

# Exploring Legitimization of Religio-Politico Discursive Practices: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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## Abstract

The current study examines the legitimacy of religio-politico discursive practices prevalent in the novel a case study of exploding mangoes (2008) by Muhammad Hanif. This text is a cut-throat satire on the military interference in state affairs. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used as a major method under the theoretical lens of legitimization theory to execute the study. The major character of the novel, General Zia ul Haq, exercises his powers and controls the government of Pakistan by the takeover of the military forces till his death in an aircraft crash on 17 August 1988 in Bahawalpur. On multiple levels, Hanif reveals the religio-political mechanisms wielded by the titled political and religious stooges. The theory of Legitimization interprets how power structures legalize their authority on social, political, and religious groundings. The study also underscores the religiosity imposed by Zia under the pretext of Islamization in this particular era. The study's objective is to spotlight various doctrines of religio-political machinery used to manipulate the political system in the 1980s.

**Keywords:** Religio-Politico Practices, Legitimization, Power Structures, Islamization

## Introduction

The current study focuses on the coercive practices used by General Zia ul Haq, the military dictator who toppled the government and instituted martial law. Zia uses the pretense of Islamization to manipulate people and obtain the allegiance of dogs by coercion. He uses national and religious ideas as intellectual weapons to control others. Similar to the pre-colonial period, he treats people inhumanely and expects unquestioning submission. The detailed dynamics of the state under the tyrannical rule of the intermediate ecclesiastical and metropolitan powers are explored in depth in Hanif's story. Moreover, his rule was in place for eleven years because of the religio-politico stooges. Zia's propensity for avarice and his thirst for power are revealed in *A Case Study on Exploding Mangoes (2008)*.

Zia uses the pretext of "Islamization" to seize control of the nation's infrastructure and governance, leading to its eventual collapse on a national, international, and intranational scale. He monitors the media to disguise his propaganda. "The journalists were whipped under sentences passed by military courts" (Siddiq, 2007). Hanif depicts the true narrative by highlighting the military's engagement, interpersonal relationships, and the policies of the Pakistani government. As a former officer in the air force, Hanif is aware of the military's influence over civil tribunals. He utilizes

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the Holy Quran as a shield of protection for himself, one that would allow him to live and preserve his identity. His last resort appears to be religion, as he is experiencing inner guilt. He uses passages from the Holy Quran to appease his inner self and distract himself from his wrongdoings.

The current study focuses on the legitimized power structures that Zia constructed to implement religio-political discourses throughout his rule. In the novel's plot, he appears to be an Islamic hero attempting to impose Islamic principles in the interest of Islamization. In actuality, he was the prophet of bloodshed, hatred against specific groups of people, and acts of terrorism in the name of Islam. His rule has always brought shame to Pakistan's social, political, and religious ideals.

### Objectives of the Study

- To explore the legitimization of religiopolitical discursive practices in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*.
- To explore the impact of General Zia's imperialistic mindset in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*.

### Significance of the Study

The present study highlights the fault lines in the religio-politico ambiance by providing readers with a sense of responsibility and understanding of undemocratic power over the masses. The study will bring into people's consciousness the efforts of standing against such autocratic evils just for a national cause. This critical analysis highlights the potential for ideological manipulation and power dynamics that underlie such conduct. As they shed light on the complex interactions between religious and political discourse, these insights are very important to religio-politico studies.

### Literature Review

*A Case Study on Exploding Mangoes (2008)* presents the story of a usurper who, in defiance of the constitution, seized the throne and created a clone democracy. Zia was able to dissolve the National Assembly when the 1973 constitution was reinstated. Talbot (1998) discusses the devastation of the constitution caused by Zia and his policies, which were akin to those of Hanif, in Pakistan: a modern history. Instead of implementing Islam's social features, Talbot claims that Zia enforced its regulatory, punitive, and extractive aspects. Zia tarnished Islam's reputation around the world by portraying it as a strict faith. To suggest that Zia was a colonial dictatorship's twin would not be incorrect. His policies are in line with those of colonial nations when it comes to religion. Zia skillfully split his opposition and established the intellectual foundation for his regime through the use of Islam. Ultimately, he used force but also psychological manipulation to control the masses, particularly the more affluent members of society. More disdain than admiration was directed toward Zia's Islamic democracy (Talbot, 2009).

