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### **General Elections of 1993: A thriving Riposte of Democracy in Pakistan**

#### **ABSTRACT**

*Present study seeks to highlight the events started from the dissolution of elected government of Mian Nawaz Sharif to the General Elections of 1993 finally ended at the triumph of Pakistan People's Party. It also tries to pinpoint that how undemocratic decision of the President shoddily affected the ongoing process of newly established democracy in Pakistan. Yet political parties, their voters and other stake holders of the society have gathered their energies to reconstitute the democratic system through Elections of 1993. Although a large number of political parties participated in the elections yet over 90 percent of the same old faces were reflected in the emerging two-party system where Pakistan People's Party by securing the majority successfully formulated the government. With the help of both primary and secondary sources including newspapers, books, articles, and journals etc, this paper has tried to analyze that how the electoral practice in 1993 became a thriving riposte of democracy in Pakistan.*

**KEY WORDS:** Elections 1993, PPP, PML (N), Political Parties, Democracy, Election Commission

#### **BACKGROUND**

By using the controversial clause of 58(2b) President of Pakistan Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan dissolved the elected government of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on April 18, 1993. Although Supreme Court has void the presidential order by restoring his government, however, the provincial assemblies were not disbanded yet Sharif government, in spite of having elected membership in the Punjab, decided to abandon the sinking ship. Like his dictator predecessor, Ishaq Khan was enjoying much powerful position under the said clause when Nawaz Sharif openly talked about restricting the powers of the President through a constitutional amendment. Benazir Bhutto fully benefited from this scenario and started an effective campaign against the government. In the meantime sudden death of General Asif Nawaz in January 1993 provided Ishaq Khan an opportunity to appoint General Waheed Kakar as the new chief by avoiding the proposal of Nawaz Sharif. Differences between Prime Minister House and the Presidency practically paralyzed Nawaz administration up to greater extent.<sup>4</sup> It was believed that Sharif was trying to curb Ishaq's powers through repeal of the Eighth Amendment at the behest of the United States which had asked Nawaz to cut the President down to size. After the death of Nawaz Sharif on April 17, 1993, Ishaq Khan used the presidential power of 8<sup>th</sup> amendment and dismissed popularly elected parliaments of Nawaz Sharif. It is said that Ishaq Khan took the matter so serious that he dismissed the National Assembly and the cabinet, within less than 24 hours of his address to the nation.<sup>6</sup> A Care-taker cabinet was immediately sworn in the same evening, which was later expanded to include 62 ministers.

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However, Supreme Court of Pakistan reinstated the Nawaz government within the month of its removal, mentioning that the President had not enough jurisdictions to take such a drastic step. This was humiliating for Ishaq Khan, but he did not let the matter away. It is generally believe that the political mess forced General Kakar to move in but he refused and “convinced” both the President and Prime Minister to resign from their offices. The then Chairman of the Senate Wasim Sajjad took over as acting President and Moeen Qureshi was sworn in as the caretaker Prime Minister whose three months in office has been remembered for the lists he made public of all the loan defaulters and those that had got such loans written off through their political influence.

Finally, the ultimate solution of all problems, the fresh elections were announced on October 1993. All political stakeholders of the country found it an opportunity to make their wishes into reality. However, these elections were pre-mature because Nawaz Sharif could not complete his five- years. The process for Elections of 1993, sixth General elections in Pakistan, was started with great zeal, where Benazir and her PPP was in advantageous position. During the elections about 1,485 candidates from a number of political parties participated, however, contestants from PML-N and PPP attracted the attentions of the majority. In point of fact, the entire election revolved around both mainstream parties. On most of the issues their policies were similar but with conflicting ideologies. Nawaz Sharif again talked about privatizations, development schemes and restoration of his taxi giveaway programme. On the other hand Benazir Bhutto promised a government and business enterprise along with announcement of number of welfare schemes for women etc. Similarly, the extreme right and left parties of the country reiterated their old agendas including implementation of Islamic laws or promotion of secular ideology, promotion of sub-nationalism on regional issues etc. The army, by playing its role deployed 150,000 troops in polling stations to ensure free and fair elections.

