

Election 1997: The new Calculus of Pakistani Politics and Rise of the PML-N



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Abstract: *In 1996, after the termination of Benazir Bhutto government by President Farooq Leghari, the new elections held in February 03, 1997. Several major and minor political parties participated in those elections including PPP and PML-N. Before the commencement of elections more than five dozen political parties nominated their candidates to get elections but the real match was played between the same rival political parties, PML-N and PPP. The results of elections were very stunning and poles apart from the previous ones. Surprisingly, PML-N secured 134 seats in National Assembly against 18 seats of PPP and made its government in the Centre. The provincial results were also not different from Federal Assembly's results and PML-N made their governments in all four provinces too. It was first example in the political history of Pakistan that a political party individually, obtained such huge numbers of seats in National Assembly and formed its administrations in all four provinces. The remarkable triumph of newly established PML-N in elections was specifying its popularity in the masses against the senior and experience PPP. Now the questions arose that why voters changed their mindset and voted newly born PML-N against senior PPP? What were the reasons that the PPP, the winner of two times elections could not maintain its popularity in the masses? What were the political maneuverings and strategies adopted by PML-N to attracted the common voters. The answer of the questions is real topic of this research article.*

Keywords: Benazir Bhutto, Elections, Farooq Leghari, PML-N, PPP, Voters.

Introduction

In the last quarter of 1996, severe political clashes were arisen among President Farooq Ahmad Leghari and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. PML-N along with other opposition parties tried to get benefit from the clashes of two premiers and requested the President to take strict action against corrupt government of PPP. On the request of opposition parties, President Farooq Ahmad Leghari used his especial powers awarded by eighth amendment of Constitution and dismissed the Benazir Bhutto government on the charges of corruption, dishonesty, worsened law and order situation in Sindh,

involvement of PPP leadership in the assassination of Mir Murtaza Bhutto, frequent Extra Judicial Killings, noncompliance with the orders of Supreme Court, financial maladministration, and violation of Constitution.¹ Chairperson PPP decided to challenge that unconstitutional act of President and filed a writ in Supreme Court. PPP chairperson was very hopeful that Supreme Court will give her relief because the same Court had already declared the same act of President Ishaq Khan, illegal in its previous decision against the case of then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. But surprisingly, now against the writ of PPP, Supreme Court endorsed the President act

and announced its verdict in the favor of President's act with six to one majority;² which not only criticized by PPP leadership openly but also marks questions on the impartiality of the Chief Justice of Supreme Court.

President Farooq Leghari announced the date for next election which was fixed on Feb. 03, 1997. Malik Meraj Khalid³ was appointed as Caretaker Prime Minister of Pakistan and he was bestowed with the responsibility to conduct the next elections. Malik Meraj Khalid was a senior, experienced and expert politician. He was famous as the veteran and pioneer member of PPP, and close friend of President Leghari. Surprisingly, no political party, including PML-N raised any voice against his appointment as Caretaker Prime Minister.⁴ To running the government affairs and for the conduct of fair and free elections Meraj Khalid announced his nine member cabinet which later enhanced till nineteen.⁵ The new cabinet of caretaker government was mostly comprised of former officials, senior technocrats and experienced veteran legislators. To assure the neutrality and impartiality of concierge administration and to satisfy the major political parties about the conduct of neat and clean election, Malik Meraj Khalid adopted a new strategy. He decide to give equal representation to all mainstream political parties in his caretaker cabinet and he selected one senior and honest representative from each party and included him in his caretaker setup. Malik Meraj Khalid selected Dr. Zubair Khan⁶ as Commerce Minister, Shahid Javaid Burki⁷ as Finance Minister, Shahid Hamid⁸ as Defense Minister, Syeda Abida Hussain⁹ as Education Minister and Sahibzada Yoqoob Khan¹⁰ as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The new caretaker setup was also established in all four provinces and President Farooq Leghari especially appointed Mumtaz Bhutto¹¹ as caretaker Chief Minister in Sindh and gave him the task to curtail the political power of PPP in Sindh. Mumtaz Bhutto formed his provincial caretaker cabinet and included almost all anti-PPP politicians in that caretaker setup. PPP and MQM both criticized on his appointment and showed their reservations but nobody bothered their objections. Mumtaz Bhutto adopted and

introduced such anti PPP policies which gradually reduced the electoral strength of PPP in the province. He also tried to gain the political support from other major and minor political parties of Sindh against PPP and made an anti PPP group in PPP itself to curtail the political power of Benazir Bhutto in the province.¹² In the province of the Punjab, the political situation was not so different from Sindh. President Farooq Leghari appointed Tariq Rahim as governor of the Punjab who was also belong to PPP and considered as a controversial figure. Many senior politicians belongs to PPP opposed his appointment as governor but nobody bother it.

Election Campaign, Elections and Results

After the announcement of the final date of new elections, political activities have started in all over the country but in the beginning, its momentum was very slow and without political enthusiasm. Infect, most of the political parties were hesitating to start their political campaign because soon after the dissolution of the government by President Farooq Leghari, PPP had already filed a writ petition in Supreme Court against its illegal removal and its decision was still pending. About three years earlier, the similar writ had been filed by Nawaz Sharif against the illegal removal of his government on the same basis and after hearing the case Supreme Court gave its judgment in the favor of Nawaz Sharif and ordered to restore his government. Now political parties were predicting that Supreme Court will endorse his previous decision and PPP government could be restored so they did not start their political campaigns. PML-N was also doubtful about the conduct of elections but even then she has started her political activities.

