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PROBLEM OF FEDERALISM IN PAKISTAN: CONSENSUS ON TRIAL, 1956-1958

On March 23, 1956, nearly eight years after independence, Pakistan had a Constitution framed by an indirectly-elected Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. One of the constitutional issues that had baffled constitution-makers was the pattern of federalism.¹ Finally a consensus was evolved and its fundamental principles, as embodied in the 1956 Constitution, were (i) one unit of West Pakistan; (ii) parity between East and West Pakistan at the centre; and (iii) provincial autonomy as provided in the Constitution. These principles were closely interlinked. A threat to any one of them was to disturb the others and, in fact, likely to demolish the entire constitutional fabric.

During the process of evolving the consensus on the form of federalism important political elements had opposed each one of these principles; some had resisted their passage till the very end and others acquiesced in under pressure or persuasion. A majority of the politicians of the smaller provinces of West Pakistan opposed the one-unit scheme partly because they apprehended danger to the rights of their provinces under this arrangement. Interestingly no political party of any consequence owned the scheme; even the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) whose leadership was associated with its introduction and implementation, did not endorse it officially until October 1957. Similarly, the principle of parity was accepted by the East Pakistan-based parties on the understanding that parity would extend to all spheres of governmental activity and that East Pakistan would have regional autonomy. The Constitution, however, did not meet the expectations of important political elements in East Pakistan. The United Front, claiming a majority in the East Pakistan Assembly and a substantial number of seats in the National Assembly, opposed the quantum of autonomy provided in the draft constitution but finally accepted it because the Front was part of the central coalition that was piloting the Constitution Bill.² The East Pakistan-based Awami League (AL) had no share in power; therefore, it not only staged a walk-out in the Constituent Assembly on the day the Constitution Bill was passed but also boycotted the celebrations marking promulgation of the Constitution on March 23.³ With such staunch opponents and lukewarm supporters, the federal principles incorporated in the Constitution had a perilous future.

The one unit of West Pakistan remained under constant attack. It had an inauspicious start. In April 1955, Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani and Dr. Khan Sahib were appointed governor and chief minister respectively even before the creation of the new province—an action declared unconstitutional by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in July 1957. Dr. Khan Sahib's appointment as the chief minister was unwise. His selection was made due to his friendship with President Iskandar Mirza since the pre-independence days when the former was the chief minister of the NWFP and the latter the Commissioner of Peshawar. Besides, his appointment was expected to neutralise the force of the anti-one unit movement led by his younger brother, Abdul Ghaffar Khan,

leader of the former Khudai Khidmatgars or the Red Shirts. But this move had disadvantages also. Dr. Khan Sahib had opposed the movement for Pakistan and allegedly boycotted the flag-hoisting ceremony on the Independence Day, August 14, 1947.⁴ The PML felt strongly about these hostile gestures but might still have adopted him as its nominee if he had accepted its offer to become at least its associate member. But he refused to identify himself with the PML. The PML had, therefore, no choice but to oppose his continuance as the chief minister.

The West Pakistan legislature was constituted by indirect elections in January 1956. Although these elections were held on non-party basis, the Muslim Leaguers were returned overwhelmingly because they dominated the electoral college, consisting of the legislative assemblies of the former provinces of West Pakistan. They were, however, divided into several mutually hostile groups.⁵ The behaviour of the legislature, therefore, could not be predicted with certainty. As a precautionary measure, President Iskandar Mirza and Prime Minister Chaudhri Muhammad Ali invited prominent League MLA's (members of the Legislative Assembly) to Karachi and asked them to support Dr. Khan Sahib as the chief minister of West Pakistan. They agreed to do so.⁶ The situation took an unexpected turn when the newly-elected President of the revived PML, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, in accordance with the decision of the party's central council, instructed League MLAs in the West Pakistan Assembly, to form themselves into a parliamentary party and elect a leader.⁷ Dr. Khan Sahib, who had the tacit support of the Governor, reacted immediately and started negotiations for the formation of a new party, to be named as the 'One Unit Party', but deferred its finalisation till the West Pakistan Muslim League (WPML) parliamentary party had made its position clear on the issue. On April 3, 1956, the WPML parliamentary party met and elected Sardar Bahadur Khan as its leader by a vote of 131 to 70 and with the same voting strength decided to have its own chief minister. After his election, Sardar Bahadur Khan wrote to the Governor to invite him to form new government since he had been elected leader of the party enjoying majority in the legislature. The Governor referred his letter to Dr. Khan Sahib who, in his comments, recounting the circumstance of his appointment and the 'wholehearted co-operation and unstinted support' promised to him by prominent Muslim Leaguers, pointed out that the WPML parliamentary party could not assume the powers of the legislature and even within that party the proposition to have a League chief minister had the support of only 131 MLAs which did not constitute a majority in a House of 306. Claiming majority for himself in the House he asked for permission to expand his cabinet which was readily granted by the Governor.⁸

