
Nascent Democracy of Pakistan (1988-1990)

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Pakistan was going through a very crucial period in the context of the August 17, 1988 incident in which President General Zia ul Haq along with American Ambassador and top brass military officers like General Akhtar Abdul Rahman and Brigadier Sidiq Salik were blown to ashes. The nation was in turmoil and the role of Acting President Ghulam Ishaq Khan new COAS General Aslam Baig Mirza was vital. In that context the leadership in power decided to announce Party based elections.

The Elections 1988 were held under uncertain conditions. They had certain unique features also. The assurances from President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Gen. Aslam Beg about holding elections in time and pledge of caretaker governments for impartial and just elections were praiseworthy. Different political parties, political alliances and independent candidates were participating in elections. The Army, judiciary, and caretaker governments remained impartial which enhanced the level of political maturity and public interest.

The elections of 1988 were contested under the politics of electoral alliances. The formation of electoral alliances at the time of elections is a routine matter in the culture of multi party system. The political organizations at different levels become active to prove their utility. Different political parties cooperate with each other; the small parties get benefit from alliances. They easily get support for their candidates and their interests are safeguarded.

Many electoral alliances were established at the eve of October 1988 election.¹ i.e Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), Pakistan Awami Ittehad, (PAI) Democratic Front, NPP (Khar group) with Jamiat Ahli-i-Sunnat adjustment, confidential seat adjustment between PPP and JUI(F), Awami National Party, Sindhi Baloch Pakhtoon Front, Balochistan National Alliance, Punjabi Pakhtoon Ittehad. The most important alliance was IJI formed against PPP. The alliance had its power base in Punjab mainly. Later on, after election 1988 it confronted actively against PPP's federal

government which became the main root cause of bitter centre-province relations. It resulted in lawlessness and disorder which proved fatal for onward political developments.

The formation of electoral alliance is a normal routine during elections in Pakistan. Mostly, they are established in opposition to the ruling party. The opposition parties collaborate with each other against ruling political party but the elections 1988 were held in the atmosphere of rebirth of democracy. The ruling regime did not wish to lose their position. The establishment was at its service. It was for the first time in the history of Pakistan that an electoral alliance named *Islami Jamhoori Ittehad* was established comprising ex ruling stalwarts from all political parties against PPP.

PPP had emerged then as strong democratic force. All allied parties of IJI were lagging behind and were not able to challenge it individually. It had become a countrywide popular and organized party. The right wing parties gathered under the banner of IJI to contest the forth coming elections with a chance to get collective success. For that purpose the right wing party leaders had to create consensus among them unwillingly. The apparent situation was in the interest of PPP because PML was divided into two factions on the issue of dissolution of Junejo government, one supporting Junejo and the other was supporting Zia under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, one an equal partner of power while the other deprived of power. After the demise of Zia mutual cooperation or understanding between both became out of question.

Junejo was principally criticizing the role and authority of provincial caretaker governments. Both groups were in search of their supporters to enhance their utility. Fida Muhammad Khan as front man laid the foundation of IJI.² Junejo also responded to establish an alliance with JUP (Noorani) and Tehrik-i-Istaqlal of Air Marshal (Retd.) Asghar Khan, under the banner of *Pakistan Awami Ittehad*.³ Maulana Noorani was nominated as convener of Ittehad and Gen. Retd. M.A. Ansari⁴ as Secretary General. Maulana Noorani stated 'there is an electoral alliance for the period of five years and will nominate joint candidates.'⁵ JUI(F) , Pakistan Democratic Party and Jamat-i-Islami also contacted mutually for joint alliance.⁶

The residence of Dr, Sarfraz Mir (NPPP) Islamabad was the hub of activities for the establishment of IJI. The first session was attended by three IJI leaders i.e Prof. Ghafoor Ahmed, Prof. Khurshid Ahmed and Ch. Rehmat Elahi.⁷ IJI presented its reservations in the form of five points

regarding the assurance for conduct of elections, release of Islami Jamiat Talba (IJT) workers, and withdrawal of cases against them and to reinstate the workers of JI in different trade unions. JI did not attend the second session but later on joined IJI on October 10, 1988.⁸

