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DHAKA'S DAILY NEWSPAPERS AND THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1970 IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract: In the history of Bengali nationalism, the general elections of 1970 in Pakistan were important milestones. The nationalistic force, at that time, appeared strongly under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh MujiburRahman. The Awami League won a landslide victory in East Pakistan and also in the National Assembly as they sought public mandate in favour of autonomy and Six-point Programme for removing disparity between the two wings of Pakistan and to bring an end the internal colonial rule. Dhaka's daily newspapers such as the *Azad*, the *Ittefaq*, the *Sangbad*, the *Pakistan Observer* and others played an important role in those elections. They supported different political parties according to their own ideologies. Apart from the ideological differences most of those newspapers were united in the question of Bengali nationalism when the Pakistan civil and military ruling class refused to transfer power to the majority leader Bangabandhu and his party. Especially the *Azad*, the *Ittefaq*, the *Sangbad* played an important role in this context. On the other hand the role of the *Morning News*, the *Pakistan Observer* and the *Purbadesh* were not positive. This article, hence, is an attempt to analyze the role of Dhaka's daily newspapers in the elections of 1970 in Pakistan.

Keywords: General Elections of 1970, Pakistan.

In the history of Bengali nationalism, the general elections of 1970 in Pakistan were turning points. Those elections were important to solve the problem of disparity between the two wings of Pakistan as well as to implement the demand for autonomy of the Bengalis. The nationalistic force, at that time, appeared strongly under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh MujibarRahman. In those elections, the Awami League won a landslide victory in East Pakistan and also in the National Assembly as they sought public mandate in favor of autonomy and Six-point Program for removing the disparity and to bring an end the internal colonial rule imposed on East Pakistan. During the elections of 1970 in Pakistan the *Azad*[Azad means

independent], the *Ittefaq* [Ittefaq means harmony], the *Sangbad*[Sangbad means news], the *Purbadesh*[Purbadesh means eastern country], the *Pakistan Observer* and the *Morning News* were the mainstream dailies in Dhaka (Jahan 2008, 191). These newspapers played an important role and supported different political parties according to their own political ideology. Apart from the ideological differences most of the newspapers were united in the question of Bengali nationalism when the Pakistan civil and military ruling class refused to transfer power to the majority leader Bangabandhu and his party. Especially the *Azad*, the *Ittefaq*, the *Sangbad* played an important role in the whole election period. Although the *Dainik Pakistan*[Dainik means daily]was a National Press Trust owned newspaper, it played an admirable role. On the other hand the role of the *Morning News*, the *Pakistan Observer* and the *Purbadesh* were not positive. The *Morning News* was a government owned (National Press Trust) newspaper and traditionally it was against Bengali nationalism. HamidulHaqueChowdhury was the owner of the *Pakistan Observer* and the *Purbadesh*. He was compromising and opposed the Bangladesh War of Liberation in 1971. Another Bangla daily the *Sangram* [Sangram means struggle]was a pro Jamat-e-Islam newspaper. As the daily hold an extreme communal and anti-Bengali nationalistic view, its activities during the elections of 1970 can also not be ignored.

Review of Literature

Books and articles written on the Bangladesh War of Liberation are numerous in number where the elections of 1970 in Pakistan have been mentioned and analyzed as an important background. At the same time there are some pieces of literature on the Elections of 1970 in Pakistan. In this context, books like *BangladesherSadhinotaSongramItihas o Songbadpatro*[Bangladesh War of Liberation History and Newspaper] by Md. EmranJahan (Jahan 2008), *BangladesherSangbadpatro* [Newspapers of Bangladesh] by Subroto Shangkar Dhar (Dhar 1985)and*1970 SalerSadharonNirbachonBangladesherOvyudoy*[General Election of 1970 and the Emergence of Bangladesh]by MosarrofHossain (Hossain 2020) can be mentioned. All these books are highly informative.

Aims and Objectives

In most of the above mentioned works, newspapers have been used as secondary sources but none of these literatures have solely focused on the role and political ideology of every paper. This article, hence, is an attempt to analyze the role of Dhaka's daily newspapers in the elections of 1970 in Pakistan.

Source and Methodology

As the main purpose of this article is to figure out the role of Dhaka's daily newspapers; therefore, daily newspapers of Dhaka in the above mentioned time frame and *BangladesherSadhinotaJuddhoDalilpotro* [Bangladesh War of Independence Documents] are used as primary sources. At the same

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time, relevant books and articles are also used as secondary sources. The basic methodology followed in this article is historical where historical chronology is maintained while narrating and analyzing the news items of various daily newspapers.

Elections of 1970 in Pakistan

Upon becoming the President and Chief Martial Law Administrator on March 25, 1969, Yahya Khan announced that election would be held as soon as possible on the basis of adult franchise (*Pakistan Observer* 1969). Yahya Khan's speech was very much similar to that of Aiyub Khan's. Aiyub Khan also told that he and the army had no political ambition. On November 28, 1969, Yahya Khan made an important broadcast. He told that his aim was to transfer power to the elected representatives and he wanted to evolve a legal framework for general election on the basis of a consensus among various groups and political leaders. He announced that the general election would be held on October 5, 1970 and throughout the period leading to the election and other related activities Martial Law would remain (*Dainik Pakistan* 1969). According to historians, Yahya Khan declared election schedule because he thought that no political parties in East Pakistan would be able to gain majority as there were a number of political parties.