Dr. Khan Sahib exploited the PML's intra-party conflicts while selecting his new ministers. All his seven ministers were Leaguers, including one member of the central working committee, Nawab Iftikhar Husain of Mamdot. The PML's reaction was prompt. On April 23, its working committee, while endorsing the decision of the WPML parliamentary party, expelled the seven Leaguers from the party who had joined Dr. Khan Sahib's cabinet. The latter was also not sitting idle. He announced the establishment of the Republican Party (RP) on the same day. Since both the parties now claimed a majority, the West Pakistan Assembly was called to meet on May 19, to determine their

respective strength. The RP, with the blessings of Governor Gurmani and President Mirza, rapidly strengthened itself mainly at the cost of the PML by employing pressure tactics and distributing ministerial offices and other favours.⁹ The claims of the parties were tested on May 20, on the election of the Speaker. The candidates of both the parties scored equal votes but finally the Republican candidate, Fazl Ilahi Chaudhry, was declared elected by the casting vote of the chairman of the meeting, M. H. Qizilbash.

The RP owed this marginal victory to the help of the twelve-member bitterly anti-one unit Sind Awami Mahaz (SAM), led by G.M. Syed. The RP-SAM co-operation continued during the May-June 1956 budget session of the legislature. In return for the SAM's support the RP postponed discussion on the controversial issue of electorates which was a pre-requisite for holding general elections under the 1956 Constitution.¹⁰ However, G. M. Syed and Muhammad Ayub Khuhro, who was instrumental in the implementation of one unit, did not hesitate to denounce the administration of one unit during the debate on the budget.¹¹

The SAM soon realised that it held the balance between the mutually hostile PML and RP. It did not miss any opportunity to push its demand for the dissolution of one unit. In August 1956, when the West Pakistan Assembly, in a resolution, recommended separate electorates as the mode of elections with the Republicans voting for it, the SAM, a supporter of joint electorates, turned against the RP. When one of the SAM members moved a no-confidence motion against the Republican ministry, the PML was prepared not only to support the motion but its leaders also hinted at reconsidering the one unit.¹² The RP, realising the danger of the PML-SAM collaboration, saved its ministry by managing an abrupt adjournment of the Assembly by the Speaker.

In September 1956, all the anti-one unit elements joined hands and consolidated themselves on one platform. Indeed, the efforts to undo one unit had started as early as August 1955, when the former Khudai Khidmatgars led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and the NWFP AL, headed by Pir Aminul Hasnat of Manki Sharif, had jointly established an Anti-One Unit Front whose consultative committee had directed the movement against one unit. The Wrore Pukhtun (Pukhtun Brotherhood) of Abdul Samad Achakzai, the Usthman Gal (Peoples' Party) of Prince Abdul Karim, the SAM, the Sind Hari Committee of Hyder Bakhsh Jatui and the Azad Pakistan Party of Mian Iftikharuddin had supported this Front and contributed to its anti-one unit campaign. The Front weakened rapidly after the passage of the 1956 Constitution. The NWFP AL dissociated itself from the Front due to lack of interest in the issue by the central AL leadership. By June 1956, after the arrest of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Anti-One Unit Front had become in all political purposes, totally inactive.¹³ Its constituent parties, however, badly felt the need to have a more cohesive and unified forum to voice their views and coordinate their activities. In September 1956, these parties - SAM, Khudai Khidmatgar, Wrore Pukhtun, Usthman Gal, Sind Hari Committee and Azad Pakistan Party-, after protracted negotiations, decided to form the Pakistan National Party (PNP). Except for the Punjab-based Azad Pakistan Party, all the other parties had their roots in the smaller provinces of West Pakistan. The PNP's primary goal was the replacement of one unit by a sub-federation of four provinces in West Pakistan, while other objectives ranged from radical economic and

land reforms to an independent and non-aligned foreign policy.¹⁴

The PNP wielded more influence than the SAM because of its broader base. Still holding the balance between the PML and the RP in the West Pakistan Assembly, it used its otherwise insignificant MLA strength to secure a demerger resolution passed by the West Pakistan legislature. It found a very receptive atmosphere to operate. The PML leadership in West Pakistan was keen to dislodge the Republicans from power and responded favourably to the PNP moves against one unit, giving even secret assurances in writing to this effect. On March 18, 1957, Qazi Muhammad Isa, general secretary of the PML, wrote 'a note' saying that his party could not support one unit because it had 'failed completely'. Two days later, on March 20, in a 'top secret and personal' communication to G. M. Syed, Sardar Bahadur Khan, leader of the WPML parliamentary party, promised that his party would support any anti-one unit motion in the West Pakistan legislature.¹⁵

