

## 1970 Elections in Pakistan: A Case-study of NWFP and Balochistan

Muhammad Rizwan

Department of Pakistan Studies, Hazara University Mansehra,  
PAKISTAN.

[drmuhammadrizwan\\_hu@yahoo.com](mailto:drmuhammadrizwan_hu@yahoo.com)

### ABSTRACT

*The first ever general elections in the political history of Pakistan reflected some bitter realities. Pakistan Muslim League, the founder party, vanished completely. From East Pakistan, Awami League of Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman came out as the only representative of the Bengali population and from West Pakistan; Zulfikar Ali Bhutto with his Pakistan People's Party got majority votes. However, the predominantly tribal structure of North-West Frontier Province and Balochistan has produced a pattern of voting behaviour dominated by the primary loyalties. Consequently, the share of the rightist parties during the elections of 1970 in these two provinces was equally poor because the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (Hazarvi), which won substantial number of seats, was closer to the National Awami Party (Wali), a champion of the Pashtoon identity, than the rightist parties.*

**Keywords:** Balochistan, NWFP, Tribal loyalty, Regionalism, Provincial autonomy, NAP, JUI

### INTRODUCTION

The year 1970 proved an eventful and exciting for Pakistan because in more than a decade a normal political process was restored when Yahya Khan took a step towards the first democratically elected civilian government. In point of fact, the political situation of Pakistan in March 1969 was vastly different from its condition in October 1958. On the earlier occasion, Martial Law was generally met with relief by the people who had grown weary of political instability and, therefore, welcomed authoritative decision making by the military. Ten years later, however, the dictatorial rule under a presidential form of constitution stood rejected. Consequently, the military regime, unable to quell the mass upheaval in both parts of the country, was forced to abolish the One Unit system in West Pakistan and to promise a general election on the basis of one-man-one-vote. In the light of his meetings with different political leaders, Yahya Khan declared his intention as, "the peaceful transfer of power to the nation".<sup>1</sup> However, after the abrogation of the Constitution of 1962, Yahya issued the Legal Framework Order (LFO) on 30 March 1970, which illustrated a strong view about the future constitutional arraignment. Although the Order laid down that the preamble of the future Constitution, however, it was criticized by many of the political parties. They believed that the LFO has produced a 'steel frame' to limit the National Assembly's independence of legislation and the same time legalize his authoritarian rule for future or for coming civilian set up.<sup>2</sup>

In general, the LFO was taken as a positive contribution of the Yahya regime, which would lay down the basic principles for the future constitution of Pakistan; that the One Unit System would end by 1<sup>st</sup> July in West Pakistan; the National Assembly would consist of 313 members, of which thirteen seats would be reserved for women; and provincial elections would be held not later than 22 October, 1970.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the LFO resolved another sensitive issue—that of representation on population basis. In the words of Sharifal Mujahid, "parity

between East and West Pakistan in the National Assembly, a basic principle in the 1956 and 1962 Constitutions, was discarded and the eastern wing was conceded 56% (169 out of 313) seats.”<sup>4</sup> Yahya Khan, on the other hand, was quite firm that if any individual or any group or any party which propagate against the basic principles of Islam and the ideology of Pakistan would incur “the wrath of the people and their armed forces”.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, political parties contesting the forthcoming elections were required to contest the elections within the limits of LFO. It was made clear that any political party that did not accept its conditions had to stay out of the forthcoming elections.<sup>6</sup>