The promise of an election was welcomed by all section of people. On March 30, 1970, The Legal Framework Order (LFO) and the Province of West Pakistan (Dissolution) Order were promulgated. By the second order, One Unit was dissolved and the four provinces of Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province came into existence. LFO provided the framework under which the constitution was to be framed and the elections were to be held. The LFO stated that National Assembly of Pakistan was to consist of 313 seats, of it 300 members would be directly elected and 13 seats would be reserved for women. Provincial Assembly of Pakistan was to consist of 621 seats. These seats were allocated on the basis of Population Census of 1961. East Pakistan, thus received 169 seats out of 313 in National Assembly and 310 seats out of 621 in the Provincial Assembly (Osmany 2014, 527-28). According to LFO, the constitution Bill, as passed by the National Assembly would be presented to the President for authentication. If authentication was refused, the National Assembly would be dissolved. LFO also stated that the President and not the National Assembly would have the power to make any amendment in this order (Rahman 2009, 2:505-523). The Awami League and some other left wing parties showed negative reaction to it. On the other hand Islamist and right wing parties showed their support as they thought Martial Law would be helpful for them. But all the political parties in East Pakistan were positive to take part in the election.

From January 1, 1970, full political activities were resumed. Seven to eight major and some other smaller political parties in East Pakistan took part in the elections. On June 7, 1970, the Awami League officially launched its

election campaign (*Dainik Pakistan* 1970). Their election manifesto was a composite of Six-point Program, Eleven-point Program and as well as some other issues not included in those two programs. The Awami League called this election as a referendum in favor of autonomy for East Pakistan. This party used a poster titled 'Sonar Bangla Soshan Keno [Why is beloved Bengal a desolate place?]' to gain popular support. That poster was prepared by a party member named Nurul Islam and artist Hasem Khan (Rahman 2009, 2:409-12). The National Awami Party led by Professor Muzaffar Ahmed (hereinafter NAP - Muzaffar) supported the demand for autonomy and was interested to form an alliance with the Awami League. Another faction of the National Awami Party led by Mawlana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani (hereinafter NAP - Bhashani) wanted regional autonomy for all the regions of Pakistan. The Pakistan Democratic Party (PDB) supported a strong center and opposed regional autonomy. Islamist Party Jamaat-e-Islam opposed the Six-point Program of the Awami League. This party opposed Bengali nationalism and supported Islamic ideology, integrity and solidarity of Pakistan. The Council Muslim League supported full provincial autonomy while the Convention Muslim League wanted a strong center (Sen 1986; Rahman 2009, 2: 558-561). So in the elections of 1970 in Pakistan, there were three types of political parties:

- a) Supportive of the demand for autonomy
- b) Supportive of a strong center
- c) Various Islamist parties who opposed Bengali nationalism and supported Islamic ideology

The date of election was postponed from October 5 to December 7 because of devastating floods in East Pakistan during the month of August. In November the coastal areas of East Pakistan were hit by cyclone. The Awami League made good use of the additional time by visiting the flood and cyclone affected locations. Some political parties like the NAP (Bhashani) did not want to participate in the elections due to natural disaster. Elections to the National Assembly were held on December 7 and to the Provincial Assembly on December 17. The postponed elections in the cyclone affected areas (9 constituencies in the National Assembly and 21 constituencies in the Provincial Assembly) were completed by January 17, 1971 (*Pakistan Observer* 1970; *Pakistan Observer* 1971). In the final election results including the results of those postponed areas, the Awami League in East Pakistan secured 167 seats out of 169 in the National Assembly and 298 seats out of 310 in the Provincial Assembly. The two seats lost in the National Assembly were one to PDP leader Nurul Amin and the other to an independent candidate from Chittagong Hill Tracts - Raja Tridiv Roy. The Awami League did not get any seat from the West Pakistan. In West Pakistan the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was the largest winner having secured 83 out of 138 seats in the National Assembly. So the Awami League became the largest

and the PPP became the second largest party in the National Assembly (Rahman2009,2: 592).

Political Ideology of Dhaka's Daily Newspapers

Although Dhaka's daily newspapers were united during the mass upsurge of 1969, their ideological differences were strongly visible before the election of 1970. Generally a newspaper owner's own political belief influence its editorial policy, news items and viewpoints. These newspapers supported different political parties according to their own political ideologies as described below—

The Azad

Right wing newspaper the *Azad* was founded on 31 October 1936 under the direction of MawlanaAkromKha. As he was involved in the politics of provincial Muslim League, it influenced the editorial policy and news items of the *Azad*. During the whole Pakistan period the daily played a twofold role. Sometimes it was very much communal as it opposed Tagore Songs (RabindraSangeet) and participation of girls in cultural programs. Although the daily initially opposed the Six-points of Awami League, it played a strong role in the mass upsurge of 1969 and against the Agartala Case. Here the word "conspiracy" has not been used as the original name of the case was "State vs. ShekhMujiburRahman and Others". Aiyub Government propagated it as "Agartala Conspiracy Case" to gain political privilege. Defendants in this case are not pleased with the word 'conspiracy' (Ali 2015). Especially, the paper stood up strongly under the leadership of KamrulAnam Khan, son of MawlanaAkromKha. In the election of 1970, the *Azad* supported Council Muslim League and was in favor of holding the elections in time (Haider 2010, 172).

