



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Causes and Consequences of PNA's Agitation about the Election of 1977: An Analytical Study in Perspective of Print Media**

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**ABSTRACT**

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This research focuses on the PNA's demands such as restoration of democratic government as indicated by the 1973 constitution. Besides this, Freedom and Supremacy of the judiciary and the removal of black laws, state of emergency and different curbs on common freedoms were the major parts of its demands. The purpose of PNA was to compel the government to dissolve the National and all Provincial Assemblies and formed an interim government to conduct fair and free elections so; this paper is the outcome of the detailed demands and agitation of the opposition coalition. The focus of this research is also to enforce the political as well as Socio-economic justice. In this research paper, the authors have also tried to highlight the reasons behind this coalition like annulment of Elections, dismissal of the Chief Election Commissioner and the resignation of Prime Minister and the aftermath of this agitation.

**Introduction**

The National Assembly passed a Constitution Amendment Bill on November 14, 1975. This bill had prohibited the High Court's from any order for preventive detention or to grant bail to anyone so detained. This was the curtailment of the High Court's jurisdiction. Moulana Norani challenged this Amendment in Lahore High Court. After that, Norani attended the meeting of the pioneers of major political parties in Islamabad on November 25, in which they decided not to talk with the government in the future and to resign from

Assemblies if necessary. Besides this, to shape a typical front against the governing body a meeting of the pioneers of the opposition was held on October 30, 1976, at Lahore. This meeting was organized by the National Democratic Party (NDP) in which Moulana Norani President (JUP), Mufti Mahmud (JUI), Mian Tufail Amir (JI), Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan of Pakistan Democratic Party and Pir Pagaro President of Muslim League. The NDP was headed by NDP president Sherbaaz Mazari and some others like Begum Wali Khan, Barrister Zahoorul Haque and Mehroz Akhtar. (Mazari, 2006) Ashgar Khan head of Tehrik-I-Istaqlal did not participate in this meeting. The pioneers of this meeting affirmed to shape a coalition on the following points:

1. Restoration of democratic government as indicated by the 1973 constitution and cancellation of all those amendments which made the constitution ineffectual.
2. Freedom and Supremacy of the judiciary.
3. The removal black laws, state of emergency and different curbs on common freedoms. Political and Socio-economic justice. (Mazari, 2006)

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of Research**

According to Moulana Norani, this coalition would be debilitated if Ashgar Khan and his political party would not participate. When Ashgar Khan denied joining another meeting of opposition parties, a delegation was set off so that he was convinced to participate in the coalition. (Mazari, 2006) As a result of this delegation, Asghar Khan agreed to attend the next meeting of opposition at Abbottabad on November 22, 1976. (Khan, My Political Struggle, 2008) During this meeting, Asghar Khan demanded 'functional politics' and imposed a condition that the coalition parties should be assigned the seats in advance in the following elections. He also insisted that JUP and TI were allocated 60% of the total seats. (Khan, My Political Struggle, 2008) It was decided to proceed with a conversation on December 4, 1976, at Karachi and Ghafoor Ahmad, the Secretary-General of the United Democratic Front was assigned a task to prepare a draft suggesting the premise of the opposition parties' collaboration and the framework of the recommended agreement. (Mazari, 2006)

On 4<sup>th</sup> December, a meeting was held at Moulana Norani's home in which Asghar Khan, Pir Pagaro and Sherbaaz Mazari participated. Prof. Ghafoor Ahmed did not join this session. The gathering talked about the potential outcomes of collaboration among the opposition in case of an electoral challenge. Sardar Mazari had no position to contest the election and apprised the participants that his party would not participate in the decisions because of the detainment of the prohibited NAP pioneers and the military activity against their supporters in Baluchistan. Pir Pagaro was not ready to talk about the mechanics of elections because United

Democratic Front had not yet determined to contest the elections.(Khan, We've learnt nothing from History, 2005)

On January 7, 1977, Prime Minister Bhutto prompted President Fazal Ilahi to dismiss the National Assembly on tenth January. The election commission nominated 7 and 10<sup>th</sup> March as electoral process respectively for the National and 4 provincial Assemblies. On September 17, 1985, Newspaper *Leader* wrote:

“The declaration of the election positively affected the opposition coalition. The split opposition understood that they would get an opportunity of accomplishment in the general election by the joint coalition against Bhutto. After the declaration of general elections, Moulana Norani communicated with the opposition pioneers to chalk out the tentative plan”. (Leader, 1985)

For the following meeting, it was decided to gather at the head office of JUP at Lahore on January 10, 1977. Later on, this meeting was shifted to Rafique Ahmad Bajwa’s residence due to the fear of intelligence agencies’ interference. In this gathering, work was done for the portion of seats to various parties. After a warm discussion, it was concluded that JUP and TI would have 36 percent of the national and provincial assemblies and the ratio between JUP and TI would be 17 and 19 percent respectively.(Khan, We've learnt nothing from History, 2005)At last, on the recommendation of S.A. Norani, the coalition of the nine-party partnership was given the title of Pakistan National Alliance and its development was freely reported on January 10, 1977.(Muhammad, 2009)PNA consisted of JUP, TI, JUI, PML, JI, NDP, PDP, KT and AJKMC and was representing the whole range of modern political thought and ideological orientation. The JI, JUI, and JUP were the rightist fundamentalist parties while PDP and the PML were moderated. Similarly, the TI was left to the middle and the NDP was liberal in orientation.(Mujahid, 1978)

As indicated by Sharif al-Mujahid the following three most puzzling issues standing up to the PNA were:

1. How to stay united in any event during and after the election?
2. How to determine issues of filling top PNA workplaces?
3. How to draw up an intelligible compromise deal which would from one perspective, fulfill a rather dissimilar view focuses within the collusion and still then again have enough intrigue for voters.(Mujahid, 1978)

To choose the leadership of the Coalition a gathering of the pioneer of the considerable number of segment parties of the PNA was held on January 15, 1977. The Muslim Leaguers were eager to appoint Pir Pagaro as the President of the Coalition while the remaining parties of the UDF were agreed to see JUI leader Mufti Mahmud whose name was proposed by KT’s leader Ashraf Khan and

seconded AJKMC's pioneer Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan. Pir Pagaro and Sardar Mazari also preferred Mufti Mahmud. Norani protested on this appointment on this ground that the pioneers of JUI contradicted the Pakistan Movement, so Mufti Mahmud should not be appointed as the president of PNA. He proposed the name of Asghar Khan who was seconded by the Amir of Jamat-e-Islami. (Pirzada, 2000)

Shockingly enough, the claims and counterclaims were somehow amicably settled. Mufti Mahmud and Rafique Bajwa were consistently appointed as president and Secretary-General respectively. Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan was designated Vice President and Pir Pagaro appointed as chairman of the Parliamentary Board for the nomination of seats. (Mujahid, 1978) Besides this, that coalition affirmed to exclude the elections in Baluchistan on the compelling demand of NDP to agitate against the military activities. A green flag of nine-star, which revealed the nine segment parties of the coalition, was approved as its electoral symbol. (Mujahid, 1978)

The principal indication of pre-pole rigging became clear when Jan Mohammad Abbasi, the PNA nominee who went to submit his nomination papers to restrict Bhutto was seized by the local police and the district management thus forbade him submitting his nomination form. According to *Dawn* on January 24, 1977:

“The PNA started its political campaign by a public gathering at Nishtar Park in Karachi on January 23, 1977. Asghar Khan, Moulana Norani, Mian Tufail, and Sardar Sherbaaz addressed an enormous gathering. Norani named the coming elections a straight battle between the privilege and an inappropriate, he said that if the former succeeded then the Islamic system would enforce in the country.”

In the election of 1970, PPP had won just 38.89 percent of the absolute vote in West Wing. (Weinbaum, 1977) The outcomes of the National Assembly shocked almost everybody because PPP had won a considerable triumph with 155 seats whilst just 36 left for the PNA, 8 for independent candidates and only one saved Qayyum League. PPP Secured 58.1 percent while PNA 35.1 percent of the total cast vote. PNA secured 8 out of 116 seats in Punjab, 17 out of 34 in NWFP and 11 out of 43 in Sindh. S.A. Norani also won his seat from Hyderabad.

