

Introduction

Although Pakistan achieved independence through a constitutional means on the basis of 1945-46 elections, however, after getting independence it hardly followed a constitutional way leading to the electoral politics. No general elections on the basis of adult franchise could be held till 1970.

Background

- The authoritarian rule of the ruling party Pakistan Muslim League (PML) avoided going for elections due to their declining popularity against other regional and linguistic political forces of the country.
- President General Ayub Khan, in order to re-elect himself, hold indirect elections on the basis of Basic Democracy.

Background

The first ever general elections on the basis of adult franchise was held by General Yahya Khan. By avoiding his personal intentions to get himself re-elected as the head of state in case if no one could get clear cut majority.

Yahya khan got the credit to held the first ever general elections in the constitutional history of Pakistan

Why Yahya Khan agreed to arrange election?

It has been often suggested that the army believed that the elections would see the emergence of a large number of political parties in the Assembly.

Thus, no party would have a commanding majority; thereby leaving the initiative in the hands of the President and the emergence of coalition government

The Legal framework order :

On 28 March, 1970, Yahya Khan announced the basic principles of the legal framework order relating to election.

- The LFO also dissolved the "[One Unit](#)" scheme of [West Pakistan](#)
- Pakistan would be a democratic country and the complete name of the country would be the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

2. There shall be a National Assembly of Pakistan consisting of 313 members of whom 13 shall be women and the five Provincial Legislative Assemblies will be composed of 621 members.

Distribution of seats for the National and the Provincial Assembly

Regions	National Assembly			Provincial Assembly		
	General	Women	Total	General	Women	Total
East Pakistan	162	7	169	300	10	310
West Pakistan	138	6	144	300	11	311

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- 169 seats were to be for East Pakistan, 85 for Punjab, 28 for Sindh, 19 for NWFP, 5 for Baluchistan and 7 seats were allotted to the tribal areas.
- Legislatures shall be elected through direct elections on the basis of population and adult franchise.
- Within a specified period, economic and all other disparities between different provinces and areas shall be removed.
- The independence of the judiciary shall be secured.

ELECTION MANAGEMENT

- On July, 1969, as per the announcement of Yahiya Khan , an Election Commission was formed which was headed by justice Abdus Sattar, a justice of Pakistan Supreme Court.

Election Date:

Assembly	Previous Date	Changed Date
National Assembly	October, 5	December, 7
Provincial Assembly	October, 22	December, 17

Why Election Date changed?

- The elections were originally scheduled for October 1970, but the devastating cyclone in East Pakistan upset the plans.
- This worst natural calamity killed, according to the official estimate, over 200,000 persons (and unofficially about five times that figure)
- Affected over three million people and destroyed 90 per cent of the crops and houses in 3,000 square miles

1970 Flood

- No warning had been issued in these areas although there was a storm warning system in East Pakistan.
- The relief operation was slow and inadequate only intensified the deep anger of the Bengali people

National vs regional

- During the election campaign, it became obvious that “national” parties had little grass-root support, while parties with mass support tended to be regional.

Campaign of Political Parties

Campaign of Awami league

- The main issue in the election campaign in East Pakistan was the question of provincial autonomy and the political scene from the beginning was dominated by Sheikh Mujib-urRehman of the Awami League.

Awami league got advantage

- The Awami League had a fairly sound base in East Pakistan at the advent of elections. However, the boycott of elections by Maulana Bhashani and by the National Progressive League and Krishak Saramik Party in East Pakistan left the League virtually alone in the field.¹⁶ Moreover, the traditional parties, like the Muslim League and the Jamaat-i-Islami or the Nizam-i-Islam Party, which set up candidates in both wings, mustered no support in East Pakistan

Campaign Of Pakistan peoples party

- Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party was the second 'winning' party. His personality, his socialistic ideas and his slogan of Roti, Kapra aur Makan, meaning food, clothing and shelter, were the factors that contributed to the popularity of Pakistan Peoples Party.

Campaign Of Pakistan peoples party

- During the election campaign, the PPP reiterated its principles:
- 'Islam is our faith;
- Democracy is our polity;
- Socialism is our economy;
- all Powers to the people'.
- Similarly, the party introduced a new language of politics focusing on the local issues related to the industrial relations, landlord-tenant conflicts and demands from the government that shelter be provided to the working class etc.

Rightist parties

- Muslim league, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan and Jamaat-i-Islami.
- The rightist parties, at this occasion, propagated their views and denounced their opponents' programmes especially in regard to socialism and regional autonomy.

Election result

- The elections of 1970 resulted in an overwhelming victory for Sheikh Mujib's Awami League in East Pakistan. The Awami League won an absolute majority in the National Assembly by securing 160 out of 300 seats.
- **Awami league also secured all 7 reserved seat for women.**

Election Result

Table 2. Pakistan National Assembly Elections, 1970-71

<i>Party</i>	<i>Punjab</i>	<i>Sindh</i>	<i>NWFP</i>	<i>Baluchistan</i>	<i>East Pakistan</i>	<i>Total</i>
AI	---	---	---	---	160	160
PPP	62	18	1	---	---	81
PML(Q)	1	1	7	---	---	9
CML	7	---	---	---	---	7
JUI (H)	---	---	6	1	---	7
MJU	4	3	---	---	---	7
NAP (W)	---	---	3	3	---	6
JIP	1	2	1	---	---	4
PML (C)	2	---	---	---	---	2
PDP	---	---	---	---	1	1
Independence	5	3	7	---	1	16
Total	82	27	25	4	162	300

Sources: Pakistan Observer, January 20, 1971

Total

Parties	Seats
Awami League	167
Pakistan People's Party	88
Other Parties	44
Independents	14
TOTAL	313



Provincial Assembly

- Awami League's strength in the East Pakistan Assembly was 288 out of 300 seats but it had no representation in the provincial Assemblies in West Pakistan.

Provincial Assembly

Table 3. Pakistan Provincial Assembly Elections, 1970-71

<i>Party</i>	<i>Punjab</i>	<i>Sindh</i>	<i>NWFP</i>	<i>Baluchistan</i>	<i>E.Pakisstan</i>	<i>Total</i>
AL	---	---	---	---	288	288
PPP	113	28	3	---	---	144
PML(Q)	6	5	10	3	---	24
NAP (W)	---	---	13	8	1	22
CML	15	4	1	---	---	20
MJU	4	7	---	---	---	11
JUI (H)	2	---	4	2	---	8
PML (C)	6	---	2	---	---	8
PDP	4	---	---	---	2	6
JIP	1	1	1	---	1	4
Others	1	1	---	2	1	5
Independence	28	14	6	5	7	60
Total	82	27	25	4	162	300

Significance of the Election

The election of 1970 had enormous significance for the emergence of an independent and sovereign Bangladesh and Bangalee nationalism. That was the most free and fair election after the election of 1954. The election of 1970 marked the victory of the uniqueness that Bangalee as a nation had been voicing since 1947, at different aspects of life including language, art and culture. Moreover, the autonomy that had been claimed by the people of the eastern province was declared illegal by the western government got validity. The demand for the Six Points based on autonomy was proved valid due to this election result. However, following his announcement, Yahiya Khan refused to transfer power when the time was due. Instead he directed military attacks on the innocent Bangalees. That was the beginning of the armed struggle for the liberation of the people of Bengal, which eventually resulted in the emergence of an independent state in the world named Bangladesh on 16th December, 1971.

- <https://youtu.be/YzrAMfpQIL0?si=TyK53Zo4z9uM6pq1>

Thank you