Secondly, before the commencement of elections, caretaker government had issued new instructions and directions for election candidate and had imposed some restrictions on political activities.¹³ According to their instruction no party has allowed to spent more than specified expenditures on elections. Candidates are advised to prepare the banners according to the prescribed size which has been approved by election commission. No party was allowed to

make huge banners or gigantic party flags for its publicity. The use of loudspeaker or megaphone was also prohibited.¹⁴ Those restrictions also decrease the momentum of election campaign. Another strong reason was that the election were falling in the holy month of Ramadan which was the most sacred month for the Muslims of Pakistan and they preferred to perform religious duties and special devotions instead of participating in political activities. It also made the whole process of election very dull and full of exhaustion.¹⁵

But rather than, the whole political momentum boosted up when Supreme Court issued its judgment and endorsed the act of President. The Supreme Court decision remove uncertainty about the conduct of elections and after the verdict of Supreme Court, all political parties started their political campaign with new passion including PPP itself. Chairperson PPP Benazir Bhutto criticized the Supreme Court decision but refused to boycott the election and chalked out her political plans.¹⁶ She decided to get justice from the masses and advised her workers to participate in election with full zeal and zest and show the opposition, the real verdict with their votes.¹⁷ She presented her manifesto to gain the support of voters. In her political campaign, she criticized the President and his caretaker setup and declared that President House is playing main role as an opposition for her party. She also blamed that her former worker (President) was trying to divide PPP in two factions but her party workers will fail that plans with their unity and President will never succeed to make a king party from PPP.¹⁸ In her party's manifesto she presented her future plans and stated that "PPP would bring political stability in Pakistan. Accountability bill would be introduced and the process of accountability would be started from the Parliament. New reform would be introduced in economic sector and economic development would be the first priority of Pakistan People's Party. Eighth Amendment would be abolished and Prime Minister would be bestowed with full ruling power. Women would be empowered and their involvement would be increase in every field of life. Human rights, minorities' rights and

women rights would be preserved. Taxes would be reduced and new taxes would not be imposed. PPP would continue its nuclear policy."¹⁹ The announced manifesto could not fascinate the voters. The present manifesto was the same which PPP had already presented in her last election. Common people did not show any interest in that manifesto. Perhaps they were not ready to give a third chance to PPP with her same policies. On the other side, the continuous propaganda of President and PML-N was now working against the PPP's leadership. PML-N was blaming that PPP government was playing in the hands of enemies and if Pakistani wants to rescue Pakistan they should vote for PML-N. The President was also supporting PML-N and presenting the proof of corruption of previous government of PPP. That political propaganda of President and PML-N was so powerful and effective that a large number of the voters left the PPP and joined the hand of PML-N and it seems that PPP has lost the election before polling.

Before election, Mian Nawaz Sharif presented the manifesto of PML-N. On January 1, 1997 He announced the main pointes of his manifesto and stated that "PML-N will make best future policies especially for the betterment of worsened economy, education and health sector."²⁰ He ensured in manifesto that model school would be established on district level under Social Action Program.²¹ Health card would be issued to poor and needy people. Restoration of the women seats in National Assembly, legislation to ban floor crossing, preparation of comprehensive program for the revival of economy, bringing Peace in Karachi, revival of development projects, formation of price control committees, establishment of health task force, privatization of white elephant institutions, Sunday to be holiday instead of Friday, ban on excessive expenditure on marriages and friendship with Muslim countries²² were the main point of our manifesto." He announced that PML-N would contest election independently but she will ready to make some seat adjustment with other parties. In those elections, PML (N) applied the "exclusionary model²³ of alliances" to get more

seats particularly in the province of Sindh and NWFP. Awami National Party was the electoral companion of PML (N) in province of NWFP from decades so PML (N) sustained its electoral alliance with ANP in the shape of seat adjustment.²⁴ The similar seat adjustment formula was settled in Sindh with different regional and ethnic political parties and PML (N) selected Pakistan Muslim League (Functional group),²⁵ Pakistan People Party (Shaheed Bhutto group)²⁶ and Mutihadda Qoumi Movement,²⁷ as electoral partner in Sindh on seat adjustment basis which was necessary for the enhancement of the political power of PML-N in Sindh. Beside those prominent political parties Tehrik e Jafria Pakistan, which was the alliance partner of PPP in previous election also decided to support PML (N) and both political parties formed an electoral alliance in the shape of seat adjustment. Those electoral seat adjustments formulas with different political parties strengthened the political power of PML (N) in the country especially in the province of Sindh which was the hub of PPP voters. Now PML-N was ready to enter in the arena of election with new hope, confidence and full preparations.

Before the election political atmosphere of the country take a turn. The two mainstream religious political parties' including Jamaat-i-Islami and Jamiat Ulema i Pakistan, went to boycott. Both religious political parties announced to remain aloof from election procedure and their leadership advised their candidates to not participate in election.²⁸ The second event happened in the province of Sindh, where the second largest political party of the province MQM split into three factions. It was alarming situation for both MQM and PML-N because MQM was the electoral partner with PML (N) in Sindh and before election the division of MQM in Sindh could create

problems for MQM vote bank which could also affect the position of PML-N in Sindh. The third event accrued when Pakistan Tehrik i Insaaf, a new political party under the headship of former skipper of Pakistan Cricket Team, Imran Khan announced to participate in those elections.²⁹ Those new changes made several political alterations in National politics.