The government's endorsement of religion is merely an attempt to maintain public composure, and its justifications, which adhere to the principle of "might makes right," are little more than lies. Their slogans are nothing more than tricks meant to deceive people; they made promises of revolution and transformation for the betterment of the nation. The top class uses force against its people, just as the previous government did to survive (Fanon, 2004). Examining *A Case Study of Exploding Mangoes (2008)* is a clear example of Pakistan's autocratic class system. They have little regard for the public good; their judgments are driven only by their political and economic objectives. General Zia called the first meeting of the key commanders to support the new setup after overthrowing the elected prime minister. He had several options for generals who could better

serve him than the country, so he chose them rather than making the best decisions for the cause. These generals have sworn allegiance to themselves rather than the nation (Noman, 1989).

All of the intelligence that could be utilized to protect the nation is being directed toward preserving the general against threats that are not yet visible. The nation's protections were bestowed onto stooges who ascended to the positions of ministers and governors. The agencies' tasks intensified if a national cleanliness week was declared, as they were supposed to be the nation's stewards and had to ensure that the gutters were infected and that security was checked before the president could arrive for his photo. They all yearned for power because everyone aspires to be higher up, and there are infinitely many evils that may be done in pursuit of that goal. The Comprador bourgeoisie is never prepared to comprehend or give a damn about what people want or think. They only take action that will assist them continue to make money and wish themselves well. Because they have no one to answer to but themselves, the ruling class is never willing to accommodate the needs of the general public. They also show little regard for popular ideology or their own social needs. In only one line, Hanif exposes the autocratic ruling elite by stating that their training prevents them from comprehending native demands. In summary, the oppressive discipline of the army marginalizes and silences people (Khan, 2018).

The media outlets raising awareness among the country's people were suppressed to the hilt during the Zia administration. With an iron grip, Pakistan's print media, in particular, was brutally suppressed. Under orders from the military courts, journalists were subjected to whipping. The purpose of media repression was to prevent print media from destroying the pretended image of an Islamic democratic state. Zia repeatedly postponed the elections after usurping power on the pledge to hold them in 90 days because he knew the political powers would take his crown. Following an eight-year hiatus, the nation had elections, which ultimately became a farce—under Zia, the army, whose job is to guard the nation's borders, looked for the dictator's position of power and authority. The army also expertly employed intelligence services to influence the political parties. At the very beginning of the novel, Hanif uses a single blow to dispel this false idea of Islam. The 2008 novel *A Case Study of Exploding Mangoes (2008)* reveals the Islamic state's protectors, torchbearers, and many natural heroes. It is a jest against the army's pseudo-religious nature and popular religiosity (Azimova, 2022).

Iqbal (2015) asserts in his research that Hanif criticizes General Zia in *A Case Study of Exploding Mangoes (2008)* for manipulating the nation's foundation and administrative structure while claiming Islamization, which ultimately led to his rule and demise. Through exposing the harsh realities of his regime's repressive governance, Hanif's work presents Zia as a dishonest and unreliable leader. *A Case Study of Exploding Mangoes (2008)* explores the complex relationships between the state's coercive hold over the local category and the preeminent role of metropolitan authority. The new government is in charge of the country, and the go is secular. Zia's mature viewpoint that humanity is dejected is the reason for his current discontent with the status of the globe. In addition, Zia's greed is stated in *A Case Study of Exploding Mangoes (2008, p. 4)* wherein the dominating middle class is held accountable.

Ali (2016) investigates significant aspects of Pakistani history hidden from both the general public's and each person's consciousness. According to Hassan, Zia would be remembered in Pakistan as the person who took over the country unlawfully, illegally held onto power for eleven years, and left behind nothing but debt and mortgages, unemployment and starvation, prejudice and exploitation, drugs, and corruption. Although Zia disliked the term "dictator," he did not like to refer to himself as a democrat. After the split, Zia was, in a way, Pakistan's colonial dictator. He embodied colonial rule exactly. Zia's death in an aircraft accident was deemed "a bad death for the

west" (Kalra, 2019). When US sectaries called him to Islamabad to attend Zia's funeral, they said that Zia was a staunch supporter of the Afghan struggle and a defender of Pakistan's freedom and independence. Conversely, Benazir Bhutto declares, "I do not regret Zia's death" (Bukhari, 1988).

Arafat (2020) focuses on the colonial legacy that Zia upheld during his rule by adopting the laws and customs of his white masters and abusing the people of his nation. The brutal tendency of the colonial overlords was to enslave the masses and prevent them from having any say over what they did. In the same way, Zia is acting as a comprador in the narrative by attempting to hold onto the colonial agenda. He is a messenger of violence into the Indians' homes and thoughts. While Arafat focuses solely on the colonial component of Zia's time, the current research explores the religio-political practices that Zia employed during his autocratic reign. The study delves further into Hanif's portrayal of the tyranny of absolutism in the totalitarian state and highlights the roles played by the powerful in Pakistan's religio-political climate. By drawing people's attention to a thorough understanding of the current form of slavery, the research aims to close any gaps in expertise.