This was contrary to the PML's open posture. It had yet to spell out its policy on the one unit issue. Discussions in its various forums displayed a state of complete confusion and indecision. On January 30, 1957, the WPML parliamentary party discussed the issue in a meeting where its MLAs from Sind, NWFP and Baluchistan supported unanimously the breakup of one unit while those from the Punjab were evenly divided. The meeting adjourned without taking any decision. At another meeting on March 6, the parliamentary party authorised the PML working committee to take a decision on the matter. When the issue came up before the working committee for consideration on the following day, it, in turn, directed the parliamentary party to use 'its own discretion' on the issue. Such a policy by the largest party made the future of one unit uncertain.

During February-March 1957, the PML-PNP secret understanding accelerated moves against the one unit in the National Assembly and the West Pakistan Assembly. In February, Pir Ali Muhammad Rashidi, a private member and a former protagonist of one unit, moved a resolution in the National Assembly seeking appointment of a ten-member commission to inquire into the success or otherwise of one unit with special reference to any financial, economic and administrative improvements brought about by one unit.¹⁶ The admissibility of this resolution was challenged by the Government benches on two grounds: (i) it raised a matter that was within the jurisdiction of the provincial Government; and (ii) it involved amendment of the Constitution and any motion for amendment could not be taken up because the strength of members required for amending the Constitution was not present in the House. A heated and prolonged discussion followed, but the National Assembly finally adjourned without taking any decision. Since it was a private motion it was not brought before the Assembly again.

More hectic activity was witnessed in the West Pakistan Assembly. Four private members, including one Muslim Leaguer, served notice of four resolutions against one unit. On March 7 the House took up discussion on one resolution by Dr. Saeeduddin Swaleh which read:

That this Assembly recommends to the Government to convey the views of this Assembly to the National Assembly that the present province of West Pakistan be divided into four or more zones, each enjoying provincial autonomy, and the

geographical boundaries of the zones envisaged be drawn up in consonance with the views of the elected representatives of the proposed zones.¹⁷

The debate on the resolution was still in progress when the Speaker postponed its further consideration till March 28, a day reserved for non-official business. Sardar Bahadur Khan, however, tried to challenge the Speaker's ruling and suggested immediate voting on the resolution, but the Speaker ruled his motion out of order. Before the Assembly met again, the PML and the PNP had forged closer links as a result of the secret promises made by the former. The RP came to know of the PML-PNP understanding during the debate on the budget on March 20 when Sardar Bahadur Khan repeatedly asked for voting on the demand for grant for land revenue. Aware of the consequences the RP avoided a division.¹⁸ Instead, on that evening the President, on the advice of the Republican ministry communicated through the governor, assumed the administration of the province under Article 193 of the Constitution.

From March 20 to July 15, 1957, West Pakistan remained under the presidential rule. When the provincial expenditure authorised by the President was brought before the National Assembly for sanction, one unit was severely criticised. Pir Ali Mohammad Rashidi led the attack and gave a lengthy discourse against one unit. His arguments included that West Pakistan had never been one administrative unit. Secondly, the methods used for its establishment and the disclosure of 'secret documents' had strengthened apprehensions of the people of smaller provinces that this arrangement was designed to manouvre domination of the Punjab. Thirdly, a pre-requisite for the success of one unit was the provision of better administration but instead the administration had deteriorated. Fourthly, the promises made to the people of the smaller provinces at the time of integration had not been fulfilled.¹⁹ Mohammad Ayub Khuhro also saw no good in its continuance. The only member to support the one unit wholeheartedly was Mian Abdul Bari who warned that its liquidation would be 'the forerunner of Pakistan's doom'.²⁰ Although the debate could not change the status of one unit, it did provide an opportunity to the anti-one unit elements to express their feelings.

