STRUCTURAL EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN PAKISTAN: A STUDY OF FIRST THIRTY YEARS (1947-1977)

Dr. Mazher Hussain  
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

Mian Muhammad Ahmad  
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

Muhammad Anwar Farooq  
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Political system of Pakistan, from the very beginning, dangles between authoritarianism, whether military or civilian, and an urge for the legitimacy of democratic norms. As an addition to the bitterness of this fact, Pakistan, since its inception, lacks representative government. The concept and functioning of election is closely related to the party system and its evolution in the democratic process. In Pakistan, the party system has gone through a long historical and evolutionary process. In this article an effort has been made to discuss and explain the political parties evolved and what changes have been experienced in their structures in the first thirty years (1947-1977).

KEYWORDS

Crises, Electoral System, Political Parties, General Elections, Legitimacy

The idea of a strong autonomy, after several failed attempts, through the Constitution of 1956, was promulgated which was not out of flaws. It lacked the requisite democratic norms which gave more arbitrary powers to the President on the lines of the Viceregal precedent present in 1935 Constitution (Khurshid, 1997, p.27). After two years, it was abrogated without testing its legitimacy and gave way to a freakish and authoritarian 1962 Constitution, with no legitimacy. Both these constitutions failed to ensure democratic process and norms (Khurshid, 1997, pp.27-28) and later General Elections 1970 were held under the shadow of military authoritarianism. Analysing the Pakistani politics very closely, Norman D. Palmer (1975) has pointed out six major factors that hindered in developing a good democratic system in Pakistan in 1970s and they are, with certain exceptions, even applicable today. These are as follows:
1. The Identity Crisis,
2. The Crisis of Legitimacy,
3. The Crisis of Integration,
4. The Penetration Crisis,
5. The Crisis of Participation, and
6. The Distribution Crisis (Palmer, 1975, p.46)

Palmer is of the view that Pakistan’s identity crisis was inherent with major religious ethnic, linguistic, regional, and tribal groups whose loyalties were often more parochial and regional than national and this crisis became severer after the secession of East Pakistan in 1971. Furthermore, except for founding fathers, no other political leaders of Pakistan and no other governments had could establish and maintain their legitimacy for more than short periods of time. Also, even within the more limited more logical and more cohesive borders of the post-secession period, Pakistan could not be able to resolve the problem arising from a variety of ethnic, regional and other divisions (Palmer, 1975, p.47). While discussing the penetration crisis, he upholds that “In Pakistan, a major traditional society, the gap between the rulers and the ruled is still alarmingly wide and the effect of ruling groups to penetrate the society have varied greatly in extent and in results. Muhammad Ali Jinnah was an elitist par excellence, but his hold on the people of Pakistan was such that he did not have to be concerned about legitimacy or popular support. Ayub Khan was in the same position, for different reasons and under different circumstances, in the early years of his rule…. Bhutto, an aristocrat, was the first top political leader of Pakistan who resorted to the politics of populism as a mean of entrenching himself and his regime and of moving the country forward in a more ‘progressive’ direction….. Bhutto, in other words, was able to penetrate the political and social system more pervasively than perhaps any other outstanding political leader in the brief history of independent Pakistan” (Palmer, 1975, p.48). Like penetration crisis, the participation crisis shares the same footing. Participation may assume many forms, some of which are more symbolic than effective and may in fact be mere facades for limited participation and authoritarian manipulation, participation and control but no genuinely democratic system, whatever its form, can exist without widespread and meaningful participation” (Palmer, 1975, pp.48-49).

Two major agencies or institutions ensure this kind of participation. political parties and elections. But, as far as, Pakistan’s experience is concerned, the political parties have not fared well here and nothing, even close to a real party system has emerged. On the other hand, the experience with elections has been even more limited and disappointing (Norman D. Palmer, 1975, pp.178-190). But one of these traumatic factors the most ignorable one is the distribution crisis. Although many political parties have designed slogans with an aim to establish egalitarianism and distribution justice in the country, but very little has been done to distribute goods, services and values more equitably throughout the society (Palmer, 1975, p.50).