The Ittefaq

The *Ittefaq* was founded in 1949 as a weekly under the leadership of Mawlana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani. It was published as a daily on 24 December 1953. During the election of 1954 the daily supported the Awami League under TofazzolHossainManik Mia. He was the owner and editor of the daily. As a mouthpiece of the Awami League the *Ittefaq* played a strong role in favour of Bengali nationalism during the whole Pakistan period. It criticized the constitution of 1956, opposed communal riots and supported provincial autonomy based on Six-point Program. In different editorials, sub-editorials and news items, the daily criticized the activities of left wing parties and its leaders. At the same time the daily was against communalism and opposed the activities of different right wing political parties like Jamat-e-Islam, Nezam-e-Islam and others. So the Pakistan autocrat regime banned it for several times. After the death of Manik Mia, SirajuddinHossain acted as the editor of the daily (from June 1969) (Mukul 1983). During the election of 1970 the *Ittefaq* supported the Awami League and its campaign based on the Six-point Program. So, it can be said that the *Ittefaq* believed in centralism i.e. equal opportunity and economic freedom.

The Sangbad

The *Sangbad* was founded on 17 May 1951 by a businessman named Giasuddin Ahmed. Its ownership changed for a number of times in Pakistan period, which influenced the editorial policy of the paper. KhairulKabir was the first editor of the *Sangbad* and journalists like AbdurGaffarChowdhury, K.G. Mostafa andJohurHossainChowdhury were involved with it. Central Muslim League bought the paper after a few months because of its financial crisis. After the election of 1954 the daily tried to stand up under the leadership of AhmedulKabir. He and Nasiruddin Ahmed were the managing directors of the Sangbad Limited. At that time the daily's editorial policy was supportive of Awami League. AhamedulKabir and JohurHossainChowdhury (editor of the daily) joined NAP (Bhasani) in 1957. Within a few years they started to support another faction of NAP led by Professor Muzaffor Ahmed. The *Sangbad* was the mouthpiece of NAP (Muzaffor) when the party officially divided in 1967 (Dhar 1985, 42). The paper played a strong role in favour of provincial autonomy, Six-point Program and anti Aiyub movement in the 1960s. Over all the *Sangbad* was a leftwing newspaper.

The Dainik Pakistan

Bangla daily the *Dainik Pakistan* was published on 6 November 1964 under National Press Trust. The trust was founded by Aiyub Khan in 1964. He was concerned about media as he wanted to use it in favour of his autocratic rule. Urdu speaking poet Ahsan Ahmed was the managing director of the paper. Former editor of the *Azad*, AbulKalamShamsuddin joined the *Doinik Pakistan* as an editor. Although it was owned by the government, progressive journalists and personalities like MozammelHaq, poet ShamsurRahman, SanaullahNuri, poet HasanHafizurRahman were involved with the paper from the very beginning. As a government owned paper it was quite impossible for it to publish any news or editorial in favour of Bengali nationalism, provincial autonomy or Six-point Program (Jahan 2008, 170,208).

The Morning News

The *Morning News* was published in 1942 from Kolkata and was transferred to Dhaka on 20 March 1949. It was founded by KhajaNuruddin. As a right wing newspaper the daily from the beginning played negative role against Bengali culture, literature, language and over all Bengali Nationalism. It refused the demand of Bangla as the state language. The paper became a part of the National Press Trust in 1964. During the Mass Upsurge of 1969, the paper continued its negative role and criticized the activities of the students. As a result, the agitated mob attacked the newspaper office several times and set fire on 24 January 1969 (Dhar 1985, 40).

The Pakistan Observer

The *Pakistan Observer* was founded on 11 March 1949 by HamidulHaqChowdhury. The English paper changed its editorial policy for several times along with its owner HamidulHaqChowdhury. Prior to 1952, the

Pakistan Observer was supportive of the Muslim League as HamidulHaq was a leader of the Party. He soon left the party and joined the KrishokSromik Party of A. K. FazlulHaq. It influenced the editorial policy and news items of the daily. HamidulHaq personally was against the political ideology of Bangabandhu and the Awami League. This view was also reflected in the news items of the *Pakistan Observer*. Although the paper published various news, editorials and sub-editorials based on the economic disparities between the two wings of Pakistan, it was not supportive of the provincial autonomy and Six-point Program of Bangabandhu. Even it criticized the role of the students during the mass upsurge of 1969 as they participated in political agitation.

The Purbadesh

Bangla newspaper the *Purbadesh* was also owned by Hamidul Haq Chowdhury. So ideologically it held the similar view with that of the *Pakistan Observer*. Previously the newspaper was known as weekly *Pallibarta* [Village News] which started to publish as a daily from 14 August 1969. Before the election of 1970, the *Purbadesh* consistently criticized the activities of Bangabandhu and the Awami League and published different news items, editorials and sub-editorials in this regard (Haider 2010, 129,136).

The DainikSangram

Right wing and pro Jamat-e-Islam newspaper the *DainikSangram* was published on February 17, 1970. Korban Ali and Faiyaj Ahmed were its managing directors. AkhterFarukh, editor of the *Sangram* was a professor of Quaid-i-Azam College. He was a fanatic person and a believer in extreme religious activities. War criminal MatiurRahman worked in the literature section of the paper. As a mouthpiece of East Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islam, the paper from the very beginning showed communal attitude which was conflicting with the principles of Bengali nationalism (Haider 2010, 181).

