
**Second Constituent Assembly of Pakistan: Politics for Dissolution of Former Assembly
and Electoral Regulations for New Assembly**

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Abstract

One part of this paper uncovers how the politics around the demands for the dissolution and re-election of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan took place subsequent to the elections for the country's provincial legislatures, especially in East Pakistan. Following the dissolution of the Assembly, Pakistan was tangled into a political quagmire about the election of the successor of the Constituent Assembly. The politics around pre-election legislation to resolve this predicament is recorded in the second part of the study. The British archival record makes the most of source material of this study. These records provide impartial and third party accounts – hence are reliable sources – of the political developments of the period under consideration. As in the period, Pakistan was a dominion state under the British the records of Dominion Office (DO) or Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) bear detailed inside and secret information that is rarely available in indigenous historical works. Therefore, the study provides a thorough and impartial historical explanation of the electoral politics on the dissolution of the original Constituent Assembly and formation legal framework for the constitution of the new Assembly.

Keywords: Constituent Assembly, Constituent Convention, Dissolution, Electoral Politics, Electoral Regulations

Demands for Dissolution of Constituent Assembly Pakistan

The First Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was indirectly elected in the summer of 1947 by the Muslim members of the Provincial Assemblies in those provinces of undivided India which had chosen in whole or in part to join Pakistan (UKHC Karachi, 1954). Its status fell after the elections of provincial legislatures of Punjab (1951) NWFP (1951) and East Bengal (1954) as they formed the Electoral College for different sections of the Constituent Assembly. Punjab Legislative Assembly was newly elected in 1951 based on universal adult franchise. It passed a resolution that demanded that the sitting members in the Constituent Assembly from Punjab should be replaced by members elected by the new assembly. A similar resolution was passed by the Legislative Assembly of NWFP after its election in 1951 (Ahmad, 1960, p. 14).

The East Pakistan legislature's election, like in Punjab and NWFP, was followed by new and stronger demands for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly (UKHC Karachi, 1954). The United Front, an alliance of anti-Muslim League parties in East Pakistan, after its victory in provincial Legislature's elections of 1954, asserted that the East Pakistan members of the Constituent Assembly had become completely unrepresentative. The alliance demanded the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and the holding of new elections. If this major demand was not accepted at least the East Pakistan members, including the Prime Minister, should have resigned and be replaced (UKHC Karachi, 1954, March 31) newly elected ones.

At one of the meetings of the UF Parliamentary Party, the majority party in East Pakistan legislature, on 2nd April 1954 one of three resolutions passed was about inviting the Constituent

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Assembly to dissolve itself or failing that the East Bengal members to resign. The subject of this resolution continued to figure prominently in the statements and speeches of UF leaders and 4th April was observed as “Protest Day” in support of this demand. Maulana Bhashani, President of AML, the major component of majority UF, called for a “countrywide movement on constitutional lines” to achieve these ends, which meant an organized non-violent harrying of the East Pakistan Members of Constituent Assembly. It was fairly certain that if and when any of these Members of Constituent Assembly ventured to return to the Province life would be made impossible for them and that accordingly, they would in effect be political refugees in Karachi for as long as they held on to their seats. (Deputy UKHC Dacca, 1954, April 8)

Punjabi group of Muslim League politicians also endeavoured to strengthen their position at the expense of their Muslim League colleagues from East Bengal by winning the support of the UF particularly Suhrawardy. They joined a common cry for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. At the same time, the Bengali Muslim Leaguers and their friends tried to forestall this attempted alliance by winning over some of the parts of the UF to their side by dangling in front of them the suggestion that Governor’s Rule might be lifted in East Pakistan in favour of a Coalition Government including elements of the Muslim League and the UF (UKHC Karachi, 1954, October 14).