Mengal (2023) offers a historical and sociopolitical interpretation of the book. According to him, *A Case Study of Exploding Mangoes (2008)* shows a fresh revolt that thwarts Zia's propensity for exploitation in the early going of his rule. The study's objective is to comprehend the text's cultural context. Still, it also contributes to our understanding of the political and religious discourse practices common throughout Zia's military general era. The paper emphasizes the drawbacks of military dictatorship that upended the chosen democratic government and maintained its supreme law. Comparing civil and military governance is another feature of the study. It serves as a kind of alert to avoid similar complexities in the future that could put the nation in the hands of crazy people. As one might expect, *A Case Study of Exploding Mangoes (2008)* is an allegorical satire of Pakistan's political history, both before and after. The book also clarifies the forced Islamization that led to the nation's religious, political, and economic collapse.

Tanvir (2014) investigates the social and political climate in Pakistan in the 1980s, a time when General Zia toppled the democratic government and ruled the country until his death. *A Case Study on Exploding Mangoes (2008)* was written by Muhammad Hanif, a skilled critic and seasoned analyst of worldwide political scenarios, in a humorous-cum-satirical style employing both actual and fictional characters. Hanif's account is a priceless record that accurately captures the political landscape of Pakistan, the army's function, and its meddling in civil and public affairs. During Zia's reign, Pakistan evolved into a praetorian state where the military and political leadership had a partnership that promoted the military's rise to become the exclusive source of authority. A Pakistani novelist, Muhammad Hanif, who was an officer in the armed services before leaving for personal reasons, aims to add to the body of knowledge regarding the role played by military might in maintaining political order in his nation. Alternatively, many Pakistani generals and analysts who support this reluctant professional army believe the military must clear up the mess left by dishonest and incompetent politicians. He explained that the equally troubling instability and corruption that all army-led governments also cause is difficult if this is the case. This essay answers the question: Is the military's political dominance a product of institutionalized foreign restrictions and flaws in domestic policy?

To democratize, integrate, and "consolidate" the Pakistani state, Maya Chadda (2009) presents the politics of Pakistan from an elite perspective, positioning herself as a superior force capable of employing even "coercive" tactics. Was the country 'consolidated' 1971 by the elite, i.e., politicians and civil-military bureaucrats? The problem with this strategy is that it propagates the myth of a

monolithic nationalism ruled by an elitist leadership. Furthermore, the role of the masses in influencing the nation's political processes is minimized, if not outright ignored. To further serve their own institutional and organizational goals, it also subtly encourages the armed forces to use needless violence in the name of national consolidation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework employs the theory of legitimization by offering a lens through which to examine the dynamics of hybrid religio-politico discursive practices employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a major method for this qualitative study. Through a nuanced analysis of *A Case Study of Exploding Mangoes*, we deconstruct the exploitative mechanism inherent in the political system of Pakistan.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

Much literature exists on general politics in Pakistan and civil-military relations. These literary works can be divided into two categories: propagandists, who see the military as a tool for modernizing and constructing nations, and conspiracy theorists, who believe that the military plots with foreign powers, particularly the US, to increase and solidify its power at the expense of political forces. The three schools of thought that describe Pakistan's military are structuralists, who explain it within the greater framework of the state; instrumentalists, who see the military through the lens of outside influences and elite bargain theorists, who observe political processes through the lens of the elite.

According to Cheema (2002), the military can strengthen a country. The military enters politics as the most contemporary institution. Otherwise, the military would be unwilling to rule due to the inept political leadership. The propaganda material essentially views the military as an impartial political arbiter that innately wants to defend the nation. It does not address why the military feels compelled to get involved in politics. From several perspectives, the political situation is shown in *A Case of Study of Exploding Mangoes* (2008). Hanif states at the novel's beginning, "But this afternoon, history is taking a long siesta, as it usually does between the end of one war and the beginning of another" (Hanif, 2008, p.2).

In *A Case Study of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), Zia's policies in Pakistan are shown together with criticism to draw attention to international politics and how they affect developing nations, particularly Pakistan. These lines noticeably align the circumstances, 'I, the imperialist Eagle, swooped down on Obaid's third world, Dove, he fought back, and for the final sat on my chest, drawing blood from my neck with his cardboard beak' (Hanif, 2008, p.17). In addition to taking blood from the Afghans, Zia, the same Third World Dove, was also taking blood from the necks of his supporters. Due to the tragic accident that Zia's plane encountered and the ensuing tragedy that claimed his life, a great deal of conspiracy theories concerning the country's military rule were created in this context. It was only a national myth that military rule would never end because God had other plans.

