

Non- Party based General election of 1985: Causes an effect

Dr. Amir Ali Chandio

Department of Political Science

Shah Abdul Latif University,

Khairpur, Pakistan

e-mail: amir.chandio@salu.edu.pk

Abstract-Democracy and stable Democratic government is a big problem of Pakistan from its birth. After the short time of ten years Military occupied the power. Army rulers did not leave the power till the separation of East Pakistan. The power of rest Pakistan transferred to the elected representatives but after six and half years military took over the power again and imposed the Martial Law on 5th June 1977. The alliance, Movement for the Restoration of Democracy was formed in 1981. Alliance launched the movement for the restoration of Democracy in 1983. Though the movement was crushed by brutal used of force, but it was the result of the pressure of MRD that general elections were hold in 1985, though it was on non- party basis. The object of this paper is to find out the causes and impact of the elections of 1985.

Key words: democracy, martial law, movement, elections, alliance .

I. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan came into being in 1947. Leaders of Pakistan succeed to make the constitution in 1956. After two years of the implementation of constitution military occupied the power of the government and military men were in power till the division of the country in 1971.

First general elections in Pakistan were held in 1970, on the basis of adult-franchise. Awami League of Sheikh Mujeeb Rehman won the majority seats of National Assembly. But power was not transferred to the winning party. Awami League demanded for the transfer of power and formation of the government. Army ruler Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan did not agree, resultantly Awami League launched the agitation. Army government started the operation against the League. Finally Indian military intervened and East Pakistan was separated.

After the separation of East Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto took over the power from Yahya Khan on 20th December 1971. He became Chief Martial Law Administrator, President and later the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Second general elections of Pakistan were held in February in 1977 under the rule of Bhutto. PPP of Z.A Bhutto won 155 seats which was more than two third majority. Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) did not accept the election results and accused the ruling party for rigging. They boycotted the elections of the provincial assemblies. (Dawn 8th March 1977) A country wide agitation was launched by PNA against

Bhutto government. Bhutto contacted the leaders of the PNA for the solutions of the crises. Both parties agreed to negotiations and many meetings were held between the leaders of both parties. Finally the dialogue between Bhutto and the PNA leaders nearly reached to conclusion. Bhutto also declared it in the press conference that the agreement would be signed next day. But the military never wanted to slip the opportunity of taking over the government, hence declared Martial Law before the next sunrise i.e. 5th July 1977. Bhutto was ousted from the power and General Zia became Chief Martial Law Administrator. He is promising the people in his first address to hold general elections within the stipulated time of 90 days. However he postponed the elections on the ground to make the accountability of PPP government. Z. A Bhutto Chairman of PPP and former Prime Minister of Pakistan executed in 1979 and once again the elections were postponed for indefinite period by General Zia. After this the political scenario was entirely changed. Such prevailing political situation compelled PPP and some parties belonging to PNA to make an alliance for the restoration democracy in Pakistan.

Alliance sponsored a four point programmed, "An end of Martial Law, Restoration of the 1973 Constitution, Parliamentary elections and Transfer of power to public representatives" (Waseem, 1994, p. 393). Alliance launched movement in 1983 and it was first threat to Zia. when Sindh uprising against his dictatorial and authoritarian rule. Christina Lamb wrote "The greatest threat to Zia came in 1983, when the PPP led the Movement for the Restoration of democracy (MRD) launched a Movement to topple him. Though Movement was crushed through the used of brutal force of the army. Zia was afraid from the re-uprising of the movement. So he was trying to find out the the way to prolong his rule in this connection a referendum also held by him in 1984 but majority of the people of Pakistan rejected it on the appeal of MRD. Some analysis put the turnout as low as 2% per cent. But Zia took it as a vote of confidence in himself anyway."

It was indication that after the defeat in the referendum Zia agreed to share the power with the civilians. In this regard he contacted politicians, industrialist and feudal lords. After the meetings of some politician's influential persons he decided for the general elections. He announced that general elections

of National Assembly would be held on 25th Feb: and Provincial Assemblies on 28th February 1985.

Zia agreed to share the powers with civilian but same time he was afraid from the popularity of PPP. In this regard he made a strategy that on any cost PPP would not come in power. The elections on non-party basis were the part of his policy. Zia would not see a popular leader of PPP in the assembly, even his individual capacity.

II. REASONS OF NON- PARTY BASED ELECTIONS

A. *Defeat in Referendum*

In the referendum people of the country follow the MRD and boycott the referendum of 1984, it was defeat of Zia regime. Therefore Zia preferred the non party elections.

B. *Popular Support of PPP*

One and major reason was the popular support of PPP. Zia did not want that PPP would come as force in the National Assembly.

C. *Non political and non committed people became the member of the Assembly*

Zia preferred the non Party elections because he know very well that non political and non committed people is easy to control as compare to political and affiliated peoples. So he wanted that the people who become the member of the assemble they would not member of any party nor to affiliated with political leader.

The Waderras and member of the feudal families contested the elections, majority of them were unknown in the politics.