The election held in time. All major and minor political parties independently or through alliances actively took part in those elections apart from Jamaat-i-Islami and Jamiat Ulema i Islam Pakistan, who went on boycott and did not take part in election. During election campaign candidates of different parties organized public and corner meetings to attract voters. Prominent and major political parties arranged big rallies to impress the common voters. Although election commission had already announced a specific amount for election expenditures but they spent huge amounts on their campaign to fascinate the voters. Once again the cliques of "Bhutoism" and the supporters of "Ziaism" used their political maneuverings to get the political support of ordinary voters. Election was contested face to face and one to one between PPP and PML-N. Both political parties frequently used their electoral slogans in the favor of Social democracy and dogmatism for attracting the masses. Similar to previous election it was again predicting by political scientist that the real race for power will be run among PPP and PML-N and same happened on polling day and in the end rightists get lead on leftists. General election held on time at February 03, 1997 on 204/207 Muslims seats of National Assembly. On three seats polling was postponed due to the death of candidates of that's constituencies. Ten seats for Non-Muslim and Twenty seats for women were reserved. After the completion of elections the result of National Assembly was as following:

Result of National Assembly

Total number of seats	237
Date of election	February 03, 1997

Party Name	Party	Seats in N.A
	(PML -N)	
Pakistan Muslim League (N)	(PPP)	134
Pakistan People's Party	(MQM)	18
Mutihadda Quomi Movement	(ANP)	12
Awami National Party	(BNP)	10
Baluchistan National Party	(JUI-F)	03
Jamiat Ulema I Islam (F)	(PPP-SB)	02
Pakistan People's Party (SB)	(NPP)	01
National People's Party	(JWP)	01
Jamhori Watan Party	(IND)	02
Independents		12

Note: "Eight seats of FATA are not included in it. Therefore total are counted as 195. Seat of Federal capital was won by PML (N). Elections on three seats were postponed."³⁰

The election result was so striking and shocking for all political analysts and forecasters. The previous ruling Pakistan People's Party, which had been deep-rooted in the Federal, NWFP and especially in the Punjab since last decade, got a overthrow which she never expected.³¹ Surprisingly, She got only eighteen seats in National Assembly out of total two hundred and seventeen, while her rival PML-N secured one hundred and thirty four seats³² in National Assembly and with that absolute majority she emerged as leading party in the Parliament. MQM occupied third position with securing just twelve seats. ANP the electoral ally of PML-N in NWFP secured ten seats,³³ however; the independent candidates had also won considerable seats. PML-N got marvelous victory and got majority of the seats from Punjab. Amazingly, she secured one hundred and thirty four seats in total among which one hundred and seven were from Punjab while she secured fifteen seats of National Assembly from

Sindh, nine from NWFP and three from Baluchistan.³⁴ The election result showed that PML-N had completely swept in Punjab. It was amazing that no political party could give tough time to PML-N even her rival PPP which secured fifty seats of National Assembly in previous election from Punjab now unfortunately, could not secured a single seat from the biggest province which reflected the displeasure of the masses of the Punjab with Pakistan People's Party's previous plans and policies. Dr. Tahir Kamran analyzed that political situation in his book and stated;

"The inevitable happened on February 3. 1 and abused for over 10 years by Ms Benazir the vote bank of the People's Party refused up on Election Day. A party which was always enough for at least 40-odd seats in the 1 Assembly, because of its consistent ability over 35 percent of country's active electorate cut down to mere 18 NA seats against PML Foul, cried Ms Bhutto, but unlike 1990, there one to listen to her. For good reason, the Feb polls was not simply a defeat for the PPP in numbers; it was a death of a culture that ha

extremely tortured existence ever since Ms I return from exile in 1986.”³⁵

It was also stunning that in election 1997, not only PPP got worsened defeat but the mainstream religious political parties also could not bagged any seat in National Assembly except Jamiat ulma Islam (F) who could secured only two seats in National Assembly and swept out. Many other small alliances and regional or linguistic based political parties were completely wiped out from the political arena of Pakistan. In election 1997, PML-N had got

enough seats in National Assembly to form its government in Centre without the help of any other political party but she had contested the election with settling a seat adjustment formula with MQM in Sindh who also secured 12 seats in National Assembly so PML-N invited her electoral partner and established its government in Centre with the help of MQM and independents.

Result of Provincial Assemblies

Provincial Assembly’s election also held on same day and date. The result was as following:

Party Name	Party	Seats in Punjab Assembly
Pakistan Muslim League (N)	(PML-N)	211
Pakistan People’s Party	(PPP)	03
Pakistan Muslim League (J)	(PML-J)	02
Pakistan Democratic Party	(PDP)	01
Independent	(IND)	21
Vacant	(VCT)	02

Party Name	Party	Seats in Sindh Assembly
Pakistan People’s Party	(PPP)	36
Muttahida Qaumi Movement / IND	(MQM)	29
Pakistan Muslim League (N)	(PML-N)	15
Independent	(IND)	14
Pakistan People's Party (SB)	(PPP-SB)	02
National People’s Party	(NPP)	04

Party Name	Party	Seats in NWFP Assembly
Pakistan Muslim League -N	(PML-N)	32
Awami National Party	(ANP)	30
Pakistan People's Party	(PPP)	04
Jamiat Ulema e Islam	(JUI)	01
Independent	(IND)	11
Vacant	(VCT)	02

Party Name	Party	Seats in Baluchistan Assembly
Baluchistan National Movement (H)	(BNP)	09
Jamiat Ulema Islam- F	(JUI-F)	07
Jamhuri Watan Party	(JWP)	06
Pakistan Muslim League (N)	(PML-N)	04
Baluchistan National Movement -H	(BNM-H)	02
Pakistan People’s Party	(PPP)	01
Pakistan Muslim League –J	(PML-J)	01
Pakhton Khawah Milli Awami Party	(PKMAP)	02
Independent	(IND)	08

