

Minority's Representation in Federal Cabinets of Pakistan: A Comparison between Democratic and Military Government (1947-1999)

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Abstract

Pakistan's creation is not solely the achievement of Muslims but also of other religious communities from India. Pakistan ensured the representation of minorities across various social and political domains. This research paper aims to spotlight the political domain and draw comparisons between parliamentary and military regimes regarding the inclusion of minority representatives and their roles in serving the nation and managing portfolios in the federal cabinets of Pakistan. Minority ministers not only received cabinet representation but also actively participated in the policy-making process and contributed to the development of both the nation and their respective communities. They held ministerial positions in crucial areas such as Law, Health, Education, and Labour, playing a significant role in these domains. A comparative analysis of minority representation in parliamentary and military regimes (1947-1999) reveals that parliamentary systems were more accommodating towards minorities, particularly in terms of providing them with opportunities in the cabinet and other political institutions. However, it should be noted that minority representatives were allotted lesser space in military governments than democratic governments. The key sources of the paper are the parliamentary debates, reliable works of search and various cabinet documents.

Key words

Minority, Parliament, Military, Cabinet, Comparison, Government.

Introduction

Pakistan basically is the achievement of the minority- a religious minority of colonial India. The Muslim minority had to face two major powers in India; one was the British government- a political power and the second one was the Hindu majority. Muslim minority fought not only for their rights but also for other minorities, Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah focused the low caste Hindus and Parsi community along with the Muslims interests, especially during the Round Table Conference and on other occasions.

Farahnaz Ispahani draws a picture of the reign of Muhammad Ali Jinnah as a Governor General. "Mr. Jinnah started in the days when there was no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no

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discrimination between one caste, creed and another. He initiated with this fundamental principle that all the citizens are equal citizens of one State.”¹

Since the creation of Pakistan, Minorities had been given representation in the higher ranks of the administrative structure. They served as highest political and administrative ranks in Pakistan. This research work, highlight and compare the parliamentary and military regimes that gave representation to the Minorities and space to serve the country and their portfolios. But Minority representatives had been given less space in the military governments. To examine the minorities representation in parliamentary and military regimes, this research work has been divided into five phases. The first phase is from 1947 to 1958 with a parliamentary form of governments; seven prime ministers and eight cabinets. The second phase was the first military phase in Pakistan, from 1958 to 1971. This phase has further been divided into three periods. First two periods consisted of Ayub Khan cabinets and rest was the cabinet of Yehya Khan. The third phase is the second parliamentary period from 1971 to 1977. In this period four cabinets were formed. The second military phase starts from 1977 to 1988. Zia ul Haq's Cabinet was divided into four cabinets. After Zia's death, the fifth phase was parliamentary, which start from 1988 to 1999. Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif ruled this era and they gave the representations to minorities.

Theoretical Framework

To strengthen the study of comparison between democratic and military regimes in view of minority representation in a democratic institution such as a cabinet. Two different theories have been discussed, Theory of Military Dictatorship by Barbara Geddes and the second one is Benjamin A.T. Graham's theory of Power Sharing and Democratic Survival. Barbara Geddes builds up her theory that there are three types of dictatorships: personalize, military, and single-party but Geddes explains the Military Dictatorship Theory in her book, *Military Rule*. Barbara Geddes believed that the country that has remained under colonial rule, fascinates the military officers to rule the country on colonial mindset. That is why Military dictators put ryes themselves as the guardians of the national interest, saving the nation from the disaster wrought by myopic and corrupt civilian politicians. Dictator never comes to power their own and they rarely control enough resources to govern alone. Dictators rely on a support coalition. This support coalition might be including armed forces, key allies of the royal family, economic and religious elite. All dictators have a power-sharing agreement with coalition elites to come in power. Dictator always has an incentive to utilize the power-sharing agreement to his benefit. In fact, dictators want to acquire all power. Dictators enjoy all powers by powering the few institutions of the state ignoring all the sections of the society especially ethnic and religious minorities. Same in Pakistan, all the military dictators Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and Zia ul Haq, all pretended they were liberator and guardian of the national interest. The fact is that they never split the power with all the sanctions of the society only powering the few institutions and some religious group of society.

