Politics of Sindh: An Analysis of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto’s Government

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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to examine the political situation of Pakistan with special reference to the politics of Sindh. When first Sindhi Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto became Chief Executive of the government and head of state, Z.A. Bhutto left a long-standing political repercussion in the politics of the country and especially on the politics of his home province. The nationalist feelings increased among the people of Sindh due to the military rule before Bhutto government. The analysis of Bhutto’s policies against the Sindhi nationalists is the part of this study.

Keywords: Sindh, Politics, Government, Democracy, Nationalism

Introduction

Without the concept of the participation of the people in the decision-making, democracy is nothing; so the share of Sindhis in the power structure of Pakistan was nominal before the Bhutto government.

1.1 Background of the study: Pakistan came into being in 1947. Leaders of Pakistan succeeded 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.

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, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto took over the power from Yahya Khan on 20th December 1971 and then he became Chief Martial Law Administrator, President and later the Prime Minister of Pakistan. He was first Sindhi, who reached on the highest post of the state.

The transfer of the power to Z.A. Bhutto by Yahya Khan was not in normal conditions. “The Indian Army and Bengali Militants defeated to Pakistan Army. About 93,000 military officers and Jawans were arrested by the Indian Army as prisoners of war” (Waseem, 1994, p.
The East Pakistan was separated and became an independent state on the map of the world named Bangladesh.

President Yahya transferred the power to Bhutto on the pressure of the junior officers of Army and General Gul Hassan Khan and Air Martial Rahim Khan, “And yet Bhutto ascendency to power through a mini-coup and his formal position as the Chief Martial Law Administrator point to the Military ‘ continuing hold over political initiative for some time” (Waseem, 1994, p. 295). At that time the behavior of the junior officers towards their leadership was not in a disciplined, it is quoted by General K.M. Arif as under:

“On 19 December (1971) General Abdul Hamid Khan the Chief of staff of the Pakistan Army addressed the army officers in the national defense collage auditorium at Rawalpindi. He faced a volley of hostile questions from the agitated junior officers and barely managed to extricate himself from an awkward situation” (Arif, 1996, p. 36- 37).

It was mentioned by Hamid Khan in these words “Violent demonstrations began on 18 December, against the military regime in West Pakistan, followed by a vocal revolt by army officers in G.H.Q Rawalpindi on 19 December, which led to Yahya’s resignation” (Khan, 2001, p. 431).

He further quoted that “On 17 December Gul Hassan, along with Rahim Khan, went to the President House to confront Yahya. On arrival, they found Yahya still busy with his radio address. At the meeting at which General Abdul Hamid Khan was present, Gul Hassan and Rahim Khan informed Yahya that remained but for him to go. At first Yahya resisted this suggestion but when they pressed him more firmly, He agreed and added that He would then go back to the army as Commander-in-Chief. This, Gul Hassan and Rahim Khan treated as absurd and insisted that Yahya must go altogether” (Khan, 2001, p. 433).

‘Bhutto assumed power as President and Chief Martial Law Administrator, and the army assisted him to power”. This is unique example in the history that a Civilian became a Chief Martial Law Administrator.

When Bhutto took the charge of the President and Chief Martial Law Administrator of the country, “About Six Hundred square miles of territory occupied by India and nearly 93,000 Prisons of War were in Indian jails. It was the first Sindhi who took the highest post of the country, Sindhi were very happy and welcomed the Bhutto with great warm and heart” (Ageef, 1989, p. 260).
Dr. Mahtab Ali Shah described it as under:

“The PPP won the 1970 elections in Sindh, as opposed to Punjab, not on the basis of its manifesto but because of the personality cult of Sindhi. In the Punjab Bhutto rode the tiger of anti-India rhetoric, but in Sindh the PPP’s propaganda machinery portrayed him as the personification of a Sindhi identity, Bhutto Saeen By voting for Bhutto the Sindhi felt that something would be done for them” (Shah, 1997, p. 54).

