



GENERAL ELECTION OF 1970

- Cyclone of 1970 and response of Yahiya government
- Reaction of the Bengali people
- Election result and the aftermath
- Significance of the election

YAHYA KHAN

- In March 1969, Ayub Khan announced his retirement and named Gen. Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan to succeed him as president.
- Once again, the country was placed under martial law. Yahya Khan, like Ayub Khan before him, assumed the role of chief martial-law administrator.
- In accepting the responsibility for leading the country, Yahya Khan said he would govern Pakistan only until the national election in 1970.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK ORDER (LFO)

- Yahya Khan abolished Ayub Khan's basic democracies system and abrogated the 1962 constitution.
- He also issued a Legal Framework Order (LFO) that broke up the single unit of West Pakistan and reconstituted the original four provinces of Pakistan—i.e., Punjab, Sind, North-West Frontier Province, and Balochistan.
- The major dilemma in the LFO, however, was that in breaking up the oneunit system, the distribution of seats in the National Assembly would be apportioned among the provinces on the basis of population.
- This meant that East Pakistan, with its larger population, would be allotted more seats than all the provinces of West Pakistan combined.

PAKISTAN'S FAILURE AS A STATE

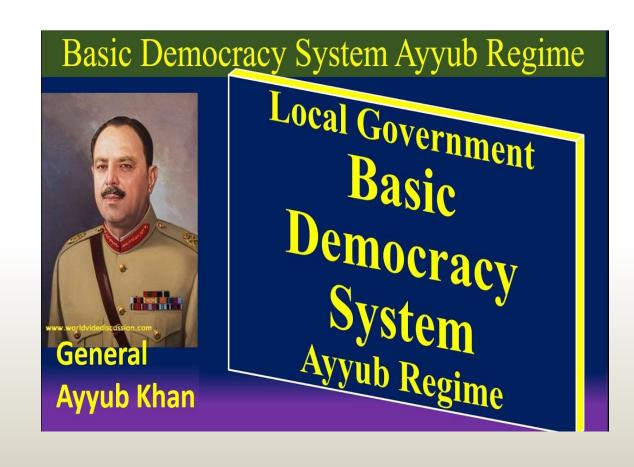
- □Although Pakistan achieved independence through a constitutional means on the basis of 1945-46 elections, however, after getting independence it hardly followed a constitutional way leading to the electoral politics.
- **■No general elections on the basis of adult franchise could be held till 1970.**
- Adult Franchise means all adult citizens of the country should have the right to vote without any discrimination of class, caste, religion, or gender.

MUSLIM LEAGUE AVOIDED ELECTION

• 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.

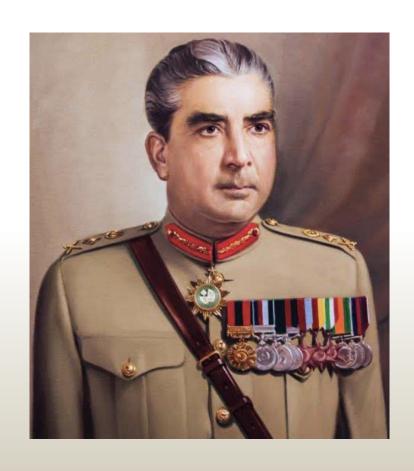
AYUB KHAN'S BASIC DEMOCRACY

President General Ayub Khan, in order to re-elect himself, held indirect elections on the basis of Basic Democracy.



GENERAL ELECTION HOLD BY YAHYA KHAN

The first ever general elections on the basis of adult franchise was held by General Yahya Khan.



YAHYA KHAN

- ❖To his credit, he delivered elections in 1970 but when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's East Pakistani Awami League won the largest number of seats, the result was not accepted.
 - >Ironically, that was considered to have been the first free and fair election in Pakistan's history.
- *However, his viciousness in trying to suppress the East's aspirations for autonomy, which resulted in the birth of Bangladesh, cancels any credit he may have deserved for holding elections.
 - >In the end, he did nothing to nurture democracy.

WHY DID YAHYA KHAN AGREE TO ARRANGE THE 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.

ELECTION DATE WAS CHANGED

- The elections were originally scheduled for October 1970, but the
- >flood in September and

upset the plans.

devastating cyclone in November in East Pakistan

CYCLONE IN 1970

- Also known as the Great Bhola Cyclone.
- Cyclone kills 350,000-500,000 people in the Bengal delta.
- Affected over three million people and destroyed 90 per cent of the crops and houses in 3,000 square miles.



CYCLONE IN 1970

 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.



RESPONSE OF YAHYA GOVERNMENT

- The fallout of responses to the cyclone was found to be more severe than the cyclone itself.
- It took almost ten days for the government to officially announce a state of emergency and mobilise the military to aid in relief and recovery operations.
- President Yahya Khan received substantial criticism for his mismanagement of the crisis, with many viewing his lack of concern as a form of criminal neglect.
- This delayed reaction significantly influenced the attitudes of the Bengali population and fueled their desire to break away from the rest of Pakistan.

