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Abstract

There is a direct connection and relationship between elections and electorates. Even All the voting patterns rightly emerge from the election-electorate binary eventually determine the fate of electoral process which both results and inculcates into the government-making with all modes of decision-making and functioning, law-making and smooth functioning of all the organs of the state including executive or administration, policy making and judiciary, etc. However; it marks ideal approach which seems quite different from ground realities. The political epoch of 1970-1988 tells the different stories revolving around three variables i. e. Electorates, Electioneering and Electoral Politics as dependent variables under one big independent variable—Bhutto-Zia Antagonism which proved watershed to the forthcoming history of the nation which can be taken as hypothesis. This study is a fresh look into the then political arena based on the functioning and results of the aforementioned variables. As the historical record of Pakistani Elections manifests, they had been held on the need-based intervals due to the weak democratic institutions, complexity of the power-play and political instability which have been categorically discussed by the election experts worldwide. For instance; the results of 1970 General Elections were not accepted by the political and other stakeholders that led to rifts and dichotomies and ultimately claimed the integrity of the country on gloomy note. Similarly; the 1977 General Elections were the worst example of ‘electioneering’ and mistreatment of the expectations of electorates which invited General Zia to marshal the circumstances. Here, in the research in hand, an effort has been made to highlight the role of electorates, albeit the dominance of electioneering and gradual decline of the response of the electorates in forthcoming series of elections in summative as well analytical manner and this will help in establishing as well as developing an overall understanding of the phenomenon, especially in Pakistani perspective.

Keywords: Pakistan, Constitution, Parliamentary Democracy, Elections, Electorates, Legislatures; Law-making; Executive; Judiciary

1. Political System in Pakistan as a Dichotomy into Electoral Process and the Power Politics- An Introduction

Political system of Pakistan, like any other prevailing system, works within the limitations of the social fabric which gives way to coin a new term ‘socio-political landscape’ whose ingredients are, in turn, determined and provided by the Constitution of the country. These ingredients include state institutions (both legislative and administrative) and political structures (parties and pressure groups) whose smooth interaction makes the functionality of this political system possible, intact, viable and sustainable. Its smooth functioning ensures the creation of an environment for development of a ‘political culture’ necessary for transformation of ‘public opinion’ into well established ‘electorates’. This political process, in turn, consolidates the very roots of democratic values in the country. It is the call of the time that, like other functioning democracies around the globe, the political system of Pakistan must be based on scientific lines, as a mechanism of inputs (demands of people), processes (transformation of demands into public opinion, consolidated into electorates); and outputs (manifestations into government policies in order to materialize public demands). In this scenario, masses, especially the overwhelming and effective fraction of the society i.e. the electorates are considered to be the power-base, with a crucial but decisive, role to play. (Huchinson Encyclopedia, Vol.7, 1997, p.1173) They are destined to command authority by wielding power, leading to the fateful decisions. Hypothetically speaking, if a ‘true democratic system’ prevails, then the key-players will be the electorates whose exercise of ‘will’ provides and ensures legitimacy to the indirect-political-participation of parliamentarians. This parliamentary practice is called as ‘General Election’ in popular political terms i.e. the exercise of ‘right-to-vote’ (through adult franchise or suffrage). (*Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 2005, Sec: 32) In this way the public representatives enjoy the ‘mandate’ given by the electorates for a fixed term and rule the country legitimately. (Duverger, 2000, p.13)

