

Florida Atlantic University

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto:

Rebuilding Pakistan, December 1970 – April 1973

An Historiographical Essay Submitted To

Dr. Hanne

Department of History

by

David Glauber

Readings Seminar: Authority in Islam

Boca Raton, FL

4 May 2006

## Zulfikar Ali Bhutto: Rebuilding Pakistan, December 1970 – April 1973

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a civilian politician, took over the helm of leadership in Pakistan following a loss by Pakistan's military government in a war against India in December 1971. India helped East Pakistan, which was on India's eastern border, to gain independence from West Pakistan, India's western neighbor. The loss of half of its nation left the people of West Pakistan (now Pakistan) in a depressed and embittered state. After the loss, the military handed power over to Bhutto, a charismatic individual from upper class origins, who had prior government experience under the military government. Bhutto was chosen to lead Pakistan because he was the top vote-getter in West Pakistan in democratic elections that were held in December 1970 before the secession crisis began. His success at the polls stemmed from his campaign that advocated Islamic Socialism, which promised to redistribute the wealth in the country away from the twenty-two families (Finpols) which held the concentration of the nation's money supply. The Finpols, therefore, were not happy with Bhutto's rise to power, nor were Pakistan's Islamic religious groups, who deemed Bhutto's Islamic Socialism, as anti-Islamic.

With intense opposition from these two groups, in addition to two of West Pakistan's four provinces, which did not vote for Bhutto, it is important to understand how Bhutto was able to consolidate his power and to rebuild the nation's confidence. In this vein, exploring various perceptions of his domestic leadership, including his leadership style, his party leadership, the reason for his mass following, the manner in which he dealt with his opposition, and his control over the military will all be explored.

Bhutto was in power from December 1970 to July 1977 when he was overthrown by the military. However, this study will focus on his early years in power from the end of the Indo-Pakistani War to the signing of a constitution in April 1973. Viewing the scholarly perceptions of his leadership in a chronological manner will better allow the reader to understand how scholars have built upon one another and why Bhutto's legacy continues to be debated

In 1975, Khalid Sayeed argues in "How Radical is the Pakistan People's Party?" that Bhutto was a very astute and capable politician. Sayeed asserts that Bhutto had "an acute awareness of how much power he need[ed] to achieve his objective, and of how to conceal his weaknesses."<sup>1</sup> Using journal articles, speeches, newspaper accounts, and books, he explains that before Bhutto came to power, he had an established reputation in the country as a fierce nationalist. Sayeed believes that this reputation helped him to fend off attacks from the Islamic groups which claimed that his Islamic Socialism pledge was anti-Islamic.<sup>2</sup> His use of language and his defensive rhetoric towards his opponents were two of his key strengths, Sayeed maintains. He claims that Bhutto masterfully portrayed himself as the victim and his followers as the victims of a larger conspiracy against them. In responding to criticism against him that he liked to drink wine, Bhutto responded that "he did not drink, like his opponents, the people's blood."<sup>3</sup> As part of his Islamic Socialism, Sayeed explains that Bhutto reduced the amount of land that feudal landlords could hold so that more people in the country could acquire land. Sayeed does not believe that this was a radical idea because of the massive support it received from the

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<sup>1</sup> Khalid B. Sayeed, "How Radical is the Pakistan People's Party?," *Pacific Affairs* 48, no. 1 (Spring 1975) : 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

urban masses and peasants in the countryside.<sup>4</sup> Overall, Sayeed believes that reforms such as this could not have been achieved by anyone other than Bhutto because he was a figure who was larger than life.

Like Sayeed, Salmaan Taseer in *Bhutto: A Political Biography*, believes that after coming to power, Bhutto did a wonderful job in reaching out to the masses whose confidence was badly shaken by the loss of East Pakistan. Taseer claims that “at this moment of national crisis, Bhutto displayed the true qualities of leadership” by appearing to be confident and in control, despite all of the turmoil around him.<sup>5</sup> However, with the intense opposition Bhutto faced and the fragile nature of the country at this time, Taseer explains that Bhutto chose to be more authoritarian rather than to begin the democratic process. He asserts that Bhutto chose this path because authoritarianism was inherent in his character and because he wanted to shape the country according to his vision.<sup>6</sup> Taseer believes that this authoritarian nature, which drove him to eliminate the military title of commander-in-chief, to arrest dissenting journalists, and to refuse to share power with other political parties that had similar goals to his, were the result of “an intense personal insecurity.”<sup>7</sup>

