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Bhutto and the Opposition: Politics of Pressure and Negotiation in Pakistan, 1971–1977

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Abstract
During Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's tenure as Prime Minister of Pakistan (1971–1977), political opposition emerged as a formidable challenge that exerted sustained pressure on his government. Two major opposition alliances the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) repeatedly tested the resilience of Bhutto's administration. While the opposition managed to achieve some of its objectives to a certain extent, differences between the opposition and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) persisted throughout this period. An analysis of the broader political landscape of Bhutto's era suggests that he remained politically successful despite facing widespread resistance, largely because he was fully aware that most major political parties stood against him. Compounding this pressure, Bhutto received repeated warnings from military headquarters that the army was turning against him, Bhutto chose to continue negotiations with the opposition for the sake of the country, demonstrating his commitment to resolving political conflict through dialogue rather than confrontation. This study examines the dynamics of opposition politics during Bhutto's era, the strategies employed by both the government and its rivals, and the ultimate consequences of these tensions for Pakistan's political stability.

***Keywords**: Political Opposition, Alliances, United Democratic Front, of Bhutto's era.*

Introduction

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto is the first leader who came in to power as a result of historical general election. The politicians from Liaquat Ali khan to Sikandar Mirza (military men), like president Ayub khan and Yahya khan are no match to him. Mr. Bhutto came to acquire the steam prefix, Quaid Azam'' (leader of the people) and it is believed that his popularity was perhaps next only to ''Quaid Azam'' (father of the nation) Muhammad Ali Jinnah.[1]

General Yahya knows transferred the power to Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto on December, 20, 1971. Bhutto elected as a president and interim constitution formulated. After two years 1973 constitution come into enforce and Bhutto elected as Prime Minister and Chaudhry Fazl Elahi as President respectively. During 1973-77, Bhutto took several steps in order to counter the opposition. Bhutto inherited two traditions of political opposition one from political parties and groups which enjoyed tacit recognition from the state, the other from outside the legitimate political community which was often persecuted by successive governments.[2]

[1] Kaushik, S. N. (1984). *Politics in Pakistan: With special reference to rise and fall of Bhutto* (p. 1). Aalekh Publishers.

[2]Khan, H. (2023). *Constitutional and political history of Pakistan* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.

United Democratic Front was an important Alliance of Opposition parties against the Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. After the separation of East Pakistan and emerging Bangladesh as a sovereign and independent State on the map of the world, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto assumed the charge of Civilian Chief Martial Law Administrator and then President. Bhutto was a great advocate of democracy and pledge to restore democracy, and other there was the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) formed by opposition parties during Bhutto's period,[3]The purpose of opposition to save the national interest and also criticized the government. The opposition keeps the check on the ruling party, points out its weaknesses and prevents it from becoming despotic or negligent of national interest.[4]Though, opposition gave tough time to Bhutto and formulated two alliances i.e. United Democratic front and Pakistan National Alliance proved a last nail in the coffin of Bhutto govt.

Role of opposition in making of 1973 constitution:

The matter of forming a constitution was a big problem. Initially the government announced that there would be no interim constitution because in the words of then law minister Mian Mahmood Ali Kasuri, it would amount to giving a constitution by one man. The country had very unpleasant experience of a one-man constitution and, therefore it would not be proper to repeat it''.[5] The national assembly had already appointed a committee for the purpose even before the promulgation of the interim constitution. Although the People's Party enjoyed the two third majorities in the national assembly and it could easily pass the constitution of its choice but it decided to associate all the other political parties in this sacred task of great national importance.[6]

1973 Cabinet and Bhutto reaction towards opposition:

Initially, on December 24, 1971, Mr. Bhutto announced formation of a presidential cabinet, saying that ''the president and CMLA are the head of the cabinet and will hold portfolios of the ministers of foreign affairs, defense, interior and provincial co-operation.'' That was meant to be a 'temporary arrangement.[7]Bhutto formulated two cabinets in 1973 and he gave Ministries to the several politicians in order to maintain discipline in N.W.F.P and Baluchistan. Though PPP govt. was only in federal and two provinces but in N.W.F.P and Baluchistan, there was a coalition govt. Bhutto gave important portfolios to khan Abdul Qayyum Khan in order to counts Khan Abdul Wali Khan in N.W.F.P Wali Khan also mentioned in his book that Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan was Considered as Secret reporter of Bhutto. On the other hand, he gave important portfolio to Nawab Akbar Bugti in Baluchistan.