People did not response to the appeal of the boycott of MRD as they responded in the referendum. The turnout in the elections and about 44.6 percent in Sindh and 59.6 per cent people of the Punjab were participated the elections. And in general 52% people were casting the vote in the elections. The elections turnout was really surprised for all the groups, the military, the candidates and the opposition. No doubt people casting the votes in the elections but they rejected to Zia regime. The majority of the ministers of Zia cabinet and members of the Majlis Shoora were lost their seats. Benazir comments "The voting was a resounding rejection of Martial Law and Zia's policy of Islamization; Six of his nine Cabinet Ministers who ran for the National Assembly were defeated, as were many of his other associates. The candidates backed by the fundamentalist religious parties, only six out of sixty – one candidate of the Jamaat-e-Islami won their seats. In contrast, candidates who had claimed association with PPP in spite of our boycott did remarkably well, 'winning fifty out of fifty two' seats.

The elections were free and fair government did not interfere. The main proof for it that majority of the ministers were defeated in the elections. Zia regime did

not rigging in the elections because they already successful his strategy that his main opposite party PPP and their allies were boycotted the elections. So there was no need to Zia to interfere in the elections. The second reason of the not interference was believe of regime "in bullet and not ballot. Zia regime only wanted a democratic cover, not democracy."

Zia and his friends were very happy about the result and turnout of the elections. Even major parties boycotted the elections and appealed to the people for the boycott. People discourage the appeal of the boycott and participated in the elections. "Over twelve hundred candidate contested for the 207 National Assembly seats for the Muslims."

The promise of lifting of the Martial Law after the elections was one of the main reasons of the participation of the people in the elections.

People participated in the elections because they were against Martial Law and in the favour of the democracy. Elections were first steps for democratic government, even on non party basis.

The convincing to voters by Candidates also played vital role in the participation. They used their personal, brotherly, religious and ethnic relations to convince the people to cast the vote.

Some Waderras bought the votes from the local chiefs of clan and the little landowners. It was one reason of turnout in Sindh province. Haji Amir Bux Junejo won the provincial seat from K.N.Shah District Dadu purchased the votes from the local influence persons. Famous economist Shahid Kardar also described " But a major factor was the price in the rural Sindh for 20 or more votes Rs. 10,000 considering the extent of poverty, households which could deliver 20 votes, facing no real alternative choice, were willing to vote for Rs. 10,000. The eased the burden of the poverty. So the money also played a vital role in the turnout in the elections of 1985.

The purchasing of votes was negative sign of the non party elections. Due the purchasing of votes the corruption increased in the country. The members who won the elections by purchasing the votes, they would use all means for their personal interests. It proved when Junejo government decided that development fund would be given to the elected members, and this was first time in the history of the country that development fund directly goes in the account of the assembly members. And that was on the will and honesty of the members that they utilized the funds in proper way or not?

The turn out changed between the Punjab and Sindh also in the NWFP and Baluchistan. The landlord of the Punjab participated in the elections themselves or put up the candidates on their own choice. The same position in NWFP, but it was changed in Baluchistan and Sindh. The tribal chiefs of Baluchistan were not more interested in the elections. And the landlord class of Sindh was divided into two camps. One and large camp supported

the line of MRD. And other camp was in trying to accommodate in the proposed structure.

General elections of the 1985 were on the non-party basis therefore the political issues were not on the agenda of the elections. It left the negative impact on the society, such as the base of elections campaign on the brotherly as well as on local issue. So it created the ethnic as well sectarian issue in the politics of the country. Omar Noman narrated “Tribe, clan, sect and ethnicity are factor that appear to be serving or framers of reference for the voters in today’s electoral contest.” The same remarks of Dr Tahir Amin about the 1985 elections He stated “The most significant consequence of the party less elections has been that the political campaign inevitable revolved around tribal, ethnic and sectarian issues in the absence of any programme. Regime claimed the elections had one propose to take forward the process of Islamization with the participation of the people. But it was not seen during the elections, majority of the candidate were talk about the local issues and convinced to the people on his personal and ethnic and tribal relations. Rai Shakil Akhtar comments on the elections as under “Elections primarily concerned with local issue and seldom took up bigger national issue. Islam, Democracy, Martial Law, economy foreign affairs, etc. were not part of electioneering. These elections reduced national politics to municipal level.” Mostly all the scholars and social scientist are agreed that the non-party elections left the negative impact on the politics of country especially on the politics of Sindh province.

It was the impact of the party less elections that ethnic politics increased and many ethnic groups became more powerful. MQM, PPI, Pushtoon federation, were the result of the elections.

Benazir Bhutto a federalist politician and believed in strong center comment “The non-party elections held by the regime had furthered the country’s fragmentation. By banning political parties, the regime forced candidates to campaign not on a platform of political ideals, which transcended ethnic and regional boundaries, but on the basis of individual identification. Vote for me, I’m a Shiite like you, candidate in these elections told their constituents. Vote for me, I’m a Punjabi.

Dr Tahir Amin also wrote about it as under “Opportunist local holders principally the land owning rural class emerged victorious in the elections and the regime was more than happy to make them a junior partner in the power game both at the center and in the provinces.”

III. CONCLUSION

In the result of non-party elections the ethnic, regional as well as religious factors were increased in the country. It went in the interests of separatists, as well as in the interests of religious fundamentalist. The people of the country divided into clan, caste and sects.

The political issues such as foreign policy, economic policy and the question of the integrity of the country went into wave. Members came into assemblies without political agenda and program. Political bribe and corruption was increased in the result of the non-party elections.

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