Although some political leaders objected the LFO, however, they welcomed the decision of the military government to hold the general elections. They agree to work with the Order so that the elections were not delayed and the ruling generals did not have the reasons to hang on powers for an indefinite period.<sup>7</sup> Finally, in December 1970, elections were held simultaneously for both the national and five provincial assemblies on the basis of ‘one man one vote’. Although there were no allegations of rigging, however, the election results were not to the political expectations. No doubt, the Awami League was expected to win in East Pakistan but not by such a large margin because the experts gave the League at best 60 per cent of the seats.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the People’s Party’s victory was seen even more astonishing; in West Pakistan the Con ML and the Jamaat-i-Islami had been expected to win in the Punjab and Sindh but the PPP’s victory marked a successful assertion of the new group in West Pakistan politics. However, when the election results of December 1970, gave an electoral majority to the Awami League representing the people of East Pakistan, it was rejected by the West Pakistani elite and the outcome was civil war and finally the break-up of Pakistan. Although the PPP succeeded in getting full-fledge support of the Punjab and Sindh, however, in the NWFP and Balochistan, NAP (Wali Group) represented the General Will of the people.

### North-West Frontier Province

In the Frontier Province the voters represented a confused division of votes between Qaiyum Khan’s Muslim League, Wali Khan’s National Awami Party and the religious elements represented by Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam.<sup>9</sup> All these three parties had performed better than the other parties. However, the NAP entered the elections, as the most prominent political party of the NWFP. The NAP would have been strong, at least in West Pakistan, had not the mercurial Bhashani from East Pakistan cut it into two factions; the so called Pro-Peking, led by himself, and the Pro-Moscow, led by Abdul Wali Khan.<sup>10</sup> Due to Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s self imposed exile in Kabul, the leadership had passed on from father to his son Abdul Wali Khan, who was trying to give his party more liberal, patriot and a national standing.<sup>11</sup> The so called ‘principled’ and ‘rigid’ policies of the traditional Pashtoon leader had come to be transformed into more flexible, pragmatic and all Pakistan nation concerns. This shift in leadership and accompanying attitude suggested some positive role for the NAP in the national politics.

Before the polling, hostilities between PML (Qaiyum) and the NAP (Wali) have been revived. The confused division of voters among the major political parties naturally benefited another element, the JUI. Wali Khan and his NAP could secure three seats in the elections, however, the southern part of the province gave six seats to JUI and the remaining two seats were bagged by the PPP and the Jamaat-i-Islami.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the NAP got 18.8 per cent votes for the National Assembly and 19.4 per cent for the NWFP assembly, but in the 1946 Provincial Assembly elections, the Khudai Khidmatgars had got 51.70 per cent of total votes in the province. The Tribal Areas of NWFP provided a further seven seats which, as to be expected, went to the so-called independent *maliks*. Although the NAP did fairly well in the

NWFP and Balochistan, however, in the Punjab, Sindh or East Pakistan, where it had hoped to capture a few seats, was not successful.<sup>13</sup>

Contrary to the expectations, in the NWFP, JUI got the highest number of seats in the National Assembly and thus, out-pollled the NAP through its religious appeal to the masses. The JUI announced its manifesto on 20 January, 1970; promising the country with an Islamic constitution in accordance with the 22 points which they had submitted in the first Constituent Assembly in 1954. In May 1970, the JUI entered into an alliance of nineteen religious parties and minor organizations, Mufti Mahmud was elected as the president, while Bashir Ahmed Bakhtiar and Maulana Kausar Niazi as its secretaries.<sup>14</sup> Despite this front, the JUI's election campaign was structured by its own party organization. Mufti Mahmud, at this occasion, appealed to his voters to endorse the party programme and to accept Islam as their ideology<sup>15</sup>

Overall, 90 candidates of JUI were contesting for the National Assembly in West Pakistan and 15 in East Pakistan. Out of which 7 were returned from West Pakistan which included Mufti Mahmud, Maulana Ghulam Ghaus Hazarvi, Maulana Abdul Hakim, Maulana Abdul Haq, Maulana Niamatuallah, Maulana Abdul Hakim, Maulana Sadrul Shahid (NWFP) and Maulana Abdul Haq (Balochistan) and none from East Pakistan.<sup>16</sup> For the provincial assemblies, it nominated 72 candidates for the Punjab, 23 for Sindh, 35 for the NWFP, 14 from Balochistan, and 23 for East Pakistan. JUI won 2 seats in the Punjab, 4 in the NWFP and 3 in Balochistan. However, a major victory of the JUI was in the National Assembly's Dera Ismail Khan Constituency, where Mufti Mahmud defeated the PPP Chairman Z.A. Bhutto.<sup>17</sup>