Demands of opposition:

It was very interesting and astonishing that the religious parties were demanding provincial autonomy. They had always been remained main supporter of strong centralization. But it was the first time in the history of Pakistan that they were talking against the centralization. Bhutto was not ready to give any such power to provinces which might implement any scheme that would lead to the disintegration of the remaining Pakistan. On 10th September 1972, the government alleged that opposition leaders namely Khan Abdul Wali Khan and Atta Ullah Mengal had held secret meeting with Shaikh Mujeeb-ur-Rehman with a view to break up Pakistan. It was also remarkable that Bhutto considered the proposals made by Wali Khan that the central

[3] Askari Rizvi, H. (1986). *The military and politics in Pakistan 1947–1986* (p. 152). Progressive Publishers.

[4] Mahmood, S. (2002). *Pakistan political roots and development 1947–1999* (p. 137). Oxford University Press

[5] The dawn, January 16, 1972**.**

[6] Jones, P. E. (2003). *The people's party: Rise to power* (p. 186). Oxford University Press.

[7] Kaushik, S. N. (1982). *Pakistan under Bhutto's leadership* (p. 104). Uppal Publishing House.

government should be responsible only for defense; foreign affairs and finance would leave the central authority "a widow without a pension". He further asserted that there was a thin line of demarcation between maximum autonomy and secession. He made it clear that though some talked of Punjabi domination, Punjab contained sixty two percent of total population of the country and he would never ignore the interests of the smaller provinces. Meanwhile, the differences among the members of PPP were also developed. The Law Minister, Mahmood Ali Kasuri, tendered his resignation from his ministry due to the following reasons which he mentioned in his letter to Bhutto

Several contentious issues strained relations between the government and the opposition during this period. First, there was a fundamental disagreement over the constitutional pattern the country should adopt. Second, differences of opinion arose regarding the dismissal of civil servants under Martial Law Regulation. Third, an economic depression worsened the political climate and added to public discontent. Fourth, the deteriorating law and order situation intensified tensions, and the continued imposition of the state of emergency in the country further deepened the political divide.

Opposition Parties demanded several Law and Islamic Provisions. They wanted to strengthen its Islamic Provisions, reduce the govt. preventive detention and emergency lowers allow the supporter courts to review the divisions of special tribunals, make the election commission autonomous rationalizes the constitutional protection to be given to laws and provide job severity to civil servants. But Bhutto already announces after making of constitution, he said, ''today is undoubtedly a day to be remember. I will not say that it is a historic day; nor will say that it is a momentous day. But nevertheless, it can safety be said that on this day this country, which had been many tortuous ups downs and has witnessed many upheavals is at least embarking on the road of true democratic stability. The people are supreme. They make and unmake their leaders.[8]

Foundation of Alliance and 1973 Constitution.

Opposition Parties made an alliance on 13th March 1973 that was called united democratic Front. The dialogue between the opposition and 2.A. Bhutto team was resumed and after the discussion, both the adversaries managed to achieve compromise on their stands about the draft constitution.

Name of prominent political parties:

The growing discontent against the Bhutto regime and his rough harsh rule the opposition party's expression in the form of an alliance known as Pakistan National Alliance (PNA). The PNA consisted of nine political parties belonging to the opposition block.

Several major political and religious parties formed the backbone of the opposition during this period, including the Muslim League, Jamaat-e-Islami, Tehreek-e-Istiqlal, Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Pakistan, Jamiat-ul-Islam, the Pakistan Democratic Party, the Kashmir Tehreek-e-Istiqlal, the Pakistan Democratic Party, and the Muslim Conference of Azad Kashmir. Together, these parties represented a broad spectrum of religious, regional, and political interests, which strengthened the opposition's collective challenge to the government. [9]

Civil disobedience momently UDF:

UDF leaders demanded the immediate promulgation of the Constitution, enforcement promulgation of the constitution enforcement of the rule of law and the restoration of provincial

[8] Bhutto, Z. A. (1976). *Speeches and statements* (p. 84). Classic Books.

[9] The Dawn,12, 1976

govt. in N.W.F. P and Baluchistan when Z. A. Bhutto, despite of his promises failed to take concrete steps UDF leaders divided to launch a Civil disobedience movement in Aug 1973.

Amendments in 1973 constitution and role of opposition:

Opposition demanded to amend the constitution for those purposes they toured almost all big cities of the country to build a pressure on the government.