During the presidential rule in West Pakistan, the RP and the PML endeavoured desperately to capture power by any means. The Republicans finally came back in office mainly because of President Mirza's support. Prime Minister Suhrawardy had laid down the condition that only after a formal vote in the provincial Assembly any party should be invited to form the ministry. This was to avoid frequent threats of no-confidence motions. The Republicans were not prepared to comply with this or any other condition since they were not sure about their actual strength in the Assembly.²¹ They waited for an opportune moment to return to power. On July 15, when Suhrawardy was on a tour of Europe and North America, they prevailed upon President Mirza who, without a formal vote of the Assembly, withdrew the presidential rule and re-installed the Republicans into power. The ministry was now headed by Sardar Abdur Rashid in place of Dr. Khan Sahib whose election to the West Pakistan legislature had been declared invalid in March 1957. According to the Constitution, the ministry was to face the legislature within two months of its assuming office.

About two weeks after the installation of the Republican ministry, the PNP

broadened its base still further by aligning itself with the East Pakistan-based GD and a dissident group of the AL led by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani. The new party, the Pakistan National Awami Party (NAP), had among its major objectives the demerger of one unit, regional autonomy and independent foreign policy.²²

The East Pakistan regional autonomists were as determined as the anti-one unit elements to achieve their objectives. They had wanted to leave only three subjects, i.e. defence, foreign affairs and currency, with the centre, but were outmanoeuvred during the constitution-making process. The Constitution had allocated as many as thirty subjects to the centre which included foreign affairs, defence, currency, citizenship, foreign and inter-provincial trade and commerce, insurance and corporations set up by the Federation, industries owned wholly or partially by the Federation, posts and all forms of telecommunications, mineral oil and gas.²³ The regional autonomists accepted this arrangement with reservation and the Awami Leaguers registered protest openly by staging a walk-out in the Constituent Assembly on the passage of the Constitution Bill and boycotting the celebrations marking the Republic Day on March 23. Maulana Bhashani had vowed to continue constitutional fight to amend the Constitution in order to achieve regional autonomy. Within two months of the promulgation of the Constitution, he revived his demand by asking for the implementation of the Twenty-one Point Programme of the UF. However, his demand did not gain momentum immediately because it was initially used by him as a device to overthrow the UF ministry in East Pakistan.

On August 30, the AL campaign forced the UF ministry to resign. The AL came to power in the following month not only in East Pakistan but also at the centre with its all-Pakistan chief, Husain Shaheed Suhrawardy, as the prime minister, heading an AL-RP coalition. The assumption of powers considerably softened its radical stand. Its governments' policies were welcomed by Bengali autonomists. The dissatisfied extremists had to lie low due to the popular upsurge for the Awami League. But they reasserted about six months later first on the question of Pakistan's pro-West foreign policy. The AL, especially its East Pakistan and NWFP branches, had called for an independent foreign policy and opposed Pakistan's entry into pro-West defence alliances. The AL had assumed power when the pro-West foreign policy was under severe strains due to the situation arising from the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egypt. Husain Shaheed Suhrawardy, immediately after assuming office, contrary to the declared policy of his party, pledged support for the alliances. Maulana Bhashani, president of the East Pakistan AL, and a few others challenged him. Suhrawardy, however, cared little for their protestations. Being the party's all-Pakistan leader and the country's prime minister, he was in a less vulnerable position. The prevailing situation also favoured him. In January 1957, the Constituent Assembly of the Indian-occupied Kashmir decided to make the valley 'an integral part of the Union of India' which caused great resentment in Pakistan.²⁴ This atmosphere was congenial for the advocacy of defence alliances.

Maulana Bhashani, realising his weak position on the question of foreign policy, pressed for the acceptance of 'full regional autonomy' on which Prime Minister Suhrawardy held a different opinion. The former knew that he could command unanimous support of every section of East Pakistan on this issue. Therefore, he did not

hesitate to advocate it' in an aggressive language. In his address to the council of the East Pakistan AL at Kagmari in February 1957, he, after highlighting Bengali grievances, observed that 'a stage might come, say after ten years - if the grievances of the eastern wing are not redressed-, when the people of East Pakistan might feel inclined to say Assalamo Alaikum (goodbye), to Pakistan'.²⁵ When the council of the East Pakistan AL discussed the issue, it gave support to both Suhrawardy and Maulana Bhashani. Its resolutions, which reflected an awkward compromise between the viewpoints of the two leaders, authorised the Suhrawardy-led AL parliamentary party to continue in the central coalition which was supporting the pro-West foreign policy and at the same time empowered Maulana Bhashani to take disciplinary action against those who violated party's policy on the issue of defence pacts. Encouraged by the resolutions of the East Pakistan AL council, Suhrawardy brought the alliances before the National Assembly for approval. No party in the National Assembly opposed the pro-west foreign policy or the alliances. The opposition, consisting of the PML members, differed on matters of detail and abstained from the final voting. Only two members from West Pakistan, Mian Iftikharuddin (NAP) and Mian Abdul Bari (Independent) spoke and voted against the motion.²⁶