As far as democratic norms in Pakistan are concerned, Pakistan came into existence on ideological basis (Ahmad, 1979, p.195-201) and from the very first day popular demand was the establishment of Islamic democratic system as was promised by the leaders of Pakistan Movement and an effective mandate was sought to establish a separate homeland for Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent through holding of 1945-1946 General Elections. (Saiyid, 1962, p. 292; Hayat, 2016, pp. 224-232) However; it could not be materialized due to complex and complicated constitutional problems which had not been settled or resolved during his short executive term of the Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and even after his death in 1948, no common base for a new constitution could be established. (Symond, 1987, p.89) However; the temporary base was managed to be provided in the form of the Objectives Resolution 1949 which, instead of filling the prevailing constitutional gap, raised a very heated debate especially in the political ranks of Eastern Wing of the country, giving way to right-left dichotomy in the national politics. (Rashid, 1994, p.213) It took seven more precious years to reach a consensus for the Constitution. Although the agreed provisions of the 1956 Constitution were not ideal one yet the real test of any Constitution lies in its fully fledged enforcement and holding of a series of elections in order to test its validity through the smooth functioning of the political processes and exercise of parliamentary practices which result into effective law-making and meet up to the aspirations of the public but unfortunately the democratic process was derailed by the imposition of Martial Law by the President Iskandar Mirza, followed by the military coup by the then Military Commander-in-Chief General Ayub Khan in October 1958. Again the same was repeated in 1969 and 1977—a ‘sandwich’ democratic epoch. However; it cannot be termed as the ‘solution’ because the cure of a treatable disease does not lie in the cutting of poor functioning body organs. Rather it lays in the accurate diagnosis of the disease and a delineated study of the disease history. Same is the case with democracy as the suspension of the democratic process is not the viable solution. In case of temporary failure of democratic forces, fresh elections can

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be called for a new parliamentary set up. It will surely ensure the 'process of evolution and refinement' and history of today's strong democracies reveals that they went through arduous and painstaking political processes which resulted into strong democratic institutions. As we learnt nothing from history so recurring interruptions and intervening of undemocratic forces gave way to weak political institutions. Civil-Military binary in terms of Bhutto-Zia Antagonism is the major focus of this research taking into account different streamlined close variables i. e. electorates, electioneering and electoral politics.

2. Literature Review

In Pakistan, weak democratic process, although is not the product of one day, does not support the development of strong democratic institutions and for this there are many, both intrinsic and extrinsic, reasons behind. First, the existing stock of political parties, whether they are major or minor ones, do not respect democratic SOPs and protocols. Even they lack intra-party democratic norms which are very essential for a flourishing democracy resulting into the resentment of party workers and talented youth, etc.

Even voters and supporters have no direct role to play in the affairs of the political party they belong to. Even no direct link can be found between the political parties and the election commission (EC). Keeping this situation in view, it is necessary to have a deep study of the electoral process in Pakistan. Interestingly; the main focus of the researchers in recent past mainly focused on the working of political parties and presented facts and figures revolving around their structural functioning and procedural experiences on discursive bases and they ignored the very aspect of the electoral processes and their subsequent results on country' political norms.

In Pakistan, the very first 'General Elections' were held in 1970 by involving the 'adult franchise', the popular method of voting in democracies across the globe, and up till now, there were held 13 general elections but with quite different results that shows the gradual development of the electoral process in the country. (Interestingly the literature produced on the electoral process does not show the clear picture of the topic under consideration. For example, Ishtiaq Ahmad (1976)'s *Pakistan: General Elections 1970* (South Asian Study Centre, Punjab University Lahore, 1976) is although a detailed study yet is specific to the results and implications of the 1970 elections only. Likewise Professor Khurshid Ahmad's "*Aur Election Na Ho Skay*" in Urdu (And Elections Could Not Be Held...) is an account of 1977 Elections and aftermath and is a plain study on the topic. Thus traditionally after every elections relevant literature is compiled to fulfill the timely needs of the readers. Hence, there are many books like, Tariq Ismail's *Elections 1988*, Zahid Hussain Anjum's *Election 1990*, Muhammad Waseem's *The 1993 Elections in Pakistan* (Vanguard, Karachi, 1994), Anwar Hussain's *Elections 1993* (Academy of Writers, Islamabad, 1994), Dr. Yasin Rizvi's *Election 1993* (Shirkat Press, Lahore, 1993), Zahid Hussain Anjum's *Elections 1997* are important to quote. However; for the data analysis and discussions on general elections the researchers have to rely upon the reports of national and foreign agencies and NGOs which do not reflect the true picture of the election results. All these works provide valuable details, facts and figures about the electoral process but they provide material as per partly study. Hence; one can safely conclude that no work of objective and real scholarship has been rendered on the theme under investigation. All the attempts mentioned above and others have been made on the political process, leadership and institutions, neglecting the vital role of voters. Hence, it is a need of the time to launch a research to fill this gap. The objective of this research paper, however, is to give an extensive and all-inclusive analysis of the voter and his response in the broader sense. All the aspects regarding the electoral process have been discussed in summative terms. This study hopefully will be helpful in developing a better understanding between leader and a voter in specific political conditions of Pakistan leading to an ultimate development of a healthy political process in the country. Moreover; it intends to bring about the facts and figures about the multifarious role of the country electorate, the basic ingredients of the prevailing political system and its evolution, nature and composition of the electorate and its due role in the development of the political system in Pakistan. Significant light has been thrown on the trends and tendencies of the electorate during 1970-1988, the period under investigation. Historically; the researchers retrieve the following elements during their study:

- i. They confronted sufficient amount of details about the constitutional development in the subcontinent into Pakistan, evolution of the electoral system and the idea of electorate in the united India, the gradual development of the principles of elections, development of the electorate in the modern world, the origin and evolution of the Pakistani electorate, emergence of Pakistan and constitutional problems, evolution and restructuring of electoral and political system in Pakistan, the nature and contents of Pakistani electorate from 1947 to date. (Jalal, 1995, p. 216-217)
- ii. They observed, recorded and analyzed the changing trends in the role of electorate from non-party to party-politics between 1985 and 1988. Here was a remarkable change in the tendencies of the electorate when it appended its aspirations once again with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). It was an interesting phenomenon that the eleven years long martial law and the experience of non-party elections could not move away the previous party affiliations of the electorate. (Wilder, 1999, p. iii-ix)
- iii. They also examined the phenomenon of the split mandate between 1970 and 1988. In this period two elections were held but the country electorates could not produce a clear mandate due to a number of reasons. Electorate while gone fed up with the poor performance of the PPP regime under Z. A. Bhutto (1970-1977) attached their aspirations towards the emerging Pakistan National Alliance (PNA). (Sheikh, et al, 1991, pp.449-456)

3. Discussion and Discursive Summative Analysis

In Indian subcontinent, as a matter of fact, the idea of the electorate and method of elections were developed through a series of complicated reforms between 1861 and 1935. Pakistan came into existence with the same legacies from the British including the high rates of illiteracy in the areas where Pakistan was established. Illiteracy in consonance with the defective education system weakens the very base of electoral system. Electorates, illiterate or semi-educated cannot use the right-to-vote properly as they cannot analyze the political parties' programs and their electoral manifestos so they can easily be distracted. On the other hand, the powerful sections of the society have developed a parallel education system which is detrimental to the very soul of equal human rights and this element