(a) Qadiyani as a non-Muslim by government:

After the collapse of the UDF the national politics experience clam until mid-1974 when the Qadiani issue dominated the political scenario. The demand for declaring Qadiani's outside the pale of Islam and old one for which in 1952 a fruitless countrywide agitation had been launched. All parties' khatm-e-Nabuwat action Committee (APKNAC) paid crucial rule in this scenario. Due to the pressure of opposition, Bhutto government declared the Qadiani as a Non-Muslim on September 7, 1974 through second amendment of the constitution of 1973. A person who does not believed in the absolute and unqualified finality of the prophet hood of Muhammad (SAW) the last of the prophet or claims to be a prophet, in any sense of the word or of any description what so over after Muhammad (SAW), or recognize such a claimant as prophet or a religious reformer is not a Muslim for the purpose of the constitution or law.[10]

(b) Islamic Provisions in Constitution:

Another amendment was made in the constitution due to the pressure of opposition on the govt. After that, Friday announced as a holiday and all the gabling spot were closed down. Strict steps were taken regarding fast in Ramzan. And all types of drinking were banned. Though, some differences remained between the opposition and the ppp.

Recognition of Bangladesh:

After the implementation of the constitution, Z.A Bhutto made seven amendments in his self-supervised constitution. The first amendment of the constitution deals with the recognition of the Bangladesh and other administrative matters of Pakistan. The opposition offered tough resistance to the recognition of Bangladesh and opposed it. The opposition argued that National Assembly is not competent to concede the secession of Bangladesh. They also argued that the prisoners of war should release in anyway even without the recognition of Bangladesh. The speaker said while giving the ruling that the recognition was an administrative action relevant to the bill under discussion.

Bhutto and socialism:

Religious political parties and Ulama raised criticism on Socialism [11] Because, " His slogan was "Roti, Kapra aur Mahan," or "Bread, Clothing, and Shelter," a "call for economic and social development.[12] and the Ulamas and religious political parties like Jamat-I-islami and jamiat-ul-ulema Pakistan were harsh critics of Bhutto and his brand of socialism and thay thought Bhutto was inspired by socialism as practiced in china and would implemented Islamic socialism on the same pattern.[13] They were doubtful of his religious qualification. Though his educational background and political philosophy was sufficient grounds to categories his as a secularist but he had emphasized but he had emphasized the need for Pakistan to adherre to the Islamic ideology. Addressing a conference of and Ulemas, he stated. The political credo the PPP,

[10] The dawn, June 26, 1974

[11] Bhutto, Z. A. (1969). *The myth of independence* (p. 53). Oxford University Press.

[12] Bhutto, B. (2008). *Reconciliation: Islam, democracy, and the West* (p. 184). Harper.

[13] The Pakistan Times, August 1972

significantly, revolved round, Islam is our faith, democracy is our polity, and socialism is our economy and all power to the people**.**[14]

Although the Ulema had overwhelmingly rejected at the polls. Mr. Bhutto believed it was best to have them on his side rather than to have to fight them. Along with the army and the core province issue, the religious leaders were the major potential threat to his role. Religious political parties and Ulema raised criticism on socialism. In truly Islamic polity, there is no room for theocracy or governance through a sacerdotal class. For that matter, Islamic constitution or, in other words, a constitution for an Islamic state can only be secular. The ideology of Nizam-i-Mustafa that the religious parties favored, was also put forward by the PNA in its election campaign, because it was much more simple and popular view of Islam[15] Nizam-i-Muatafa was, a powerful slogan of all religious opposition parties.[16] Bhutto said, a matter of fact, the first seed of socialism flowed under; the Islam of the days of our prophet, the Islam of the four khalifahs that is the Islam which give birth the principle of socialism. That is our Islam, the Islam of the people of Pakistan[17]

A review of relation between Bhutto and opposition

Over its four-year tenure, the opposition emerged as a serious challenge to Bhutto's government. Yet during the constitution-making process, its response and role were remarkably positive and constructive: it took an active part in drafting the constitution and cooperated with the government in resolving all conflicting issues, even though certain differences between the opposition and the PPP remained in the National Assembly. The Ulemas, for their part, were of the view that under such circumstances religious parties would not be able to influence the masses.[18]

1977 election and charges of rigging by opposition:

Polling for National Assembly seats was held on 7th March 1977 and by midnight it was clear that Bhutto's PPP had gained a runaway victory over the Pakistan National Alliance. When the results were complete, the PPP had won 154 seats in the 200-seat National Assembly, and the combined. Opposition had gained only thirty-six. All nine main Opposition parties managed to combine together to form the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA).[19] The PNA refused to accept the results and charged that the election was massively rigged according to the calculated plan. The PNA demand immediate and conditional resignation of Bhutto and removal of the Chief election commissioner and the holding of fresh elections under the supervision and army Bhutto denied the charges of rigging in the press conference on 11th March 1977. The PNA divided to launch civil obedience campaign in major cities of Pakistan.