The pioneer of PNA rejected the outcomes. They alleged that the elections were engineered and there had been a furnished and systematic arrangement to deny them their triumph. There were reports of enormous rigging in all the regions. The polling stations were asserted to have been shut for a considerable length of time, manufactured ballot papers, multiple voting, and armed gang strikes on polling stations, unlawful stuffing of boxes and high occurrences of rejected votes were seen by the autonomous observers. (Mazari, 2006)

Bhutto in his broadcast meeting excused the charges of huge rigging in elections and affirmed that if the public felt cheated in the outcomes of elections,

they would take to streets to appear their resentment.(Mujahid, 1978)This boycott was a complete achievement because the polling stations looked like a dessert on that day. On March 11, the strike was also very fruitful. Public gatherings occurred in every town and city of Pakistan. PNA made a plan to agitate on 14<sup>th</sup> of March until the approval of the following demands:

1. Annulment of the Elections.
2. Dismissal of the Chief Election Commissioner.
3. The resignation of P.M. Bhutto.(Khan, We've learnt nothing from History, 2005)

Different pioneers were allocated the assignments of leading the rallies in the diverse piece of the country. On March 13, 1977, Rafique Ahmed Bajwa had met with Bhutto subtly and thus the focal advisory meeting of the PNA expelled him from his post and Ghafoor Ahmed was nominated as the Secretary-General of the Coalition.(Bhopali, 1977) To *Nawa-i-Waqt* on March 16, 1977:

“S.A. Norani took a solid activity and removed Bajwa from the JUP membership because Bajwa had met with Bhutto in his ability as the Vice-President of the JUP and not as the Secretary-General of the PNA”.(Nawa-i-Waqt, 1977)

According to *Leader* on September 17, 1985:

“Bajwa, who appeared as a prominent leader during the electoral campaign of PNA, expressed his lament on his meeting with Bhutto and requested for forgiveness. But S.A. Norani refused to accept this request by saying that he could sacrifice you however could not slaughter the JUP”.(Leader, 1985)

On March 30, 1977, *Pakistan Horizon* quoted Mufti Mahmud’s letter that was written to Z.A. Bhutto:

“This public campaign carried on without pause. The pioneer of PNA again rejected Bhutto's idea of talks”.(Pakistan Horizon, 1977)

Mufti Mahmud imposed a condition that he couldn't react to the conversation until he met with the imprisoned pioneer of PNA. As a result, Norani and other PNA pioneers were discharged from Sukkar Jail to discuss Butto's idea of talks. PNA central leadership agreed to its past stand that conversation could just occur once new elections were held under the autonomous supervision of the military and judiciary.(Mazari, 2006) On March 28, 1977, in a News of *Nawa-i-Waqt* was described:

“On March 24, 1977, Mufti Mahmud, Norani, and Malik Qasim guided a procession from NelaGumbad Mosque disobeying Section 144, so all the top heads of PNA arrested. In his message to the public, S.A. Norani requested to give each sacrifice for the imposition of *Nizam-e-Mustafa*”.(Nawa-i-Waqt, 1977)

At the beginning of April, a few PPP parliamentarians surrendered their seats. Mubashir Hasan, the PPP's Secretary-General stepped down whilst retired army officers Air Marshal Rahim Khan and Gen. Gul Hasan Ambassadors of Spain and Greece also resigned and requested Army Chief Gen. Zia not to obey undemocratic and unlawful orders from a fascist Bhutto. Besides this, eminent *Mashaikh* and *Ulama* of *Ahl-e-Sunnat-Wal-Jamaat* issued a verdict in favor of *Tahreek Nizam-e-Mustafa* and called it *jihad* and those murdered by the police named *Shaheed*.(Sadiq, n.d) On April 16, *Dawn* Published that:

“On April 15, Bhutto presented a formula for settling the deadlock by Attorney General Yahya Bakhtiar. This formula recommended new elections to all provinces with the stipulation that if PNA won a larger number of seats then Bhutto would advise the President to dismiss the National Assembly and announce new elections. But PNA pioneer refused to accept this offer and repeated its demands for the resignation of Bhutto and the Chief Election Commissioner before new elections”.(Dawn, 1977)

On April 17, Bhutto not only invited Mufti Mahmud, S.A. Norani, and Moulana Moudodi to join the Advisory Council for the enforcement of Sharia but also declared Islamic Rules including the boycott of alcohol deal and utilization, betting in all sorts of games like horse racing, closure of bars and night clubs and the holiday of Friday instead of Sunday.(Khan, We've learnt nothing from History, 2005) Bhutto reaffirmed his belief in Islam and his assurance to present Islamic Laws. He ensured to impose *Sharai Qawanin* within a half year if the suggested Advisory Council finalized the task in time. As PNA pioneer recognized these protestations about Islamic change exclusively to derail the primary issue of new elections so, nobody took it seriously.(Khan, We've learnt nothing from History, 2005)

On April 21 and 22, the government enforced Martial Law in Lahore, Hyderabad, and Karachi which resulted in 25 casualties in the country.(Qaisar, 2001) On April 25, Asghar Khan composed a letter to the chief of staff committee and different army officials during his detainment in Kot Lakhpat Jail. It was a reminder that the military had taken the oath to obey the officer and the legal order. In this letter he composed:

“Bhutto has disobeyed the constitution and is blameworthy of a grave crime against the public. It is not your obligation to help his illicit crime nor you can be called upon to slaughter your public. In Karachi, firing on unarmed people by the army is unforgivable. As men of dignity, it is your obligation to perform your responsibility and the honorable obligation in these difficult conditions is not

the blind dutifulness of illegal commands".(Khan, We've learnt nothing from History, 2005)

But Gen. Zia had presumed that it was their obligation and wellbeing to agree with the ruling class.(Weinbaum, 1977) To recover public regard and increase influence for a political settlement, Bhutto attempted to carry the PNA authority to the dialogue table. On April 27, PNA pioneers were called at Sahala rest house. According to the published essay in *Leader* on September 22, 1977:

"On April 28, Saudi diplomat Sheik Riaz-al-Khatib came Sahala and met the PNA leaders. He requested them to arrive at the settlement with Bhutto excluding new elections. He also made a few visits to gain this goal. Mr. Khatib informed Noranithat the Saudi Royal family is also aware of this political crisis and anarchy".(Leader, 1985)

Libya and UAE's foreign Ministers also tried their best to play a vital role in this settlement. On the same day, Bhutto delivered an enthusiastic speech before the National Assembly in which he pronounced that the PNA movement had been from the dawn well-financed universal conspiracy. He claimed that America and some other countries had attempted to oust him for his independent foreign strategy and present assurance to proceed with the atomic reprocessing plant. The event which made an impermanent mishap and made the PNA pioneers and devotees upset was the declaration of 'long march' by PirPagaro. An enormous number of people planned to arrive at Rawalpindi. PirPagaro enclosed himself in the Continental Hotel so that Bhutto approached him. The next day, their photo displayed in papers causing bewilderment among the accumulated PNA protesters.(Mazari, 2006)

Bhutto had met with Mufti Mahmud in Sahala and CMH at Rawalpindi. For the first time on May 3, 1977, when Bhutto visited Sahalato discuss with the PNA pioneer then nobody wished to meet him except Mufti Mahmud. The meeting between them was continued for 90 minutes in which D.G. ISI, Gen. Ghulam Jillini, Mufti about the military risk to Pakistan from its neighbors like India, Afghanistan, and Iran. At the closure of this long meeting, Bhutto requested the settlement in the larger interest of the country but Mufti Mahmodagain requested for new elections.(Mazari, 2006) On May 6, *Dawn* reported that:

"PirPagaro at a question and answer session made public the expectations of PNA which included:

1. The prompt lifting of martial law and emergency as well as section 144 of the code of the criminal system.
2. To release all the political detainees.
3. Dissolution of special tribunals and courts.