On the other hand, there is a democratic system which spread the power and strengthens the political institutions of the state instead of elite family, military

¹ Farahnaz Ispahani, *Purifying the Land of the Pure*, (Uttar Pradesh: Harper Collins, 2015), 22

dictator or religious elite. Benjamin A.T. Graham's theory of Power Sharing and Democratic Survival mandate the participation of several parties or groups in particular offices or decision-making processes. Inclusive power-sharing places power broadly and jointly in the hands of multiple recognized groups. This includes grand (cabinet) coalitions representing all significant parties; constitutional or statutory provisions that reserve specific political offices for particular parties or social groups; rules that mandate inclusiveness in the armed forces, civil service, or other government appointments; and rules that give minority groups veto power over policy changes in sensitive areas, such as language and religious policy. Power sharing theory of democracy is to guarantee each group a share of political power and a floor level of political expectations, reducing the threat that they might withdraw or rebel from fear of being shut out of the political process. In Pakistan, all the parliamentary regimes assured the representation of all strata and ethnicities of society.

Hypothesis

Comparative study of minority's representation in both parliamentary and military regimes shows that the parliamentary regimes were more welcoming for minorities, in regard to give them space in the cabinet and in other political institutions. Their active participation in the initial Human Development programs in Pakistan, Constitution Making process and introduction of legislation are all on their credit in military regimes, Cabinets mostly consisted of loyal bureaucrats and professionals. as per dictator thinking, they concise the power in their own hands. most of the political parties and groups deprived of the representation. Minorities were ignored to provide representation in Cabinet; even they were not a member of any Constitution-Making body in few cases. They were passive in Ayub Khan Era, and similarly, Yahya Khan and Zia ul Haq were not eager to give representation to minorities in his Cabinets except Justice Cornelius who was appointed as a Law Minister. He, too, was not able to perform well in socio-political issue because Military establishment was the main decision-making authority.

The First Parliamentary Period, 1947-1958

In this period, three sorts of cabinets were there. The first was Single Party Cabinets 1947-1954. The second was Cabinets of All Talents 1954-1955 and the last one was Coalition Cabinets 1955-1958. In this parliamentary phase three ministers from minority, Joginder Nath Mandal, Kamini Kumar Dutta and Akshay Kumar Das, served in the federal Cabinets. The first cabinet was chosen by Governor General Muhammad Ali Jinnah on 15th August 1947.² Mr. Jinnah not only took the initiative in cabinet-making but also in the formation of the policies of the cabinet was to carry out. The cabinet was broadly representative of the provinces as also of the refugee and minorities.³ Joginder Nath Mandal enjoyed portfolios as a law minister from (15-08-1947) to (16-09-1950), labor from (15-08-1947) to (16-09-1950) and works (31-05-1949) to (10-09-1949).⁴ He also served

² Naumana Kiran Imran, *The Federal Cabinet of Pakistan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2016),³

³ Mushtaq Ahmed, *Government and Politics in Pakistan*, (Karachi: Pakistan Publishing House, 1963), 23

⁴ Imran, *The Federal Cabinet of Pakistan*, 331

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as minister of Commonwealth and Kashmir affairs from (10-10-1949) to (08-10-1950).

In March 1949, Mandal supported the Objective Resolution – the same resolution that endures generating political discussions in Pakistan where the progressives believe that it has been exploited to transform Jinnah's 'Secular Pakistan' into a 'Religious State'.⁵

After the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan which was a mortal blow to the young state, Khawaja Nazimuddin assumed the office of the Prime Minister under the most extraordinary circumstances. According to the theory and practice of the parliamentary system of government, the former Cabinet should automatically be dismissed. Khawaja made no changes in the cabinet beyond appointing Chaudhry Mohammad Ali as the Finance Minister, to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Malik Ghulam Muhammad, and the inclusion of Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar as minister for Industries. This Nazimuddin cabinet was terminated by the Governor-General in April 1953 and the third cabinet was formed under the Muhammad Ali Bogra in April 1953 with no minority minister.

The fourth cabinet which was 'Cabinet of All Talents' by Muhammad Ali Bogra because he claimed that this cabinet had all professionals and competent people.⁶ But it was the civil-military complex without the minority representations. In 1955, in a result of indirect elections of 1955, Awami League, United Front, Congress and Scheduled Caste Federation won seats but the Muslim League lost its Majority. Chaudhri Mohammad Ali, the leader of Muslim League parliamentary party, was commissioned to form the government because he had succeeded in forging an alliance with The United Front, which Mr. Suharwardy had been clearly unable to do because he had not only to accommodate the groups inside the Muslim League in constituting Cabinet but also to leave the selection of the United Front Ministers entirely to the discretion of Mr. Fazlul Huq.⁷ The basis of the partnership was a common desire to share state power.

