



POLITICAL VANDALISM IN PAKISTAN: A CASE STUDY OF PPP REGIME (1972-1977)

Tahir Munir

Ph.D Scholar

Department of History

University of Peshawar

Peshawar - Pakistan

tahir555@hotmail.com

Prof. Dr. Salman Bangash

Chairman, Department of History

University of Peshawar

Peshawar - Pakistan

salmanbagash@yahoo.com

Abstract

Political victimization in developing countries remained the practice of civil and military regimes in various shapes. Pakistan has no exception as when within a week of independence, the dismissal of non-League government in NWFP, and followed by similar practice of August 12, 1948 in Babara Charsadda district. The later practice ordered by the chief minister of N.W.F.P in newly created Pakistan. Interestingly, both the acts exhibited vandalism, and targeted against those rivals. Such vindictive practice continued in Pakistan in different political eras including the PPP led regime of 1970s where political oppression reached to climax against the political rivals. One such political rival of (PPP) was National Awami Party-NAP, which struggled hard to survive in a so called 'conspiracy case against the state and government of Pakistan'. Consequently, tension created and uncertainty found in the NAP's leadership as its loyalty towards Pakistan was doubted, and held responsible for assassination of PPP leader, Mr. Hayat Muhammad Khan Sherpao in 1976. State agencies were utilized to scapegoat the NAP, and following the arrest of its chief along with other leaders-their trial was initiated inside Hyderabad prison. The Government tried to prove involvement of NAP's leadership in anti-Pakistan activities, however, with



imposition of Martial Law in July 1977, the case was reviewed and the trial terminated. What irritates the researchers' mind is to know about the maneuverings of political upheavals in the then era, and curiosity develops to know many points including those that have been analyzed in this paper, i.e. nature of NAP's politics prior to the trial, the causes being used by the PPP regime to charge the NAP for their affiliation with anti-Pakistan activities and also the prime concern of Martial Law regime which questioned the validity of the trial, and which exonerated NAP of the charges levelled against its leadership.

Key Words: Hyderabad Tribunal, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, NAP, Abdul Wali Khan, oppression

Background

Since the creation of Pakistan Muslim League was seeking a way to maintain itself at the helm of affairs. It was the problem of right wing to suppress the opposition and especially the socialist wing. This type of politics had blocked the ways of trade unions and due to increasing dependence on USA—the capitalist world where the progressive organizations and parties were victimized by the successive regimes. The Basic Democracy system expedited the culture of self-interest rather than of national interest. The tragedy was that the progressive parties in the country were tried to be blocked and their image and loyalty with the state made doubtful by the regimes (Ali, 1994).

The fact became real when in the first week of independence the non-League governments in the provinces of NWFP and Sindh were removed by Quaid-e-Azam. Even Prime Minister Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan could not tolerate any opposition in and outside the constituent assembly. Like the Pakistan National Party (PNP) of Mian Iftikhar ud Din was banned. Similarly, the League chief minister Mr. Abdul Qayyum Khan in NWFP tried his level best to suppress the political rivals and the 1952 provincial elections were the clear proofs of this political hooliganism. President Iskander Mirza also used the same method and as a strategy to disrupt the progressive elements in politics. With the formation of All Pakistan National Awami Party (PNAP) in 1957 as a dynamic and progressive force, the establishment feared and the socialists as well as the nationalist forces in the country were tried to lower their image and, their leaders were arrested in different fake charges. The practice continued throughout the era of General Mohammad Ayyub Khan along with character assassination of the opposition leaders in public.