The Nationalist and provincial sentiments were reduced and the federal politics was flourished in Sindh Province. The nationalists’ feelings were flourished in previous governments, due to its policies. Bhutto took many steps for the betterment of the people and tried to fill the wounds of the Sindhis.

He was first Sindhi who became the head of State and government; due to that reason Sindhi felt that Bhutto’s government was their own government. So they commitment with the federal government and politics was increased in the people of Sindh, it was the first time in which Sindhis were preferred in jobs and services in the government and semi-governments. Omar Noman wrote that “Bhutto was the first Sindhi to hold such an important political post. Under him both substantive symbolic measures were undertaken to rectify past discrimination against Sindhis, and preference was given to Sindhis for government jobs in Karachi as well as other parts of Sindh” (Noman, 1988, p. 181).

Mahtab Ali Shah (1997) said that Sindhi got the jobs also in Islamabad especially in education and health departments.

Bhutto announced the Agriculture Reforms on 11th March 1972, through the Martial Law Act. Bhutto reduced the land ceiling from 500 to 150 acres of irrigated land and from 1000 acres of non-irrigated land to 300 acres only, and from 3600 to 1500 produces index units. (Khan, 2001, p. 440 & Ageef, 1989 p. 263). The speed of the distribution of the land was very slow.

“From May 1972 to November 1974, only 229219.4 hectors were distributed but the land was fixed for the distribution 646365.2 hectors. In other words the all land was not snatched from the Feudal. (Ageef, 1989, p. 264).

The maximum ceiling by way of 150 acres of irrigated land or 300 acres of un-irrigated land was easily undone by the alternative provision of produce index units.
When Bhutto announced more reforms in 1977 and reduced the ceiling of the land and increased the taxes on the property. Mostly Zamindars and feudal opposed it and left the PPP. They joined the opposition against Bhutto. (Ageef, 1989, p. 273).

The Land Reforms by the Bhutto government also grew the self confidence in the haris (Farmers) and the trust on the federal government also increased. The farmers who suppressed and exploited from the centuries by the feudal and waderas, they were honored and respected first time, so their loyalty with Bhutto and country was increased and Bhutto was the creature of the political conscious in the people.

Dr. Safdar Mahmood narrated it as under “Bhutto and his party gave the political sense to the people of the country. PPP gave a democratic constitution and imparted political consciousness and a sense of elation to the common people. (Mahmood, 2000, p. 140).

Nationalization policy was introduced by Bhutto, many factories as well as financial institutions, Private Schools and colleges were nationalized, the jobs were given to Sindhis on the priority basis. Sindhi became directors and members of the board of the governors in many institutions.

He announced his nationalization program, in the first phase on 2nd January 1972 that Ten (10) categories of basic Industries were being taken over by the state for the benefit of the people of Pakistan. (Khan, 2001, p. 439). Life Insurance Business was nationalized on 19th March 1972, and government established the State Life Insurance Corporation to undertake Life Insurance Business, after that “All Pakistani Banks were nationalized on 1st January 1974, private schools and Collages were also nationalized. Those steps of Bhutto Government to increase the resentment in the capitalist class. (Rizvi, 1992, p. 211)

Sindhi got the jobs in many companies after the implementation of the policy of Nationalization. Dr feroze Ahmed also mentioned that “Under the PPP Government some Sindhi got job in the nationalized sectors. (Ahmed, 1999, p. 163)

The government announced the labor policy: “The labor reforms aimed and providing a more meaningful participation to workers in industrial managements as well as “equitable” share of profits. The industrialists were made responsible for the education of one child of every worker employed in their concern. New rules were announced regarding bonus, gratuity leave, compensation and retirement. These rules also provided for a ‘quick and fair’
settlement of collective disputes, protection of workers against victimization and promotion of trade unionism”. (Rizvi, 1992, p. 211).