4. To regulate the media.
5. To dissolve the National and Provincial Assemblies within seven days after the final settlement.
6. To appoint a new Election Commissioner with mutual understanding.
7. To announce new governors of all the provinces.
8. Transformations in all key posts with mutual understanding and assurance of new and fair elections".(Dawn, 1977)

However, Bhutto requested the PNA pioneers to give up additional demands if they are serious in meaningful conversations with the government. Bhutto again met with Mufti Mahmood but all in vain. So, Bhutto and his senior colleague analyzed that Asghar Khan, Moulana Norani and Sherbaaz Mazari were the only hardliners of PNA.(Mazari, 2006)The deadlock was still present because Bhutto was not ready for new and fresh elections. At last, Mufti Mahmood informed Bhutto that these meetings will not be useful because we are staying on no point in return.(Mazari, 2006) On May 14, *Dawn* published a report in these words:

"Last day, Bhutto spoke to the National Assembly and addressed the nation on Radio and T.V. He also read Mufti Mahmood's letter and refused to admit PNA's demands. According to him, in the present scenario new elections would be calamitous for the country due to foreign and domestic problems. He declared his strategy to hold a referendum on his continuation in power. He suggested that a joint meeting of parliament would pass a transitory amendment a referendum and thus the seventh amendment was passed imposed on May 16, 1977".(Dawn, 1977)

After the rejection of negotiation, many PNA leaders along with hard-liners were sent again to different detainment getting the most awful of the deal.(Mazari, 2006)Asghar Khan was kept at Sahiwal, Mufti Mahmood was sent at Sahala, S.A. Norani to Ghari Khari and Sherbaaz Mazari to Mianwali.(Bhopali, 1977)In summer, the temperature at Ghari Kherogoes up to 50 centigrade so MoulanaNorani had been demanded exceptional treatment. The re-detainment of the PNA pioneers gave more energy to the movement. As a result, Multan arose as the focal point of the PNA movement in the leadership of Moulana Hamid Ali Khan, the appealing pioneer of JUP.Because of the genuine unsettling influences, Multan was handed over to the military.(Saeed, 1980)

On May 17, Riaz-al-Khatib again approached to Mufti Mahmood and tried to convince him of a meaningful agreement. The next day, Bhutto and his consultants met with Nasrullah Khan and Mufti Mahmood, and Bhutto showed his readiness to hold new elections. After this, Sardar Qayyom was also discharged who met Mufti Mahmood and Bhutto and then went to meet with other PNA's detainees.(Mazari, 2006)On September 19, 1985, *Leader* wrote:

“Sardar Qayyom met with Norani at the rest house in Garhi Khero. As per Norani, Sardar Qayyom revealed to him that Bhutto wanted to negotiate for a mutual and meaningful settlement. Norani told him that a reasonable contract should be reached through discussion. But the settlement could not be reached at the sacrifice of principles nor on the refusal of PNA’s pioneers.”.(Leader, 1985)

PNA pioneers decided that this team had no power to acknowledge any term or condition of the suggested agreement without the endorsement of the general council. The initiative of the dialogue was appreciated by the whole nation who sacrificed for the movement. After a few meetings, the participants agreed upon the following points on June 15, 1977:

1. The new and fair election would be held very soon.
2. The military would be pulled back from Baluchistan.
3. All special courts would be closed down especially Hyderabad conspiracy case and every political detainee would be discharged.
4. All controversial amendments regarding basic human rights would be considered inoperative.
5. All the restrictions on the press would be removed.
6. On Radio and TV, equivalent time would be given to PPP and PNA.
7. The state of emergency and military rule would be revoked on the finalization of the contract.(Mazari, 2006)

The PNA Council affirmed the transformed outline on June 27, and Mufti Mahmud was given authority to consent the arrangement with the Bhutto if he acknowledges it yet, instead of any transforms he may recommend, must be taken back to PNA council. Bhutto and Mufti Mahmud had met with each other on June 29 and 1<sup>st</sup> of July in which the PNA draft was examined and the dialogue carried on for ten hours. Both made a concession and lastly, the PNA's new draft had sustained some change. The major features of this contract were as under:

1. Termination of the Assemblies on July 15 and new elections would be conducted on October 8 and 10, 1977.
2. Conduct of the neat and free elections would be guaranteed by the Implementation Council based on equal members of both sides in the headship of Bhutto or special situation by Mufti Mahmud. The suggested council would:
  - a. Exercise the intensity of the President and those of the central government under the administrators and governors.