Political Victimization of NAP and its leadership

The General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan regime had an exception in the sense that he announced the longest election campaign in the political history of the state, however, the opposition parties in the election campaigns especially the PPP continued this character assassination of PNAP and its leaders. After the Tragedy of East Pakistan in December 1971, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto tactfully tried to wipe out the opposition in and outside parliament. NAP and its leadership was on the hot list of the then regime. The PPP leadership when failed to install its governments in Balochistan and NWFP, turned to maneuvers. On different issues like the Lasbela Incident in Balochistan, the disruption of the NAP meetings in Balochistan, lack of proper shares of Balochistan in the Federal budget, blames of Bloch insurgency, the support of Kisan Movement in NWFP by the PPP regime etc., were some of the main charges under which the NAP-JUI government dismissed there. In 1974 when some leaders of different political parties were in England, like Sardar Attaullah Mangal, Abdul Wali Khan, Mohammad Akbar Bugti, Ahmad Nawaz Bugti, Mr. Ghulam Jilan the then general secretary of Tehreeki Istiqlal, and Sheikh Mujib. The PPP regime put blames on them for a conspiracy against the solidarity of Pakistan and called it London Plan Conspiracy. It was propagated that these politicians were trying to bring back General Ayyub in power for which A.K. Somar and Mahmood Haroon were active (Anjum, 1994). Alongside, to disintegrate Pakistan into four independent states on the pattern of confederation. As usual, the PPP regime left no stone unturned to defame its political rivals, the nationalist forces were on the hit list (Bhutto, 1973). The PPP regime launched a vilification plan against NAP leader Wali Khan, the only political icon who could challenge the PPP chairman leadership (Kaushik, 1985).

Besides, the continuous vilification campaign, several assassination attempts on the life of NAP leader were made during that period (Williams, 1975). On 20th May 1972, another unsuccessful attempt of the murder of NAP was made (Mazari, 1999) in which he narrowly escaped. After that three other murderer attacks were made but these bids foiled (Bibi, Jameel, & Jalal, 2018). A para-military Federal Security Force (FSF) of the regime frequently used for sabotaging the opposition rallies and processions (Mazari, 1999). The regime was allergic from any kind of opposition (Khan, 1993) and the nationalist leaders were pin pointed. Even the Islamist leaders of Jamaat-i-Islami, Jamiat-ul-Ulalma-i-Islam like Molana Shams ud Din and Jamaat-i-Islami leader Dr. Nazir Ahmad were murdered (Zahra, 2020), (The New York Times, 1977, September 6). Due to these atrocities the political opponents called the regime as the Fascist One (Banuazizi, & Weiner, 1988). The Opposition leaders criticized this fascist tendencies of the regime and called fatalist for the strengthening of democratic norms in the country (Khan, 1993).



According to Robert A. Dahl “democratic leadership as “Polyarchy” wherein conflicts and contradictions are adjusted and resolved through peaceful competition and not through coercion (Kaushik, 1985). Controlling the state media and using it against the political rivals, the following is a succinct analysis: on the whole in Pakistan, the ruling elite instead of heeding and understanding opposition view-point have always tried to suppress it with iron hand. (Ziring, 2003). The PPP regime generated his own enemies, on the one it offered portfolios as a bribe, on the other victimized them (Shafqat, 2019). It was a carrot and dagger policy which the PPP regime used to play with the opposition (Niazi, 1986).

According to one political analyst the PPP regime used to twist the speeches of the opposition leaders in and outside parliament (Khan, 1993). Giving an example of 19th October 1973 of the speech of NAP leadership which was rephrased as that the opposition leader said the people of the NWFP would shift the border check-post from Torkham to Attock Bridge and would be able to enjoy fruits grown in Afghanistan (Mazari, 1999). Another example was given of the statement of the 30th October 1973, a misstatement ascribed from NAP leadership that ‘a new country comprising NWFP, Balochistan and Afghanistan would come into existence and the border line at Torkham would not be shifted to Attock Bridge but would be located at the Margalla Hills of Islamabad (Khan, 1993). The regime being aware of the power of the press fully used it against the progressive and Islamic political forces in the country (Khan, 1993), (Mazari, 1999).

The character assassination was usual in the speeches of the PPP chairman (Raza, 2012). According to a PPP leader the opposition were pushed to the wall in the regime (Ziring, 2019). The FSF was fully used against the political rivals. A deliberate move was made and a rift between the Punjabi and Pakhtun was tried to be created and to turn them into ethnic clashes between the two communities of the state (Sayeed, K. B. (1980). Suppression of opposition was one of the serious flaw in the character of the regime (Shaikh, Sahito, & John, 2020). Contrary to the PPP leaders the opposition leaders believed that the state could move ahead in a better position without the leadership of the PPP (Khan, 1993). As there were other forces who were more patriotic to work for the development of state and to strengthen its democratic institutions.