#### **TO THE ELECTION PROCESS**

Election process for 1993 Elections has been formally started with the guideline from the Election Commission of Pakistan. Mr. Justice Naeem-ud-Din issued the Code of Conduct that clearly stated that the political parties must not propagate against the security, integrity or sovereignty of the country. It further said, political leadership may not interfere with the liberty of others. By avoiding the official interference in the election process, the Commission prohibited the support or hinder of the civil servants. The Commission tried to make it sure that political gatherings may not create public nuisance. The Election Commission of Pakistan was created by the Constitution of 1956 but it has been constrained and transformed in different occasions. It had a panel of four members each from every province of the country having equivalent position. In order to ensure neutrality both the Prime Minister and opposition leader use to recommend three names for appointment of Chief Election Commissioner. Who, for conduction of free and fair elections, tried to make sure that the election is conducted in accordance with law. As far as its monetary dealings are concerned, the commission has been granted full financial autonomy, independent from governmental control.

Similarly, without any governmental interference, the Commission usually perform its function of conducting nation-wide as well as the by-elections solely decided by the Election Commission. By following its old traditions, the Commission has performed all important functions i.e. preparation and execution of polling schemes, nomination of polling personnel and arrangements to maintain the law and order etc. All the political parties were compelled to accept the code of conduct in order to take part in the electoral process during 1993 elections.

It is generally agreed that the electoral system adopted during 1993 elections was much better than previous elections. Yet, the Human Rights Commission reported some irregularities in electoral process. On the other hand, the Chief Election Commissioner was confident about the electoral system particularly in terms of their fairness and impartiality. According to him, "the preparations for election were going on smoothly and everything was being done on schedule, hopefully it will be fair participation in the election process." Similarly, on August 22, 1993 he drew the attention of candidates to Article 62 and 63 of the constitution. These articles provide a condition to qualify or disqualify a candidate on certain order including a divisive clause to judge a character, "Candidate is not of good character and is not commonly known as one who violates Islamic injunctions." In order to punish the offenders the Commission declares, "The candidate has been found culpable of corruption or unlawful activities under the law, unless a period of five years has elapsed."

In order to attract their voters, the contesting political parties have displayed their party manifestos just before the Elections. It is said, PPP being the hot favourite, showed its cards in most appropriate manners. They pledged to create “public private partnership” in order to achieve the full potential of the market forces for economic development and social progress. Although party decided to reformulate foreign relationship especially with India, however, it fully supported modernization of the armed services for effective defense against outside aggression.<sup>32</sup> On the internal fronts, Benazir Bhutto committed to protect women’s rights, boost educational facilities and unemployment progressive media policy population welfare programs and to control the menace of narcotics.<sup>33</sup> The PPP manifesto had given new Hoopston the lower classes as it envisaged comprehensive and practical plans to fight unemployment ignorance, poverty and disease.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, PPP also announced to cope with the country’s growing power shortage affecting almost every aspect of life.<sup>35</sup>

Pakistan Muslim League (N), on the other hand announced the provision of equal social and economic opportunities by developing agricultural and industrial sectors.<sup>36</sup> During 1993 election campaign, PML(N) repatriated to continue its previous programmes including yellow cab scheme and motorway etc.<sup>37</sup> In addition to this, different schemes including Golden card scheme, yellow tractors, motor cycle and bicycle scheme was to be introduced.<sup>38</sup> Like PPP, PML also announced the protection of women’s rights and equal rights of women in society.<sup>39</sup> Privatization, population planning, trade, job opportunities, female literacy, primary education, health for all, freedom of press and revival of women seats in assemblies etc were also included in the manifesto.<sup>40</sup>

Third important political force Pakistan Islamic Front (PIF) announced its manifesto on August 20, 1993 stressing upon the establishment of truly Islamic democratic welfare state in which Quran and Sunnah was to be the supreme law of the country.<sup>42</sup> The PIF campaign promised economic reforms aimed at making the country economically self-reliant, putting an end to all un-Islamic means of earning including interest, speculation, gambling, narcotics hoarding, black marketing, smuggling and corruption.<sup>43</sup> Regarding the labor policy, the PIF manifesto revolved around in accordance with the recommendations of ILO.<sup>44</sup> The manifesto also promised economic reforms aimed at making the country economically self-reliant, putting an end to all un-Islamic means of earning including interest, speculation, gambling, narcotics hoarding, black marketing, smuggling and corruption. Another political force Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, in its manifesto, also pledged to make Pakistan a truly Islamic, democratic, welfare state with Quran and Sunnah as its highest commandment.<sup>45</sup> Provision of education, health, maintenance of law and order establishment of interest free banking and reformulation of national media policy were the other elements of manifesto.<sup>46</sup>