Provincial results were also not so different from the Centre and PML-N and its allies won in all provinces. Rendering to the traditions of Pakistani politics, the winner party always celebrates the triumph and loser political parties always rejected the election results and raised the question mark on election's results. The allegation of rigging and engineering on winner party was a common practice. So do the PPP and JUI (F) and refused to accept the election results and defendant the Chief of Army Staff, interim government, President and other law enforcement agencies to influence the elections. The third largest party in National Assembly, MQM did not throw away the total results but it also accused the involvement of establishment in election process and alleged the ISI for rigging in some urban areas of Karachi where its candidate could not win the seat. Caretaker Prime Minister rejected all these accusations and stated that election were clean, nonviolent, impartial and fair.³⁶ He gave the reference of several international and national spectators and observing teams including SAARC, NDI, EU, HRC, HRCP and HRS who watched all the election process very intensely and all of that teams declared that election free and fair.³⁷

Formation of the Government

After elections PML-N emerged as sole majority party in National Assembly so it was obvious that she will make her government in the Centre. Beside landslide victory in National Assembly PML-N also got marvelous victory in the Provincial Assemblies of Punjab and NWFP and now there was no hurdle in making its governments in those provinces. PML-N got smaller number of seats in Sindh and Baluchistan but its allies got sufficient seats that with their help PML-N was in the position that she could make its government in those provinces too. The process of government making started from the nomination of Speaker in National Assembly and surprisingly, Mr. Pir Ellahi Bax Somro from PML-N unopposed elected as speaker of National Assembly and similarly, Mr. Jafar Iqbal from the same party elected as deputy speaker of National Assembly.³⁸ In the beginning, PPP nominated Khurshid Shah and Naveed Qamar as its

candidates for the portfolio of Speaker and Deputy Speaker but later, after analyzing her tiny strength in National Assembly, Benazir Bhutto withdrew her candidates and let the PML (N) candidates elected unchallenged.³⁹ Perhaps it was the first instance in the Parliamentary history of Pakistan that both Speaker and Deputy Speaker had been elected unopposed.⁴⁰

After the election of speaker and deputy speaker the nomination for the portfolio of Prime Minister was started on February 17, 1997 and Nawaz Sharif from PML-N elected as Prime Minister of Pakistan after securing 177 votes from the house. His opponent Aftab Shaban Mirani got only 16 votes which showed that all political parties except PPP voted for Nawaz Sharif.⁴¹ On February 25, Prime Minister announced his seven members cabinet,⁴² which later enhanced till 18.⁴³ Prime Minister selected all cabinet members from PML-N and its allies parties, ANP and MQM. After the establishment of government in the National Assembly, PML - N formed its governments in all four provinces and Shahbaz Sharif (Punjab),⁴⁴ Mehtab Abbasi (NWFP),⁴⁵ Liaquat Jatoi (Sindh)⁴⁶ and Akhtar Mengal (Baluchistan)⁴⁷ were chosen as Chief Ministers. In the province of the Punjab and NWFP, PML-N formed its governments individually while in Sindh and Baluchistan she made its government with the coalition of MQM and BNP.⁴⁸

After becoming Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif had to face many serious problems which he had inherited by previous government. Now on one side he has to tackle with the axe of 58 (2) (B), which had been cut the throat of four elected governments, and on other side he had to deal with terrorism, worsened law and order situation in Sindh, corruption, unemployment, defaulter of bank loans, worsened economy, external debts, and with his political opponent which were not only in opposition but in its government too.

The Role of President

President Leghari played most critical and vital role in the defeat of PPP and in marvelous triumph of PML-N. Apparently, election 1997 was contested between PML-N and PPP but real

competition was fought between PPP and President House. Basically, President Leghari belongs to PPP and it was Benazir Bhutto who nominated and elected him as President but when clashes arose between them and he terminated the government of his own party; he surrounded in hallucinations. He was scared that if Benazir Bhutto won the elections and came back in power she will never spare him and will put on all corruption allegations on him which he imposed on her at the time of termination. Now the election 1997 was converted in the matter of life and death for President. To save his political future, President Leghari used every means to torn apart PPP's unity, traduces its popularity and gave her defeat in elections. To achieve the goals President adopted two types of strategies. Firstly, he used his presidential powers and made such caretaker setup which was consisting on those politicians who were totally against the PPP's previous policies and have severe clashes with PPP's leadership. President Leghari appointed Malik Meraj Khalid as caretaker Prime Minister who was a senior veteran of PPP but now he was more close to Farooq Leghari then Benazir Bhutto. Unfortunately, his neutrality for election was also suspicious and he seems to be more loyal to President then his own party. He appointed such persons as Ministers in caretaker cabinet which were considered as the worst enemy of PPP.⁴⁹ He also picked those frontrunners of PPP in caretaker setup who could obey all his orders without any question. Maximum of them were the friends or relatives of President and rests of them were belong to previous ruling party and having issues with Benazir Bhutto and all of they were loyal with President.⁵⁰ Surprisingly, it was the only criteria for their appointment in caretaker setup. In fact, by all means, President Farooq Leghari wants to wipe out PPP in elections, especially its chairperson Benazir Bhutto and for that purpose he used every fair and unfair method.