All these dilemmas mentioned above led to a weak political party system ineffective elections process with limited participation of the electorate. This fact can easily be proved if we make a short retrieval through the pages of brief history of Pakistan. A study will explicate that the structural changes in the party system and electoral process have been evolved accordingly. This study can be done through the following phases:

1. Transition from colonialism to political autonomy (1947-54)
2. Era of multiparty system and politics of coalition civilian–military bureaucraticism (1954-58)
3. First Martial Law - transformation of the bureaucratic state into a military regime issuance of Basic Democracies (1958-69)
4. Era of federal crisis leading to the secession of East Pakistan (1969-71)
5. Era of Bhutto’s populism, (1971-77)

The outcome of the early heated constitutional debate was the Objectives Resolution (1949) in which the fundamental principles to run the state were chalked out. However, before drafting the first regular constitution for the country, many crucial constitutional issues were to be settled to reach a general national consensus (G.W. Choudhry, 1957, pp.68-69). The burning issues were the nature of the state – theologian or secular, question of provincial autonomy vis-a-vis federal authority, question of representation based on population and the equality of federating units, the structure of the federal legislature whether unicameral or bicameral, the form of government i.e. parliamentary or presidential, nature of the electorate-joint or separate and the question of language – both national and regional etc. (Symonds, 1987, p.101). These, as well as many other issues, obstructed the process of constitution making, questioning the legitimacy of national integration and cohesion. However, many solutions were tried including the creation of ‘One Unit’ (G.W. Choudhry, 1957, pp.69-70) to establish parity between both the wings, but the gulf between the centre and the provinces continued to be widened which equitably culminated into the dismemberment of Eastern wing from the West Pakistan (G.W. Choudhry, 1957, p.70).

Early promulgation of constitution would ensure the early start of electoral process, continuity in democracy and strengthening democratic institutions (Palmer, 1975, p.8). It would also exercise the enhanced role of electorate, effective participation of masses and respect of the public opinion. However, the delay in constitution-making process gave way to regionalism and provincialism between 1954-1958. Especially in Punjab and East Pakistan, two populous provinces with ever increasing antagonism where “the political configuration had radically changed” (Palmer, 1975, p.9). The 1954 Provincial Assembly Elections in East Pakistan further provoked centre – province confrontation, giving way to the emergence of a new United Front Party in East Pakistan bringing into political prominence the representation of the regionalist elites instead of the former centralist leadership of the Muslim League which had been completely uprooted from the provincial politics in East Pakistan (Palmer, 1975, pp.9-10). In West Pakistan, a new political party the Republican Party was created with the backing of the bureaucrat- politicians (Herbert Feldman, 1955, p.41). These spectacular developments set the stage for renewed political activity and constitution making. The questions of forming new governments for the nation and for the provinces came to be entangled with the problem of constitution making and led to hard bargaining (Khalid B. Sayeed, 1967, pp.48-59). But contrary to expectations, the general elections that were being expected after the promulgation of 1956 Constitution could not be held. Even the method of election as well as the role of electorate were not clearly mentioned in the constitution (Khalid B. Sayeed, 1967, p.60). This absurdity led to confusion, confrontation and chaos, and “after a period of unstable coalition politics, the civilian military coalition of power elites brought about the military coup d’etat, abrogated the constitution, and imposed Martial Law with the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces” (Palmer, 1975, p.52-53).
forces, Mohammad Ayub Khan… marked the transformation of the bureaucratic state system into a military regime in which the bureaucrats came to play a subservient rather than a dominant role” (Khalid B. Sayeed, 1967, p.61).