However, another aspect of the campaign was the politics of slogans that were playing a vital role. Majority of the slogans have provided the political nature of political parties and used as political weapon. PPP with its famous slogan *Roti, Kapra aur Makan* was the dominant to repudiate the forces of ethnicity.<sup>47</sup> PML(N) slogan *Qadam bharao Nawaz Sharif Hum Tumhary sath hain* (move ahead Nawaz Sharif we all are with you) also gained popularity.<sup>48</sup> Fazal-ur-Rehman, however, used the term as *America ka jo yaar hy ghadar hy ghadar hy* (Friend of America is traitor). The slogan of MQM during the past elections was *Jeay Altaf* in the style of *Jeay Bhutto* but Jammāt-i-Islami changed its style through music as a figure of respect.<sup>49</sup> PPP also took help from slogans used musical means and had released songs to propagate its manifesto and party’s objective.<sup>50</sup>

## **COMMENCEMENT OF ELECTIONS**

The Elections of 1993, under the supervision of Care-taker government were held in the month of October 1993 as had been decided earlier.<sup>51</sup> All political parties of the country took part in elections except MQM, a strongest party in the urban Sindh. It had announced a boycott of the elections on October 1, faulting the government for its failure to provide security to its workers. However, it is generally believed that MQM had decided to boycott on the assumption that voters would stay away and turn the process into a farce.<sup>52</sup> There were more contestants in the 1993 Elections than in any previous elections of the country. The record number of candidates for both national and provincial contests was in the field. The average number of candidates contesting a National Assembly seat in 1993 was seven and for a provincial assembly it was about eight but disintegration of *Islami Jamhori Ittehad* became a major factor in this regard.<sup>53</sup> Higher candidate seat ratios have significance because under Pakistan’s first-past-the-post-electoral system, a candidate only needs to gain more votes than each of his rival to win.<sup>54</sup> The Elections was to be observed by International observer delegations. Whereas the Election Commission was standing to organize and conduct the elections honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with law as per

satisfaction of these observers.<sup>55</sup> Quite a large number of foreign organizations also visited Pakistan on the eve of the polls to have an over view of the election campaign and to see actual conduct of the polls.<sup>56</sup>

The holding of elections for the National and Provincial assemblies on 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> October 1993 respectively was a relatively smooth affair. It was billed as a free and fair election by the care taker government, the Election Commission, political parties, International election observers, the media at home and abroad and the public at large. More than 20 million people voted in an atmosphere charged by hostility between contesting parties the level of election-related violence was relatively contained. The mobiles teams comprising people from the armed forces and civil bureaucracy kept a vigil on the polling stations on the election day.<sup>57</sup> Every political party tried its best to obtain more seats, for the National Assembly out of the two major contenders the PPP put up 166 candidates and the PML (N) had fielded 173 the highest number by any party. National Democratic Alliance (NDA) put up eight candidates to the National Assembly, twelve to the Punjab Assembly and one each to the provincial assemblies of NWFP and Balochistan.<sup>58</sup> Jammāt-e-Islami contested the election on the platform of Pakistan Islamic Front. The Front went to polls with 103 candidates. There were a total of 1449 candidates in the fight for the Muslim seats whereas 62 candidates were contesting for the 10 minority seats while the PPP had relatively more of the rural rich among its candidates the PML (N) had more of the urban rich, an overall analysis reveals that as compared to the Muslim League the PPP had a broader social mix of candidates.<sup>59</sup> During the elections, 4 tickets were given to women from PPP while PML(N) gave 2 tickets and other parties did not give any tickets to women.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, the two largest parties given priorities to the women. It was observed by political analysts that like the elections of 1985, 1988, 1990 nature of the election campaign of 1993 was largely issueless.<sup>61</sup> There were 5,23,26,021 registered voters for the 1993 elections as compared to 4,80,61,670 voters in 1988 and 4,86,48,960 voters in 1990. The low turnout in Sindh was the outcome of the MQM's boycott of the National Assembly.<sup>62</sup> In fact the Election'93 was a choice between two governments that have been tried and found wanting.<sup>63</sup> For the smooth and transparent election it was not an easy job to mobilize and train the manpower for managing 1,16,057 polling booths established in 34,123 polling stations to serve more than 52 million voters throughout the length and breadth of Pakistan.<sup>64</sup>