National assembly session and opposition boycott:

National assembly session was convened on 26th March 1977 but no opposition member attends the session only the 153 members elected on PPP tickets and eight members from federal administered Tribal areas attended the session Miraj Khalid elected as a speaker of assembly. Bhutto invited the PNA to come for negotiations. Z. A. Bhutto decided to meet Moulana Maudad of Jamat-i- islami who was brain child behind Nifaz.i.Nizami.i.Mustafa. the meeting took place on

[14] Shah, S. M. H. (1996). *Religion and politics in Pakistan 1972–88* (p. 101). National Institute of Pakistan Studies.

[15] Wolpert, S. (1993). *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan: His life and times* (p. 283). Oxford University Press.

[16] Saeed, K. B. (1980). *Politics in Pakistan: The nature and direction of change* (p. 159). Praeger Publishers.

[17] Bhutto, Z. A. (1975). *March towards democracy* (p. 92). Classic Books.

[18] Bhutto, Z. A. (1969). *The myth of independence* (p. 59). Oxford University Press.

[19] Taseer, S. (n.d.). *Bhutto: A political biography* (p. 164). [Reproduced by Sani Hussain Panhwar, Member Sindh Council, PPP].

15, April 1977, in Lahore. He announced of Nizam Mustafa, all casinos and night clubs were close down and sale of alcoholic drinks and gambling would be banned.

Demand for fresh election by opposition alliance:

The opposition alliance demanded the rolling party for fresh elections under the supervision of judiciary and army. Though, the government of PPP tried to devise a solution to the political consist. Yahya Bakhtiar suggested that the government was ready to organize fresh election to the provincial assemblies. If PNA won majority seats, the National assembly would seat, the National assembly would also hold a fresh but the opposition refused to accept the offer of the govt. Hard-line Islamist leaders such as Mulana Madudi called for the overthrow of Bhutto's regime.[20]

In due course, the PPP government decided to open negotiations with the opposition leaders. On 18 May 1977, Bhutto visited Maulana Mufti Mehmood in Sihala. The PPP delegation comprised Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Abdul Hafeez Pirzada, and Kausar Niazi, while the opposition alliance put forward the names of several prominent leaders, namely Mufti Mehmood, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, and Prof. Ghafoor Ahmad. The talks stretched over a month and a half, with at least twelve rounds of negotiations taking place. The opposition's demands were twofold: fresh elections and the formation of a caretaker government. Following the conclusion of the talks, PPP spokesman Kausar Niazi announced at a press conference that the two sides had agreed to hold fresh elections.

Analysis:

During the era of Bhutto from 1971 to 1977, opposition proved itself a great challenge and develop a pressure on the government. Time and again UDF and PNA proved a great opposition for Bhutto govt. Though, Opposition for Bhutto government Though, opposition succeeded in order achieves their goals to some extend although some differences remained between the opposition and the PPP. If we see all the political scenario of Bhutto time Bhutto was successful because he know that all main parties are against him and he was got back to back news form army head quarter that army is going against him like On 3 July 1977, Major General K.M. Arif secretly met Bhutto, revealing that the planning of a coup had been taking place in the General Combatant Headquarters (GHQ) but he continue negotiation with oppositions [21] for the sake of country.

Conclusion:

The foregoing discussion leads to the conclusion that Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto took numerous steps for the progress and development of the country. While some of these measures proved fruitful, others were perceived as flawed or baseless, prompting the opposition to exert pressure in an effort to counter them. Although the opposition gave the Bhutto government a difficult time and established two major alliances the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) Bhutto's government demonstrated considerable resilience in the face of this pressure.

With regard to the role of the opposition in Pakistan's politics, it is evident that alliances have frequently been formed by a number of political parties united by a common interest against the

[20] Hassan, M. (2000). *The mirage of power: An inquiry into the Bhutto years, 1971–1977* (p. 296). Oxford University Press.

[21] Haqqani, H. (2005). *Pakistan: Between mosque and military* (p. 395). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

government. A review of the past reveals that one of the principal causes of the failure of democracy in Pakistan has been the ineffective role of opposition parties.

On 5 July 1977, General Zia-ul-Haq imposed martial law and dissolved Bhutto's government. The PNA, along with other factors, was a major cause of Bhutto's downfall.

In sum, the role of the opposition in Pakistan's political process has been characterized by the formation of alliances among multiple parties seeking to safeguard common interests against the government. Historically, the ineffective role of opposition parties has been a major cause of the failure of democracy in Pakistan. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was the first leader to come to power as a result of a historical evolution; the politicians from Liaquat Ali Khan to Sikandar Mirza, and military men such as Presidents Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan, were no match for him.

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