This Cabinet included four Minister from the United Front and Five Ministers from the Muslim League. The United Front nominated two Ministers from Minority, Mr. Kamini Kumar Dutta and Mr. Akshay Kumar Das.⁸ Mr. Kamini Kumar Das was Health Minister from (11-08-1955) to (12-09-1956) and Law Minister from (11-08- 1955) to (31-08-1955) in the cabinet of Chowdhury Muhammad Ali.⁹ Mr. Akshay Kumar Das served as Minister of State for Economic Affairs.¹⁰ The inclusion of two Minority ministers in this coalition cabinet gave a non-sectarian look.¹¹

The next and last Coalition Cabinet formed by the Republican Party with National Awami Party, the Scheduled Caste Federation and the Pakistan National

⁵ *Dawn*, Karachi, November 4th, 2015

⁶ Imran, *The Federal Cabinet of Pakistan*, 8

⁷ Ahmed, *Government and Politics in Pakistan*, 58

⁸ Kamran Ahmed Suhrawardy, *Tazkra-i-Wuzra-i-Azam Pakistan*, (Lahore: Fiction House, 2010),116

⁹ Naumana Kiran Imran, *The Federal Cabinet of Pakistan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2016),337

¹⁰ Kamran Ahmed Suhrawardy, *Tazkra-i-Wajra-i-Azam Pakistan*, (Lahore: Fiction House, 2010),116

¹¹ Stanley Maron, *A New Phase in Pakistan Politics; Far Eastern Survey* 24 (1955), 162

Congress under the office of Malik Firoz Khan Noon in December 1957. It was Republican Cabinet and headed by the Republican Prime Minister expect for a few ministers who were more or less independent of any party control like Kamini Kumar Das as Health Minister.¹² Mr. Basanta Kumar Das was Education Minister. He also enjoyed portfolio as Labour minister from 7-2-1958 to 7-10-1958.¹³ In this collision Cabinets, there were some the more regular ministers such as Jaffar Shah, Ramizuddin Ahmed, Abdul Aleem, Syed Amjad Ali and Mr. Kamini Kumar Dutta. Ziring argues that all they were buccaneers and opportunist in the Cabinet.¹⁴

Their effectiveness and participation in decision-making process remained visible in different cabinets of first parliamentary regimes on different matters. Minority's representatives played a vital role in constitutional and legislative developments. They remained members of Constitution-Making Committee, One Unit Committee, and Islamic Law Commission. They were very active for their rights and community building activities too. They bluntly criticized and expressed their reservations on some features of Constitution and other issues such as Islamic status of Pakistan, the definition of Minorities and separate electoral issue for minorities. They formulated policies and introduced laws on population welfare, human development and humanitarian issues. Their active participation in the initial Human Development programs in Pakistan, Constitution Making process and introduction of legislation are all on their credit. Their community building services cannot be ignored, Joginder Nath Mandal remained active to discuss various elements of the Objectives Resolution, Kamini Kumar Dutta played a key role in the formulation of One Unit scheme and in finalizing the Constitution of 1956. Mr. Kamini Kumar was the law minister as well as chairman of constitution-making Committee. When One Unit issue was opposed and badly criticized in the Assembly, Mr. Kamini Kumar advocated the issue and convinced the Assembly on One Unit. Thus, its implementation was materialized without a referendum. There was a need to set up a commission for the recommendation of Islamic law after the 1956 constitution. Basanta Kumar Das, Minister for Law, initiated to establish, Islamic Law Commission, its first report was published in 1962.

Besides constitutional contribution, they worked for social development and Human Rights. Labour ministry under Joginder Nath Mandal established Un-Employment Exchange organization, which helped ten million people in 1949. The first Housing Scheme in Pakistan for laborers also went to the credit of Joginder Nath Mandal. Minister Kamini Kumar Dutta allowed all the communities to build their religious educational institutions. All such institution played their role in the community's character-building.

1.3-First Military Period, 1958-1971

The first Parliamentary Period ended when Ayub Khan imposed first Martial Law on 8th October 1958. Democratic Institutions were unable to strengthen the democratic norms in Pakistan even the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan did not play its proper role. The imposition of martial law reasoned for the culmination of

¹² The Gazette of Pakistan Notification, No Cord (1)-4/2/57, 16 December 1957, Government of Pakistan, Cabinet Secretariat Notification, Karachi.