Taseer criticizes Bhutto for extending this insecurity to his own political party, the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), which he explains Bhutto ruled with an “iron fist.”<sup>8</sup> Despite these character quirks, Taseer commends Bhutto for his impressive political leadership in the years after he came to power. He praises Bhutto’s work ethic, with Bhutto expressing a month after he came to power, “If you Americans think Franklin

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>5</sup> Salmaan Taseer, *Bhutto: A Political Biography* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), 132.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 133, 148.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 152.

Roosevelt had an amazing first hundred days, watch us.”<sup>9</sup> This grand allusion to Roosevelt’s New Deal policies allows the reader to grasp Bhutto’s sense of history and of his great desire to improve Pakistan. Taseer believes, though, that since many of Bhutto’s policies were rushed, there were often problems with the decisions that he made. However, he believes that overall, Bhutto was successful in implementing his goal of Islamic Socialism, which improved the lives of the rural poor.<sup>10</sup> Taseer’s use of sources for his study are impressive, as well, including a personal interview with Bhutto, along with Bhutto’s writings, speeches, letters, books, and newspaper accounts.

In *Politics in Pakistan*, written by Khalid Sayeed five years after he wrote, “How Radical is the Pakistan People’s Party?,” he expresses a much more critical perspective of Bhutto than in his earlier article. Instead of his earlier sentiments of praise for Bhutto’s charismatic talent for directing the masses, he portrays Bhutto as a man who “wanted to control every major class or interest by weakening its power base and by making it subservient to his will and policies.”<sup>11</sup> This perspective complements Taseer’s belief that authoritarianism was inherent in Bhutto’s character. It also reflects a sense of disappointment on Sayeed’s part with Bhutto’s policies in the immediate aftermath of Bhutto’s removal from power and his subsequent execution by the military. Alternatively, he may not have wanted to write a negative piece about Bhutto while he was in power. Sayeed further alters his views with his assertion that Bhutto’s land reform program was not created for the benefit of the masses, but rather to feed his own ego so

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>11</sup> Khalid B. Sayeed, *Politics in Pakistan: The Nature and Direction of Change*, Praeger Special Studies (New York: Praeger, 1980), 91.

that the masses would worship him as their savior.<sup>12</sup> While Sayeed's attitude towards Bhutto changed between 1975 and 1980, his use of sources has not, except for his addition of some official documents.

Sayeed's disappointment with Bhutto includes the fact that Bhutto never truly gave up his own land that exceeded the limits that he had set for property owners. Instead, he claims that Bhutto had care takers accept "ownership" for the land, which he still controlled.<sup>13</sup> Sayeed still recognizes, however, that Bhutto's programs had aroused a new sense of respect and self-worth in the peasants whose lives Bhutto sought to improve.<sup>14</sup> He is critical, though, that despite Bhutto's efforts to help the rural peasants, he never "spelled out clearly how Islam and socialism were to be combined or were to influence each other."<sup>15</sup>

Through the use of newspaper reports, Shahid Javed Burki explains in *Pakistan under Bhutto* that Bhutto's Islamic Socialism was clear. He claims that following the 1970 election in Pakistan, Bhutto's victory was "generally interpreted as a triumph for secularism and socialism."<sup>16</sup> Burki's description, therefore, implies that Bhutto added the term "Islamic" to his platform in order to increase his following. Like Taseer and Sayeed in his 1980 work, Burki also portrays Bhutto as an authoritarian figure. Burki, more specifically than the previous authors, expresses that Bhutto's background, from a "backward part of the province of Sind," in addition to his feudal background, were instrumental in the development of his authoritarian character.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>16</sup> Shahid Javed Burki, *Pakistan under Bhutto, 1971-1977* (London: Macmillan Press, 1980), 92

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 36.