The non-Pushtoon areas of Hazara, of course, went with Qaiyum Khan and his faction of the Muslim League. Out of total eighteen seats from NWFP's settled area, he won seven, showing that despite the funds and support from the Army junta his political powers had declined considerably even within his home province. Under Ayub Khan, the Con ML had accumulated a vast fortune in its party coffers. However, in June 1970, by issuing a Martial Law Order, Yahya Khan seized the party funds. The order signed by Yahya Khan simply stated, "No person shall henceforth operate the accounts of the said funds except in accordance with orders issued by me."<sup>18</sup> These funds were then said to be used to finance favoured political parties. Not surprisingly, Qaiyum Khan was able to field not less than 132 candidates for the elections. All of this required money. Interestingly, strong suspicions also arose as to the source of the Bhutto's Peoples Party funding. In the beginning of 1970, the president of the Con. ML accused Bhutto of receiving money from its confiscated party funds in the hands of the government.<sup>19</sup> It seemed that the Military junta had decided to support Qaiyum Khan in the NWFP and Bhutto in the Punjab and Sindh. Throughout his period, Bhutto and his 'close associate' Qaiyum Khan, remained friendly with the army establishment.

## **Balochistan**

The Elections of 1970 making it for the first time that Balochistan had ever participated in the direct elections for the national and provincial legislatures. However, the traditional leadership in the former BSU had been rejected. In point of fact, Balochistan had lacked the presence of a commanding nationalist leader in the mould of NWFP's Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Similarly, people with nationalist credentials i.e. Abdus Samad Khan Achakzai were unable to exert their influence beyond the boundaries of a localized area. Moreover, National Awami Party, the majority party, started pulling in different directions in Balochistan must have weakened it.

The NAP in Balochistan received a severe blow when an old friend of Abdul Wali Khan, Abdus Samad Khan Achakzai, withdrew from the party and formed Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP).<sup>20</sup> The main point of difference between him and Wali Khan was that Achakzai wanted a re-demarcation of the province in the west on a cultural and linguistic basis. He wanted a Pashto-speaking province from Chaman to Quetta to Chitral in the north, leaving the Baloch of Balochistan, and of the adjacent areas to find themselves a new province.<sup>21</sup>

In Balochistan, the NAP campaign was in the hands of Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, Khair Bakhsh Marri and Ataullah Mengal, each operating at the local level, however, the man who came up from behind in the campaign was Sardar Akbar Bugti. He was supporting three candidates: Dr. Abdul Hayee Baloch, who had a NAP ticket for the National Assembly; his own brother Ahmad Nawaz Khan Bugti, who was an independent candidate for Balochistan Assembly, and his son-in-law, Mir Chakar Dombki, an independent candidate for the Provincial Assembly. Bugti was legally forbidden under Yahya's LFO to join a political party for a five year period as he had been in prison for over two years.<sup>22</sup> Unable to officially join the NAP, he attended All Party's Central Committee meetings and played a pivotal role in the success of NAP in Balochistan.

However, Bugti was working for the NAP so diligently that the general impression was that he had put the NAP under an obligation, which, of course, never came.<sup>23</sup> After a successful campaign by the NAP, the elections had brought forth results that were not unexpected. Population-wise, the NAP had a strong base in two of the smaller provinces of West Pakistan—Balochistan and the NWFP. The party contested and won the elections in these two provinces mainly on the question of provincialism.<sup>24</sup> Balochistan had only four National Assembly seats out of which NAP got 3 seats. The Khan of Kalat, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan, had put up two of his sons for elections, however, his position had been weakened considerably by his earlier political somersaults.<sup>25</sup> Thus, having diminished position, it was not surprising that his sons were both routed in the elections by their NAP rivals. Agha Mohiuddin was beaten soundly by Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo, and the President of the Baloch Student's Organization, Abdul Hayee Baluch defeated Agha Yahya Jan. The third NAP seat was won by Khair Buksh Marri while the fourth election representative was Maulana Abdul Haq, a JUI candidate.