So the policy of the Nationalization and more facilities for the labor such as share in the production and other advantages for the labors did not acceptable to the industrialists. The policy of the ‘Late Entry’ was introduced according to that policy many Professors of the Universities indicted in the district management and other departments.

The support of the Bhutto and federal politics raised due to the policies constitutional covered to Quota System. According to the percentage was fixed for the rural areas and urban areas. The rural Sindhis were more beneficiated from that policy. The introducing Domicile and National identity Card also went in the interest of the Sindhis. The admission in the professional collages and jobs also on the basis of the domicile prevent the outsiders, and gave the benefit to the local peoples.

Bhutto worked on the constructions of the infrastructures. The facilities of the educations and health also provided to the people of Sindh on the priority basis and flourished the federal politics in Sindh.

Chandka Medical Collage Larkana, Shah Abdul Latif Campus Khairpur, Mehran University Jamshoro and many schools and health centers were opened by the Bhutto government.

Above all steps of Bhutto enhance the patriotism in the people of Sindh. The nationalist of Sindh such as G. M Sayed and others went to low profile; awam did not response to them, the slogan of Sindhu Desh did not impress the people of Sindh. Many Nationalist leaders including G.M Sayed, Abdul Wahid Ariser, Habibullah Narejo were arrested, even than the sympathies of the Sindhis were towards Bhutto.

Bhutto moved the constitutional Bill in the National Assembly on 30 December 1972. “After a lengthy discussion on the constitution in the Assembly new constitutions was passed on 10 April 1973, with Islamic provision. New constitution came into force on 14 August 1973. Federal Parliamentary System was introduced through this constitution. Chaudhry Fazal Elahi was sworn in as President and Bhutto was Prime Minister”. (Khan, 2001, p. 510).

According the new constitution The Parliament consisted of two houses, National Assembly and Senate. The representation in National Assembly was on the population basis and it consisted on 200 hundred members. Forty-three seats reserve for Sindh. The upper house of the parliament means Senate represents the units of the Federation on equal basis.

Sindhi Language became official language of Sindh. In 1970 elections campaign in Sindh PPP had promised with the people of Sindh that if they would win the election and formed
the Government, they would restore the previous status of the Sindhi Language. So in this regard they introduced the Sindhi Language Bill in Sindh Assembly, it was passed on 7th July 1972. Out of Sixty members 50 voted in the favour and only 12 went against it. “All the Sindhi speaking supported the Bill and all Urdu speaking people opposed it, either they belonged to treasury benches or opposition”. (Ageef, 1989, p. 318). According to Sindhi Language Bill, Sindhi Language would be the official language of the Province.

“The PPP Government wanted to restore the old status of Sindhi Language as the Provincial official language, but this evoked a strong reaction from the Urdu speakers, they saw it as an attempt by the Sindh Government to undermine their special status. (Mahtab Ali Shah, 1997, P-54, Far Eastern Economic Review 22, July 1972, P-14).

After that Urdu speaking demonstrated and chanted the slogan that “Urdu Ka Janaza Hai Zara Dhoom Se Nikly”. The demonstrator attacked on the government properties as well as they targeted and attacked on Sindhis. The Sindhi Department of Karachi University was burnt by them; in the reaction Sindhi attacked on Urdu speaking in the Sindhi dominated areas. The ethnic and linguistic riots took place all over the province at least 55 people were killed and thousands were injured. (Amin, 1993, p. 126)

It was only the fears in the minds of the Urdu speakers that the government would finish the status of Urdu but it was not the reality. The PPP government wanted only to restore the previous status of the Sindhi Language. At that time Urdu population was under the influence of Jamaaiat Ialami and JUP. So both parties instigated into them and serve their political interests. The All India Radio broadcast also supported the Muhajirs and Urdu Language.

“India radio service also criticized the reintroduction of Sindhi as the official Language of the Province and evoking the Urdu propaganda slogan from a poem of Rais Amroohi “Urdu Ka Janaza Hai Zara dhoom Se Nikly”. (Shah, 1997, p. 450).