¹³ Imran, *The Federal Cabinet of Pakistan*, 342

¹⁴ Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan: At the Crosscurrent of History*, (Lahore: Vanguard, 2004),46

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the constitution of 1956. The powers and status of the Cabinet remained unclear that is why mostly democratic customs and representation of all section of society disturbed especially the minority section which could not attain its actual representation in Ayub's Cabinets. No minority minister was nominated in his Cabinet except the political figures, technocrats and military generals. Ayub Khan era divided into two phases, Martial Law Era 1958-1962 and Cabinet under the 1962 Constitution, 1962-1969. Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan characterized Hindus as 'The Others'¹⁵ because the certainty of Islam to Pakistani politics favored the orthodox explainers of the religion. No representative of minorities could get a place in Cabinet during the military period except Justice Cornelius in the Civilian Cabinet of Yahya Khan. So, they legitimized the views that minorities lived in the country only at the sufferance of the Muslim majority. Ayub enunciated his anxiety that 'our society is torn by a number of schisms'¹⁶

The first phase of Ayub Khan Martial Law era was from 1958 to 1962, two cabinets were formed but no minority minister was nominated in the cabinet. Same was the case during the second phase from 1962 to 1968. Ayub Khan resigned on 25 March 1969 because of political agitation against him. Same day Yehya Khan imposed Martial Law in the country. His cabinets were military oriented cabinets which worked with undefined status and power. Yahya's second Cabinet was civilian cabinet, but it was just a ceremonial body.¹⁷ First military cabinet with no civil and minority representation was branded as the Council of Administration.¹⁸ The second Cabinet of Yehya Khan was the coalition of civil-military bureaucrats which was formed on 4 August 1969. From the side of civilian's lawyers, doctors, educationist, ex-ambassador and industrialist were included. Contrasting the Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan appointed ex-Judge Justice Cornelius from the Minority side.¹⁹ He functioned as Law Minister from (17-9-69 to 22-2-71) in the civilian cabinet of Yahya Khan.²⁰

This civilian Shadow Cabinet was dismissed on 22 February 1971, depriving Yahya Khan of his symbolic legitimacy.²¹ He tried to retain some of the former cabinet members as his advisors and he succeeded to get assistant of Ghiasuddin Ahmed, M.M. Ahmed and Minority Minister for Law, Justice Cornelius.²²

1.4- Second Parliamentary Period, 1971-1977

Military Rule ended with the fall of Dacca on 16 December 1971. Yahya Khan resigned in favor of Civilian setup. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto the leader of the largest party (Pakistan People Party, established 1967) in Pakistan. He became the first Civil Martial Law Administrator because Pakistan was being governed without any constitution. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's period could be divided into four Cabinets

¹⁵ Ispahani, *Purifying the Land of the Pure*, 71

¹⁶ Ibid, 72

¹⁷ Imran, *The Federal Cabinet of Pakistan*, 28

¹⁸ G. W. Choudhary, *The Last Days of United Pakistan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1974),51

¹⁹ The Gazette of Pakistan Notification, No.102/18/69-Min-11, 4 August 1969, GOP, Cabinet Secretariat, Rawalpindi

²⁰ Imran, *The Federal Cabinet of Pakistan*, 355

²¹ Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan: At the Crosscurrent of History* (Lahore: Vanguard, 2004),346

²² Ibid,346

with two phases; Presidential Cabinets during 1971-1973 and Parliamentary Cabinets existed from 1973 to 1977. The role of minorities in the cabinets, was amplified during the second parliamentary phase. Raja Tri Dev Roy, Minister for Tourism, remained active in Bhutto's cabinet meetings. He developed the tourism industry and launched new projects and developments in the remote areas of Pakistan. The first two Cabinets witnessed minority representation in the shape of Raja Tri Dev Roy as a minister of Minority Affairs and Tourism.²³ He was the only middle-class minister in the socialist-minded Cabinet.²⁴ Raja Tridev Roy was born in Rajbari Rangamati, the Chittagong hill tracts in 1933. He was a Buddhist by faith. He was a representation of 4318 Buddhists in Pakistan.²⁵ The last two cabinets of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were without minority representations. This period also witnessed the declaration of Ahmadis as Minority. The Ahmadis supported Bhutto in the elections of 1970, but Bhutto performed a balancing act by asking parliament to debate and vote on declaring Ahmadis as a minority.²⁶

1.5- Second Military Period 1977-1988

This second parliamentary period closed on 5th July 1977 when Zia-ul-Haq, Chief of Army Staff, took over the reins of power. He legitimated his rule by claiming the mantle of Islamization. Zia claimed himself in his first speech 'Soldier of Islam'.²⁷ After his consultation with all the political parties after seizing the power, he insisted that 'all these political parties should work for establishing an Islamic order because this country had been created in the name of Islam and will survive only by holding fast to Islam'²⁸. He closed the Bhutto vision of pluralist Pakistan. Zia's cabinets were not different from other military dictators on the representation of the minorities. Unlike Bhutto's regime, Zia Ul Haq's policies created uncertainties among the minorities. The most questionable policies were its Islamization Policy and Haddood Ordinance. This period is considered a 'Depressed Period'²⁹ for minorities. Constant absence of minority's representation in the Cabinets during Zia's era resulted in dissatisfaction among them. They could not contribute to national level politics and development of the country too.