During the elections the voter's turnout remained low as compare to the previous elections in Pakistan. However, PPP came out as the single largest party winning 86 seats in the National Assembly with 37.85 per cent votes, but could not get a majority to form the government without the cooperation of other parties. PPP's collaborator PML-J won only six seats with 3.9 per cent votes. Hence, PPP and PML (J) alliance secured a combined national vote share of 41.75 percent. The PML (N) secured 73 seats with 39.86 per cent votes, although it was lagged behind the PPP in number of seats. It was in the competition to form the government.<sup>65</sup> PPP got majority in Sindh while PML (N) got majority seats in Punjab. The PPP fielded 166 candidates for the National Assembly: 99 from Punjab, 46 from Sindh, 11 from the NWFP and 9 from Balochistan. The PML (N) contested 173 seats: 113 from Punjab, 36 from Sindh, 17 from the NWFP and 6 from Balochistan.<sup>66</sup> Benazir Bhutto won 121 votes of confidence in the National Assembly against the votes of Nawaz Sharif.<sup>67</sup>

The PPP which emerged as the single largest party in the general elections, has managed to retain its vote bank of about 38 percent which seems to have remained remarkably consistent for twenty-three years. Together with the PML(J) which polled 4 percent of the national vote, the PPP-PML(J) alliance had a combined vote share of 42 percent in 1993. The PML(N) secured 39.7 percent of the vote in the National Election-showing its transformational from a Punjab based to a national party that polled 45.3 percent vote in Punjab, 25.1 percent in NWFP, 30 percent in Sindh and 7.6 percent in Balochistan. The 'third force' in fact was independents polling 7.4 percent the third largest vote share after the two major parties. The Jammāt Ulema-e-Islam (F) also lost some ground with its vote share down from 2.9 percent in 1990 to 2.3 percent in 1993; but it lost several seats.<sup>68</sup> The female voters gave much advantage to PML (N) considerably higher in middle and upper class neighborhoods than in lower class neighborhood.<sup>69</sup>

**Table No I**  
**Party Position in National Assembly**

Party	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Balochistan	FATA	Fed.Capital	Total
PPP	47	33	5	1	0	0	86

PML(N)	52	10	9	0	0	1	72
PML(J)	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
PKMAP	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
PIF	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
ANP	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
IJM	0	0	2	2	0	0	4
IND.Can.	5	1	1	1	7	0	15
JWP	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
MDM	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
BNM(H)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
BNM(M)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
NDA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
NPP	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
PKQP	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
G.TOTAL	112	46	24	11	7	1	201

Source: *The News International*, October 13, 1993.

Electoral performances of PML (N) demonstrated its transformation from a Punjab-based to a national party as it polled 45.3 per cent of the votes in Punjab, 25.1 per cent in the NWFP, 30 per cent in Sindh and 7.6 per cent in Balochistan. The performance of electoral alliances was not significant Islami Jamhoori Mahaz secured four seats, Muttahidda Dini Mahaz two and National Democratic Alliance could secure only one seat and PIF secured only three. It is widely believed that electoral coalition between the PPP and PML (J), Jamat-e-Islami's decision to contest elections independently and MQM boycott of National Assembly, made it possible for Benazir to return power.<sup>70</sup> As a result of electoral process, PML (N) won 72 seats in the National Assembly against PPP's 86seats, however, Benazir Bhutto secured 121 votes of confidence in the National Assembly against 72 votes of Nawaz Sharif.<sup>71</sup> She was elected as a leader of the House on October 19, 1993 and the same day took oath for the office of the Prime Minister of Pakistan by achieving the rare honor of being the first Prime Minister in the Muslim World.<sup>72</sup>

**Table No: 2**  
**Elections Turnout**

Province/ Area	Total No. of Registered Voters	Total Votes Polled	Percentage
The Federal Capital Area	2,11,821	1,21,821	57.51per cent
Punjab	3,02,64,766	1,42,45,257	47.07per cent
Sindh	1,10,21,918	31,11,346	28.23per cent
NWFP	60,92,576	21,07,209	34.59per cent
FATA	33,805	20,891	61.80per cent
Balochistan	27,53,029	6,86,783	24.95per cent
Total	5,03,77,915	2,02,93,307	40.28per cent

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan, *Report on General Elections 1993* Vol. I, Islamabad: ECP, 1994, pp.328-29.