After that situation, Z.A.Bhutto himself interfered and directed to Government that He would not sign on bill, and called the leaders of both communities and appointed the committee to consult the delegates and to find out the acceptable solution for both. It included Abdul Hafeez Pirzada (Sindhi) Hayat Mohammad Sherpao (Pathan), Meraj Mohammad Khan (Muhajir) all of them Central Minister and Meraj Khalid the Chief Minister of Punjab.

After the direct interference of Bhutto after that an agreement was signed:

“Sindhi would become the official language of Sindh and Urdu would be honored and promoted as the National Language and that for a period of Twelve Years no one would be
disadvantaged in Public employment or transaction on the ground that He did not know Sindhi”. (Khan, 2001, p. 466)

Sindhi Nationalist and Urdu extremist did not accept the agreement, but after that riots were in controlled. It was the situation of the political phenomenon of the country. The right wing religious parties, left wing progressive parties and nationalist parties were against Bhutto. The nationalist parties demanded for the more Provincial Autonomy. At that time G.M. Sayed the Sindhi Nationalist launched the program of Sindhu Desh, an independent State. Bhutto’s support in Sindh did not reduced even than the Sindhi Nationalist called him the agent of the Punjab (see, G.M. Sayed’s book Sindhu Desh Chho ain chha laai) It was only due to his Charismatic personality, its behavior towards the awam and practical work for the welfare of the peoples. He appointed the Sindhi in the federal government and also in the Provincial government, on the priority basis. Many development projects were started in Sindh on his instructions and personal interests. The special projects were established for the development of the undeveloped Kohistan, Kachho and Thar areas of Sindh. The hospitals and health centers were also built in Sindh, the schools, colleges, Universities, Mehran University, and Shah Latif University, and medical collages were established. The separate High Court established in Sindh for quick justice. The Quota System was continuing under the protection of the constitution, which was beneficial for the rural areas. (Low educational facility in rural areas) The domicile policy and the identity card also introduced by Bhutto.

On 7 January 1977, Bhutto announced that the general elections would be held in March. After that President dissolved the assemblies. Election commissioner fixed 7th March for the poll of National assembly and 10 March for the elections of the four provincial assemblies. Bhutto was confident that He would win the majority seats.

At that time, the opposition of Bhutto was not unite. When the elections were announced the nine opposition parties were unite on the Pakistan National Alliance plate form on 21 January 1977.

The National Assembly elections were held on 7 March. The 15 candidates of the Bhutto’s PPP, including him, declared successful as unopposed. The Bhutto’s opposite candidate Jan Mohammad Abbasi was kidnapped before the submission of nomination by the Government agencies and he was released after the last date of the submission of the nomination. Hamid Khan also quoted it as under.

“The district Government in his home town, Larkana arrested his opponent Jan Mohammad Abbasi on 18 January 1977 and kept him at an undisclosed location until after the date for the
filling nomination papers (19th January) had passed. The Prime Minister was thus declared to have been elected unopposed. (Khan, 2001, p. 561)

So it was the position that an unknown person was arrested and he did not allow to fill the nomination form. If he would have been allowed to fill the form then he was not in a position to secure only 3% votes. So the arresting of Jan Mohammad was really a blunder, it was aimed to reduced the popularity of Bhutto and degrade him in the political world.