Even though he formed four Cabinets in his era but he didn't bother to give representation to minorities. Even in the Cabinet of Muhammad Khan Junejo, one of the eighteen members of his cabinet were nominated by Prime Minister but Zia, who intended to head the government himself. So, there was no chance to give a

²³ GDE, Notification, No102/33/71, 25 December 1971,424/CF/71, NDC, Islamabad.

²⁴ Naumana Kiran Imran, *The Federal Cabinet of Pakistan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2016),48

²⁵ Population Census of Pakistan, 1972, Statistical Report of Pakistan, Statistic Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, 1-20

²⁶ Rafi Raza, *Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Pakistan, 1967-1977*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 296

²⁷ Special Report: Darkness Descends 1977-1988, *The Dawn*, November 01, 2017, Karachi.

²⁸ Text of Gen. Zia's Address to the Nation, *The Dawn* 28 July 1977, Karachi.

²⁹ Special Report: Darkness Descends 1977-1988, *The Dawn*, November 01, 2017, Karachi

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representation of minorities in the Junejo's Cabinet.³⁰ Zia ul Haq died in a plane crash on 17 August 1988. His death paved the way for general elections. And next eleven years, power rotated between Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif.

1.6- Third Parliamentary Period, 1988-1999

The third parliamentary period can be categorized into two phases, Benazir Bhutto's cabinet and Nawaz Sharif's cabinet. Benazir Bhutto came in power just after the general elections in November 1988. This parliamentary era had to face powerful establishment and Islamists were now at the verge. In this situation, life was not easier for minorities. Even separate electorates, created by Zia, deprived the political parties of its minority support and votes in the elections. By accepting the challenge, after Zia ul Haq, minorities returned to active politics and attained representation in cabinets of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. But, then the nature of portfolios, given to minorities, was changed. Ministry of Minority Affairs, Narcotics Control and Social Welfare were assigned to the Minorities. They worked determinedly and untiringly materialize the given tasks. Four minority ministers enjoyed portfolio as federal ministers in the third parliamentary period. Father Rufin Julius and J. Salik were in the cabinets of Benazir Bhutto. Rana Chandar Singh and John Peter Sahorta were in the Cabinets of Nawaz Sharif.³¹ John Peter Sahorta, Minister for Minority Affairs, launched Tameer-i-Watan program. In this program, minority's community centers and educational institutions were built, and welfare programs were launched. Their democratic struggle observed success to a wide scale. Similarly, they struggled for electoral rights since 1947. Their demand for a joint electoral system was not acceptable for right-wing politicians, who were in favor of a separate electoral system. But minority minister like Mr. Kamini Kumar Dutta, Basanta Kumar Das and Akashy Kumar later on, Rana Chandar Singh and J. Salik remained the champion of Joint Electoral System.

Conclusion

The evaluation of various regimes has proved that since the first cabinet of the parliamentary period to the Nawaz Sharif's second last cabinet of 1999, minority ministers not only got representation in the cabinet but also, they had played their role in policy-making process and development of the country and their community. They served as ministers on very important ministries such as Law, Health, Education and Labour. Hindus, Christians, Parsis and Buddhist enjoyed their representation in the civilian federal cabinet. Their appointment criteria were qualification and representation to the minorities. On the military period side, no priority had been given to minority presenters. They totally ignored the minorities representation in democratic institutions such as the cabinet. All military cabinets were self-nominated and without presentation of all communities. They appointed men who would undeniably carry out their policies. Only justice Cornelius was appointed as Law Minister in Yahya's civil-military cabinet. This cabinet was only mediocre in work, wisdom and skills. Criteria of military cabinets were loyalty and personal interest. In this military period, cabinets were given less-important social, political, defense and foreign issues. Their cabinets were run by civilian

³⁰ Jonathan C. R, *Zia Names Caretaker Cabinet in Pakistan*, The Washington Post, New York, June 10, 1988

³¹ <http://www.cabinet.gov.pk/>, Cabinet Division, Islamabad

bureaucrats and military generals. That is why minority ministers, who were civilian, true presenter of their community, could not attain a proper share in the military cabinets.

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