It can be realized from the Arms Cache episode of Iraqi Embassy in which without any proof or conducting inquiry blames were levelled against the opposition (Dogar, 1990), (Hamza, 2006). It was the same as Adolf Hitler in Germany did by burning down the ‘*Reichstag*’ and using it as an excuse to ban all forms of political



opposition (Bokhari, 1957). Even the then Interior Secretary called it a drama (Khan, 2009, August 17). Sardar Mangle also called it a planned action of the Federal government against the nationalist forces in the country (Attaullah, 2009, April 9). A strange anomaly was that when the conduction of inquiry of the case demanded by opposition through a judge of the Supreme Court it was rejected by the regime (Sayeed, 1980). The discovered arsenals were paraded through a rail in the country, however, due to the exerting foreign diplomatic pressure it was stopped and later on, nothing could be found about the arsenals in the train and the case (Ahmed, 2014). According to one political analyst it was a blatant charge without any sound proof against a mass party (Ahmad, & Ali, 2017). A democratic culture is developed with the toleration of opposition at both central and provincial level. As PPP's provincial governments were in Sindh and Punjab and in Balochistan and NWFP there was the NAP-JUI coalition government. It was not in favour of the PPP regime therefore, through political the Balochistan provincial government was dismissed and the NAP-JUI supported governor was also removed, the NAP-JUI coalition government in NWFP as a protest resigned. The regime criticized it. It was not a good move on behalf of the federal government which hampered the way for developing a healthy and democratic culture in the country (Sultana & Jahan, 2018). The dismissal of Balochistan government decision appreciated by the the PPP stalwart leaders like Ghulam Mustafa Khar and he called the resignation of the Frontier as a foolish action and called them inefficient. Later on, MF. Khar himself became the victim of the PPP chairman's displeasure and lamenting on the insult at the hands of the PPP chairman (Kukreja, 2003).

Some critics was of the view that once the PPP chairman revealed that as the neighboring country was not pleased with nationalist government in Balochistan on the apprehension that it could support the Irani Balochs which haply could start a movement for independence against the Iranian government. So, on that pretext this coalition government in Balochistan dismissed (Kukreja, 2003). It seems that there was an atom of truth that the NAP leadership also highly criticized the Shah of Iran for his government involvement in Balochistan. Perhaps on this very reason the NAP president who was invited to visit Iran, declined it (Sayeed, 1980) and (Mazari, 1999). It showed the weakness of the regime which was instructed by outside and a blatant interference in the affairs of another country. The reason were that shah of Iran had reservations against the nationalist government in Balochistan and the elimination was indispensable. (Ahmed, 1984). (Shafqat, 2019) and (Harrison, 1981). Prime Minister belonged to a Shia community and her wife was also Iranian, it could might be another factor. Whatever, might the case, however, it was not a good move on behalf of the Federal Government, on this ground, the opposition parties to counter the regime undemocratic moves, the small but united opposition parties formed United Democratic Front (UDF) on 28th



February 1973. (Syed, 2008). The Front observed 20th July 1973, as 'Balochistan Day' and urged the Federal Government for restoration of constitutional rule in the province (Khan, 2014). Due to these undemocratic moves by the PPP regime the NAP leadership called it fascist course of action as Mussolini did in Rome against its rivals (Mazari, 1999), (Banuazizi, & Weiner, 1988, 341).