The elections results came in the favour of Bhutto; He won 5 seats out of 6 from Larkana, Thatta, Karachi and Multan and loosed only one seat to Mufti Mahmood from Dera Ismail Khan. PPP won 155 seats; it was more than two third majority: Party position was as under

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PNA did not accept the election results and accused the ruling party for rigging in the elections and boycotted the elections of the Provincial Assemblies. “PNA refused to accepted the result, charged that the elections were rigged by the Government and boycotted the Provincial assemblies elections. (Press conference of Asghar Khan on 8 March Source Dawn March 1977) Hamid khan narrated it as: “The PNA also resorted to mal practices, where it could, and notable in the city of Karachi. (Khan, 2001, p. 561)

The movement launched by PNA against Bhutto, movement became strong in Hyderabad and Karachi. During the movement the curfew was imposed in Karachi, Hyderabad, Faisalabad and Lahore. Martial Law was imposed in the big cities of the country, such as Karachi, Lahore, and Hyderabad under the article 245 of the Constitution. The one thing was notable that the big cities of Sindh means Karachi and Hyderabad were the center of the movement, but the Sindhis did not participate in the movement. So the PNA movement were not spread in the Sindhi dominated areas.

Bhutto imposed the partially martial law in the cities. He forgotten his own warning five years early that “Once armed forces intervene, they play the game according to their own
rules. It is necessary for a civilian government to avoid seeking the assistance of the armed Forces in dealing with its responsibilities and problems. (Lamb, 1991, p. 83)

It was proved truth that once Armed Forces were come on the order of the Bhutto, than they never returned to barracks and ousted Bhutto from power structure.

“On 17 April, Bhutto an attempt to dislodge them, banned drinking and gambling, shut down night –clubs and race-courses, and reconstituted the Islamic Advisory Council with the mandate to propose measures for Islamizing the country’s law within six months”. (Khan, 2001, p. 564)

“In the speech in the National Assembly on 28 April, Bhutto asserted that agencies of the United States government presumably the CIA and the American embassy of Islamabad had instigated and funded the PNA movement. (Khan, 2001, p. 563)

The Martial Law was challenged in Lahore High Court and “full bench declared on 2nd June that the Martial was unconstitutional”. (Waseem, 1994, p. 338, Khan, 2001, p. 564)

In May 1977, the corps commander protested but in April 1977 Zia had advised the imposition of martial law in certain cities. (Khan, 2001, p. 568)

On 1st July the negotiators were reached on conclusion the final draft of the agreement. The agreement needed the PNA council’s for approval. The negotiators of the PNA were hopeful that the council would approve them, but when the council met on the evening of the 2nd July Asghar Khan, Sher Baz Mazari and Begum Nasim Wali Khan condemned the negotiators for entertaining the Bhutto’s proposed changes. Finally council recommended nine more points for the agreement and authorized to Mufti Mahmood that if the Government negotiators accepted the new draft they would sign an agreement.

The PNA team took new additional points to Bhutto at 10:00 pm on 3 July 1977. Nawabzada and Mufti Mahmood urged that new points are only technical so accepted. Bhutto told Mufti Mahmood that he needed more time to consult his friends. Bhutto called the meeting of the cabinet at the same evening, the dominant view of the cabinet opposed the further concessions to the PNA. Zia who was also present, stood up once again both hands on his chest, to assure Bhutto of his complete support, adding ‘please rely on us, we are your strong arm’. (Khan, 2001, p. 570)

On the evening of the 4th July 1977, Bhutto called the meeting of the cabinet to re think on the issue of the agreement with the PNA and discussed on the political situation of the
country. In the meeting they also discussed on the chances of the military coup. After that Kausar Niazi recalls that, when the cabinet rose, “Zia had a private meeting with Bhutto, after which the General left hurriedly, unsmiling”. (Khan, 2001, p. 571)

On the evening of the 4th July the fear of the coup was appearing, Bhutto was ready to make an agreement with PNA. He consulted Mr Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi Chief Minister of Sindh and Mumtaz Ali Bhutto and Hafeez Pirzada. Jatoi and Mumtaz counseled that accepted the demand of the PNA but Pirzada opposed it.

Bhutto arranged the press conference at 11:30 am and announced that he accepted the demand and said that I will sign the accord tomorrow. (Khan, 2001, p. 571) But before the tomorrow Zia took over the reins of the country and declared the Martial law throughout the country on the night between the 4th and 5th July and Bhutto ousted from the Government and was arrested.
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