assured the implementation of Islamic Laws in six months. re-elections PNA leaders viewed these statements as a diversion from the primary issue of re-elections.¹⁴⁵

As the PNA movement grew with every passing day both Bhutto and religious parties excessively relied on religious rhetoric to denounce each other's. The differences sharpened despite multiple rounds of talks between Bhutto and the PNA leadership. The deadlock continued and got deeper

¹³⁴ Ibid

¹³⁵ Ahmed, *Jamiyyat Ulama-I-Pakistan*, 139.

¹³⁶ Ulfat and Iqbal. "Politics of alliances and its effects during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's rule in Pakistan, 10

¹³⁷ Rizwan Ullah Kokab & Muhammad Arif Khan. "Religious Motivation behind Political Movement: A Case Study of Nizam-e-Mustafa Movement." *Pakistan Vision* 19, no. 1 (2018):131.

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Ghafoor Ahmad, *Phir Martial Law Aa Gia*. (Lahore, Jang Publisher Press, 1988), 162.

¹⁴⁰ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, vol.I, no.1, 9 April, 39.

¹⁴¹ *Mussawat*, February 15, 1977

¹⁴² *Muswaat*, January 14, 1977

¹⁴³ *Mussawat*, March 6, 1977

¹⁴⁴ *Mussawat*, January 12, 1977

¹⁴⁵ Muhammad Afzal, Dr Khalil Ahmed and Ahmad Ali. "Causes and Consequences of PNA's Agitation about the Election of 1977: An Analytical Study in Perspective of Print Media." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* (2017): 106.

which ultimately swept the fragile democracy the country saw another Martial Law of Zia-ul-Haq.

Conclusion

The reactionary politics marred with authoritarianism and populism in the decade of the 1970s badly hit the foundations of Pakistani democracy and political culture. The people's movement during the late 1960s against Ayub Khan was a mass movement and could have potentially turned Pakistan into a truly democratic state and transformed Pakistan's political culture forever. But unfortunately, the coming decade of 1970s politics got trapped by reactionary forces and populism, leaving little space for the democratic project to navigate. Bhutto, unlike his promises, turned authoritarian and anti-left, and the religious parties turned more toward religious populism, dragging Bhutto to be even more rightist, resorting to religious populism. Bhutto resorted to authoritarian tactics and anti-left politics. It pushed the democratic project and the people's politics, once on the peak during the anti-Ayub movement, to the brink.

Both Bhutto and religious populism used religion for their political gains to appease their constituencies and marginalize each other. Both tended to use populist binaries of 'otherizing' each other. The people's slogans, issues that were once the fundamental current of politics, were dragged to the brink of the margins. This shift transformed the political landscape into a reactionary landscape. The movement, which had previously focused on the genuine and real issues like fundamental rights, democracy, workers' rights, and socio-economic reforms, increasingly turned to populist religious rhetoric. This shift undermined the core ideals of the movement and shifted the focus away from addressing people's concerns while disregarding the democratic aspirations of the masses. The reactionary politics of the 1970s represented a major setback for Pakistan's democratic project, setting the stage for more reactionary politics in the years and decades that followed.

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