Secondly, President Leghari used his constitutional powers and before the commencement of elections, he issued three important Ordinances to curtail the political power of PPP. The first Ordinance issued by

President was "Ehtisab Ordinance 1996".⁵¹ The main object of that Ordinance was the trial of crooked and corrupt politicians, government officers and civil bureaucrats who robbed the state wealth or used their power and authority beyond their limitations. But the real purpose of that Ordinance was to snub the political opponents and their supporters. Caretaker government used that Ordinance against PPP's leadership and registered hundreds of FIRs against them. Infect, that Ordinance was a threat for those politicians who were still loyal to Benazir Bhutto and refusing to leave PPP or not ready to obey the orders of President against their party.⁵² Under that Ordinance police arrested dozens of politicians, bureaucrats and government officers who were still supporting PPP's policies. The main object of that Ehtisab Ordinance was to create fright in civil bureaucracy and government officers. That Ordinance was used frequently against PPP and it create scariness in the supporter of PPP which reduced the political power of PPP in the civil bureaucracy as well as in common people. Another Ordinance was also issued as an amendment in constitution and through that Ordinance two institutional reforms were introduced; first "the introduction of adult franchise in FATA tribes"⁵³ secondly, the establishment of a "Council of Defense and National Security (CDNS)."⁵⁴ The first modification was considered an appreciable step in the good way, though the second alteration through which CDNS was formed was severely criticized by politicians but appreciated by Military because it bestowed them more participation and importance in national policy making process. Infect, that Ordinance was issued by President to gratify the establishment and to get their support in elections against PPP. According to political scientist it was not a good step for political instability. They argued that CDNS will enhance the Military power and will allocate a perpetual part to Army in the all national decision making procedure. By doing so the two participants of Troika (Military Chief and President) could have legitimize their part in the concerns of the administration. The third Ordinance was issued by President on December, 1996 and an amendment was made

in “Representation of the people Act 1976”. According to that amendment no any loan defaulter could contest election.⁵⁵ The Ordinance disqualified dozens of politicians including PPP’s ex MNAs and MPAs. Benazir Bhutto criticized the Ordinance and blamed that alteration act was introduced only to restrain the political power of her party. She declared it a political strategy to snub and pressurize the politicians especially PPP’s election candidates.⁵⁶ Chairperson PPP condemned the modified act and warned the caretaker government to stop such negative activities. She accused that a caretaker government had no right to modify the constitution through Ordinances. She declared it a tactic to banned the politicians especially PPP candidates to participate in election.⁵⁷ She claimed that PPP leadership could not be pressurized by such mean tactics and she warned caretaker government to stop their illegal activities against PPP leadership.⁵⁸

Caretaker government used the modified Ordinance of Representation of the people Act 1976 as a weapon against her political opponents. In the reign of Benazir Bhutto dozens of politicians, businessmen, industrialists and feudal lords acquired loans from different banks. It was a routine matter and every government was bound to facilitate their investors with loan facility to enhance the production capacity. Beside businessmen and investors, politicians also got benefit from that facility. Before election 1997, there were hundreds of politicians who had took the loan from different banks belonging to different political parties. That Ordinance bound them to obey the orders of caretaker government instead of their party leader because refusing to accept the orders of caretaker government means their maladroitness from elections. Surprisingly, that Ordinance mainly used against defaulters of PPP leadership except other political parties, in the result, a large numbers of PPP leaders rather changed their loyalty and joined the hand with President or compelled to keep them aloof from election process. That large number of PPP’s leaders and workers who forced to leave the PPP, assured common voters that President’s allegations of corruption on PPP were correct. It changed the

mindset of common voters and they also preferred other political parties instead of PPP. It decreased the vote bank of PPP and enhanced the popularity of PML-N in the masses. Later after the formation of National Assembly PML (N) government endorsed all step taken under those ordinances.⁵⁹

The Role of Caretaker Government

Caretaker government under the instructions of President and in the command of Prime Minister Malik Meraj Khalid played very significant role in the success of PML-N and in the defeat of PPP. According to the instructions of President Leghari, caretaker Prime Minister and all Ministers of interim cabinet started a continuous electronic and print media campaign against PPP and tried to bring out the negative image of PPP in the masses. In fact, caretaker setup was established for the smooth conduct of elections but unfortunately, it converted into an opponent of PPP and they adopted such policies against PPP which exposed their biasness and partiality. By means of Ordinances, caretaker government registered hundreds of FIRs against the candidates and workers of PPP to pressurize them. Thousands of political workers of PPP were arrested and put in the Jail. In several districts administration imposed ban on political activities of PPP’s leadership. Under the command of caretaker government media presented Benazir Bhutto as the traitor of the country. Newspapers were filled with the articles of anti-PPP columnists. All caretaker administration openly used its sources to defame and vilify the political posture of PPP. The continuous campaign of caretaker government against PPP leadership badly influenced the vote bank of PPP. The nonstop character assassination of Benazir Bhutto also affected the image of her party in the masses and in the result several electable MNAs and MPAs left the party and announced to contest election independently or they joined had with PML-N. It not only divided the vote bank of PPP but also enhanced the popularity of PML-N.

PML-N’s Powerful Election Strategy

It was reality that Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, as the head of PML-N, run his election

campaign very wisely and affectively. The first cause of his success in election was that he had played main role in the creation of political clashes and differences between President Leghari and Ex. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Now during election campaign he tried to get benefit from those differences and poses himself as the favorite candidate of President and establishment. He presented PML-N as a nationalist and patriot political party which was acceptable for everyone even for PPP too because President Leghari was himself from PPP and favoring him. He postured PML-N as a peaceful and accommodating political party which has no clatters and differences with Military, President even with caretaker Prime Minister. It created a soft image of PML-N in the masses and in elections they preferred PML-N on other political parties. That soft image not only enhanced its popularity in common people but also increased the vote bank of PML-N.