has widened the poor-rich gap further and the workability of an independent electoral system would be not fair in such circumstances. Other factors which are dangerous to the proper functioning of electoral system are regionalism, provincialism, sectarianism, and linguistic distribution and misallocation of economic resources, poor economy and absence of socio-economic justice, and uneven representations of different interest groups into the legislatures. (Rizvi & Gillani, 2013, pp. 26-27) These elements put a huge question-mark on the fair functioning of country's electorates. Another significant element is the lack of intra-political democratic norms due to which no healthy relationship has been developed between the parties' leadership and the electorates. (Akhtar, 2012, pp. 283-285) However; a temporal liaison is developed during election campaigns and this lacuna is cashed by those election candidates who are deployed by undemocratic forces to fulfill specific designs e.g. disturbing the vote proportions in favor or against some targeted candidate and this can be a part of the electoral phenomenon called 'electioneering'. (Khurshid, 1997, pp. 8-9) It is also pertinent to note that the weaknesses and lacunas of the electoral system also give way to 'electoral fraud' which is not limited to only weak democracies of the third world. If the country's electorates are well-educated, well-trained, and well-aware about the mechanics of election holding and their due role, it would be highly profitable for the strengthening and consolidation of democracy. Here; one can quote the glaring example of reaction and response of the electorates in 1970 and 1977 General Elections when the same electorates behaved differently. (Khan, et al, 2021, pp. 193-199) They once favored PPP in one election and brought them into rule and became part of a movement against the same ruling party after the rigging allegations in the wake of next elections. (Ahmad, 1985, pp. 39-42) The political epoch between 1970 and 1977 was marked with the Bhutto's authoritarianism. Bhutto's internal policies were directed towards political assassinations and suppression of the political parties and personalities in opposition. As a result, the electorates became part and parcel of the mass movement against PPP government who allegedly rigged the 1977 General Elections. They boycotted the Provincial Assembly Elections Polls, held after 3 days of the (reportedly rigged) National Assembly Elections and this disrespect of electorates and their right-to-vote ultimately led COAS General Zia to declare Martial Law as there was no agreement between the leaders of the Pakistan National Alliance (hereafter PNA), and the ruling PM Z.A. Bhutto. General Zia-ul-Haq initially projected this take over as a ninety day operation for holding General Elections but later he changed his plans and on 16 October postponed them for an indefinite period. (Waseem, 1989, p. 238) Zia introduced long-term program of Islamization of the society as a strategy to curb PNA Movement of the opposition parties. Zia played hide-and-seek with the political parties in order to delay the holding of elections. So he promoted one party and demoted the other; and later announced the holding of Local-Bodies Elections in order to distract the attention of internal and external opponents. (Khan, et al, 2021, pp.193-199) Moving on the election delaying tactics, Zia regime held local bodies' elections, creating a fear among PNA ranks as they apprehended that they could be used as 'Electoral College' as once manipulated by his predecessor General Ayub Khan in 1960s. Another arrangement, as a part of notorious electioneering phenomenon, was made to oust PPP from the local bodies elections. At the third place; in the wake of Afghan War (1979-1988), his anti-communist stance released international pressure for resumption of political activities; and he enjoyed this new international position up till the defeat of the Russian forces in Afghanistan that became clearly visible in the middle of 1980s. (Ibid, p. 244-245) Later, he, in the face of mounting international pressure for returning to democracy, introduced his power-sharing plan in 1984. Also in order to secure his position he decided to hold referendum on his ongoing Islamization process in the country.

General Zia's referendum 1984 was conducted under peaceful conditions with no opposition and no party to oppose him. A comparison with 1977 polls, it was totally irrelevant—one being a general election, and the other mere a referendum. Referendum results were not astonishing but they stabilized Zia's bargaining position for making deals with political parties except PPP and the MRD (Movement for the Restoration of Democracy; initiated by PPP itself in 1981 against Zia) which pressed him for the restoration of democracy and transfer of power to civilian government after holding general elections at earliest. (Raza, 1998, p. 17)

In this perspective, the 1985 election had never been a factor in Zia's stay in power. At the same time, he could not leave his re-election as President to the newly-elected representatives. Hence, he had to take a non-party basis for forthcoming elections in order to avoid any future black-mailing from political parties. Reacting to this distrust of Zia, MRD and other political parties decided to boycott the polls. In these conditions only a large voter turn-out could lend credibility to the elections. Therefore, the government decided to waive the conditions which barred the MRD politicians from participating in the elections. (Ibid, pp.18-19)

As far as the significant feature of the 1985 elections are concerned, about 85 per cent of the candidates contested for the first time and majority of candidates had no previous political background. During the 1977 general elections, the minimum age for a candidate to the National Assembly was 25 years while for the 1985 elections certain other conditions were added. The government also amended the Political Parties Act of 1962, so that all present and past office-bearers of the political parties, which had not registered themselves with the Election Commission of Pakistan before 1979, were disqualified from taking part in the elections. This made it impossible for politicians of many political parties to participate in the elections. (Ibid, p.33)