As a result of initial negotiations IJI was established on October 5, 1988. After the joining of JI and other parties Prof. Ghafoor Ahmed was nominated as Gen. Sec. and Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi as President.⁹ To establish the alliance at large scale eleven political parties and groups joined the alliance which included

- 1 Jamat i Islami
- 2 Pakistan Muslim League (Fida group)
- 3 National People's Party
- 4 Markazi Jamiat i Ahli Hadith (Lakhvi group)
- 5 Jamiat Ulema i Pakistan (Darkhawasti group)
- 6 Hizb i Hind
- 7 Jamiat ul Mashaikh Pakistan
- 8 Azad Group (Fakhar Imam)
- 9 Nizam i Mustafa Group
- 10 Khaksar Tehrik
- 11 Pakistan Muslim League (Junejo)¹⁰

The formation of IJI brought good luck for PML i.e. both factions of it reunited on October 14, 1988. The differences between both ended and PML (J) joined the alliance. It was the revival of PML at national level. If the differences would have been controlled in time the situation would have been different. The other constituent parties of IJI belonged to diverse ideological back ground. Actually, this alliance consisted of two major national level political parties, i.e. PML and JI.

Mainly the aim and objective of IJI's election campaign was to target and malign PPP. Its leaders propagated publically that Hindu and Jewish lobby was at the back of PPP.¹¹ They argued that PPP was responsible for the dismemberment of country in 1971. They argued that Bhutto had under hand deal on the basis of 'Idhar ham Udhar tum' and on Kashmir issue. Moreover, Al- Zulifkar was a sibling militant group of PPP which hijacked PIA plane. IJI leadership tried to convince people not to bring PPP into power again.

IJI was established under the umbrella of civil military establishment. According to Prof. Ghafoor Ahmed, Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg (COAS) invited him at a dinner on his residence. The other participants were all the four Chief Ministers, Naseem Aahir, Federal Interior Minister, Lt. Gen. Hameed Gul (ISI chief), Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi (NPP chief), Dr. Sarfraz and others.¹² During mutual conversation political situation was brought under discussion. Hameed Gul's special attention was about the formation of IJI, and was of the view that PML lacked discipline despite of reunion of both groups. Many candidates were not allotted party tickets and were contesting election independently.

NPP's Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi was also not satisfied with the process of distribution of tickets. There were also reservations of JUI (D) due to non issuance of ticket to Maulana Ajmal. JI was also complainant about the issuance of tickets which were less as promised before. JI also complained about the proceedings against IJT (a student wing of JI) of Punjab Government., due to which JI was facing difficulties to cater the cooperation of youth. Independent group was also dissatisfied that a potential candidate Syeda Abida Hussain was not allotted ticket. Jamiat Ahli Hadith had also reservations of same kind. Hizb i Jihad was also dissatisfied from non issuance of ticket to Agha Murtaza Poya from Islamabad.

According to Gen. Hameed Gul's analysis presented during the meeting PPP had upper hand over IJI. At provincial level PPP had a better position in NWFP, Punjab and Sindh as compared to other parties. Its performance was not better only in Balochistan. According to his estimate PPP was able to get 94 National Assembly seats and IJI 68 seats.¹³

Lt. Gen. Fazal ul Haq and Naseem Aaheer pointed about the differences in IJI which were factual.¹⁴ PML (J) joined IJI at the moment when ticket distribution had almost been completed. Although PML (J) was granted

certain concessions, but Nawaz Sharif had dominant position over the process of ticket distribution.¹⁵ The leaders of IJI had also personal differences among themselves, i.e Junejo and Jatoi. It created lack of confidence among IJI leadership.

Prof. Ghafoor Ahmed in his book “Wazir i Azam Benazir Bhutto Namzadbi se Bartarfi tak” that he had contacts with Gen Aslam Beg and Gen Hameed Gul at different events and levels regarding the performance of IJI. Prof. Ghafoor had a meeting at Gen. Aslam Beg’s residence with Gen. Hameed Gul, Naseem Aaheer, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi and Nawaz Sharif. During meeting Hameed Gul informed about election campaign and expected results. He informed that IJI improved its condition in NWFP and it would be able to get 69 seats in response to 90 seats of PPP in National Assembly. He proposed before time that IJI should be able to tackle the post election scenario and should contact the successful candidates of FATA, independent candidates, Pakistan National Party and JUI. He advised the IJI leadership to contact Maulana Fazal ul Rehman, Haji Hanif Tayyab and Pir Pagara¹⁶ and MQM. Balochistan National Party was in a better position in Balochistan and JUI in NWFP. It shows that how the military and ISI played its role in making future government by patronizing IJI. It also played role in downfall of next PPP government.¹⁷