The second reason of PML-N success in election was, the president of PML-N, Mian Nawaz Sharif was belongs to the Punjab which was the largest and most populous province of Pakistan and about 2/3 of Pakistani considered themselves Punjabi. Punjab had highest seats in National Assembly and it was obvious that the winner from that province will sit on the chair of Prime Minister therefore Punjabi politicians have a substantial political power base in Pakistani national politics. Before the commencement of elections, Nawaz Sharif decided to play “Punjab Card” during his election campaign and adopted a new political modus operandi. On his instructions main political leadership of PML-N started to blame PPP that she was the only party of Sindh and in her previous tenure she spent all of the national funds on Sindh and deprived the Punjab from its rights. They appealed the masses of the Punjab that please cast your vote to PML-N because Nawaz Sharif is a Punjabi and a Punjabi Prime Minister will give them their rights. They arose slogan “*Jaag Punjabi Jaag, teri pug no lug giya daag.*” That Punjabi card worked affectively and a large number of Punjabi voters converted their loyalties from PPP to PML-N. It was the reason that PML-N got total 134 seats in National

Assembly in which 107 were from Punjab.

The third reason of PML-N’s marvelous triumph was the political and financial support of industrialist and businessmen class in elections. After the death of Zia ul Haq, Benazir Bhutto had won two elections while Nawaz Sharif had won one election. During her both tenures Benazir Bhutto under her socialist manifesto introduced socialist reforms. Nationalization policy was also one of the parts of her that reforms. Bhutto’s reforms created troubles for venture capitalist especially for foreign investors. Through that nationalization policy industrialist, capitalist, businessmen and private factory owners including Nawaz Sharif’s family suffered badly. Punjab was the hub of that class and for them success of PPP in elections means once again the elimination of their business. On the other side PML-N introduced its manifesto in which Nawaz Sharif presented an economy structure based on privatization and economic liberalization, especially for banks and industries. That privatization program reversed the nationalization policy of PPP. It was a good sign for capitalist and investors so they supported PML-N against PPP in all over the country, especially in Punjab and gave huge donations for political processions and rallies of PML-N. It not only boosted up her moral but also increased the vote bank before elections.

Another cause behind the success of PML-N was the introduction of new policies, development plans and political and administrative reforms by Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister. From 1990 to 1993, Nawaz Sharif remained Prime Minister of Pakistan and in his that tenure he introduced numerous reforms and developments plans in all over the Pakistan. The results of that plans and reforms were outstanding. Nawaz Sharif constituted several new institutes and introduced privatization policy which enhanced the investment in the country and decreased the unemployment. He gave new boom to industrial sector which increased the export goods and Pakistan earned millions of dollars by selling those products. Nawaz Sharif paid full attention to development work in the country especially in Punjab and spread a huge network of roads in all

over the Punjab. He distributed yellow cabs in youth on easy installments. He gave loans on easy conditions to un-employers and to small businessmen for starting their own business. He gave subsidies to poor people on food items through utility stores. In 1993, PPP came into power again but she could not introduce such reforms and plans. Now before the election 1997, Nawaz Sharif tried to cash those development plans and reforms against PPP failure policies and advertised his developments plans by using all means. He spent huge amounts on its publicity and exposed the dishearten policies of PPP through electronic and print media. It created political awareness in the masses and after comparison the both governments they decided to vote PML-N which enhanced the vote bank of PML-N and decreased the popularity of PPP in all over the country especially in the province of the Punjab.

The role of Anti-PPP Politicians

The appointment of governors in the provinces was the sole prerogative of President so Farooq Leghari appointed Khawaja Ahmad Tariq Rahim as governor of the Punjab which politically, was the most important province of Pakistan. He was the close friend of President and also has best relations with the leadership of PPP in Punjab. Leghari appointed him with task to curtail the political power of PPP in Punjab. Khawaja Tariq Rahim did his duty very well and took several steps against political leadership of PPP in Punjab. He established a parallel political group against Bhutto's party in Punjab which not only divided its vote bank in all districts of Punjab but also decreased its political popularity. Khawaja Tariq Rahim made the governor house the hub of conspiracies against PPP and controlled all political activities of loyal PPP's activist from that point. As a governor, Khawaja Tariq Rahim used funds, authorities and administration against PPP leadership and supported the PML-N workers underhand. It not only enhanced the political popularity of PML-N in the masses but also decreased the vote bank of PPP in the Punjab. The same role was played in Sindh by Mumtaz Bhutto. Sindh was the political hub of PPP. The founder of PPP was belongs to Sindh and his daughter Benazir

Bhutto also have its place to Sindh so it became the center of PPP's political activities. PPP was the biggest political party of rural areas of Sindh and she always obtained highest seats in every election from Sindh. It was very difficult to any political party to challenge the popularity of PPP in Sindh. President Farooq Leghari appointed Mumtaz Bhutto as caretaker Chief Minister of Sindh to restrain the political power of PPP. Mumtaz Bhutto was one of the founder members of PPP and was a close friend and first cousin of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Mumtaz Bhutto belongs to Bhutto family and had sufficient political influence in Sindhi politics. He had served as Sindh Chief Minister in 1972 and later he became Federal Minister and Governor of Sindh too. He was also appointed as President of PPP in Sindh. After the demise of Z.A. Bhutto, he left the PPP and formed his own political party named Sindh National Front, and contested several elections from the platform of that party. In 1996, President Leghari appointed him as caretaker Chief Minister Sindh. After the nomination as Chief Minister of Sindh he made his provincial cabinet and included almost all anti-PPP politicians in that cabinet. The interim cabinet's formation was very peculiar as most of the members were biased and prejudiced. They belonged to Mumtaz Bhutto's party or relative or friend of the Chief Minister. He tried his best to gain the political support against PPP and for that purpose he adopted such political strategies which weakened PPP's electoral strength. Mumtaz Bhutto made relations with angry and displeased workers of PPP and offered them to join his own party. His struggles deteriorated the political power of PPP in Sindh which resulted in the reduction of PPP's vote in elections.