He believes that Bhutto preferred this leadership style in his early years in power because he was an insecure person, which Taseer also touches upon. Burki reasons that this is why Bhutto restructured the political, bureaucratic, and judicial institutions so that he could have more control and power over the country.<sup>18</sup> He explains that Bhutto's desire to consolidate his power was exemplified in his naming of General Tikka Khan as the army chief of staff. Bhutto believed that Tikka Khan could be trusted to keep the military out of the political sphere.<sup>19</sup> Burki maintains that with Bhutto's desire for control and power, notwithstanding, he had a desire to achieve legitimacy for his rule. As such, his actions were geared towards preparing the country for a constitutional government, rather than the military government he inherited.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, he disagrees with Taseer's view that Bhutto refused to share or give up some of his power. Burki contends that Bhutto conceded to many of the demands that his opposition wanted to include in the new constitution, which was signed in April 1973, because he had this desire for legitimacy. He asserts, though, that Bhutto wanted this legitimacy in order to give him further power and authority to reshape Pakistan according to his vision.<sup>21</sup>

Surendra Nath Kaushik, in *Pakistan under Bhutto's Leadership*, portrays Bhutto as a man of great contradiction. She asserts that Bhutto worked to establish a national consensus, yet he held his allegiance to his constituency in the provinces of Punjab and in his native Sind.<sup>22</sup> Kaushik further explains that Bhutto called for national unity, while he oppressed his opposition.<sup>23</sup> Despite Bhutto's regional support for the provinces of

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 81, 89-90.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 97-98.

<sup>22</sup> Surendra Nath Kaushik, *Pakistan under Bhutto's Leadership* (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1985), 319.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 320.

Punjab and Sind over the Northwest Frontier province and Baluchistan, she maintains that Bhutto had no desire to delegate more power to the provinces since it would take away from his power.<sup>24</sup> Kaushik attests that Bhutto “felt that excessive emphasis on regional autonomy would ultimately be prejudicial to Pakistan’s national interest.”<sup>25</sup> Like Burki, Kaushik also believes that Bhutto had a desire to attain legitimacy.<sup>26</sup> However, rather than focusing on his attainment of legitimacy through the constitutional process, Kaushik focuses on his charismatic appeal to the masses as his way of achieving legitimacy.<sup>27</sup> She believes that Bhutto’s socio-economic goals were intended to achieve stability in the country.<sup>28</sup> This is clearly the opposite viewpoint from that taken by Sayeed in *Politics in Pakistan*, where he claims that Bhutto was only interested in himself.<sup>29</sup> Kaushik supports her claims by using Bhutto’s writings and speeches, debates of the Pakistan National Assembly, official documents, journals, newspapers, and a number of books.

In “Public Policy and Reform in Pakistan,” Saeed Shafqat focuses on Bhutto’s socio-economic reform. He argues that Bhutto strove for gradual, not immediate change with his socio-economic policies.<sup>30</sup> As examples of this, he explains that Bhutto’s nationalization of industries was done over a two year period, while his land reform program was intended to be carried out in three stages.<sup>31</sup> He asserts that Bhutto needed ten to fifteen years of stability in order to carry out all of the socio-economic reforms he

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 323.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 326.

<sup>29</sup> Khalid B. Sayeed, *Politics in Pakistan*, 91.

<sup>30</sup> Saeed Shafqat, “Public Policy and Reform in Pakistan, 1971-77: An Analysis of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s Socio-Economic Policies,” *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 11, no. iii (1988) : 37.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 41, 47.



planned.<sup>32</sup> He did not have this time, however, since he was overthrown by the military before the end of the 1970s. Shafqat believes that Bhutto was committed to improving the lives of the rural masses, as previous authors have said, but he also reached out to the urban masses, which benefited most from his education policies. Policies such as this, he maintains, helped Bhutto to increase the strength of the national government and consequently, his power.<sup>33</sup> Shafqat uses journal articles, books, speeches, Bhutto's writings, and government documents to support her arguments, including her assertion that Bhutto had few options but to resort to authoritarianism in order to achieve his desired socio-economic reforms since they stood to help rebuild the nation's confidence.<sup>34</sup> Since he did not have enough time in power, Bhutto was unable to gradually integrate the interests of the new groups and classes that his reforms created into the national polity.<sup>35</sup> Shafqat is happy, nonetheless, that Bhutto achieved a measure of "social justice" for the masses.<sup>36</sup>