As ISI Chief Gen. Hameed Gul had deep insight about the facts. He mentioned that provincial governments were not fulfilling their promises because IJT candidates were also imprisoned at Hyderabad and Karachi. MQM had to face tough competition and it was not part of IJI. The participant parties of IJI were unable to work in such areas. The federal interior minister Naseem Aaheer was the only person who had direct contacts with MQM. After the formation of alliance an unexpected situation arose that anti JI and IJT activities started. Liaquat Baloch an important leader of JI and IJI was attacked at Lahore.¹⁸ The improper performance of IJI and its internal differences, the alliance could not open its offices at central and provincial and even its manifesto could not be published.

PPP was in a better position and had circulated its manifesto.¹⁹ The common cause before IJI leadership was to check the PPP’s way to come into power again. Mostly all political parties and their leadership was victimized during last rule of PPP. There is no doubt about the authoritarian rule of PPP. Many political leaders and workers were tortured and murdered; the basic rights remained suspended also and even emergency was imposed. The constitution was also amended several times. The activities of political

parties were checked. Due to all these bitter experiences all constituent parties and leaders of IJI were worried about the chances of PPP's victory again.²⁰

The month of November 1988 has much importance in country's political history which witnessed the transfer of power to real democratic forces after a long span of 11 years. The election campaign of all political parties was at its optimum level. It was a general viewpoint that IJI would give tough time to PPP but it could not be practically materialized. The election campaign and public meetings of IJI were better than the expectations because it was established only three weeks before elections. It was successful to cater the environment of mutual confidence and cooperation between divided workers on party basis.

PPP alone was much effective. Its workers got an open chance to express their aggression against non democratic forces and Zia. The election campaign was also stained with mutual conflicts between IJI and PPP workers. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, Pir Pagara, Muhammad Khan Junejo and other leaders criticized PPP leadership with reference to performance of last regime. Mian Nawaz Sharif also played an important role in IJI's electoral politics.

It is pertinent to note that elections 1988 were mainly contested between PPP and PML. Although PML had support of Jamat-i-Islami and other constituent parties of IJI. The IJI leadership could not effectively introduce their manifesto and programme. They remained personal against PPP leadership. Bhutto ladies were very much confident about PPP's victory. Benazir stated that many big leaders left party for a chance to become PM under Martial Law regime. Begum Nusrat Bhutto severely criticized the leadership of Sindh National Alliance during a public meeting at Dadu on November 8, 1988.²¹ She stated that these had been the advisors of dictators and were motivating innocent Sindhi people to get their support. Benazir Bhutto during an interview with foreign magazine claimed that PPP would get majority than any other party and no political party would be able to compete with PPP. She said that political developments which have occurred after Zia's death are due to PPP's efforts which included party based elections and separation of military from politics.

Benazir also objected PML's tilt towards India previously. She questioned during a public meeting regarding election campaign on November 15, 1988 that how and by whom Kuldip Nayer, an Indian journalist was brought

to meet Dr. A. Q. Khan.²² She challenged for an open T.V. debate. While addressing a public meeting on November 12, 1988, she claimed that PPP had representation at national level. The IJI leadership including Jatoi, Junejo and Nawaz Sharif were not popular enough to win elections with the exception of their native areas.

During an address to public meeting at Peshawar she declared that interim leaders have put the solidarity of country in danger at the cost of racial differences. She asserted that end of differences between rival political parties would be the prime responsibility of all and PPP was the only party which was considered to be a unifying symbol of federation of Pakistan. As a result of a poll conducted by Pakistani news papers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were favourite candidates for becoming prime minister by the ratio of 30% and 28% respectively.

Mostly, the election results in Pakistan are hardly acceptable for losers because there are always a tradition of manouvouring and manging the results of 'one's own' choice. There are the precedents of influencing elections but comparatively 1988 election results were finalized in independent and impartial atmosphere. The process of electioneering was conducted with the sense of maturity and responsibility.