The role of Supreme Court Judgment

Caretaker Prime Minister introduced Ehtesab Ordinance 1996 and it was decided that a retired or serving judge will be headed it as Chief Ehtesab (Accountability) Commissioner.⁶⁰ The Ehtesab Ordinance involved judiciary in politics and through that Ordinance hundreds of politicians belonging to opposition parties were put into jail or forced to convert their loyalties against PPP. On the other hand, the ruling of Judiciary against the restoration of Benazir

Bhutto's government also played an important role in the defeat of PPP in elections. It was on the record that the clashes between Benazir Bhutto and President Leghari were started on several issues and one of them was the appointment of Judges in Supreme Court. The clashes enhanced and President terminated PPP's government through executive order. Benazir Bhutto filed a writ petition in Supreme Court against that illegal removal. But Chief Justice of Supreme Court did not give her any favor. According to Khan;

When Benazir challenged the order of the dissolution of the National Assembly, his [chief justice] attitude was clearly hostile. He returned her petition twice on flimsy procedural grounds... He pulled out old cases pending against the validity of the Eighth Amendment and fixed them ahead of the dissolution. On all previous occasions, the cases of dissolution of assemblies were heard by all available judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan but this time he constituted a Bench of only seven judges, keeping a number of senior judges out of the bench. Such maneuvers resulted in the dismissal of the petition only four days before the general elections....⁶¹

The decision of the Supreme Court also affected the popularity of PPP in common people. The biggest opponent party, PML-N tried to get political benefits from it and put the allegations on PPP's leadership that the verdict of Supreme Court against PPP was a proof that President's allegations of corruption on PPP's chairperson were true. They argued that President Ishaq Khan terminated Nawaz Sharif's government on corruption charges but his allegations were forged and false so Supreme Court restored Nawaz Sharif government. PPP was a corrupt political party and Supreme Court endorsed it by its judgment. They appealed the common people to support PML-N and assured that PML-N will throw out the PPP from the elections with the help of Masses. The judgment of Supreme Court not only decreased the popularity of PPP in the masses but also reduced the vote bank in elections.

Conclusion

Before election 1997, the political scenario of Pakistan converted into very interesting and amazing situation. All most all political parties and political stack holders of Pakistan including establishment, President, caretaker Prime Minister, opposition political parties and anti-PPP politicians made a political alliance against PPP which was unannounced and invisible. That alliance was not publicized but could be felt because all of them tried their best to defeat PPP. Each of them has its own reservations and issues with PPP. President wanted the defeat PPP to prove his allegations of removal true. Military was eager to wipe out PPP in elections because Military officials did not want to give her a third chance of Premiership. Caretaker Prime Minister was obeying the orders of President. Anti- PPP politicians were assuming that their political survival was in the defeat of PPP so they were trying to divide her vote bank. It was luck of Nawaz Sharif that beside invisible alliance, religious political parties also favored conservative PML-N instead of socialist PPP. The other victims of previous PPP's government including a large number of industrialists, businessmen and bankers supported Nawaz Sharif which enhanced the vote bank of PML-N in election. The support and struggle of above mentioned elements converted the affiliations of common PPP's workers towards PML-N and it was the reason that Nawaz Sharif got absolute majority in election 1997.

References and Notes

- ¹ *Nawa e Waqt*, Lahore, November 10, 1996.
- ² In the bench of "seven Judges six judges endorsed the verdict while one judge wrote different note."
- ³ Malik Meraj Khalid was born in.1916 in the outskirts of Lahore. He started his political career as a member of Majlis-e-Ahrar. Later on he was quite active during Ayub era when he joined the Convention Muslim League. Afterwards he joined Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and was among the founding members of PPP. After his election to the National Assembly in 1970 he became Federal Minister for Agriculture. For a brief period, he also served as Chief Minister of the Punjab. In 1988, when democracy was

restored he was elected Speaker of the National Assembly. Thereafter he could not secure any niche in the Parliament as he kept losing elections. His acceptance of a rectorship of the Islamic University Islamabad virtually marked the end of his political career. However he entered into lime-light again after he was made care-taker Prime Minister following the dismissal of Benazir Bhutto on 5 November 1996.”

⁴http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/HistoryPStudies/PDF-FILES/17-Zahid_V28_no2.pdf Accessed on Feb. 11, 2016.

⁵ *Nawa e Waqt*, Lahore, December 11, 1996.

⁶ He was the brother-in-law of President Farooq Ahmad Leghari.

⁷ The renowned economist “Shahid Javed Burki, was given the portfolio of finance, who was instrumental in introducing major economic and financial reforms. He undertook several measures to stabilise the foreign exchanges and bring down fiscal deficit to the 4 percent of GDP as demanded by IMF.” Moreover, “broadening of the tax base to include agricultural incomes, changes in the management of the state owned banks, and the establishment of a Resolution Trust Corporation to deal with bad debts” were the important steps that had been taken by the care-taker government.

⁸ His appointment by President Leghari in Meraj Khalid’s caretaker cabinet was as a minister holding three key portfolios, of Establishment, Defense and Law.

⁹ Syeda Abida Hussain has given the portfolio of Minister of Education, Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. Later she was bestowed with the Add. Charge of Ministry of Social welfare and special education, and ministry of women development and youth affairs.