The first thing that one is forced to encounter is the shifting sociopolitical landscape of world politics during those years, as Mohammed Hanif has discussed at the very beginning of his novel: a gap in understanding between the public's and the army's deep meanings of the actions taken in the process of establishing political insight. Being a praetor, a dictator, and the head of the army staff of the seventh-largest army in the world, Zia-ul-Haq has been the most powerful person in the nation. Deep insight into the historical changes, particularly those about the nation's political

structure, has been provided by Mohammed Hanif. Examine the following passages from the novel:

"General Zia was the ultimate man of faith, the leader who could turn his country's hopes and dreams into reality with the wave of his baton, yet remained deeply paranoid, mistrusting even the closest of his aides."

Another striking illustration of the General's religio-political views is how he treated his opponents, punishing them for no fault of their own simply because they held a different position. In *Baby O*, Mohammed Hanif's made-up persona expresses his thoughts regarding the crimes and how they seem to the prosecutor and his favorite teammates. "There is poetry in committing a crime after you have served your sentence. I do not have much interest in poetry, but punishment before a crime has a certain sing-song quality. The guilty commit the crime, and the innocent are punished. That is the world we live in" (Hanif, 2008, p. 4).

Thus, it has always been the case in this nation that the guilty bear the consequences of their crimes while the innocent are spared. These lines best interpret this region's political climate and the formation of various realities. Even after years of supposedly being emancipated from foreign domination, the people of Pakistan were still waiting for true independence to arrive. For the people of Pakistan, independence meant little more than a change of rulers. Two global superpowers—Russia and America—were playing politics, and Zia was the blue-eyed kid of America since he was the head of state and at war with Russia. Ultimately, he was forced to conceal his covert and clandestine actions by using his blatantly unjust and undemocratic use of power, which would ultimately cause him to blow up under peculiar circumstances. "Unsurprised there will be no autopsies, the leads will run dry, investigations will be blocked, and there will be cover-ups to cover cover-ups. Third World dictators are always blowing up in strange circumstances" (Hanif, 2008, p.3).

General Zia's religious inclination was another mask covering his face; he was a "wolf in sheep's clothing," disguised as a general but acting like a Mullah. Check out these passages from the book: "The generals who had called Zia a mullah behind his back felt ashamed at having underestimated him: not only was he a mullah, he was a mullah whose understanding of religion did not go beyond parroting what he had heard from the next mullah. A mullah without a beard, a mullah in a four-star generals uniform, a mullah with the instincts of a corrupt tax inspector" (Hanif, 2008, p. 32). Zia's political approach, which involved using the name of Islam to further his objectives, is briefly and vividly described in the paragraphs above. Zia did not declare Islam and Pakistan to be equivalent since he was a praetor. Saeed Shafqat has demonstrated the slow transition of Pakistan from official Islam to Islamism. Pakistan pledged to adopt an Islamic system during its infancy, albeit a progressive one, in contrast to India, where the government "continually violated its professed (secular) ideology."

Starting in 1940, the Muslim leadership embraced religion and religious symbols more and more, portraying Pakistan as an Islamic state in the future, which was in line with Allama Iqbal's ideas as expressed in his masterpiece, *Reconstruction*. Following Pakistan's independence, the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan adopted the renowned Objective Resolution in March 1949, combining Western liberal democratic traditions with Islamic principles, in response to pressure from the *Majlis-i-Ahrar* and Maulana Maududi's *Jamat-i-Islami*, the parties opposed to the country's demand. Before Zia, the administration of General Yahya Khan fought to compel future legislators via the LFO (1970) to promise (under the fear of a presidential veto) to draft a constitution in line with Pakistani ideology. Another issue is that the Yahya government needed help to carry out its original strategy. Bhutto established a deadline under the 1973 Constitution

for Islamizing Pakistani legislation and implemented some measures (prohibition, a weekly holiday on Friday, and a ban on gambling and horse racing wagering) in that direction. Religion was again given center stage in national politics during the PNA's anti-Bhutto campaign.

The perspective of Mohammed Hanif regarding Zia's faith in the Holy Verses of the Holy Book is aptly interpreted in the following lines. The country's Islamization was only one of the many masks Assad wore on his face to prolong his control. "Between making a decision and implementing it, General Zia sometimes liked to seek divine opinion. Moreover, changing into uniform before or after morning prayers was not likely to affect the destiny of his one hundred and thirty million subjects" (Hanif, 2008. P. 25).