Maulana Bhashani was angry at this vote in the National Assembly. In retaliation, he aggressively advocated regional autonomy for East Pakistan. On March 2, under his instructions the working committee of the East Pakistan AL directed its MLAs to move a non-official resolution in the provincial Assembly recommending regional autonomy for East Pakistan to the centre. To offset pressure to the contrary, he submitted his resignation from the presidentship of the East Pakistan AL. His tactics proved successful. On April 3, the East Pakistan Assembly adopted a non-official resolution without a division urging the provincial government to ask the centre to take suitable steps to provide 'full regional autonomy' for East Pakistan leaving the centre with only defence, foreign affairs (political) and currency.²⁷ In West Pakistan some people took this development very seriously. The Interior Minister, Ghulam Ali Talpur, termed the resolution a move of 'secession' and threatened 'to smash' it with 'an iron hand'. The young Awami Leaguers were sensitive to such observations and their reaction was equally sharp.²⁸

Maulana Bhashani was happy with the performance of his lieutenants, but he was disturbed by the observations of the party chief, Prime Minister Suhrawardy, who had termed the 'autonomy' resolution as a 'political stunt' unworthy of any consideration and declared that the 1956 Constitution had conceded 98 per cent regional autonomy.²⁹ He was still hopeful and wanted to have Suhrawardy's personal clarification in the light of the pledge the latter had signed in 1955.³⁰ But Suhrawardy, instead of explaining his position before the provincial party, brought the issue before the central coalition which authorised him to set up a committee to determine the quantum of autonomy for East Pakistan.³¹ No such committee was ever set up. By June 1957, Maulana Bhashani was completely disillusioned with the AL when its central council formally endorsed Prime Minister Suhrawardy's foreign policy. He along with his supporters left the AL and joined hands with the PNP leaders to found the NAP.

The NAP had three major objectives: demerger of one unit, regional autonomy for East Pakistan and independent foreign policy. Immediately after its formation, it proceeded to get a demerger of one unit resolution passed by the West Pakistan Assembly. Numerically it was a very small party in the Assembly, but its bargaining position vis-a-vis the PML and the RP was bright. The latter two parties were prepared to compromise on any of their fundamental principles in their pursuit of power. During August-September 1957, the NAP conducted negotiations with the PML and the RP on various issues. Its four-member negotiating team (G.M. Syed, Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi, Abdus Samad Khan Achakzai and Mian Iftikharuddin) held talks with four-membered committee of the PML (Sardar Bahadur Khan, Mian Mumtaz Mohammad Khan Daultana, Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan and Mohammad Ayub Khuhro) and three-members of the RP (Dr. Khan Sahib, Malik Firoz Khan Noon and Sardar Abdur Rashid). Interestingly, this bargaining was done openly and fully reported in the press. After lengthy negotiations, the NAP and the RP entered into the following agreement:-

The representatives of the Republican Party and (the) Pakistan National Awami Party have arrived at a mutual agreement, and the Republican Party will support a resolution in the West Pakistan Assembly for the replacement of One Unit of West Pakistan by a zonal federation of West Pakistan composed of autonomous provinces on a linguistic and cultural basis, and the Pakistan National Awami Party will support the Republican Party Ministry in all matters including confidence in the Ministry.³²

A text of another agreement to be signed between the PML and the NAP was also drafted but was dropped at the last minute. On September 17, in accordance with the NAP-RP agreement, Ghulam Mustafa Bhurgari, a NAP MLA from Tharparkar District, moved the following resolution in the West Pakistan Assembly:-

This Assembly recommends to the Government to communicate the views of this Assembly to the National Assembly that the province of West Pakistan be constituted as a subfederation with four or more autonomous provinces.³³

After only a three-hour discussion, the resolution was passed by 170 to 4 votes. The WPML parliamentary party participated neither in the discussion nor in the voting on the resolution.