The demands for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan were resounded in the Assembly as well. When it met on 8th April Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan moved for the postponement of any further consideration of the Basic Principles’ Committee (BPC). He urged for the dissolution of Assembly and to take in new representatives from East Bengal before the task of framing the Constitution. All Muslim League members voted against this proposal. Some of the members from East Pakistan firmly attacked it (CAPD, 1954, April 8). As the Hindu members of the Opposition were boycotting the Assembly on some issue and as Mian Iftikharuddin, a vocal opposition member was not present, Abdul Ghaffar Khan was alone in support of his demand (UKHC Karachi, 1954, April 9).

There was certain plausibility about the argument that the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was no longer representative. The overwhelming defeat PML suffered in East Pakistan had detracted sensibly from the moral authority of the East Bengali element in the Assembly, and that if the government wanted to get a Constitution through with what can plausibly be represented as the support of the East Bengal some sort of compromise would be desirable (Leithwait, 1954, March 26). On the contrary, the effect of a Provincial election fought on mainly Provincial issues, could not in theory affect central politics. Moreover, the Constituent Assembly derived its sanctity from the UK Government’s announcement of the 2nd June 1947, which followed weeks of close negotiation between Lord Mountbatten and the Hindu and Muslim leaders. There could not be any legal or practical basis for reconstituting it.

The same was the line of argument that Prime Minister Bogra took in his speech on 20th March. He claimed that only the Central Parliamentary Board of the PML Assembly Party could ask its members to resign from the Assembly; and that the duty of the assembly was to complete its job of constitution-making (UKHC Karachi, 1954). In his monthly speech of April 1955, he said that “This Constituent Assembly was set up with the primary duty of framing a Constitution for Pakistan (Bottomley, 1954, March 31). He announced on 6 April that Constituent Assembly will proceed without interruption from 5th April with the task of framing the Constitution, so that direct elections to the Central Legislature could be held under the new Constitution next year (Deputy UKHC Dacca, 1954, April 6).

Prime Minister Bogra took a stand to save the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in face of demand for its dissolution because his position after the election of East Pakistan Legislative Assembly had shaken. To consolidate his position he got the support of the members of the Constituent Assembly, especially from East Pakistan. Therefore he could not accept the demand of assembly’s dissolution or resignation of Bengali members. He on the contrary mustered the position of Bengali members to make them abstain from resigning. Even former Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin, himself an East Pakistan member, the first time since he fell from power was called in a meeting in the Prime Minister House where he supported the Prime Minister and majority of East Pakistan against resignation (Leithwait, 1954, March 26, Note for Record). Supporting the Prime Minister, Fazlul Haq too said that he was opposed to the resignation of the sitting East Bengal

members in the Constituent Assembly, although he could scarcely say this in public. (UKHC Karachi, 1954, May 12)

In response to the stand of government in defense of the Constituent Assembly's continuity, the UF riposte was that a Constitution passed by that Constituent Assembly, which they branded as unrepresentative, would have no sanction or authority and would be null from the beginning. Bashani began to threaten in rather obscure language that unless the Centre gave way on that point the Awami League would start a mass movement, possibly involving non-cooperation in East Bengal, to coerce the Central Government into compliance with their wishes (UKHC Karachi, 1954, March 31).

Almost half year after the election for East Pakistan legislature the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was dissolved on 24 October 1954 neither on the ground of its unrepresentative nature nor in fulfilment of the demand of newly elected forces in legislatures. Constitution-making, reason détente of Constituent Assembly, was in progress as the Prime Minister had promised. On September 11, he expressed his hope that the Constituent Assembly would complete its consideration of the BPC Report within a week or so, and that drafting of the actual Constitution would then go ahead in the hope of having it ready for adoption at the end of October and the whole process completed by 25th December (UKHC Karachi, 1954, September 15). The Assembly approved the Report of the BPC on September 21. It was then adjourned until the end of October when it was expected that the Constitution Bill itself would be ready for consideration. (UKHC Karachi, 1954, September 29).