Role of Dhaka's Daily Newspapers

As political activities were prohibited until January 1970, newspapers, especially the dailies were the only medium to express public opinion. These papers started publishing various news, reports, public opinion and discussion on the constitutional crisis, election and the structure of future constitution from long before the beginning of full political activities.

The Ittefaq

During the election of 1970, the *Ittefaq* worked to build public opinion in favor of the Awami League. The Awami League was against the policy of receiving the constitution of 1956. The *Ittefaq* supported it. By supporting the policy of provincial autonomy and dissolving one unit, the paper was in a favor of the Awami League and its election based campaign. In different news, editorials and sub-editorials it tried to establish the importance of election. The newspaper was against Martial Law and published a number of reports

in this context. On March 28, 1969, in his own column, Manik Mia stated that the lack of a nationwide election after the birth of Pakistan had created the overall situation. According to him, nothing but a free, fair and nationwide general election in Pakistan would develop the political condition. He expressed his wonder, that another Martial Law after 1958 was quite unexpected. He was optimist and expressed his negative view that the Martial Law situation could not be continued any longer (*Ittefaq* 1969.) Manik Mia was always active against Martial Law and never supported it as a way of solving political problem. During the reign of Aiyub Khan, he wrote a number of editorials and sub editorials in that regard.

The *Ittefaq* emphasized on the 'good will' of the political parties as political activities were suspended. It again emphasized on election to solve all kind of political problems in a special column –'MoncheNepotthe [Behind the Scenes]' on September 1, 1969. In that column it asserted that the people wanted to participate in the election process (*Ittefaq* 1969).

Apart from publishing news articles related to constitutional and political crisis, the paper used to publish public opinions regularly. For example, on September 6, 1969, a reader named Anwar Hossain commented that an election without dialogue among the political parties would not bring anything positive. He stated that the political parties should be united on some basic issues like autonomy, dissolution of one unit and representation in the National Assembly based on population (*Ittefaq*, 1969). Previously, another reader named AbulHasnat also put his comment. The title of his article was 'Rajnoitiksongkot o tar somadhan [Political crisis and its solution]'. In this way the *Ittefaq* was very much active before the election. Especially in the month of September, October and November of 1969, it published a number of reports based on constitutional and political issues. For example, on September 1-4, 1969, it published special reports, in this regard. It also played an active role to bring into practice the name 'Bangladesh' instead of 'Purbo Pakistan [East Pakistan]'. In a program of Gramophone Company at Bangla Academy, Bangabandhu declared to use the name 'Bangladesh' instead of 'East Pakistan'. On December 17, 1969, the paper quoted the speech of Bangabandhu and used it as headline on the other day (*Ittefaq* 1969). Most of the political parties supported Bangabandhu's decision. PDP and Jamat-e-Islam opposed to use the name Bangladesh. In a public meeting at Dhaka Race Course Maidan [Field], Bangabandhu used the slogan 'Joy Bangla' for the first time. This slogan was used on January 4, 1970, as stage background banner in a program of Chatra League (student organization of Awami League), but it gained maximum popularity on January 11, 1970 during a public meeting of Bangabandhu at PaltanMaydan (Rahman 1999)

The *Ittefaq* indirectly welcomed the Legal Framework Order (LFO) (*Ittefaq* 1970). In the middle of 1970, the newspaper started to publish various types of articles based on the election campaign of Bangabandhu and other

leaders. The paper always supported Six-point Program and in that way it assisted the Awami League. Due to flood and cyclone in East Bengal, Bhashani and some other leaders called for the postponement of the election. On November 26, 1970, Bangabandhu called for resisting any more delay of holding the general election (*Ittefaq* 1970). The *Ittefaq* supported it and published a number of reports, editorials and sub-editorials in this regard. It criticized Bhashani strongly as he demanded 'Bhoter age bhat chai [Rice before election]'. In a sub-editorial on November 1, 1970, it stated that the election and mass movement are mutually related, so any kind of postponement of the election would hamper the democratic progress. The newspaper strongly believed that without proper democracy, people would not be able to enjoy the fruit of democracy. It continued to criticize Bhashani and his 'BiplobTotto [revolution theory]' and published a sub-editorial on November 12, 1970 in this regard. The *Ittefaq* believed in systematic movement of the political parties. In a sub-editorial titled 'Rajniti o rajnoitikdayitto [Politics and Political duties]' on November 1, 1970, the daily focused on the duties and responsibilities of party members. The daily also published another editorial on November 5, 1970 in this regard where it emphasized the positive activities of the Awami League as people expected a lot from the party than others. Some journalists of the *Ittefaq* personally participated in the political gathering of Bangabandhu and the Awami League and played the role of party cadre. News editor of the *Ittefaq* Sirajuddin Hossain was one of them. He gave his speech at a public meeting which was held to celebrate the Eleven-point week of Chatra League (*Purbadesh* 1970).

The *Ittefaq* also concerned with anti Awami League reports of other newspapers. The paper criticized the role of the *Morning News* as it underestimated the role of the Awami League in its different news items. It called the *Sangbad* as the associate of British colonial power and criticized its negative approach and compromising attitude (*Ittefaq* 1970). The paper also emphasized non-communalism, secularism, Bengali nationalism and criticized the role of various religion-based political parties like Jamat-e-Islam and others. On October 21, 1970, it stated that the forthcoming election would be helpful to achieve autonomy and would free the country from religion-mongers and conspirators. Before the elections of 1970 it covered almost all the political gatherings of the Awami League and Bangabandhu. For example, it covered the election campaign of Bangabandhu at Joydevpur and his speech was used as headline on the other day. The *Ittefaq* participated in the election campaign and tried to create public opinion in favour of the Six-point and Eleven-point Program.