Many popular political leaders including party chiefs lost the 1988 elections and many popular candidates by ordinary candidates. A large number of independent candidates won the elections. It became favourable for national harmony that many sectarian and regional based political parties vanished from the scene.

Another trend developed in party politics under the politics of alliances. The petty political parties, groups and organizations combine to form alliances jointly, to get majority collectively. Many educated middle class candidates were elected at provincial and national level in opposition to federal and industrial approach.²³ The success of independent candidates at large level might be the result of local bodies system introduced in 1979 after along gap. Gen. Zia introduced and utilized this system to have direct approach with the masses and tried to legitimize his government. During Zia regime local bodies' elections were held thrice i.e. 1979, 1983 and 1987. These elections proved helpful to cater new leadership. Therefore a large number of independent candidates the then have now become important figures at national level. The success of independent candidates securing thousands of votes created troubles for political parties. The rate of success of political

remained nominal i.e 10% of total votes because vote bank was divided at large numbers.

The election of independent candidates is always on regional, tribal and family basis. This trend upsets the national political scene. Mostly, the independent candidates prefer their vested interests over national interest and present themselves as purchasable commodity with the exception of a few. The political parties have already suffered due to non political and non professional behavior of independents.

In a civilized society the effective personalities are always popular. Personality worship is always prevalent in different societies. It has also played an important role in national politics. People are attached with different political parties due to their manifestoes, performance, ideology and leadership. It has very long lasting consequences eg Bhuttoism and Ziaism etc. The Bhutto factor is still dominating the national and provincial politics of Sindh.

It was mainly due to personality charisma of Zulifkar Ali Bhutto which made PPP successful in Sindh. In contrast to PPP, PML introduced the concept of Ziaism during 1988 elections. The same approach was further responsible for bitter Centre Punjab relations. The success of PPP in Sindh was the acceptability of Bhuttoism where as IJI and Nawaz Sharif created the acceptability of Ziaism in the Punjab.

The political scene of urban Sindh was dominated by MQM and pressure groups organized under Altaf Hussain. It proved hard nut for its opponents at Karachi and Hyderabad. The sectarian politics also created the atmosphere of hatred and enmity. The people belonging to different sects organized their respective political parties which always remain at logger's head to each other under the advice and *fatwas* of their respective leaders.

The role of Shrines is also an important factor in our national politics. The followers of different Sajjada Nasheens and Pirs play decisive role in national politics. All provinces of Pakistan have different social circumstances; therefore the election results were different. The national level politics could not make its room at provincial and regional level; therefore the leadership of national level caliber could not emerge. The personality factor remained dominant at all levels. The parties were not organized and were not capable to propagate their program. Mostly the political parties always remain in search of potential candidates which are

guarantee of success due to their personality called Electables. Such personalities won the previous elections in their respective constituencies' i.e. Nawabzada Nasar Ullah Khan, Maulana Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi, Ghulam Mustafa Khar, Mian Ghulam Haider Wyien, Mir Zafar ullah Khan Jamali, Abdul Wali Khan and others.

Considering the performance of different political parties, PPP secured 93 seats despite of all odd situations. The party enabled itself to emerge at national level and formed its government at centre with the support of 12 MQM and 12 women seats. It emerged as federal party because its candidates belonged to different parts of Pakistan. The election results were of much importance for PPP and PML and were according to the estimate of Gen. Hameed Gul. PML became deprived of power at centre and provincial level at Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan. It could form its government only in Punjab being an important part of IJI.

PPP became single majority party in National Assembly by securing 93 seats where as IJI could secure 54 seats despite of being a big alliance.²⁴ According to the scenario PPP emerged as a federal party as per its claim. The IJI became limited to Punjab only. In other three provinces i.e Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan it lost its representation at national level. It was the advantage of PPP that it also emerged as strong democratic force after competing against Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) in 1977 and now IJI in 1988. IJI was the group of political parties having divergent interests and was established due to the backing of civilian-military establishment.

IJI became victim of its internal conflict due to which it could not run the election campaign effectively. Its main constituent party PML had been the victim of group politics due to which the party further divided under different political personalities. The main controversial issue faced by IJI before the conduct of Election was distribution of tickets due to its delayed formation. The candidates which remained deprived of tickets contested election as independent candidates. The election campaign of IJI almost remained stained with much difference. There was another important issue that under the principle of seat adjustment between different parties, some weak and ineffective candidates got tickets and lost the election.