Purposely, the new military regime was adamant to reshape the political system to facilitate economic planning and development, to ensure much needed political stability and security. A new experience was done “to erect the superstructure of the political system of local government meant, in turn, to elect the members of the National and Provincial Assemblies and the President of the country, replacing the parliamentary system with presidential system. To provide a constitutional safeguard, a new constitution of 1962 was drafted with much more ambiguities and absurdities (Palmer, 1975, p.9). It was an obstinate step contrary to the past constitutional history of the subcontinent. In its nature and functioning, it was a constitution of one man, by one man and for one man. “It was neither presidential nor federal, nor truly representative either in form or substance” (Malik, 2001, p.38). It, in real sense, meant for the militarization of the political system, and for prolonging the authoritarian rule of Ayub Khan (Palmer, 1975, p.10). Hence with his quittance from power, it lost its legitimacy and was abrogated by his successor Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan. Mushtaq Ahmad (1985) rightly observes that “the Ayub regime had apparently not disturbed the balance but actually closed all avenues of participation through method of indirect elections, a powerless legislative and an all-powerful executive” (Mushtaq Ahmad, 1985, p.42).

General Yahya Khan, on pressing public demand, restored the old provinces by dissolving the One-Unit (1955-1970). He also introduced Legal Framework Order (LFO) in 1970 with the electoral principle of one-man, one-vote based on adult franchise (Rafi Raza, 1997, p.24). Reportedly, the elections were organized fair and impartial but they polarized the Pakistani electorate along regional lines. The Awami League (AL) of Sheikh Mujeeb-ur-Rehman swept the polls in East Pakistan, securing 160 out 162 National Assembly seats allocated for the East Pakistan, leading to an absolute majority in the National Assembly (Baxter, 1997, pp.110-117). On the other hand, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s Pakistan Peoples’ Party remained the runner up, although it emerged as the single largest party in the West Pakistan (Malik, 2001, p.442). The election campaign of both the parties was missing an urge for a constituent assembly to frame a constitution for the country; the other issues overwhelmingly dominated this urge. It also foretold the ensuing division (Malik, 2001, p.447). Also, the most political parties did not show their full power in both wings. The contestant Awami League, with power in East wing, concentrated upon the demand for provincial autonomy while PPP and JUI had no candidates in the Eastern Wing. Only the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) and the Muslim League filed the candidates in both wings but their election campaign was a failure (Raza, 1997, p.17). This election also missed the phenomenon of electoral alliances and marked an absence of real measure of strength, attempts to establish alliances, even among the religious and rightist parties were non-existent due to several reasons (Raza, 1997, p.18).

Yahya Khan reportedly planned to allow a plurality of parties to be represented in the National Assembly, none with a clear majority, holding a grip over them to prolong his rule (I. Ahmad, 1975, pp.65-77). It was also evident from the frequent clashes between the antagonistic political elements that no clear-cut majority party would emerge on the political scene. Also, the multiplicity of candidates for each seat obscured the direction of general mobilization. For example, there were as many as 460 contestants for 80 National Assembly seats of Punjab (Report on General Election Pakistan 1970-71, pp.7-13).
Finally, on 7 December 1970, the country electorate gave their verdict. About 57 million voters cast their votes for 1570 candidates from 25 political parties and 315 independent candidates also participated in the elections. The contest was for 290 National Assembly seats, as polls in some East Pakistan constituencies were postponed because of floods (Raza, 1997, p.17). The turn-out was 57 percent in east Pakistan, where the Awami League secured 75 percent of the vote, winning 151 out of 153 seats, and a month later won the remaining 9 postponed contests (Raza, 1997, pp.18-23). Thus, the total number of NA seats raised up to 160 out of 162. On the other hand, PPP won 81 but of 130 contested seats in the west wing, with 62 out of 82 in the Punjab and 18 out of 27 seats in Sindh (Raza, 1997, p.24). According to Rafi Raza (1997), “though smaller in numerical terms than the Awami League, the PPP’s success was no less significant as it crossed provincial boundaries and resulted in defeat for numerous traditionally strong candidates. In the process the religious and rightist parties were routed in both wings” (Raza, 1997, p.37).