Just three days before the draft constitution framed by the Assembly was about to be reported in the house (*Manchester Guardian*, 1955, August 9; Choudhury, 1956; Newman, 1962) on 24 October 1954 suddenly the Constituent Assembly was dissolved by Governor-General who proclaimed that new representatives would be elected afresh as early as possible. (Governor-General Pakistan, 1955, April 15) The sudden cause of the dissolution of the Assembly was not to comply with the resolutions of provincial assemblies. The Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad, a former bureaucrat, dissolved the assembly through a political move in retaliation to a Bill passed by Assembly that deprived him of some powers including that of the dissolution of Assembly. A private member affiliated with the anti-Governor General Bengali group introduced the bill on the Prime Minister's departure for America. The Bill, which was subsequently passed, was to bind the Governor-General in the future by the advice of his Council of Ministers and to empower the Prime Minister to dismiss Ministers (P.T.E., 1955, pp. 40-41).

Framework for Formation/Election of New Constituent Assembly

Governor-General in his proclamation of the dissolution of Assembly had promised the people would elect their representatives afresh and indicated the mode of direct elections for the Constituent Assembly. Prime Minister Bogra too remarked, after taking over afresh told Commonwealth representatives in Karachi that the government hoped that a new Constituent Assembly could be elected by direct suffrage (UKHC Karachi, 1954, October 26). But the manner and timing of new elections was still an unsolved question for the political pundits in Karachi. Prime Minister Bogra told the foreign correspondents on 26th October 1954 that elections might be possible next year but the procedure had not been decided (UKHC Karachi, 1954, October 30). The constitution had not yet been enforced. There was no provision in the Indian Independence Act and the Government of India Act for the election of a new Constituent Assembly. There was only a precedent of the election of the original Constituent Assembly that was chosen by the Provincial Assemblies (UKHC Karachi, 1954, October 25).

Finding no basis for arranging a direct election, the government was to follow the existing provisions and use the Provincial Assemblies as Electoral College, with nominations in respect of areas like Balochistan where no assemblies existed. Either the existing assemblies, all of which were newly elected by universal adult suffrage, could be used or fresh elections to the Provincial Assemblies as a preliminary to their electing the new Constituent Assembly could be held. The use of existing Provincial Assemblies would not necessitate the lifting of the Governor's rule in East Pakistan nor even the meeting of the suspended East Pakistan Assembly. The members of the Assembly could elect their representatives in the Constituent Assembly utilizing a postal vote. In any event, fresh nominations for the Constituent Assembly would have to be called for and electoral districts would have to be delimited. Under existing legislation, the new Constituent Assembly would have to consist of the same number of members as the suspended one, and be in the same proportions

as before so far as representation of the various units was concerned (UKHC Karachi, 1954, October 26).

Tamizuddin Case and Reference

Maulvi Tamizuddin, the president of Assembly challenged the action of dissolution to the then Chief's Court of Sindh that restored the dissolved Assembly. The final battle was fought during the appeal to the Federal Court of Pakistan (*Dawn*, 1955, March 22). The Court with the majority of four to one (Symon, 1955, March 23) turned down the verdict of Chief's Court and gave judgment that the assent of the Governor-General was necessary to all legislation by the Legislature. (Federal Court of Pakistan, 1957) Thus the Governor General's power to dissolve the Assembly could not be ended with the passage of the bill by the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan (Federal Court of Pakistan 1, 1957, pp.264, 308-09).

Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan wanted to convene a new Constituent Assembly through direct elections based on adult suffrage. Other parties proposed new indirect elections for an Assembly to frame a provisional constitution; and the Governor-General demanded general elections and acceptance of his new cabinet and the constitution he was drafting independently. In his appeal, the Governor-General had a second opportunity to air his views about his role in Pakistan's government and the Constituent Assembly had another chance to restate its claims of sovereignty. The Federal Court, more sympathetic to the Governor-General than the Sindh Court had been, took the occasion to develop a theory of judicial review for Pakistan (Newberg, 1995. p. 45).