Considering overall performance of alliance we observe that it could secure the seat from capital city. Its performance was Zero in Sindh; PPP secured all rural seats and MQM all urban seats. Punjab was the center of IJI's power .In Sindh PPP formed its ministry with the cooperation of MQM , in

Balochistan Zafar ullah Jamali of IJI became Chief Minister with the support of PPP, and in NWFP ,PPP formed government under Aftab Sherpao as Chief Minister.

The previous ruling elite got much disturbed due to elevation of PPP to power corridors. Actually, the IJI leadership launched election campaign on the basis of hatred and character assassination of PPP leadership. If it would have paid attention towards the propagation of its policies and manifesto, the situation might be different. Nawaz Sharif toured the whole Punjab and alarmed the whole public that PPP would take revenge from Punjab if they bring it into power. Meanwhile an evil practice was done by launching a catchy slogan “ Jaj Punjabi jag teri pag no lag gaya dagh”²⁵ Under such conditions PPP could not form its government in Punjab but the effort of provoking provincialism was made .

The future governments at both levels became poles apart and the centre-province relations were stained severe differences from 1988-90. Even the working relations between the both could not be maintained. The efforts of dumping down to each other and getting more strength damaged the nascent democracy by the dissolution of Benazir Bhutto’s government and assemblies on August 6, 1990. The practice of weakening each other repeated thrice i.e. in 1993, 1996 and 1999 providing avenues to undemocratic forces. Such evil practices by the political parties themselves have always damaged the democratic cause due to which country could not develop at all levels.

Notes and References

- ¹ *Nawa-i-Waqt*, Lahore, October 1-31, 1988.
- ² Fida Muhammad Khan was the president of Pakistan Muslim League (Fida Group) and Nawaz Sharif was General Secretary. This League was bifurcated from Pakistan Muslim League. The other group was Pakistan Muslim League (Juneja).
- ³ Air Marshal Asghar Khan was Founder Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Istaqlal and ex-Chief of Pakistan Air Force.
- ⁴ Lt. General MA Ansari was General Secretary of Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan.
- ⁵ *Jang*, Lahore, October 9, 1988.
- ⁶ Ghafoor Ahmad, *Wazir-i-Azam Benazir Bhutto: Namzadgi se Bartarfi Tak* (Lahore: Al-Qamar Enterprises, 1995), 78.
- ⁷ Salim Younas, *Siyasi Itehad aur Pakistani Siyasat per unke Asrat, 1947-1990* (Urdu) (Lahore: Jang Publishers, 1993), 203.
- ⁸ *Jang*, Lahore, October 11, 1988.
- ⁹ *Dawn*, Karachi, October 13, 1988.
- ¹⁰ *Nawa-i-Waqt*, Lahore, October 15, 1988.
- ¹¹ *Urdu Digest*, Lahore, November 1988, 30-39.
- ¹² Ahmad, *Wazir-i-Azam Benazir Bhutto*, 94.
- ¹³ *Ibid*, 95.
- ¹⁴ Lt. General Fazl-i-Haq was close companion of General Zia-ul-Haq and an important leader of IJI from NWFP.
- ¹⁵ Ahmad, *Wazir-i-Azam Benazir Bhutto*, 95.
- ¹⁶ Haji Hanif Tayyab was leader of JUP from Karachi.
- ¹⁷ Ahmad, *Wazir-i-Azam Benazir Bhutto*, 102.
- ¹⁸ Liaqat Baloch was leader of JI from Lahore.
- ¹⁹ *Jang*, Lahore, October 14, 1988.
- ²⁰ Ahmad, *Wazir-i-Azam Benazir Bhutto*, 96.
- ²¹ *Dawn*, Karachi, November 9, 1988.

²² *Nawa-i-Waqt*, Lahore, November 16, 1988.

²³ The success of middle class candidates of JUI, JUP, JI and MQM was extraordinary precedent of positive change. The success of JUI in Balochistan, i.e. four in National Assembly and eleven in Provincial Assembly, was an important step against the tribal supremacy.

²⁴ Ahmad, *Wazir-i-Azam Benazir Bhutto*, 118.

²⁵ Beware Punjabi, your honour is at stake.