About the general efficacy of the political parties in face of election results, Muhammad Waseem (1989) observes that “the elections…proved to be a significant indicator of political change in Pakistan. Firstly, they exposed the fallacy of the state bureaucracy’s claims to represent the general will of the masses. The majority parties in East Pakistan and Punjab, the Awami League and PPP, as well as the leading parties in Sindh and NWFP and Baluchistan. The PPP and NAP respectively had fought elections mainly from the anti-bureaucracy stand point. Secondly, they destroyed the support base of the three Muslim Leagues, each of which had claimed to be the real creator of Pakistan. The long absence of electoral process from the political scene of Pakistan had left the Muslims Leagues and other conservative political parties in darkness about their relative standing in the country and no less about the extent of the appeal of Islam in the public at large. Considering themselves to be the national parties, they contested most seats in all the regions of the country and thus over extended themselves” (Muhammad Waseem, 1989, p.238).

Being the first general elections, the electorate showed large interest in the electoral process. The relatively high participation levels, especially 66.48 per cent in Punjab, and 58.44 per cent in Sind reflected the eagerness of the masses for change in the political system (Report on General Election Pakistan 1970-71, pp.31-32).

According to Muhammad Waseem, “for almost a year after the anti-Ayub movement the political scene had remained unclear. But, then, the electoral mobilization from January 1970 onwards brought the undercurrent of political trends to the surface. A plethora of issues and problems relating to regions and classes, interests and ideologies and personalities and identities emerged as the dominate themes and symbols of people’s preferences and loyalties. The campaign which was spread over eleven months, transformed the general masses’ largely undefined, spontaneous and negative feelings towards the Ayub System into new party affiliations and new ideological commitments and the public hostility against Ayub acquired a political direction that really explains the political changes in this period” (Muhammad Waseem, 1989, p.249).

As a matter of fact, the 1970 elections issues remained dominant in voter’s mind. He voted on issues and for parties and thus brought about a political community based on mass participation. As far as provincial politics is concerned, a new phenomenon emerged that “instead of nationalizing politics, the elections in fact regionalized the appeal of main political parties not only along the two wings but also along provincial lines within West Pakistan itself” (Muhammad Waseem, 1989, pp.249-250). The religious and rightist parties showed somewhat better performance. The second
position of the Muslim League (Council) in Punjab, the JUP in Sindh, and the JUI in Baluchistan
turned them into recognizable political forces (Muhammad Waseem, 1989, p.251).

However, in the provincial elections the larger parties lost some seats due to several reasons. Firstly, the local parties launched an effective campaign as compared to non-local parties. Secondly, the large number of independent candidates minimized the chances of winning for candidates with party affiliations. The number of independent candidates in the provincial election stood 1112 for 300 seats, as against 203 candidates for 138 National Assembly seats in West Pakistan (Report on General Election Pakistan 1970-71, pp.356-358).

As the results indicated, the General Elections of 1970 marked a radical change in the electorate’s mind. They, on one hand, showed a clear hatred for feudalism and provided legitimacy to the new stratum of leadership. Sheikh Majeeb-ur-Rehman in East wing and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in West wing emerged as popular political figures (Rafi Raza, 1997). The Awami League had fought the election based on their six-point formula, advocating the optimum provincial autonomy. The PPP, on the other hand, was not in favour of curtailing the powers of the centre (Rafi Raza, 1997). Interestingly, the NAP-JUI coalition sided with the Awami League to secure maximum autonomy for their centres of power – Baluchistan and NWFP (Baxter, 1997, p.116). In this way, the elections produced a new political configuration with three distinct centres of powers i.e. the AL in East Pakistan, the PPP in Sindh and the Punjab and the NAP-JUI in Baluchistan and NWFP. At the same time, another power centre in disguise was the Yahya khan himself who, in any further constitutional arrangement, wanted his definite and decisive role (Baxter, 1997, pp.116-117). However, the uncompromising attitude of both Sheikh Mujeeb and Bhutto led to political chaos that ultimately claimed the integrity of United Pakistan on 16th December 1971.

Lawrence Ziring (1997) observes that “responsibility for tragedy can be found on all side, within the political arena, among the armed forces, in the bureaucracy, and throughout the Pakistani society” (Lawrence Ziring, 1997, p.354). Undoubtedly there were more than many factors that widened the gulf between the electorate in both wings of the country and concluded to the 1971 tragedy (Lawrence Ziring, 1997, pp.354-355).