As a follow up, the political parties sponsoring the resolution in the West Pakistan Assembly were to take up the issue in the National Assembly and keeping in view their mood and strength such a resolution would have been passed without much difficulty. But any further action on the demerger resolution was forestalled by pressure from unexpected quarters. General Mohammad Ayub Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, who was one of the original sponsors of the one-unit plan, was abroad when the West Pakistan Assembly passed the demerger resolution. He immediately cut short his visit and returned to Pakistan. Under his pressure, President Mirza and Prime Minister Suhrawardy issued a joint statement on September 23, 1957, in which they disapproved of the resolution for the break-up of one unit or any other move that was likely to affect the Constitution before the general elections.³⁴ Suhrawardy who had been closely associated with the one-unit plan at its initial stages in 1954-55, realised the

implications of demerger and impressed upon his followers that 'two-third of the Constitution of Pakistan had for its bedrock the One Unit fabric. Once that foundation was removed the whole structure would collapse'³⁵ In fact, Shaikh Mujibur Rahman had warned even at that time that in case one unit was undone, East Pakistan would demand representation in the central legislature on the basis of population.³⁶ Suhrawardy wanted to preserve one unit at least till the first general elections under the 1956 Constitution. Therefore, he conducted a tour of West Pakistan to defend one unit. This campaign embittered his relations with his coalition partners, the Republicans, and eventually led to the dissolution of AL-RP coalition at the centre.

The NAP, on whose platform all the anti-one unit elements had assembled, was elated by the resolution of the West Pakistan Assembly, and it even observed a 'Thanksgiving Day' to celebrate the occasion. But when the RP did not honour its commitment about dissolution of one unit, the NAP leadership was annoyed. In order to teach the Republicans a lesson it turned to the PML which had its own grievances against the RP. The PML-RP had coalesced at the centre after the break-up of the Suhrawardy-led AL-RP coalition but this coalition broke up after only two months because the RP backed out of its promise to support a motion for the re-introduction of separate electorates. Common animosity against the Republicans united the PML and the NAP on a vague sixteen-point programme of socio-economic reforms and early general elections which was signed by Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, Mumtaz Mohammad Khan Daultana, Mohammad Ayub Khuhro and Sardar Bahadur Khan on behalf of the PML and by G. M. Syed, Pir Ilahi Bakhsh and Ghulam Mohammad Bhurgari on behalf of the NAP. The primary object was to defeat the RP ministry in West Pakistan. Although one unit was nowhere mentioned in the agreement the leaders of the two parties had some understanding on this issue also.³⁷ On March 18, the day this agreement was signed, the RP replaced Sardar Abdur Rashid Khan with Muzaffar Ali Qizilbash as the parliamentary leader and chief minister of West Pakistan. The new leader was more experienced and adept than his predecessor in manouvring MLAs' support. On March 20, the provincial legislature, with MLAs crossing and recrossing the floor, yielded a vote of confidence in the Qizilbash ministry.

In East Pakistan where the AL was in power, the NAP, holding the balance of power in the legislature, initially decided not to participate in any move for overthrowing the government. But it soon pressed the AL to accept its eleven-point programme which was similar in content to the one it had signed with the PML in West Pakistan.³⁸ The non-acceptance of the NAP demands led to frequent changes in government which seriously damaged the fragile democratic structure. Within less than a week (March 30-April 3, 1958), the provincial Assembly was prorogued, the AL ministry dismissed, a KSP ministry sworn in, Governor Fazlul Haq removed, a new governor appointed, the KSP ministry dismissed, and the AL ministry reinstalled which obtained a vote of confidence from the provincial Assembly with the support of the NAP. Realising its importance the NAP raised the price of its support. Its new five-point demands now directly called for (a) the undoing of one unit; (b) regional autonomy for both the provinces; (c) an independent foreign policy; and (d) implementation of the fourteen

unfulfilled items of the Twenty-one-point Programme.³⁹ In order to implement its demands, the eight-member NAP parliamentary board under the chairmanship of Maulana Bhashani appointed three committees to negotiate with the prime minister and the two chief ministers. The AL's refusal to accept the NAP's demands again resulted in the defeat of its ministry in the Assembly on June 18. Two days later, a KSP ministry was sworn in, but now the general secretaries of the AL (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) and the NAP (Mahmud Ali) arrived at 'an understanding' on the latter's five-point demands. The result was that within three days of its coming into office, the KSP ministry was defeated in the House. After this for nearly two months East Pakistan remained under presidential rule because the Governor had advised the President that in view of the attitude of political parties a stable ministry could not be formed. On August 25, under Suhrawardy's pressure on the Firoz Khan Noon-led central coalition Government, the AL ministry was reinstalled which spent the following month in desperate manouvres to get a vote of confidence from the Assembly. These moves heightened inter-party conflicts. On September 20-23, the Assembly witnessed many a riotous scene in which several MLAs were injured. Shahid Ali, the deputy speaker, later succumbed to the injuries he had received in the House. One major cause for this continued instability was East Pakistani frustration in not being able to get implemented even the autonomy provided in the 1956 Constitution which then rallied most of them round the demand for 'full regional autonomy', i.e. leaving only defence, foreign affairs and currency with the centre.