However, one of the most striking features of the 1993 elections was the poor performance of the religious parties. PIF managed to win only 3 seats, JUI(F) secured only 4, while MDM got two seats. However, the People's Party together with its ally, the Junejo faction of the Muslim League had won more seats in the province than party. Another aspect of the result shows the nature of the support bases of the major parties. As up to the expectations of the majority of the political experts, PPP maintained its hold in rural Sindh, however, the PML (N) on the other hand, won much of urban central Punjab.<sup>73</sup>

**Table 3**

Detailed position of political parties/alliances

S. No	Party/Alliance	No. of Seats secured	Total Votes Secured.	Percentage of Votes Secured
1	Pakistan People 's Party (PPP)	85	7578635	37.85
2	Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N)	73	7980229	39.86
3	Pakistan Muslim League Junejo (PML-J)	6	781652	3.90
4	IslamiJamhoriMahaz (IJM)	4	480099	2.39
5	Awami National Party (ANP)	3	335094	1.67
6	MutahiddaDeeniMahaz (MDM)	2	216937	1.08
7	PakhtoonKhawaMilliAwami Party (PKMAP)	3	97541	0.48
8	Pakistan Islamic Front (PIF)	3	645278	3.22
9	JamhorriWatan Party (JWP)	2	54607	0.272
10	Balochistan National Movement-Hyee (BNMH)	1	47648	0.237
11	Balochistan National Movement-Mengal (BNMM)	1	45228	0.225
12	National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	1	64713	0.323
13	National people's party (NPP)	1	48721	0.243
14	PKQP	--	54144	0.270
15	Independents	15	1482033	7.40
16	Other Smaller Parties	--	107979	0.53
	Total	201*	20020538	100

**Source:** Election Commission of Pakistan, *Report on General Elections 1993*, Vol. I, Islamabad: ECP, 1994, pp.238-39.

After the successful conduction of general elections in 1993, during the next phase the Presidential election was held on 13 November. Presidential election was schedule to be held on the date before the expiration of office term of President Ishaq on 18 November. It was held under the same constitutional framework which covered the last presidential elections in December 1988.<sup>74</sup> After President Ishaq Khan resigned in July, no consensus figure for Presidentship had emerged from amongst the political circles. The two leading political parties were engaged essentially in the election campaign which obviously enjoyed a priority consideration.<sup>75</sup>

**TABLE 4**  
**Presidential vote 1993**

Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Laghari (PPP)	274
Wasim Sajjad (PML-N)	168

**Source:** Mushtaq Ahmed, *Benazir Politics of Power* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 2005), p.256.

In the start about 20 candidates including Ishaq Khan, Air Marshal (R) Ashgar Khan, Nawabzada Nasarullah Khan, Nawab Akbar Bughti, Balakh Sher Mazai and Yahya Bakhtiar but most of them have been dropped out of the race one by one only two candidates, Farooq Ahmed Khan Laghari of PPP and Waim Sajjad of PML(N).<sup>76</sup> As per expectation Farooq Ahmed Khan Laghari won the Presidential elections by getting an outstanding votes against his rival Wasim Sajjad.<sup>77</sup> In this way the Elections 1993 formally ended by putting PPP administration at the steering wheel.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of this study it is concluded that the General Elections of 1993 was mainly conducted for the settlement of democracy which spells both change and continuity. These elections have generally been accepted by all political parties as fair, free and transparent, however, it brought back over 90 percent of the same old faces to the parliament. Yet it also signaled some change, specifically in the preferences of the electorate and in the political outlook of state institutions like the army and bureaucracy. The army, bureaucracy and judiciary together constituted the election machinery that enabled average citizens to freely exercise their right of vote. The electorate had shown preference for the two major political parties PML (N) and PPP, where the performance of nationalist and religious parties remained below average. The elections of October 1993 once again brought Benazir Bhutto into power, which showed a lack of confidence on the policies of Nawaz

government. Consequently, Benazir Bhutto was sworn as the Prime Minister of Pakistan for the second time. However, low turnout in the electoral process reflected less awareness for sustainable democratic system which can only be achieved with the help of education, responsible and socially conscious press and politically aware intelligentsia.