RESPONSE OF YAHYA GOVERNMENT

- Moreover, the cyclone had struck the poorest area of East Pakistan, where infrastructure, livelihoods, and economic prospects were severely lacking.
- And this disaster served as a wake-up call, revealing the critical importance of economic equality and political freedom for the survival of the Bengalis.
- Maulana Abdul Hamid Bhashani, at the time a prominent figure within the National Awami Party in East Pakistan, voiced strong disapproval of how the government handled the cyclone's aftermath.

BHASHANI & OTHERS BOYCOTT ELECTION

- He criticised the Pakistani government for its perceived lack of empathy towards the affected individuals.
- On November 23, 1970, he made the significant declaration of East
 Pakistan's independence and advocated for a boycott of the impending
 election. In response to his stance, two additional leftist parties also opted to
 abstain from participating in the election.
- AL leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (popularly known as Mujib in both Pakistan and Bangladesh)
 conversely took advantage of the situation to unite the Bengali population against the ruling
 authorities of West Pakistan.

CAMPAIGN OF POLITICAL PARTIES

- The politicians from East Pakistan openly accused West Pakistanis
 of undisguised hostility.
- It also received international criticism, i.e., from the British: <u>The Independence of Bangladesh in 1971 Source 3 The National Archives</u>
- According to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, "A million people had died in the cyclone, and another million would lay down their lives willingly to thwart a conspiracy against Bengalis by bureaucrats, vested interests, the ruling clique and a coterie of old politicians.

NEW ELECTION DATE

- The deteriorating political situation forced the Government of Pakistan to announce new date for the elections.
- According to the new schedule, the elections to the National and Provincial Assemblies were to be held on 7th and 17th December 1970, respectively.

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 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 Mujibur Rahman of the Awami League.



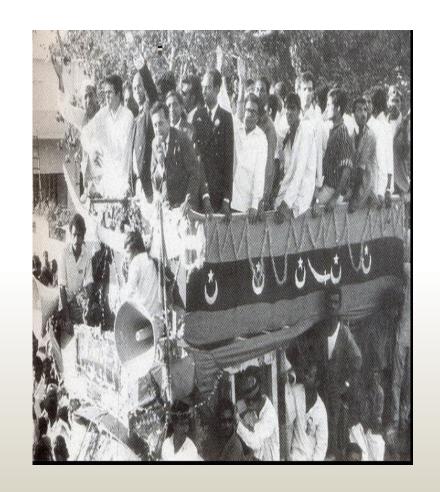
AWAMI LEAGUE'S ADVANTAGE

- 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 as a single player in the field.
- 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.

PAKISTAN PEOPLES PARTY

 Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party was the second 'winning' party.

• Bhutto's 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.



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, and so on.

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 seats for women.

ELECTION RESULT

Table 2. Pakistan National Assembly Elections, 1970-71

Party	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Baluchistan	East Pakistan	Total
Al					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

AWAMI LEAGUE LOST TWO SEAT

In the National Assembly, AL lost two seats:

- >Independent candidate Tridib Roy
- >PDM candidate Nurul Amin

PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY

- In the Provincial Assembly election, the prototype of the National Assembly was almost repeated.
- Awami League's strength in the East Pakistan Assembly was
 - >288 seats
 - **>but it had no representation in the provincial Assemblies in West Pakistan.**

PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY

Table 3. Pakistan Provincial Assembly Elections, 1970-71

Party	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Baluchistan	E.Pakisstan	Total
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.
☐ The popularity of Awami League increased.
☐ Democratic aspirations are awakened.
□The political awareness of Bengalis increased.
□Sheikh Mujib's status was increased.
□Regional dominance increased.
□Played an important role for the Liberation War.

COLLECTIVE RESOURCE - BENGALI CULTURE

- Throughout the Pakistan experiment, east Bengali culture acted as a domain that West Pakistanis could neither penetrate nor manipulate — a collective resource that fuelled Bengali solidarity across divisions of class, region and religion.
- The vernacular elite, on the other hand, could use its personal and cultural links much more effectively to mobilise the rural population for its vision of cultural renewal, political autonomy and social development.

"SHONAR BANGLA"

- This is what underlay the extraordinary outcome of the first general elections in 1970. The Awami League, by now largely representing the vernacular elite's aspirations, had captured the vision of the Bengal delta's renewal, autonomy and development in its motto 'Shonar Bangla' (Golden Bengal; sonar bangla).
- This motto was cleverly chosen because it was the title of a song that Rabindranath Tagore had written in 1906, and that the Pakistan government had banned.
- It thus evoked not only the life-giving and beloved motherland but also a defiant Bengaliness: 'My Golden Bengal, I love you – forever your skies, your air set my heart in tune as if it were a flute.' The song was performed at nationalist meetings, and its promise of a glorious future for the Bengal delta fired the imagination of millions during the ill-fated final days of united Pakistan.

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