The situation in West Pakistan was not very different from the one prevailing in East Pakistan. Here the anti-one unit elements felt frustrated when their attempts for the dissolution of one unit were constantly blocked. In desperation they were prepared to destroy whatever came in their way. One thing that was damaged the most was the cohesiveness of political parties. The attitude of the RP on this issue reflected typical opportunistic character of its policies. It gave its members freedom to canvass in the forthcoming elections for or against one unit in accordance with the feelings of the people of their constituencies.⁴⁰ As for the PML, after the demerger resolution of the West Pakistan legislature, it had finally declared to stand by one unit. But even after this, during the signing of the PML-NAP sixteen-point programme in March 1958, its leadership reportedly agreed to consider a resolution against one unit in the party's council.⁴¹ On March 30, in a meeting of the council, Mohammad Ayub Khuhro did move a resolution to the effect that since one unit had proved 'a complete failure administratively, economically and politically' and the people of the smaller provinces of West Pakistan were opposed to it, therefore, it should be dissolved. The council, however, did not take up the resolution for consideration and deferred it for three months. This decision disappointed Mohammad Ayub Khuhro who along with thirty-six other councillors left the PML. The one-unit issue also strained unity in the NAP's ranks. Its West Pakistani anti-one unit leaders were angry with their East Pakistani colleagues' emphasis on regional autonomy and their unconditional support to the AL ministry in East Pakistan whose central chief, Suhrawardy, was openly supporting the one unit. As a result of this, G. M. Syed, former head of the SAM, and his supporters left the NAP. In September 1958, all the Sindhi opponents of one unit, irrespective of their party affiliations, coordinated their

activities on one platform. In a meeting at Mohammad Ayub Khuhro's residence on September 5-6, they decided that

All political parties should unite and by adjustment put up such candidates in the forthcoming elections to the National Assembly and Provincial Assembly of West Pakistan as would achieve the fundamental object of breaking One Unit and constituting it into four or more provinces in West Pakistan.⁴²

An eleven-member parliamentary board, consisting of Pir Sahib of Pagaro, Makhdoom Sahib of Hala, Mohammad Ayub Khuhro, Mir Ghulam Ali Talpur, G. M. Syed, Qazi Fazlullah, Haji Maula Bakhsh Soomro, Abdus Sattar Pirzada, Agha Ghulam Nabi Pathan, Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi and Ghulam Mohammad Wassan, was set up to struggle for the objective laid down in the resolution.

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, president of the West Pakistan NAP, also left his party. Earlier, when the resolution seeking dissolution of one unit was not implemented, he had threatened to start a civil disobedience movement but the NAP high command had restrained him from following such a course of action. Now free of the restraints of party discipline, he announced that the Red Shirts would boycott the coming elections if the Constitution was not amended in accordance with their demand for the break-up of one unit. The only course to achieve the objective of dissolving the one unit, he felt, was to launch a movement which would be 'a war of liberation' like the one waged against the British, to give the Pathans 'the right of self-determination'.⁴³

In Baluchistan, opponents of one unit were active mainly from the platform of the NAP. The tribal sardars, independent of their party affiliations, also exerted to get the one unit dissolved. On December 17, 1957, a 'representative' group of sardars and dignitaries of the Qalat State, in a memorandum to President Mirza, submitted through the Khan of Qalat, demanded for the withdrawal of one unit because, according to them, it was 'dangerous for the ancient tribal customs and way of life'. The sardars also wrote separately to the President threatening that 'if the decision was not revoked the Baluchs would take up arms against the Government'.⁴⁴

If the political process had continued and political parties were allowed a free hand, it would have been nearly impossible to protect the federal principles. This was unmistakably evident from the mood of the politicians and political parties even before the beginning of the formal campaign for the forthcoming elections. The promulgation of Martial Law in October 1958, was partly an attempt to safeguard the principles of federalism evolved after years of painstaking efforts.