Z.A. Bhutto assumed the authority of the Western Wing of the country, termed by him as “New Pakistan”, amidst confusion (Malik, 2001, pp.48-49). The irony of this transfer of power was the fact that “he assumed from one general and finally lost it to another one” (Lawrence Ziring, 1997, p.368). The role of Bhutto in the government and politics of Pakistan is both the controversial and debatable issue. He was a majority leader in the West Pakistan. But his majorities were confined to only the Punjab and Sindh. While in NWFP and Baluchistan, NAP-JUI formed coalition ministries. Bhutto remained Chief Martial Law Administrator till the promulgation of the Provisional Constitutional Order of 1972. He was the first civilian to hold this office with the Martial Law as legal authority. Ziring holds that “if ever there was a leader who drew strength from the disgrace and demoralization of a nation, it was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto …. The first civilian to hold such a position among the new nations …. The centralization of authority in his person, the rapt attention of those around him, and the animated popular support for his presidency, proved to be the most exhilarant experience of young man’s life. Bhutto was born into aristocracy and nurtured to rule….. All his earlier actions had been predicated on the assumption that he would one day assume the leadership of Pakistan. His rejection of Ayub Khan, his decision to help in the formation of the Pakistan’s people’s party PPP, his actions following the 1970 elections and finally the civil war,
taken together, had produced the moment he had already anticipated” (Lawrence Ziring, 1997, p.375).

Ziring’s observation mentioned above cannot be negated in toto in the face of Bhutto’s later actions. His overall purpose was the construction of a permanent majority “that would ensure the longevity of his administration” (Lawrence Ziring, 1997, p.379). He never tolerated rival parties neither leftists nor rightist ones. He was by no means in favor of opening political process “to those for whom he had little respect, even if their political bona fides were no less sound that his own” (Lawrence Ziring, 1997, p.380). However, his contention amazed for NAP and JUI whom he considered arch rivals with sound political following in NWFP and Baluchistan. These parties were banned and their leaders were arrested. In addition, a military operation was launched, especially, in Baluchistan to curb dissatisfying elements (White paper on Baluchistan, 1974).

Another measure which proved, later, fatal to Bhutto’s carrier was the purging of armed forces of Pakistan. Earlier, screening of civilian officers done on large scale went unchecked, encouraged him to create antagonism with the armed forces. Thus, many higher-ranking officers of the army, Navy and the Air Force were retired and sent off on diplomatic assignments (Hamid, 1988, p.14). As far as the intra party problems and conflicts are concerned; Bhutto did not tolerate any contradiction of opinion. One of such personality clashes, with PPP critic Ahmad Raza Kasuri, culminated at petitioning of a murder case of Kasuri’s father, Muhammad Ahmad Khan that ultimately claimed his life (Hamid, 1988, p.33).

Bhutto’s internal policies were marked with political assassinations that became routine. Labour leaders were killed in their offices or in their homes. The speaker of the Baluchistan Assembly and a member of the opposition were shot dead. Abdus Samad Achakzai, the NAP leader was assassinated. Also, attempts were made on the lives of Abdul Wali Khan of NAP and Asghar Khan of Tehrik-e-Istiqlal. For this purpose, a special agency, the Federal Security Forces (FSF) was brought into existence (Hamid, 1988, pp.34-35).