Once the demise of the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was legally confirmed by Federal Court the attention was transferred to the formation of its successor constitution body. Soon thereafter a very important question arose before the Federal Court in *Yusuf Patel's case* regarding the powers and jurisdiction of the Governor-General. This eventually culminated in Governor General's Reference No. 1 of 1955 through which on 17 April 1955, the Governor-General referred to the Federal court to seek its advisory opinion on various questions of law (Raza, 2007, p.7).

The Federal court while hearing the Reference did not make anything mandatory for government. Application submitted on Fazlul Haq's behalf to Federal Court for order postponing Convention election was rejected by Federal Court on April 27th on grounds inter alia that any advice the Court might give in reply to the Governor General's reference would not be binding on the Governor-General. However, Chief Justice of Pakistan suggested during the proceedings on the Reference of Government that nomination day for the Convention should have been delayed lest anyone might later argue that he had been deterred from submitting his name for selection by the supposition that the Convention's powers would not include legislation. Diplock, the government's counsel, said he would convey this suggestion to the Government (UKHC Karachi, 1955, April 28).

Constituent Convention

To replace the dissolved Constituent Assembly, the Governor-General had decided to form a Constituent Convention partly elected by the provincial assemblies by the method of proportional representation with a single transferable vote and partly nominated by the Governor-General. (UKHC Karachi, 1955, April 17) (*Dawn*, 1955, April 22) There was a certain amount of disagreement in the Central Cabinet over the division of seats in the Convention between East Pakistan and the various units of West Pakistan. Law Minister and leader of Awami League Suhrawardy urged that the numbers should, as contemplated by Prime Minister on October 26th be identical with those in the old Constituent Assembly, i.e. 44 for East Pakistan against a total of 32 for West Pakistan. Most of the other ministers considered parity between two Wings of Pakistan preferable. Mr. Suhrawardy was over-persuaded, and on April 15th the order of Governor-General was issued to regulate powers, composition, and method of election of Convention (UKHC Karachi, 1955, July). The Prime Minister told the press on 16 April 1955 that the election would take place on 30th April. To allow the time for the revised procedure it was decided to extend the date of nomination from 23 April to 27 April. The procedure for election to the Constituent Convention would then be the same as was adopted for the Constituent Assembly elected in 1947 (UKHC Karachi. 1955, April 17) (*Dawn*, 1955, April 22).

Governor-General issued an order on April 15, 1955, that the 60-member Constituent Convention would meet in Murree on 10th May 1955. The proclaimed composition and method of election of the Convention was as follows.

Table No. 1: Composition and Method of Election of the Constituent Convention

Area	Seats	Way of Election
East Pakistan	23	To be elected by the respective provincial assembly.
Punjab	16	
NWFP	3	
Sindh	4	
Balochistan	1	To be nominated by the Governor-General because there was no provincial assembly representing these areas.
Frontier States	1	
Khairpur Sate	1	
Bahawalpur State	1	
Karachi (Capital)	1	
Tribal Areas	2	
Minorities	7	To be elected by East Pakistan Assembly

The composition of the Constituent Convention was to be based on the principle of parity of representation between East Pakistan and West Pakistan. The government claimed that this principle had been accepted by representatives from East and West Pakistan and had generally been acclaimed throughout the country (*Dawn*, 1955, April 22). The Election to the Convention was to be held by secret ballot. Subject to certain conditions such as soundness of mind etc. any person was to be qualified to be a member of the Convention if he was a citizen of Pakistan and had attained the age of twenty-one years. At the first meeting of the Convention, a person appointed by the Governor-General would preside until a President had been elected by the Convention from amongst its members (Government of Pakistan, 1955).