Although some leaders like Professor Mozaffar Ahmed, Maulana Bhashani, Ataur Rahman and newspapers like the *Sangbad* wanted to postpone the election due to flood and cyclone, the *Ittefaq* did not support any postponement. After the flood and cyclone, the best way to help the victims

of the catastrophe was by air drops of relief supplies. However, no helicopter was made available for the purpose by the government. At the same time, no leader from West Pakistan visited the affected areas. The *Ittefaq* strongly criticized the role of government and expressed its view in favor of a nationwide general election as it was the only democratic way to remove semi-colonial rule of West Pakistan upon the people of East Pakistan. It asserted that any kind of postponement of election would stop the democratic progress (*Ittefaq* 1970). Bangabandhu and other Awami League leaders won the hearts of flood and cyclone victims by touring the affected areas. The *Ittefaq* regularly covered those programs. At this stage of campaign the paper again criticized the activities of religion based political parties and their practice to use religion as a political strategy. It stated that in a country of 95% Muslim population the question of protecting Islam was quite unnecessary (*Ittefaq* 1970). In that way the *Ittefaq* supported the non-communal ideology of Bengali nationalism. On the day of election, December 7, 1970, the *Ittefaq* appealed to the general mass to protect their civil right through ballot. It called the Election Day as 'Moha Porikkhar din [a day of great examination]' (*Ittefaq* 1970). On December 8, 1970 it published a number of reports based on the voting scenario. Those reports reflected the spontaneous participation of the great mass of the population in the general election of 1970 (*Ittefaq* 1970).

The Azad

As political activities were suspended till January 1, 1970, the *Azad* strategically avoided political reports and gave importance to publish different articles, editorials and sub-editorials based on the constitutional crisis and future outline of the new constitution of Pakistan. During the initial stage of Martial Law the paper was opportunist by nature. It praised the activities of Yahya Khan and criticized heavily the previous Martial Law ruler Aiyub Khan. It also welcomed the government to take initiative to cancel *Friends not Masters* by Aiyub Khan from the syllabus of the universities and education boards (*Azad*, 1969). It started discussion on the outline of future constitution from June 15, 1969. At that stage *Azad's* role was very constructive. Although the daily was supportive of Muslim League (Council), it criticized the activities and recommendation of different political parties about the future constitution of Pakistan. According to the *Azad* Martial Law was obvious in Pakistan as the political parties were not prudent and united. Here the *Azad's* view was similar with that of the *Ittefaq* as both of the newspapers were against the Martial Law. The paper proposed to create a commission, which would verify the proposals of different political parties and in that way a unified opinion about constitution would build up (*Azad*, 1969). The *Azad's* role was in favor of parliamentary democracy. For example, it published an article by Abul Monsur Ahmed on August 14, 1969, where the author tried to create public opinion and appealed for an election as early as possible (*Azad*, 1969). The daily also published another editorial on the same issue on

August 23, 1969 and again criticized the political parties as they were not united to solve constitutional problems (*Azad*, 1969).

From January 1, 1970, full political activities resumed and the *Azad* started to play more critical and constructive role. The daily published a number of editorials about future election and constitution. It welcomed the Legal Framework Order (LFO) under which the constitution was to be formed and the election was to be held. All news items, editorials and sub-editorials of the *Azad* from January to December, 1970 regarding the election of 1970 had two main characteristics –

- a. The *Azad* was always positive to hold election in time and opposed any kind of postponement of it.
- b. The newspaper strongly criticized the conflicting relationship between different political parties as this paved the way for Martial Law in recent years.

The positive outlook of the Bangla paper towards election reflected in an editorial on January 20, 1970. In that editorial it warned everyone about some politician's intension to boycott election (*Azad* 1970). Criticism against conflicting political situation was also reflected in another editorial on March 5, 1970, where the daily suggested creating political unity. The Awami League officially launched its election campaign from the Race Course Maydan on June 7, 1970. The *Azad* claimed the meeting as one of the largest in the history of Pakistan. Even after the cyclone of November 12, 1970, the *Azad* was very much positive about participating in the national and provincial elections. It welcomed everyone's attempt of creating an easy environment for a fair election. Besides editorials and sub-editorials, various reports regarding election campaign of different political parties and leaders, especially news related to Bangabandhu were regularly covered by the *Azad*.

The Sangbad

Managing Director of the *Sangbad*, AhmadulKabir participated in the election of 1970 as a candidate of the NAP (Muzaffor) (Jahan 2008, 191). Owner's political ideology influenced the policy of the paper and it supported the NAP (Muzaffor) in the election. Although the newspaper gave equal importance to the news related to both faction of the NAP (Bhashani and Muzaffor), it always treated the NAP led by Professor Muzaffor Ahmed as the mainstream party. It criticized Bhashani as his party did not participate in the mass upsurge of 1969. It regularly published the statements of different political leaders regarding the outline of future constitution of Pakistan. For instance, it published the statement of GolamAzam, the general secretary of East Pakistan Jamat-e-Islam on June 13, 1969 where he demanded the implementation of the constitution of 1956. GolamAzam also criticized Bhashani's proposal to call a convention to prepare the future constitution (*Sangbad* 1969). Bhashani had been vacillating for a long time as to whether his party should contest the election. NAP (Muzaffor) was interested to