However, Bhutto regime had many achievements on its credit including Simla Accord 1972 (Shahid Javed Burki & Baxter, 1991, pp.53-54), drafting of 1973 Constitution, ensuing of the nuclear programme, holding of second Islamic Summit Conference – a Pan-Islamic move – in February 1974 in Lahore (Rashid, 1987, p. 187) and recognition of Bangladesh (Rashid, 1987, p.189), etc. After consolidating his party rule and curbing the opposition during his five-year tenure, Z.A. Bhutto took a momentous step to hold general elections in 1977, surprisingly one year before the expiry of the term (Hamid, 1988, p.41). At the time the opposition parties were confused about the future strategy, even they could not decide about the future leadership of the opposition. While on 3rd January 1977, Mr. Bhutto had clearly and confidently declared that the country electorate being the ultimate masters of country’s destiny would decide the fate and what so ever had been the result of the elections, would be acceptable to him (Hamid, 1988, p.42). He was confident about his victory because he had completed his election campaign in the year around before the elections. This fact was further approved by his announcements of candidates for national and provincial assemblies within two weeks after the announcement for elections and dissolution of assemblies (Hamid, 1988, pp.43-47). The national press generally welcomed this change and hoped that it would bring harmony among the dissatisfying quarters. According to Manzoor-ud-Din Ahmad, “perhaps the decision to hold early elections was taken by Bhutto on the faulty assumption that the ideologically disparate political parties belonging to the opposition
would never unite to form a united front against his Pakistan people’s Party. However, perhaps, it came as a rude shock to him when shortly after the announcement of the election dates all the opposition parties formed a grand anti-Bhutto coalition known as the Pakistan’s National Alliance which was composed of nine political parties”.

The PPP, after starting its election campaign resumed its totalitarian activities against opposition parties. Many opponents were threatened by arrests, detainments and kidnapping. Jan Muhammad Abbasi of JI, for example was detained and he could not even file his nomination papers, resulting in unopposed success of Mr. Bhutto on National Assembly seat, Larkana-I. However, Maulana Abbasi failed to prove his standing in the election commission, running short of evidence (Palmer, 1975, p.25).

Such undemocratic measures from PPP side resulted in unopposed success of 39 provincial Assembly candidates i.e. 26 from Sindh, 12 from Punjab and 1 from Baluchistan up till 24th January (Palmer, 1975, p.26) and this number reached to 67 till 1 Feb, 1977. On the other hand, PNA had not yet agreed upon a joint manifesto even after one month of dissolution of assemblies. It was eventually released on 8 February 1977. It stood for the grant of full fundamental rights to all citizens, reduction in the prices of basic needs of life, socio economic uplift and a balanced foreign policy to ensure the peace and protection of national interests. As the dates of elections drew nearer, the political scene marked a great political fervor. Both PPP and PNA were trying to mobilize electorate to secure success. The federal government announced that all the security forces would be utilized to help civil administration in holding peaceful election. However, the political parties had reservation on the use of FSF, being a pro-PPP security agency.

The general elections for National Assembly were held on 7th, March 1977 amidst great confusion. Reportedly, many incidents of breach of law and order occurred on the Election Day, claiming 8 lives and 130 serious injuries. According to the final un-official National Assembly election results, PPP got 155 seats in the House of the 200. The PNA secured 36, independents 8, and a solitary seat was won by the PML (Qayyum), while the remaining 16 seats (women 10, minorities 6) were to be filled in later. Election results obviously stunned the opposition, which in turn accused Mr. Bhutto of rigging at a massive scale. According to Ziring, “the opposition was quick to denounce the elections as a travesty, totally flawed, and indeed, stolen by the government party and particularly by its Chairman, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Arguing that they had lost all confidence in the Bhutto administration, the PNA called for a country wide strike that would shut down the nation at every level of public and private activity (Lawrence Ziring, 1997, p.414).

The allegations of the opposition were later confirmed by the white paper regarding the conduct of general elections, published in due course of time. The major findings, based on the documentary evidence, revealed “a premeditated plot meticulously prepared by Bhutto and his asides in the prime minister’s secretariat. They had prepared a model election plan which was also known as the Larkana Plan. The sole purpose of this exercise was to ensure the electoral victory of the PPP” (Palmer, 1975, pp.25-26). Bhutto had allegedly tried to establish control over election commission to manipulate rigging at large scale. He manipulated the delimitation of constituencies in PPP’s favour (Palmer, 1975, p.26). The white paper clearly mentioned that how Bhutto extravagantly utilized government machinery, propaganda and publicity agencies and state funds for securing an overwhelming success (Palmer, 1975, p.27). However, Mr. Bhutto categorically denied all these
charges and considered them a part of international conspiracy against him (Palmer, 1975, pp.27-28).