As the Advocate General had announced in the Federal Court on April 25th, (Deputy UKHC Lahore, 1955, April 30) Governor-General promulgated Order on April 27th that amended the Constitution Convention Order of 15th April to

- (i) Give the Convention legislative as well as constitution-making powers under section 8 of the Independence Act.
- (ii) Postpone nomination day to May 4th and the first meeting of the Convention to May 16th.
- (iii) Increase the number of members (to 80 from East and West Pakistan to 40 each), including 9 non-Muslims from East Bengal and 1 each from Punjab and Sindh. The number of members to be appointed by the Governor-General was raised to 10 including separate members from Balochistan States Union and one additional member each for tribal areas and Bahawalpur (UKHC Karachi, 1955, April 28).
- (iv) Delete provision for dissolution of the Convention after six months (Deputy UKHC Lahore, 1955, April 30).

The breakup of the increased seats was as follows.

Table No. 2: Amended Composition and Method of Election of the Constituent Convention

Area		Seats	Way of Election
East Pakistan	Muslim	31	To be elected by the respective provincial assembly.
	Minorities	9	
Punjab	Muslim	21	
	Minorities	1	
NWFP		3	
Sindh	Muslim	4	
	Minorities	1	
Balochistan		1	To be nominated by the Governor-General because there was no provincial assembly representing these areas.
Balochistan States Union		1	
Frontier States		1	
Khairpur Sate		1	
Bahawalpur State		2	
Karachi (Capital)		1	
Tribal Areas		3	
Total Seats		80	

(UKHC Karachi, 1955, April 28)

Arguments were advanced in East Bengal and NWFP that elections to the Convention should not take place before the delivery of the Federal Court's decision on the Convention's legality and competence (UKHC Karachi, 1955, May 2). In response to these demands, a further Order was issued

on May 1st that postponed the elections and the meeting of the Convention *sine die* pending the hearing by the Federal Court of the Governor General's reference that sought their advice on (*inter alia*) the legality of the proposed Convention (UKHC Karachi, 1955, July). The Prime Minister, discussing with UKHC on 2nd May hoped, the Convention would be able to meet during May even though its election was to wait upon the Federal Court's decision. (UKHC Karachi, 1955, May 2).

On 10th May the apex court of Pakistan judged the *Usif Patel Case* and the *Reference*. It contributed in answering four problems put before the Federal Court: the powers of the Governor General's before the legislature's action; the proper means to validate prior laws; whether the Governor-General had "rightly dissolved" the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan; and the competency of the proposed Constituent Convention. The court gave judgment that the correct name of the Constituent Convention was Constituent Assembly (Federal Court of Pakistan 1, 1957, pp.264, 308-09). The Federal Court made it clear that in their view the only course open which could be reconciled with the law was for the Government to summon a new Constituent Assembly, elected by the Provincial Assemblies. (UKHC Karachi, 1955, July) The Federal Court's advice, as published in brief on May 10th, was subject to certain conditions. The chief of these conditions were:

- (A) It must have the full powers of the original Constituent Assembly under the Indian Independence Act, 1947, and must be called the Constituent Assembly and not the Constituent Convention.
- (B) The Governor-General must not seek to assume the power to dissolve the Constituent Assembly beyond what was inherent in the Indian Independence Act, 1947 (which, according to a simultaneous ruling by the Federal Court, was only exercisable in certain circumstances); and
- (C) Representatives of areas not possessing representative institutions must be chosen under the Constituent Assembly's arrangements and not appointed by the Governor-General, although the later could specify the electorates in other parts of Pakistan.

An implication of the Federal Court's verdict of 10th May, the detailed judgment of which was issued on 16th May (UKHC Karachi, 1955, July) the Constituent Convention Order (as amended) was superseded by the Constituent Assembly Order on May 28th (UKHC Karachi, 1955, July). The order sought to bring into existence a new Assembly. It provided parity of representation between the two Wings. The previous Assembly had a Bengal majority (Zaheer, 1994, p. 38). Under this order, the number of seats remained as of last order, with the changes in way of their election. The seats and ways of their election are mentioned below.