It is a natural human psychology everywhere in the world that the personality and course of action of the leadership of a party greatly affects the followers, the same was the case with the Peoples' Student Federation, who also began to follow the fascist tendencies. In one of the protests of the National Student Federation the PSF with the help of state machinery in Karachi publicly disgraced some students, NAP seriously criticized and threatened for retaliation if it were not stopped in future (Khan, 1993, 66-68) and (Dogar, 1990). The regime tried its level best to suppress the voice of the opposition (Qureshi, 2008). It was not stopped there another bloody event of the-Liaquat Bagh Tragedy of March 1973 occurred. It was one of the bloodiest chapter of the PPP regime when the opposition rally was showered with bullets. Several people were shot dead and their cars and busses were burnt by the FSF and PPP hooligans (Mazari, 1999). The Punjab governor who observed this operation called "Operation Pastry". It could easily be given the blend of ethnic clashes between Punjab and Pakhtuns of Frontier, however, the NAP leadership was shrewd enough that it did not provoke the people of Frontier (Khan, 2005), rather tried to placate the Pakhtuns (Sayeed, 1980, 135). They could score on the dead bodies of Pakhtuns but what would happen perhaps it was apprehended that it could become internecine for both the communities in the country and could lead to a civil war. Whatever, might be the psyche of the opposition leaders however, the incident was absorbed by the NAP (Kaushik, 1985). Despite this aggressive vandalism of the PPP regime the NAP leadership avoided the impending ethnic clashes between Punjabi and Pakhtuns. It was at least not good for the opposition leaders they could not give tough time to the regime therefore, they were time and again smashed.

Democracy strengthens and the institutions developed on the basis of accepting the political rivals' and their political activities, but contrary to that in the period under consideration it was time and again tried to minimize the movement of the opposition leaders and to create obstacles in their free movement. Baseless charges levelled against them, FIRs were lodged against them, but it could not stop the opposition leaders to visit Punjab or Sindh and to address the mammoth gatherings (Pakistan, National Assembly, (1947, May 3). In the beginning of 1974, the opposition leaders through a program of mass contact campaign toured Punjab and their meetings attracted large crowds (Pakistan, National Assembly, 1947, May 3). The PPP regime so badly treated the opposition that any good gesture if it were shown by the regime was thought to be a trick



with them and the example of the PPP regime offer of amnesty to the Baloch freedom fighters, which the opposition leadership considered a drama (Pardesi, 2012). The opposition leaders said that if the regime accept the results of 1970 general elections with letter and spirit, it would become enough for the PPP chairman to accept the existence of the opposition (Mazari, 1999). The democratic spirit is that to accept the opposition political parties in and outside the parliament, stop the killings of Baloch people and redress their grievances (Khan, 1993).

In one of the meeting with opposition parties Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto on 9th June 1973, appreciated the efforts of opposition for the strengthening of democracy in the country (Ziring, 2003)., however, the opposition leadership in a public meeting at Quetta on 27th April 1973 reminded the regime that if it were sincere enough to show its reiterated that the regime should show its sincerity towards the backward provinces like Balochistan and should give it its due shares (Ziring, 2003), to win the heart of the people their participation in the national and provincial services is the need of the time (Khan, 1993) The opposition leader in one the speeches pointing to the fact said that issues are settled with the development of consensus and democracy establishes there where the existence of opposition is accepted. The policy of gun only leads towards maximizing the issue and weakening the position of a state. The amicable settlement of the political issues will produce healthy democratic culture and mutual confidence of the federating units (Khan, 1993 71-73.).

Failing on the political front, the PPP regime tried to implicate the NAP leadership in religious issues like the Qadyani Issue which surfaced at that time. In February 1974 the Rabwa Railway Station Clash turned a serious turn and the opposition leader was blamed for the incident and provocation of the students. However, the opposition leader sagaciously demanded that the National Assembly should decide its fate. It was also alleged that the main supporter of *Qadyanis* was the opposition leader on whom support *Qadyanis* made scuffle in the city. It is alleged that in the 1970 General Elections the PPP chairman financially supported by this sect. On 30th June 1974, the Opposition parties unanimously presented a resolution in the National Assembly (Ahmed, 1997) to decide the issue on the Floor of the House, after cross-questions and debate for thirteen days the Qadyanis were declared as non-Muslims on 7th September 1974, through an amendment under article 106 (3) and 260 (3) of the 1973 Constitution and it was inserted that *Qadyani* and Lahori Group were non-Muslim minority (Ahmad, n.d, " Ahmadi")

Significantly, though NAP was labelled as a secular party, an anomaly in an Islamic Republic, the resolution for declaring the *Ahmadis* as non-Muslims was first



moved in the NWFP assembly by this secular party, and unanimously passed much before the National Assembly's famous 7th September 1974 decision. (Khalid, 2003) According to Professor Ghafoor Ahmad NAP did not use the name of religion in politics and did not make it a base for its politics, it played its positive role in the Assembly proceedings and in the declaration of *Ahmadis* as non-Muslims. Not only this, but it fully cooperated with other political parties (Ahmad, n.d).