General Zia instituted zakat and usher by the teachings of the Holy Quran, which applied to all Muslims except the Shiites, who, "buoyed by the pride of Iranian Revolution," refused to pay zakat and opposed the junta's 1979 Islamization efforts because they were based on a limited Sunnite interpretation of Islamic law and theology. In addition, the government appointed a Majlis-i-Shura (consultative council), established a Federal Shariat Court, and established a Sharia Faculty. It issued the Haddood Ordinance, but in response to the popular outcry, the Shariat Court overturned the penalties imposed under it. Even so, The narrative of Zeenat, a blind lady who was sexually assaulted by an unidentified individual and sentenced to life in prison by the dictator for her adultery, provides compelling evidence of the general's authoritative demeanor. According to Zia's logic, women were the house's adornment, and their testimony was only worth half as much as a man's under the law of evidence. Women Action Forum, an organization of educated women from cities, demonstrated against these restrictions, causing global worry. He further suppressed the courts by enacting the provisional constitutional order (1980, 1981) and retiring judges of the Supreme Court who were unwilling to comply, including Justice Durab Patel and F.G. Ibrahim, to prevent any chance of judicial intervention.

Additionally, the masses restricted press freedom by enforcing print quotas, censoring certain government advertisements, and publicly shaming and imprisoning journalists who dared to disagree. Zia worked to depoliticize Pakistan for eleven years, using state resources and military force as support. The fact that his initiatives increased political divisiveness and controversy is another issue. He employed education as a weapon against and a means of governmental control. Curzonian policies discouraged curriculum diversity and focused more on Islamicity and uniformity. "Can we get on with the agenda? We have just toppled a bloody elected government; how the hell are we going to run this country?" (Hanif, 2008, p. 33).

The lines above accurately express Zia's concerns about taking over the government through a coup and running it himself. Despite taking all the necessary steps to manage the country effectively and strictly, Zia was unable to resolve the nagging issue of legitimacy—as opposed to legality—because the Apex Court had established his reign. Because during his eleven years of total power, the fundamental components of legitimacy—freedom of speech, association, assembly, genuinely democratic elections, open competition among the political parties, and judicial independence—were noticeably absent. Zia was just as stung by the legitimacy crisis as Ayub Khan had been. For this reason, in 1984, he organized a contentious presidential referendum. The polls appeared desolate, as was to be expected, and the weary election workers packed and stamped the ballots. The referendum's hard question was whether or not a yes vote for Islamization would convert into a yes vote for Zia. Zia denied that he had requested a vote on Islam, but rather on the services provided by his administration to Islam.

The dictator, who convened the meeting following the overthrow of Bhutto's government, terrified the corps commanders and chiefs of Pakistan's armed forces for their own safety. Only by adhering

to his instructions did they find safety. Furthermore In the words that follow, General Akhter Abul Rehman went a long way and admired General Zia

*I also want to thank our very professional commanders sitting around this table who carried out the coup on the orders of our Chief in such an orderly manner that not a single bullet had to be fired, not a single drop of blood had to be shed (Hanif, 2008, p. 33).*

Whether it was a result of divine intervention or sabotage, his plane crash in August 1988 spared not only the nation from the enemy of democracy but also the lone general from potential retaliation. With Zia's passing, there are now more expectations for Pakistan to revert to representative democracy. Take a glance at the lines below to see how, despite being the most powerful person in the nation, he was terrified of dying: "Those files lie. I am asking you, not General Akhtar. You are my shadow, you should know. You see everyone who comes to meet me; you know every nook and corner in this house. It's your job to protect me. As your Commander-in-Chief, I demand to know: who are you protecting me from? Who is trying to kill me?" (Hanif, 2008. p. 56).

## Conclusion

*A Case of Exploding Mangoes (2008)* explores the legitimization of religio-politico discursive practices via the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The research exposes how General Zia ul Haq's dictatorship used political and religious narratives to justify their rule and authority over Pakistan through a critical lens. The study uncovers the complex methods via which political and religious authority was entrenched and exerted by examining the satire and representation of Zia's Islamization efforts. This investigation not only highlights the use of religious beliefs for political ends but also offers a clearer picture of Pakistan's sociopolitical and historical background in the 1980s. The study reveals the widespread impact of religio-political infrastructure on the formation of state governance as well as the long-lasting influence of such operations on contemporary political discourse.

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