However, a careful estimation and analysis of the 1977 election results supports the opposition’s standing. Even, before the elections the PPP sources predicted that 30 per cent of the National Assembly seats would go to the PNA. The intelligence Bureau’s estimates of 4 March for national assembly gave the PPP 71 out of 116 seats in Punjab, 13 out of 26 in NWFP, 32 out of 43 in Sindh including 15 unopposed, and 6 out of 7 in Baluchistan including 4 unopposed. Contrary to this estimate, the PPP won 37 more seats, as foretold by the IB. PPP high command also realized this mistake by admitting that rigging took place in 30 to 40 electoral constituencies (Niazi, 1987, pp.72-88). The role of election machinery was both obnoxious and malafide. The malpractice committed during the electoral process were ridiculous for example, the ratio of polled votes to registered voters was excessively high. Sharif-ul Mujahid (1980) maintains that “if the un-polled votes for 19 unopposed National Assembly seats and really 9 per cent drop in the polled votes in Baluchistan from the previous elections due to the PNA’s election boycott in the province are accounted for the actual voting percentage comes to 79.55 per cent and not 63.3 per cent as announced”.

While analysing the overall conduct of Mr. Bhutto after the 1977 elections, Mujahid is of the view that “the tragedy with Bhutto was that he was too sure of himself. He considered himself a man of crisis, deliberately creating one and then managing it with immense relish. But unfortunately for him, when he decided as has been amply demonstrated to rig the polls, or when he disdainfully rejected the PNA’s initially moderate demands, he did not realize at all that his high-handed conduct would ultimately precipitate a crisis of much a magnitude and intensity that would defy disentanglement and diffusion. Perhaps he did not imagine that his own handpicked generals could dare topple him from the pinnacle of power. Then he was a victim of his own over confidence, complacency, miscalculation, and lust for power”.

Although the events leading to the 1977 military takeover marked a political decay yet the role, interest and later protest of electorate against their humiliation through rigging was exemplary. The election campaign mobilized both electorate and masses. Both parties organized massive public meetings and demonstration. Reportedly one PNA procession was 132 miles in length. Premier Bhutto and Asghar Khan of Tehrik-i-Istiqlal- a PNA component party, competed with one and other to see which could turn out largest crowd of supporters in demonstrations in Karachi.

This mobility of the electorate was later turned into a middle class Islamic movement. As termed by some foreign analysts on the government and politics of Pakistan, commenting on the failure of democracy after general election 1977 that “the vague but potent slogan, Nizam-i-Mustafa [Muhammadan Socio-economic Order], or the call of an Islamic social, political and economic system, became the broadest ideological base on which the diverse parties in the PNA could agree. The prominence of the Islamic issue indicated the ascendancy within the alliance of the ‘Islam Pasand Jamaats’ over the more secular National Democratic Party and Tehrik-i-Istiqlal. It also showed that the more predominantly middle class elements within the more fundamental Islamic parties had gained at least some dominance over the more elitist Pakistan Muslim League. These and other cleavages within the Pakistan National Alliance surfaced repeatedly during 1977. In campaign meetings prior to the fall elections, for instance, heated arguments arose between the old-line Pakistan Muslim League leaders who preferred to allocate PNA tickets to landed notables as in
the past, and Jama’at-e-Islami’s spokesman who demanded greater representation of middle and lower class candidates…. were subjected to pressures within the Alliance to broaden their political base and join in the demand for Nizam-i-Mustafa to capture political power”. In other words, the frustrations created by the Bhutto’s socialism- the basis upon which he mobilized the masses in 1970 – directed the people to a third alternative—the Nizam-i-Mustafa, instead of landed aristocracy and socialism. It is also to be noted that if internal manoeuvres, on one hand, caused Bhutto’s downfall, foreign intervention was not out of question. Especially the start of nuclear programme and the advocacy of third world’s interests against the exploitation of western nation put a question mark on a viability of Bhutto regime that later ended in his tragic demise.

REFERENCES


© 2017 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).