The Hyderabad Conspiracy Case

To wipe out the NAP from the scene totally, a calculated move started. It is alleged that on one occasion the PPP leader Hayat Muhammad Khan Sherpao on 18th August 1974 revealed that a big plan about the dismemberment of the country, had been discovered; the purpose was: ban on NAP and arrest of its president Abdul Wali Khan to eliminate NAP in NWFP and Baluchistan (Shafqat, 2005). After some months the planned drama started 'when on February 8, 1975 senior minister and provincial leader of PPP Mr. Hayat Mohammad Khan Sehrpao was killed in the dynamite blast, in the University of Peshawar. 'It provided PPP chairman with an opportunity to rid himself off NAP (Shafqat, 2005.) The NAP president was held responsible, on February 9, 1975 put ban on the party without any inquiry or solid proofs. The government seized NAP funds and assets. Thus in one major move, Bhutto's prime political opponent was eliminated. On 10th February, Interior Minister Mr. Abdul Qayyum Khan addressed a public meeting in Peshawar provoked the people who began to attack the NAP offices and plundered it (Khan, 1993, 134-136). 'Qayum Khan might be charged of killing Hayat Sherpao, because in the meeting in which Sherpao was killed—Qayum Khan had been asked to become the Chief Guest but he refused' (Afridi, 1998). The NAP president was in Punjab when the event occurred he was arrested near Lahore (Khan, 1993, 134-136). A strange anomaly was that prior to any inquiry on 10th February, the National Assembly passed two amendment bills withdrawing the immunity from arrest and detention that members of the National and Provincial Assemblies enjoyed; and also amended the Political Parties Act empowering the government to declare a political party banned, if her loyalty were suspected for sovereignty and integrity of Pakistan [under the Political Parties Act 1962 article 6 (1)] (Shafqat, 2005). Later on, the Supreme Court gave the decision in government's favour. A file of the case was sent to the NAP president in jail but he returned it with a note that he had not been provided with any legal aid. On the order of the Court he was sent to Rawalpindi Jail. The NAP president was in preventive custody. therefore, the Government was compelled to present him before the Federal Review Board, after every three months. (Khan, 1993, 136-138.)

The Sukkhar Jail Conspiracy Episode



After a long time, with the repeated requests of the NAP president Wali Khan, the Supreme Court at last appointed the date for hearing the case. The Supreme Court set up a six member Commission with the Chief Justice Hamood-ur-Rahman as its head. but no hearing was made and the NAP president sent from Rawalpindi to Sukkhar Jail (Khan, 1993, 136-138). There he was implicated in another case, which was known as the Sukkhar Jail Conspiracy. The Supreme Court fixed the 19th June 1975 for hearing (Qadir, 2015). In Sukkhar it was filed that the NAP president and his companions were secessionists and traitors. A Special Court was set up under the Sindhi judge Mr. Justice Abdul Haye Qaureishi (Syed, 1988). As no appearance was made in this case, the NAP president along with other NAP leaders were sent on challan to Hyderabad jail (Syed, 1988). Under the notification of 10th February 1975 against NAP 'ZAB established a Special Tribunal at Hyderabad to trial the NAP leadership. (Raza, 1997). Hearing was started on 16th June 1975; addressing the bench the NAP president demanded the presence of all senior NAP members detained by the government, in the court; the replacement of two of the judges who, in his opinion, had openly displayed partiality at the very commencement of the Reference hearing – and finally he asked to be let out on bail. The NAP president, finding the judicial attitude unacceptable, opted to withdraw from the case. Instead of exercising judicial impartiality the court decided to accept the government's evidence and conclusions in full (Taqi, 2020, Dec 11). This case was lingering on for one and a half year before the Special Tribunal in Hyderabad Jail but the Government could not prove the charges (Wazir, 2003). The Chairman of the Court was Mr. Justice Aslam Riaz Hussain from Lahore (Qadir, 2015). "The first formal hearing of the case was on May 10, 1976. There were 455 witnesses in the case; the Government was creating legal complications to prolong the trial proceedings as much as possible; when only 22nd of the 455 witnesses appeared before the court in 18 months, the NAP president appealed to the court that "My lord, please arrange for 'Aab-e-Hayat' [Elixir] and fetch us, so that we could live long till the completion of the proceedings of this trial, take it yourself in order to enable yourself to write the judgment after the completion of the proceedings. Give it to Mr. Bhutto also, so that he could live till the decision of the case. Producing only 22 witnesses in one and a half years, means that a half century will be required to hear the statements of witnesses of the prosecution and the same number of years will be required for their cross examination (Khan, Idrees, & Hussain, 2016).