contest the election from the very beginning. Professor Muzaffor emphasized on the united movement of various political parties. He wanted to form an alliance with others based on the Eleven-point Program. The *Sangbad* quoted his appeal and statement regularly. For example MuzafforAhmed's intension to form an alliance was made headline on January 5, 1970, by the paper. It also declared the meeting of NAP (Muzaffor) at PaltanMaydan as 'historic' on the same day. Professor Muzaffor Ahmed was interested to contest in the election jointly with the Awami League. But Bangabandhu was confident of the success of the Awami League in the election and was not interested to build any electoral alliance with others. After being refused to form an alliance, Professor Muzaffor accused the Awami League as a compromising party. The *Sangbad* also criticized the attitude of the Awami League as 'SongkirnoRajniti [Narrow Politics]' and claimed that the party was not really interested in political movement (*Sangbad* 1970). The paper again criticized the Awami League by publishing an editorial under the title of 'GundamiBondhoKoro [Stop Hooliganism]' (*Sangbad* 1970).

After the cyclone of November 12, 1970, both faction of the NAP appealed to postpone the election. The *Sangbad* supported this view of the NAP and published a number of editorials in this regard. In an editorial on November 29, 1970, titled 'NirbachonerTarikh [Election Date]', the newspaper called the overall situation abnormal. Referring to the President, it demanded that the meeting of the National Assembly should be postponed until further election in the cyclone affected areas. The daily questioned the intension of Bangabandhu and accused the Awami League of influencing the government to hold the election on time.

Finally the *Sangbad* took positive decision about the election and appealed to avoid sentimentalism and to make the NAP candidates victorious (*Sangbad* 1970). In an editorial on December 7, 1970 it described the Election Day as a day of new examination. By indicating the Awami League and Bangabandhu, the paper stated that the success of achieving the right to vote in public could not be claimed by an individual party or person. The *Sangbad* appealed the voters to support those, who made sacrifice to establish and protect democracy (*Sangbad* 1970).

The Dainik Pakistan

Although the *Dainik Pakistan* was owned by National Press Trust, it was supportive of Bengali nationalism. As a government owned newspaper, it was quite impossible for it to publish any news or editorial in favor of Bengali nationalism, regional autonomy and Six-point Program. Most of the journalists of this newspaper were against the policy of Pakistan Government. Editor Shamsuddin Ahmed was one of them. They tactfully published that news, which was important for Bengali nationalism but did not get any coverage by others. For example, when the province of West Pakistan (Desolation) Order was promulgated, four provinces of Punjab,

Sind, Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province came into existence again, but Pakistan Government did not change the name of East Pakistan. In this context on December 5, 1969, in a program of Shauaroardi's death anniversary, Bangabandhu declared to rename the Eastern Reign of Pakistan to 'Bangladesh'. The *Dainik Pakistan* quoted his speech and published it as front page news on the other day. Bangabandhu said, 'I am declaring ... from today the name of the eastern reign of Pakistan will be only Bangladesh instead of East Pakistan.' (*Dainik Pakistan* 1969) When Bangabandhu demanded to publish the writings of Rabindranath, the Bangla paper used his statement to express its non-communal view. It quoted, 'Those who had created obstacle to promote "RabindraSangeet" were removed ... those who are creating obstacle will also be removed – Mujib' (*Dainik Pakistan* 1969). In this way the *Dainik Pakistan* tactfully published news in favor of Bengali nationalism.

The *Dainik Pakistan* covered different meetings of the Awami League and published reports by using different adjectives before them. On January 12, 1970 the daily reported that Bangabandhu delivered his speech in front of a vast concourse of people at PaltanMaydan. In that public meeting Bangabandhu announced that the elected representatives would be able to earn full autonomy (*Dainik Pakistan* 1970). The newspaper indirectly participated in the election campaign of the Awami League by publishing the statements of Bangabandhu. Bangabandhu criticized different left wing parties as they were unable to hold strong position against the Islamist and reactionary political parties. He also criticized the unethical activities of Jamat-e-Islam in the name of Islam.

By analyzing the news of the *Dainik Pakistan* it can be said that the daily quoted the speech of Bangabandhu on July 19, August 15, September 9, 10, 23 of 1969 and on January 2, 30 of 1970. From the success of the Awami League and failure of the Islamist parties in the elections of 1970, it can be said that news related to Bangabandhu and the Awami League in the *Dainik Pakistan* influenced the public opinion strongly.

Before the elections of 1970, the autocratic Pakistan government led by Yahya Khan imposed Press Ordinance to stop the voice of writers and journalists. Although the *Dainik Pakistan* was a government owned newspaper, it regularly published the news of protest gatherings against Press Ordinance. On January 15, 1970 it covered the news of a protest gathering at the 'Battala [Bottom of Banyan Tree]' of Dhaka University. On January 16, 1970, it again published the news of a protest meeting of the artists, authors and writers.

Military Government of Yahya Khan organized electoral address over television for party presidents where they presented party manifesto in October and November of 1970. Those addresses got a huge coverage in

every newspaper. For example, electoral address of Bangabandhu was covered by the *Dainik Pakistan* on 29 October 1970 (*Dainik Pakistan* 1970).