¹⁰ Sahabzada Yaqub Ali Khan was Pakistani statesman, diplomat, military figure, pacifist, linguist and retired general of Pakistan Army. He remained governor of East Pakistan in 1969. In 1973, he joined the Foreign Service and was appointed as Pakistan Ambassador to the United States and later ascended as Foreign Minister,

serving under President Zia ul Haq.

¹¹ Mumtaz Bhutto became a member of National Assembly at the age of 32 years on March 1965. When he and his cousin Zulfikar Ali Bhutto announced a new political party, PPP on 30 March 1967, he also became the founding member and principal executive committee member of that party. He and his cousin Zulfikar Ali Bhutto fought the election of 17 March against Muhammad Ayub Khuhro and Qazi Fazlullah Ubaidullah. He earned a victory against Qazi Fazlullah. He was made Governor of Sindh on 24 December 1971, then Chief Minister of Sindh on May 1972. Citing differences with Asif Ali Zardari, Bhutto split from Pakistan People’s Party and created his own party, Sindh National Front (SNF) in 1989.

¹² Ahmed Rashid., *Breaking up the Party*, *The Herald*, Karachi, November, 1996, 39.

¹³ *The Pakistan Times*, Islamabad, April 8, 1997.

¹⁴ *The Pakistan Times*, Islamabad, January 11, 1997.

¹⁵ Tahir Kamran., *Democracy and Governance in Pakistan*, (Lahore: South Asia Partnership-Pakistan, 2008), 27.

¹⁶ *The Pakistan Times*, Islamabad, April 8, 1997.

¹⁷ *Dawn*, Karachi, December 6, 1996.

¹⁸ *Dawn*, Karachi, November 15, 1996.

¹⁹ *Dawn*, Karachi, November 20, 1996.

²⁰ Syed Talat Husain, PML (N) ‘s Manifesto, *News*, January 5, 1997.

²¹ Syed Mushahid Husain, “Muslim League ki Siasat,” *Nawa e Waqt* January 3, 1997.

²² Faqir Khan, “Revival of Democracy in Pakistan 1988-1999: An Analysis,”(*Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* (PJSS) Vol. 35, No. 1, 2015), 201-212

²³ Exclusionary model is seat adjustment among parties in which a party does not field a candidate in exchange for the other party leaving another constituency opens for its candidate. For more detail see Waseem, *Political parties in Pakistan*.

²⁴ *Dawn*, January 12, 1997.

- ²⁵ *Nawa e Waqt*, January 22, 1997.
- ²⁶ Pakistan People's Party, Mir Murtaza Bhutto group, also see *Jassart*, January 22, 1997.
- ²⁷ A. Jafri, *The political parties of Pakistan*, (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 2002) 793.
- ²⁸ *Dawn*, Karachi, February 14, 1997.
- ²⁹ *Dawn*, Karachi, January 18, 1997.
- ³⁰ *Daily Jasarat* Karachi, January 12, 1997.
- ³¹ Faqir Khan, *Revival of Democracy in Pakistan 1988-1999: An Analysis*, 219.
- ³² Tahir Kamran, *Democracy and Governance in Pakistan*, 29.
- ³³ Faqir Khan, *Revival of Democracy in Pakistan 1988-1999: An Analysis*, 311.
- ³⁴ Muhammad Waseem, *Pakistan Election 1997; One Step Forward*, in *Pakistan 1997*, (edited by Crag Baxter and Charles Kennedy, 12 Boulder: West View Press. 1998), 414.
- ³⁵ Tahir Kamran, *Democracy and Governance in Pakistan*, 27.
- ³⁶ *The News*, Lahore, February 5, 1997.
- ³⁷ *1997: General Elections Report, Vol.1*, (Islamabad: Election Commission of Pakistan, n.d), 234.
- ³⁸ Sartaj Aziz, *Between Dreams and Realities: Some Milestones in Pakistan's History*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009) 162.
- ³⁹ *Jung*, February 17, 1997.
- ⁴⁰ Tahir Kamran, *Democracy and Governance in Pakistan*, 24.
- ⁴¹ A. Jafri, *The political parties of Pakistan*, 794.
- ⁴² *Jung*, February 26, 1997.
- ⁴³ Sartaj Aziz., *Between Dreams and Realities: Some Milestones in Pakistan's History*, 162.
- ⁴⁴ *Dawn*, Karachi, February 21, 1997.
- ⁴⁵ *Dawn*, Karachi, February 23, 1997.
- ⁴⁶ Hamid Khan., *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001) 817.
- ⁴⁷ *Dawn*, Karachi, February 23, 1997.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ Syed Mushahid Husain, "Muslim League ki Siasat," *Nawa e Waqt* January 3, 1997.
- ⁵⁰ *Daily Jassart*, January 22, 1997.
- ⁵¹ Muhammad Waseem., *Pakistan Election 1997; One Step Forward*, in *Pakistan 1997*, (edited by Crag Baxter and Charles Kennedy, 12 Boulder: West View Press. 1998), 414.
- ⁵² *Dawn*, Karachi, November 20, 1996.
- ⁵³ Tahir Kamran., *Democracy and Governance in Pakistan*, (Lahore: South Asia Partnership-Pakistan, 2008), 28.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ *Dawn*, Karachi, December 6, 1996.
- ⁵⁶ *Dawn*, Karachi, November 15, 1996.
- ⁵⁷ *Dawn*, Karachi, November 20, 1996.
- ⁵⁸ *Dawn*, Karachi, January 5, 1998.
- ⁵⁹ *The Pakistan Times*, Islamabad, April 8, 1997.
- ⁶⁰ Hamid Khan., *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan*, 803-804
- ⁶¹ Ibid. 809-810