Another strange anomaly was that no political icon from Punjab or Sindh was treated so badly as the NAP leaders of Pakhtukhwa, even they were objected on the conversation with other party workers in Pashto who used to come to meet with them in jail. Not only this, but even they were prohibited to speak Pashto with one another. Why this hat for the language and the people, even when in Sindh the official language was considered Urdu it arouse the Sindhis and for days and days strikes were observed that



only Sindhi would be the official language in Sindh, but in Pahtunkhwa it was vice versa, the NAP despite its majority in the provincial assembly considered and preferred Urdu as a medium of instruction in the offices rather than Pashto (Khan, Idrees, & Hussain, 2016).

The NAP president in his full statement before the Court said that the Hyderabad Special Court had naturally expired due to the retirement of one of its three judges therefore; they were not legally jailed then but kidnapped. He elaborated the background of the Conspiracy case, said that two days before the imposition of Martial Law i.e. on 3rd July 1977 Mr. Bhutto had to strike a deal with them, he had offered for a pact, sanctions on banned NAP could be annulled. All the prisoners could be set free and the governments in the two provinces could be restored, but the NAP president declined it (Richter, 1978). It is worth mentioning that after the imposition of Martial Law of General Mohammad Zia ul Haq on 5th July 1977 the PPP regime was abolished and its leaders arrested. The Martial Law authorities after revising the case found it baseless. Therefore, on 29th November 1977 the NAP president and others produced before the Sindh Division Bench. It was argued that as in the Special Court of Hyderabad out of three judges, one had got retired therefore; the existence of the Court had vanished. However, at last on 1st January 1979, this Tribunal was abolished and all the accused were given acquittance. With this some 11,109 political prisoners were released and 1,702 cases withdrawn. About this Case General Zia said that after thorough consideration of the cases of Balochistan and Hyderabad Conspiracy cases, it was revealed that those were political cases, he further said that 90% of the bases of the case were political; therefore, the Tribunal was abolished. With this the Attock and Budh Bir Conspiracy cases were also abolished (Mazari, & Mazari, 1999). About this false case one foreign legal scholar commented that “the government’s case was shaky; frequent references to the issue notwithstanding, its evidence was Radio Kabul interceptions, foreign newspaper clippings and non-contextual excerpts from NAP speeches (Newburg, 1984).

Conclusion

It is pathetic on the part of politicians and Establishment that democracy could not be put on the right track in this very state. The compromising attitude of the politicians and their lust for power time and again brought miseries to the country and the people alike. The so called democratic regime of PPP did not tolerate any opposition in and outside the Assembly. Like Pakistan Muslim League at the initial stage when all the opposition parties were vehemently criticized by it and considered it anti-Pakistani. In the same way, the PPP regime of Mr. Z.A. Bhutto could not tolerate its political rivals and



with the use of force tried its level best to wipe them out from the political scene. The PPP regime did not set any single example as a good gesture in the parliamentary history of Pakistan. Rather, it earned a title of jingoist political party in a constant tussle with its political rivals. It seriously annoyed the people from the way of politics of the PPP and believed that the Machiavellian tricks of the party with its opponents would not flourish sense of democracy in the country. If it could believe on true politics surely, it would change the destiny of the country and the Martial Law of General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq would not shadow the unlucky state for more than ten years. Certainly, with the absence of Martial Law the pages of History would surely have added many good pages for the people of this country. The PPP regime could not conceive this fact as a result the very existence of the state was jeopardized. Good democratic culture would strengthen the roots of democracy in the country, but this opportunity was badly missed and as a result still the track of democracy is not quite right and still in danger.



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