In spite of the fact that the general elections of 1985 were held on non-party basis, the party factor could not be ignored. The major opposition force, the MRD, had demanded elections under the provisions of the original 1973 Constitution and when this demand was turned down by the government, the MRD announced boycott of the elections. But many politicians belonging to various parties of the MRD contested the elections, individually, in order to maintain their local leadership. In general nearly 291 candidates having affiliations with various political parties contested the election on 207 seats of the National Assembly. Among them, 120 belonged to parties of the MRD and 79 belonged to the PPP. (Election Results 1985, Elections Commission of Pakistan)

One factor that emerged in these elections was that the elections were fought not on a political and economic programme, but on the basis of *baradries* (clan-based-brotherhoods) and sectarian affiliations. In 1985 Elections for both National and Provincial Assemblies, the electorate participated fully in the elections in every part of the country. It can be concluded that although the Pakistani voters rejected the call of opposition, for the boycott of the elections, but at the same time they rejected a large number of Zia's associates, in Martial Law, including five Ministers.

As a matter of fact, the general public responded enthusiastically to the call for elections; 52.9 per cent of the registered voters polled their votes (Dawn, 26 February 1985). The national polls were followed by elections for four provincial assemblies on 28 February

1985, whose members then elected 19 Senate members from each province and three Senators from Islamabad. On 2 March President Zia promulgated the Revival of Constitution Order (RCO). (Ibid, 3 March, 1985) The new Bill allowed political parties to function subject to a lengthy and cumbersome process of registration with the Election Commission. After this arbitrary Constitutional engineering, the regime felt confident to lift Martial Law on 30 December 1985. (Ibid, 31 December, 1985)

Junejo had come into power through a political and electoral process so he tried to restore the supremacy of the political leadership. His all the steps taken in this connection created a lot of concerns and reservations in the minds of military leadership. Hence, Zia planned to get rid of this civilian government. The situation became grimmer especially after the signing of the Geneva Accord, which was greatly resented by the President Zia which grew tension between him and his PM Junejo. The former feared that if Junejo had gone ahead with holding the next elections in or before 1990 and had won them he would not have endorsed President Zia's re-election through the assemblies. Hence, the tension between President and PM resulted into the dissolution of the National Assembly on 29 May 1988 (Ibid, 30 May, 1988) and the electorates were called upon to be consulted again in November 1988 astonishingly once again on non-party basis. (Ziring, 1997, p. 354)

General Zia's move to dismiss Junejo Government on 29 May 1988 reactivated the dormant politics of MRD parties and the announcement of party-based elections left no option to boycott the forthcoming elections which were later held in November 1988, three months after the sad demise of General Zia in an air crash. After winning the 1988 General Elections, PPP was given chance to make a weak government as it had to face the opposition Alliance— *Islami Jamhoori Itehad* (Islamic Democratic alliance) which ultimately restricted PPP's performance. Moreover; the situation was worsened further when the working relationship between President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and PM Benazir Bhutto could not be developed on positive, healthy lines and resulted into dissolution of National Assembly (August 1990), and fresh elections were announced to be held in next couple of months. (Ziring, 1997, 412)

4. Conclusion

The political and electoral episode of 1970-1988 revolving clearly around the trust deficit of civil-military relations and country politics was sandwiched between two martial law regimes proved watershed in the national history. During this period new contours of state and society were reshaped and emerged. The so called process of 'Islamization' gave way to further rifts into the society already present on regional, ethnic and religious lines. The effects of 'Afghan Jihad' in forthcoming years engulfed the national peace and harmony and resulted into 'Kalashnikov and Heroin (addiction) Culture' and emerging terrorism, extremism and sectarianism that shook the very roots of the social norms. Disrespect of electoral mandate and fabrication of electoral results through coercion and electioneering weakened the confidence of electorates in near future and resulted into ever declining voters' turnout and this put a huge question mark on the functioning of the parliamentary democracy. This in later years questioned the legitimacy of the governments in the eyes of international investors and donors as the political and economic instability are the immediate results of such election compendium. Hence; the general elections of 1970, 1977 and 1985 did not serve the purpose rather they created doubts in the minds of electorates, weakened the democratic norms, created authoritarianism and antagonism, developed rifts in civil-military relations, gave way to religious as well as social dichotomies, etc.

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