Like Shafqat, Taseer, and Sayeed in "How Radical is the Pakistan People's Party?," Anwar Syed portrays Bhutto as a hard working man who strove to rebuild the nation's confidence after it lost half of its country in a war with India.<sup>37</sup> Syed's *The Discourse and Politics of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto* also presents Bhutto as an astute and capable politician, just as these previous works described him. Syed claims that Bhutto was realistic with how far he pursued his goals. For instance, he explains that the limit of 150 acres of irrigated land he allowed referred to an individual and so, an entire family

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Anwar H. Syed, *The Discourse and Politics of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 118.

could own much more.<sup>38</sup> He also believes that Bhutto had no intention of eliminating the feudal landlords; his intentions were geared more towards improving the rights and dignity of the peasant class they ruled over.<sup>39</sup>

Despite these astute realizations, Syed points out that Bhutto did have faults, as well. He explains, as Taseer did, that since many of the decisions Bhutto and his party made were rushed, many of them were poorly conceived and had to be altered or reversed. Syed believes that these rushed decisions had some effect in discrediting his regime.<sup>40</sup> He further criticizes Bhutto for retaining a dictatorship after he came to power, while praising his vision of yielding his power to a constitutional government.<sup>41</sup> Syed echoes Kaushik's sentiments that Bhutto wanted a strong national government.<sup>42</sup> In order to increase the power of his national government, he felt that he had to get unanimous support from his opposition for a constitution. In order to achieve this, Syed builds on Burki's view, explaining that Bhutto conceded to many of his opposition's constitutional demands, including the establishment of Islam as the official religion of Pakistan. He argues that Bhutto "would seem to have concluded that concessions to the Islamic parties would cost him less in terms of his ruling authority than concessions to the provincial autonomists might."<sup>43</sup> Just like Taseer, Syed's work is based upon interviews with Bhutto, interviews with his supporters and opponents, in addition to books and journal articles.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 126-27, 133.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 172-73.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 174, 179.

Stanley Wolpert's *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan* takes it a step further than Syed in asserting that not only did Bhutto not want to break the feudal class but he tried to govern Pakistan and his personal affairs "like the feudal lord he still was, with alternate threats and promises, with carrots and sticks, with bribes and hunting rifles, curses and tears, and solemn oaths to God."<sup>44</sup> Wolpert reasserts Sayeed's claim from his 1975 article, stating that by portraying himself as the victim of a conspiracy, Bhutto was able to mask his own insecurities.<sup>45</sup> Wolpert claims that Bhutto's authoritarian nature had a damaging effect on his good intentions for the country.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, he agrees with Kaushik that Bhutto was a man of great contradiction.<sup>47</sup> Aside from his feudal background, Wolpert believes that part of his dictatorial traits came from his readings "on how Hitler and Mussolini had dealt with their rebellious generals, as well as how Napoleon had accomplished all that he did."<sup>48</sup>

This analysis, in addition to Bhutto's claim that he wanted his policies to resemble the rapid legislation that Franklin Roosevelt helped to pass in his first hundred days in office in the U.S., leaves the reader with the understanding that Bhutto had a thirst for power that he could not wait to quench. Wolpert's assertions are based upon interviews with more than one hundred of Bhutto's colleagues and his family members. He was granted access by Bhutto's family to his personal papers and documents, in addition to his use of other government documents, speeches, books, and journal articles to round out his sources.

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<sup>44</sup> Stanley Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan: His Life and Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 178.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

Despite Wolpert's portrayal of Bhutto as power hungry, he praises Bhutto's astute ability to know when it was the right time to eliminate the martial law that he began his leadership under. This was done in April 1972 when an interim constitution was put in place of martial law.<sup>49</sup> This interim constitution was in effect until the signing of a permanent constitution in April 1973. Wolpert argues, though, that not even the charismatic Bhutto, which most of the previous authors have portrayed him as, was capable of solving Pakistan's disunity and social problems as fast as he wanted to since the country was falling apart at the seams.<sup>50</sup>