Table No. 3: Composition and Method of Election of the Second Constituent Assembly

Area		Seats	Way of Election
East Pakistan	Muslim	31	To be elected by the respective provincial assembly.
	Minorities	9	
Punjab	Muslim	21	
	Minorities	1	
NWFP		3	
Sindh	Muslim	4	
	Minorities	1	
Balochistan		1	To be elected by the members of the Shahi Jirga (nominated assembly of tribal chiefs) and the non-official members of the Quetta Municipality
Balochistan States Union		1	To be determined by the newly elected members of the Constituent Assembly after their election.
Frontier States		1	
Khairpur Sate		1	
Bahawalpur State		2	
Tribal Areas		3	
Karachi (Capital)		1	To be elected by Karachi Municipal Corporation
Total		80	

(UKHC Karachi, 1955, July)

In the original proposal of the Convention, the method of simple voting was provided. Later the simple voting was changed into the Single Transferable Vote. As the name "Single Transferable Vote" (STV) suggests, it is a system in which each voter casts one vote, and under prescribed conditions, the vote is transferred from one to another from a voter's ranked list of candidates. STV is

an evolving family of vote-counting rules rather than a single rule. The different varieties of STV share the following features: a quota of votes is established, and any candidate who attains the quota is elected; surplus votes of elected candidates are transferred to other candidates favoured by those who voted for the elected candidates; candidates are eliminated sequentially and their votes transferred to other candidates, with the candidate eliminated at each stage generally being the one with the fewest current votes. Differences arise concerning the computation of the quota, whether the surplus votes are ones picked at random or fractions of all votes, how ties are resolved, and whether the account is taken of already-elected candidates to whom surplus votes would be transferred if they were not already elected. The central attraction of the single transferable vote compared to other voting procedures is that voters can rank candidates in whatever ways they wish, and the vote-counting process sorts the voters into equal-sized groups that are suitably represented by particular candidates (with the possibility that some voters will be split among two or more groups) (Tideman, 1995, pp. 27-28).

Adoption of the STV could be claimed by the government as justified because it repeated the procedure for the election of the original Constituent Assembly, and that it provided a fair representation for all shades of opinion. However, there was a political purpose of its implications in East Pakistan. Fazlul Haq's faction of the UF commanded the absolute majority of the Muslim seats in the East Pakistan Assembly and had on its disposal more votes than any other Muslim group in the Assembly, and under the system of simple ballot papers (originally proposed by government) their panel might have been elected to the exclusion of all other groups. Owing to the provision of simple voting system Awami League began to oppose the proposal of Convention despite their leader Suhrawardy's part in it as law minister. The new decision of STV made possible a bargain between the other groups in the Assembly to vote for each other as a second preference and so keep out some at least of Fazlul Haq's nominees, although this would be a complicated and uncertain business. This change to STV made it possible that Awami League fraction might decide to take part in the Convention and this might force the hands of Fazlul Haq's group. That group was still calling for representation in proportion to population. That meant more seats for East Pakistan. Connecting the number of seats with the parity principle that Haq did not accept, his faction refused to take part in a Convention (Bottomley, 1955, April 23).

Conclusion

The Constituent Assembly of Pakistan lost its representativeness and credibility after the re-election of new provincial legislatures which served as its Electoral College. The crushing defeat of the ruling Muslim League in East Pakistan elections in March 1954 added the intensity of the demands for the Assembly's dissolution. The government, however, did not pay much heed to these demands because the Assembly was on the verge of accomplishment of its task of constitution-making. However, the dissolution of the Assembly owing to legislation due to the political collisions of parliamentary groups with executive threw the country into a new political and constitutional squabble regarding the election of successor body of the Constituent Assembly. The Governor General's intention of making the Constituent Convention in replacement of Assembly was rejected by the Federal Court. Meanwhile the on the feedback of political stakeholders, in the light of Court's observations and for the political necessities of influential politicians the number of seats, procedure, and principles of the election for new Constituent Assembly were legislated.

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