NOTES

1. For a discussion of the painstaking efforts to resolve the federal problem prior to 1956, see the author's articles "Problems of Federalism in Pakistan: The Continuing Debate, 1947-1954", in the *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* (Lahore), October 1981; and "Problem of Federalism in Pakistan: Consensus by Command", *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, July-December 1983.
2. See *Dawn*, November 26, 29, 1955 for the United Front's demand for regional autonomy.
3. Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, chief of the East Pakistan AL, pledged to continue the struggle for regional autonomy. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1956.

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4. Actually the Red Shirts were advised by the Governor not to attend the ceremony for fear of 'hostile demonstrations'. Norval Mitchell, *Sir George Cunningham*, Edinburgh, 1962, p. 132.
5. For factional divisions after the elections, see *Dawn*, January 14, 17, 1956.
6. *Ibid.*, March 30, 1956. Muhammad Ali's statement.
7. *Ibid.*, January 31, 1956.
8. *Pakistan Times*, April 8, 1956.
9. National Assembly of Pakistan, *Debates, Official Report*, Karachi (hereinafter *NAPD*), vol. II, no. 5 (April 12, 1957), p. 233; *Dawn*, May 17, 1956; and Firoz Khan Noon, *From Memory*, Lahore, 1966, 247-48.
10. The mode of elections had been left unsettled by the constitution-makers. The Constitution provided that the question of electorates should be decided by the National Assembly of Pakistan on the recommendations of the provincial legislatures of East and West Pakistan.
11. West Pakistan Assembly, *Debates*, vol. I (1956), pp. 176, 180 and 186.
12. The PML did not define its policy on the one-unit issue till October 1957. Its members, therefore, could take opposite positions. For example, in September 1956, Qazi Mohammad Isa, general secretary of the PML, observed that the party leaders had 'never reconciled themselves to the integration of the provinces' but his colleague, Mumtaz Mohammad Khan Daultana, dismissed his statement as nothing more than his 'purely personal views'. *Pakistan Times*, September 26, 27, 1956.
13. D. G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, Bombay, 1967, pp. 490-91.
14. *Dawn*, September 10, 1956.
15. Sayyid Hasan Mahmud released these secret documents to the press on September 27, 1957. He reported that a decision of a similar nature by the working committee of the PML was also communicated to G. M. Syed. This decision was not meant for publication 'for the present'. Hasan Mahmud, *A Nation is Born*, Lahore, 1958, p. 80.
16. *NAPD*, vol. I (1957), p. 705.
17. West Pakistan Assembly, *Debates*, vol. III (1957), p. 1140.
18. During the debate, about thirty members crossed over to the opposition.
19. *NAPD*, vol. II, no. 11 (1957), pp. 639-67.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
21. *Dawn*, July 3, 4, 6, 1957.
22. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1957.
23. Safdar Mahmood, *Constitutional Foundations of Pakistan*, Lahore, 1973, pp. 292-94.
24. S. M. Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis*, London, 1973, pp. 227-28.
25. *Dawn*, February 8, 1957.
26. *NAPD*, vol. I, no. 15 (February 25, 1957), pp. 1101-2.
27. *Dawn*, April 6, 1957.
28. *Ibid.*, April 4, 5, 1957.
29. *Ibid.*, February 8, 1957.
30. The pledge was signed by Suhrawardy in April 1955, at the time of acceptance of parity by the East Pakistan AL. Maulana Bhashani released the document on April 6, 1957.
31. *Ibid.*, April 29, 1957. Ataur Rahman's statement. Such a committee was never set up.
32. *Ibid.*, September 14, 1957.
33. West Pakistan Assembly, *Debates*, vol. III (1957), pp. 213-18.
34. Colonel Mohammad Ahmed, *My Chief*, Lahore, 1960, p. 96.
35. *Pakistan Times*, October 7, 1957.
36. *Dawn*, October 9, 1957.
37. *Ibid.*, March 20, 21, 1958 for the NAP reaction regarding one unit, and *ibid.*, April 13, 1958 for Mohammad Ayub Khuhro's reaction.
38. *Ibid.*, April 6, 1958.

39. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1958.
40. *Pakistan Times*, September 30, 1958.
41. *Dawn*, April 13, 1958. Mohammad Ayub Khuhro's statement.
42. *Pakistan Times*, September 7, 1958.
43. *Dawn*, September 7, 1958.
44. Mir Ahmad Yar Khan, *Inside Baluchistan*, Karachi, 1975, pp. 169-70.