Mir Zohair Hussain, in "Islam and Pakistan under Bhutto and Zia-ul-Haq" focuses on the role that Islam played in the leadership roles of Bhutto and his military successor, Zia-ul-Haq. As for Bhutto, Hussain argues that he used "Islamic rhetoric and symbolism" because he wanted "to inspire the masses with the ideal of a *jihad* (holy war), to be waged by the PPP regime against the evils of capitalism and feudalism in particular, and against exploitation and injustice in general."<sup>51</sup> This view helps to explain why Bhutto's platform was called "Islamic" Socialism, despite the fact that he was a secular individual. Using Bhutto's writings, speeches, official documents, journal articles, and newspapers to support his claims, Hussain argues that Bhutto exploited Islam in this manner because he was power hungry. Hussain seems especially pleased with his analysis that Bhutto's manipulation of Islam resulted in a religious revival that was partially responsible for his being overthrown by the military.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>51</sup> Mir Zohair Hussain, "Islam in Pakistan under Bhutto and Zia-ul-Haq," in *Islam, Muslims, and the Modern State: Case-Studies of Muslims in Thirteen Countries*, ed. Hussin Mutalib and Taj ul-Islam Hashmi (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 47, 51.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 57.

In “Z.A. Bhutto’s Leadership: A Psycho-Social View,” S. Zulfiqar Gilani takes a psychoanalytical approach in order to determine how Bhutto’s authoritarian nature developed and how his personality attracted the masses in Pakistan.<sup>53</sup> He uses books on Bhutto and on Pakistan, in addition to numerous psychological studies on narcissism, and a memoir by Bhutto and a memoir by one of his daughters, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in order to support his claims. Gilani argues in his study that Bhutto’s authoritarianism manifested from the psycho-social environment in which he grew up in. Gilani believes that this background resulted in “narcissistic injury” to his psyche, which made him a violent individual.<sup>54</sup> However, this is a debatable argument because there are a countless number of people who come from a problematic background, who do not take out their aggression against society.

Nevertheless, Gilani attests that since Bhutto’s father was an influential political figure, Bhutto grew up with dreams of leading the country one day.<sup>55</sup> He maintains, though, that the background of his father alone could not have made him the leader of Pakistan. Gilani insists that it was Bhutto’s personality, as Sayyed, Kaushik, and Wolpert attested to, that helped him to get into power. However, Gilani differs from these previous authors by asserting that “charisma is not a quality which a leader has; rather it is a product of the dialectic between the personality of the leader and the feelings and needs of the people at a particular time and place.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, he believes that Bhutto was in the right place, at the right time, in order to gain the influence with the masses that he achieved. His personality helped him to reach out to the masses, who

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<sup>53</sup> S. Zulfiqar Gilani., “Z.A. Bhutto’s Leadership: A Psycho-social View.” *Contemporary South Asia* 3, no. 3 (1994) : 217.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

wanted a leader, like Bhutto. While in power, Gilani asserts that Bhutto's narcissistic injury made him very insecure. He explains that this resulted in Bhutto surrounding himself with yes-men, who were not necessarily capable individuals.<sup>57</sup> He does not condemn Bhutto's quest for power; rather, he praises the fact that Bhutto was able to use his skills to his advantage.<sup>58</sup>

The works described in this historiographical essay, ranging from 1975 to 1994, reflect a continuing desire by scholars to better understand Bhutto, both as an individual and as the leader of Pakistan. These works portray the image of an intriguing, power hungry, charismatic, and insecure despot who strove to consolidate power for himself, yet was truly interested in the welfare of the masses. There in lies the irony that a dictator could be humanitarian, also. As a whole, scholars believe that Bhutto was an astute and capable politician, despite his insecurities. They credit him with improving the lives of the masses, even though many of his programs were impetuously created and consequently, were flawed. Nevertheless, Bhutto knew how to direct the masses in order to achieve the results that he wanted. His leadership helped to not only give the masses confidence after they lost half of their country in a war with India but also served to give many new classes and groups that his programs created a new sense of hope and dignity for their future.

He is criticized for his lack of trust in his political party, the Pakistan People's Party. Furthermore, he is criticized for the oppression of his opposition. However, he is praised for knowing when to yield his power to a constitutional government and for conceding to many of his opposition's demands in order to get widespread support for the

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 235.

new constitution. This allowed a form of democracy to develop, although, he still retained much of the power in the country. Without a doubt, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a man and a leader who had a profound impact on his country and on the scholarly community that continues to study his actions. Perceptions of his leadership have been mixed throughout the nineteen year range of this study. He will long be remembered for the social justice he created; however, his authoritarian leadership style will continue to cloud his legacy.

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