### **The Formation of the Coalition Ministry in the NWFP and Balochistan**

NAP and JUI in the NWFP Assembly had 19 seats out of 42 and needed only three members for the formation of the provincial government. However, both parties had conflicting ideologies; the NAP had won the elections on the basis of maximum provincial autonomy and JUI, on the other hand, was a conservative Islamic party propagating strong religious beliefs.<sup>26</sup> The NAP could enter into an alliance with Abdul Qaiyum Khan of Muslim League. The NWFP provincial elections had led NAP to win 13 seats against Qaiyum Khan's Muslim League ten seats but Qaiyum Khan's pro-establishment character withheld NAP to join Muslim League. He was notorious for his views regarding Pashtoon nationalism. Therefore, the only choice left with NAP in the NWFP politics was JUI.

Hence, NAP and JUI entered into an agreement to form a future coalition government. However, making this alliance was not a new phenomenon. During the Khilafat Movement, in the course of freedom struggle, both Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the leadership of JUI cooperated with the Congress and supported each other as well.<sup>27</sup> The formation of NAP against the imposition of One Unit and its subsequent leadership assumed by Wali Khan again brought JUI and the regional nationalists of the NWFP and Balochistan closer.



Regarding the situation in the Balochistan, as pointed out earlier, PPP did not score a single seat out of 20 seats in the Balochistan Assembly; on the other hand NAP and JUI were in commanding position in the province. The NAP and JUI insisted on the appointment of their nominees as governors in these two provinces on the same basis as Bhutto had appointed his own party men as governors in the Punjab and Sindh.<sup>28</sup> However, as Satish Kumar points out, “Bhutto did not allow his trust in the NAP to be taken to its logical conclusion; in Balochistan a governor in whom the NAP had no trust”.<sup>29</sup> The appointment of Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, who had been returned on an independent ticket, as Governor of Balochistan on 25 December 1971, set a series of disturbances in the province.

In such circumstances, the NAP and the JUI demanded that the appointment of the governors in the NWFP and Balochistan should be made after consulting them but Bhutto did not accede to such a request.<sup>30</sup> The incident also snowballed into a variable wall of suspicion between the NAP and President Bhutto. The first consequence was the decision of NAP not to allow its two members to join the Central cabinet. Both NAP and JUI took the position, that the PPP had no seat in the Balochistan Provincial Assembly, and had, therefore, no right to participate in the government there.

In addition to, they launched a campaign for an end to the Martial Law and lifting of the Emergency. Wali Khan and his colleagues, asserted that the cooperation would be available to the Centre, only if Martial Law was lifted immediately, undiluted democracy restored in the country, provincial autonomy granted and land reforms introduced.<sup>31</sup> The working committee of the Balochistan NAP went to the extent of passing a resolution, calling on its MNAs and MPAs, not to take part in the meetings of the committees or institutions set up by the local administration.

It appeared that in any future constitutional scheme Bhutto could not easily neglect the wishes of these two provinces where, apart from its slight representation in the legislatures, the hold of the PPP even otherwise was practically non-existent. Obviously, Bhutto could not also continue to act indefinitely on the strength of the Martial Law which would have meant increasing reliance on the army. He must have felt the need to place his authority on a constitutional and a more durable basis. Hence, the entrance of PPP, NAP and JUI into an alliance, despite having conflicting ideologies was not a surprising event.