The bold approach of the paper was also visible after the cyclone of 12 November 1970. It criticized the failure of the government to supply enough relief in the flood affected areas. It stated that the relief commissioner of Pakistan could not avoid the responsibility of so much death. In an editorial on 19 November it addressed the deaths after cyclone as 'men made' due to the negligence of the government (*Dainik Pakistan* 1970). The paper also expressed its view of independence before the election of 1970. Maulana Bhashani declared in a meeting at PaltanMaidan that the past events of government led him to believe that, Pakistan as a state had become anarchist. He called upon the people of East Pakistan to end its bond with Pakistan and made it an independent state. He ended his speech not with traditional 'Pakistan Zindabad' but with 'East Pakistan Zindabad'. On November 24, the *Dainik Pakistan* quoted the speech of Bhashani and made a 4 column headline under the title of 'Sadhinpurbo Pakistan Zindabad [Independent East Pakistan Zindabad]' (*Dainik Pakistan* 1970). On December 8, after the day of election, the paper welcomed everyone for participating in the general election.

The Pakistan Observer

The *Pakistan Observer* was in favor of election from the beginning. It also praised the Legal Framework Order (LFO). The owner of the paper, HamidulHaq Chowdhury was against the political ideology of the Awami League and known as a supporter of United Pakistan which is evident from his negative activities during the Liberation War of Bangladesh. The paper was against student politics and criticized the activities of the students during the mass upsurge of 1969 in different news items. It neither supported nor refused the Six-point and Eleven-point Program. After being released from prison in Agartala Case, Bangabandhu mentioned the name of some non-cooperative persons for whom he could not be able to implement the Six-point Program; HamidulHaq was one of them (Roy 2009, 52). Before the election of 1970 the paper covered the political campaign of all major political parties. After Bhashani demanded to postpone the election because of flood situation in East Pakistan, the *Pakistan Observer* published an explanatory report under the title of 'Bhashani not against Polls' on September 6, 1970. According to the daily Bhashani said, 'We shall participate in the election as a part of our struggle to realize people's demand and not to go to power.' (*Pakistan Observer* 1970) On the same day it also published various slogans, given at the meetings of Bhashani like, 'Bhoter age bhaterneta – Maulana Bhashani [Leader that demands food before polls – Maulana Bhashani], Bhoterbaksse Lathi Maro [Kick the ballot box]'. Prior to election, the *Pakistan Observer* covered the meeting of Bhashani at PaltanMaidan and published it on December 5. According to that report,

Bhashani demanded 'Autonomous and Sovereign' East Pakistan on the basis of Lahore resolution (*Pakistan Observer* 1970).

By analyzing the news items of the *Pakistan Observer* it can be said that the newspaper was supportive of NAP (Bhashani) because of its anti Awami League attitude. Although *The Pakistan Observer* opposed the activities of the Awami League, it was always positive about elections and did not support any activities that might hinder democratic progress. On the day of election, The English paper published an instructional editorial titled, 'A Date with Destiny'. It commented, '... the country is clam and in an expected mood. Let us hope and pray that this class will continue today and through the days to come... We cannot, we must not, let anything happen that can make the elections infructuous.' (*Pakistan Observer* 1970)

The Morning News

State owned newspaper the *Morning News* did not have any positive characteristics in favor of Bengali nationalism. It failed to perform tactfully like another state owned newspaper, the *Dainik Pakistan*. At the same time it did not even try to perform in a positive way. By analyzing the news items it can be said that the paper had some support for the NAP (Bhashani). It did not publish much news related to another faction of the NAP led by Professor Muzaffar Ahmed. It tried to show Bhashani led NAP as the mainstream party. On August 11, 1969, it published a report based on Bhashani's invitation of calling all-party convention (*Morning News* 1969). The paper only published those statements of different political parties and leaders which were related to the speech of Yahya Khan. It completely avoided other important issues and demands like regional autonomy, Six-point Program, Eleven-point program and the demand of abolishing Press Ordinance by writers and authors. *The Morning News* on December 8, 1970, in an editorial, welcomed everyone and expressed its satisfaction for a peaceful election.

The Purbadesh

Bangla newspaper the *Purbadesh* was owned by HamidulHaq Chowdhury and had ideological similarity with the *Pakistan Observer*. Although the daily covered the election campaign of all major political parties, its right wing ideological stand is clearly appeared from the news items, editorials and sub-editorials. The daily had some support for the NAP (Bhashani). Bhashani was looking for a graceful exit from the election and declared some nonpolitical programs like catching thieves and robbers in villages. The *Purbadesh* welcomed the view of Bhashani and wished for its stability (*Purbadesh* 1970). On November 5, 1970 Bhashani's electoral address was broadcasted over television. Bhashani stated, 'Even if there are thousands of differences among us; all should love Pakistan ... The name of this country is Pakistan, there is no such country anywhere in the world ... If Pakistan exits all the political parties in it will exit ... We, therefore, should stand united to make Pakistan strong and prosperous' (Rahman 2009, 2:562-566). The

Purbadesh owner HamidulHaq was against any kind of partition of Pakistan. So the newspaper welcomed the speech of Bhashani. Before the election of 1970, it published different editorials and sub-editorials by criticizing the activities of Bangabandhu and the Awami League. Especially in a regular column titled 'Tritiyo Mot [Third Opinion]' the daily successively and massively criticized Bangabandhu. In an editorial, titled 'Eta SotyoNoy [It is Not True]' on June 2, 1970, the daily accused Bangabandhu and other Awami League leaders for giving wrong information to gain political benefit. The *Purbadesh* stated that not only Bangabandhu and the Awami League but also the leaders of other political parties were involved in 'anti Aiyub' movement.