- b. Proceed against governmental authorities suspected or blamed for deterring the conducting of neat and proper elections.
  - c. Support appointments for every key post in federal as well as provincial institutions.
  - d. Regarding elections or craft of the council, no ordinance and laws would be passed without earlier approval.
  - e. If there should arise an occurrence of contradiction between representatives of both groups in the council, the matter would be forwarded to the Superior Court which must settle it within 3 days.
  - f. Prime Minister would make sure the implementation of the council's settlements.
3. Governors would be selected with the approval of PNA.
  4. The governing authority would demolish the emergency, restore basic human rights, disband all special courts except Hyderabad and discharge all political detainees.
  5. The election commission would include the five-member team all would be the justice of the Supreme Court. They would be appointed with the consent of PNA and this commission would have the managerial and monetary power as well as call the military especially in the days of elections.
  6. The military action in Balochistan would stop within 45 days of the arrangement's approval.
  7. All constitutional amendments which had the effected privileges of the citizens or power of the judges would be canceled.
  8. The government would ensure the section of laws essential for putting this settlement into impact. (Ahmad G. , 1988)

On July 4, the PNA General Council talked about the recent development which later on, published in *Leader* on September 15, 1985:

“For the first time, there was an open crack in the Coalition. Norani, Asghar Khan, and Sardar Mazari demanded to remain adhered to the PNA points while others were supported to withdraw some unnecessary demands. Despite the warm discussion, the majority of the members stressed on further dialogue. The PNA legal specialists were instructed to prepare their recommendations and the meeting was delayed for the following day”. (Leader, 1985)

Here, Bhutto called last cabinet meeting on July 4, 1977, in which General Zia-Ul-Haq and General Jilani were also invited. The meeting talked about the advantages and disadvantages of further discussions with the PNA. Bhutto discussed with Mustafa Jatoi, Abdul Hafeez Pirzada, and Mumtaz Bhutto. But Pirzada again opposed the compromise, however, Mumtaz Bhutto and Jatoi advised accepting the new demands. At a press briefing, Bhutto declared his decision to sign the agreement, saying:

“The PNA dialogue group had acquired ten new points, they did so remorsefully, seeing they were defenseless, maybe they were, yet I am not powerless, thus I will sign the agreement tomorrow”.(Niazi A. K., 2006)

Perhaps, the military did not like this agreement so, at midnight army imposed martial law in the country.

### **Conclusion**

The Print Media took over the case of PNA and put their weight behind the demand for elections. The media not only made the public aware of the significance of demands but had trained them to come forward and mobilize the people for politics in urban and rural areas. Moulana Norani demanded an interim national government to conduct the free and fair election and succeeded to compel Bhutto for new elections and establishing a coalition with TI. However, as a result of PNA agitation and mutual quarreling amongst the political elite, Gen. Mohammad Zia ulHaq took over the control of the country. P.M. Bhutto, federal ministers, and the top PNA pioneers were taken under ‘protective custody’. All the Assemblies were dissolved and Martial Law was imposed. This action was given the name of ‘Operation Fair Play’. Zia announced that he was obliged to step in to fill the vacuum produced by the political elite. He said that he accepted the challenge as a ‘True Soldier of Islam’. He also promised to conduct free and fair elections in October 1977 and transfer of power to the elected representatives. He clarified that the tension created during the political confrontation in the country and the mutual distrust between the PNA and the PPP had made the prospects of political compromises impossible. The High Court Chief Justices were allocated Governorship and political activity was suspended till further orders.

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