Bhutto, who was facing gigantic problems of rebuilding Pakistan after assuming authority, knew that the NAP was the only party which followed the secular approach and its support could be beneficial for the PPP in the National Assembly as well as in the provincial assemblies of the NWFP and Balochistan. Consequently, in order to meet the challenges, he asked the majority party of the NWFP and Balochistan to cooperate with him in the creation of democratic system.<sup>32</sup> He lifted the ban on the NAP which had a majority in the NWFP and Balochistan Provincial Assemblies. Bhutto's step was to normalize the political situation and to please the Russians and Afghans; the supporters of the NAP. However, circumstance clearly indicated that the PPP had no option except to enter into an agreement with NAP and JUI in both the provincial legislatures, of NWFP and Balochistan.

By the time, the National Assembly met on 14 April, the NAP and JUI refused to support the continuation of Marital Law. Their misgivings had been caused by Bhutto's use of Martial Law in the large scale dismissal of hundreds of civil servants.<sup>33</sup> Bhutto on April 14, 1972 announced that if the National Assembly adopted the Interim Constitution, he would lift the Marital Law on 17 April instead of 14 August as announced earlier. On April 14, 1972, Bhutto gained the vote of confidence. On the same day, the Interim Constitution was adopted i.e. 17<sup>th</sup> April 1972, the National Assembly also appointed a committee to prepare a draft of

the permanent Constitution of Pakistan. The Interim Constitution established a viceregal system that had operated in pre-independent India under the Government of India Act, 1935. Bhutto enjoyed the powers of the British viceroys. However, the lifting of Martial Law removed the last hurdle to a PPP-ANP-JUI understanding. After signing the agreement, the JUI *Shura* elected Mufti Mahmud as their parliamentary party leader.<sup>34</sup> Later, a joint NAP-JUI meeting nominated Mufti Mahmud as the NWFP Chief Minister and Sardar Ata Ullah Khan Mengal as the Chief Minister of Balochistan. Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo and Arbab Sikandar Khan Khalil were appointed Governors of Balochistan and NWFP. Thus, for the first time in the political history of Pakistan an elected government was established in the NWFP and Balochistan.

## CONCLUSION

In the elections of 1970, Pakistan People's Party and Awami League emerged as the "winners." They were mainly benefited from the inter-party conflicts of the rightists and leftists. Consequently, these two parties gradually overshadowed all the other parties in terms of leadership, organization, and projection of party programme. However, in NWFP and Balochistan, where tribal and ethnic loyalties dominated, National Awami Party and JUI got enough representation to formulate their governments. In the NWFP, the PPP had been able to secure only 3 seats out of 40 seats of the Provincial Assembly and in the case of one of those seats (won by Hayat Mohammad Khan Sherpao) the success of the Peoples Party was made possible by the support lent by the NAP in pursuance of its larger strategy of defeating the rival candidate, Abdul Qaiyum Khan, the leader of the Qaiyum League, who was the traditional rival of the NAP. In the case of Balochistan, the PPP had not been able to win even a single seat out of 20. In both these provinces, the National Awami Party and the JUI together commanded an absolute majority.

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- [25] Talking about the situation, Mazari says, “Not only had the Khan previously joined Ayub Khan and publicly acclaimed the locally detested ‘One Unit’ scheme, he had deserted Ayub Khan after his fall and had openly lionized his successor Yahya Khan the moment Martial Law had been imposed”. See, Mazari, *A Journey to Disillusionment*, p. 175.
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- [27] Majority of the Ulema of JUH were in favour of unconditional support and co-operation with the Congress so far as the cause of freedom was concerned. With these aims and objectives, the Jamiat in collaboration with the Khilafat Committee, participated in the non-co-operation movement under the leadership of Gandhi. See, Faruqi, *The Deoband School*, pp. 71-72.
- [28] Bhutto appointed his own party men as the governors in the Punjab and Sindh, Ghulam Mustafa Khar taking over the Punjab on 23 December 1971, and Mumtaz Bhutto took over in Sindh on the 24<sup>th</sup>. See, *Jang*, 24 and 25 December, 1971.
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