The *Purbadesh* played an active role against the discrimination of the government after the cyclone of November 12, 1970. It published pictures of West Pakistani leaders and made headline, 'OraKeoAseni [Anybody of them did not come]' (Hannan 2013, 544). In this way the newspaper played a strong role to unite Bengali public opinion against Yahya regime. It indirectly influenced the sentiment of general people in favour of the Awami League before the election of 1970. The Awami League gained popularity by touring the cyclone affected areas and sending volunteers to provide relief to them. After the election the *Purbadesh* welcomed everyone for maintaining peaceful environment (*Purbadesh* 1970).

The Dainik Songram

The *Dainik Songram* was the mouthpiece of Jamat-e-Islam and covered election campaign of the party. At the same time it criticized the activities of the Awami League and its leaders and published a number of news and editorial in this regard. Although Bhashani led NAP was a pro-Peaking left wing party, The *Dainik Songram* praised Bhashani when he expressed love for united Pakistan during his electoral address over television. The right wing paper accused the Awami League for stopping the vocal of other political parties through violent activities. According to the paper, the Awami League candidates were responsible for creating instability as they attacked the peaceful procession of the Jamat-e-Islam (*Sangram* 1970). After the election, the newspaper questioned the fairness of the election as Jamat-e-Islam did not perform well in that election. It compared the corruption during the elections with the reign of Aiyub Khan (*Sangram* 1970). By analyzing the news items of the *Sangram* it can be said that some of its news were similar with that of the *Purbadesh*, the *Pakistan Observer* and the *Sangbad* because of its anti Awami League attitude.

Review and Evaluation

The elections of 1970 were the most important milestones in the establishment of Bengali nationalism. Results of the elections were the referendum in the question of provincial autonomy and Six-point Program. Newspapers often reflect the opinion of a section of the society and a fraction

of the total population. Sometimes newspapers' or more precisely their owners' political ideology influence the news items published by them. During the elections of 1970 in Pakistan, the condition of Dhaka's daily newspapers was no different as the owners of most of those newspapers were directly or indirectly involved in provincial and central politics of Pakistan and in that way supported different political parties according to their own political ideology.

The *Ittefaq* wanted to build up public opinion in favor of the Awami League by publishing different articles, editorials and sub editorials. It worked as an associate in the political campaign of the Awami League and strongly supported its election manifesto. Its owner Manik Mia was a strong supporter of Bangabandhu and involved with the activities of the Awami League. It tried to establish the importance of election as it was the only democratic way to solve the problem of disparity between the two wings of Pakistan.

The *Azad* was always positive to hold the elections in time and opposed any kind of postponement. It strongly criticized the conflicting attitude of different political parties. Its role in the latter half of 1960s was quite different than its previous role in 1950s and in the first half of 1960s. It is believed that Kamrul Anam Khan, son of Mawlana Akrom Kha started the paper with a different approach than his father and influenced the transformation of the *Azad* from a conservative to a moderate newspaper.

The *Sangbad* supported the National Awami Party led by Professor Muzaffar Ahmed. He was interested to form an alliance with the Awami League to contest in the elections. Its editor Johur Hossain and Managing Director Ahmedul Kabir were members of the NAP (Muzaffar). As a result in most of the cases, the *Azad's* news items were similar with those of the *Ittefaq* and the *Sangbad*. These three papers always emphasized on the united activities of different political parties to make democratic progress strong and sustainable. After the cyclone of November the *Sangbad* supported the proposal of the NAP (both factions) to postpone elections. It criticized some activities of the Awami League but never directly criticized Bangabandhu.

Although the *Dainik Pakistan* was a government owned newspaper, it was supportive of Bengali nationalism. It tactfully published those news items which were important in the question of Bengali nationalism but did not get any coverage by others. After the cyclone of November, Bangabandhu, Mawlana Bhasani, other left wing and Awami League leaders visited the affected areas. Though Bhasani and other left wing leaders were against the elections, Bangabandhu was determined to participate. Bangabandhu shared his views with local and foreign journalists on 26 November 1970 and criticized the Military Government of Yahya by mentioning its failure to support the cyclone affected people. This failure of the government and sufferings of general people got a big coverage in daily newspapers like the

Ittefaq, the *Dainik Pakistan*, the *Sangbad* and the *Purbadesh*. It helped the Awami League to gain popular support in the elections of 1970.

The *Pakistan Observer* was in favor of election and did not support any activities that might hinder democratic progress. Its owner Hamidul Haq was against the political ideology of the Awami League. Another Bengali newspaper the *Purbadesh* was also owned by Hamidul Haq Chowdhury. So they had ideological similarities. State owned newspaper the *Morning News* only published the statements of different political parties and leaders which were related to the addresses of Yahya Khan and avoided other important issues and demands like provincial autonomy, Six-point Program or failure of the government after the cyclone. Pro Jamat-e-Islam paper - the *Dainik Songram* opposed and criticized the activities of Bangabandhu and the Awami League in its different news items.

In some cases, The *Pakistan Observer*, the *Sangbad*, the *Purbadesh* and the *Songram* were supportive of NAP (Bhashani) because of their anti Awami League ideology. These newspapers failed to realize the importance of provincial autonomy and failed to be a part of Bengali's historical win in the elections of 1970.

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