



Role of Pakistan National Congress as an Opposition Political Party: An Analysis

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Abstract:

Opposition is usually taken as the critical element to keep the sitting government of the parliamentary system on the right path. Pakistan National Congress (PNC), the country's first opposition party role is worth exploring in the context of formative years of the country's political history. This article aims to appraise the role performed by the PNC in the first legislative decade by discussing the creation, structure, administration, and strategy of the party as a coalition partner in federal and provincial administrations of East Pakistan. This study evaluates the role of the Pakistan National Congress as an opposition party, using a qualitative research approach, relying on historical documents, and archival records. The study fills a research gap by exploring the historical context of opposition politics in Pakistan, providing valuable insights for understanding the evolution of opposition politics in the country and highlighting the challenges faced by opposition parties, which have been largely overlooked in the existing literature that focuses on contemporary politics. The findings reveal that PNC faced significant challenges, including internal fragmentation, external pressure, and personal motives, which weakened its role as an opposition party despite being a coalition partner in federal and provincial governments in East Pakistan.

Keywords: Pakistan National Congress, Pakistani politics, opposition party, constitutional development, Objective Resolution, internal fragmentation, coalition partner

INTRODUCTION

Indian National Congress, the first-ever political forum for the local Indians, is where the Pakistan National Congress (PNC) originates (McTruman, 1958). Despite the majority Hindu leadership, including Mahatma Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Jawaharlal Nehru etc., the Indian National

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Congress pledged to promote secularism, composite nationalism, and religious tolerance while opposing the Muslim League's push for Pakistan based on religion. Subsequent religious strife finally resulted in the division of India and the creation of Pakistan, comprising the regions with a Muslim majority (Sachs, 1967). The number of Hindus, Sikhs, and other non-Muslims in Pakistan has dramatically decreased as a consequence of religious conflict and mass exodus caused by partition. A new political party, the Pakistan National Congress, was founded by the leaders and workers of the Indian National Congress who remained to reside in Pakistan together with members of the Christian, Hindu, Sikh, etc. minorities (MacTrumen, 1967). After independence, the Indian National Congress had not yet split into two factions. One part performed its political duties in India, and the other was in East Pakistan. As the number of Hindus was negligible in West Pakistan, the ratio of Hindus in the population of East Pakistan was quite different; the ratio of caste Hindus was 4 349000 out of 41,932,000.

The new party's members, even though most of them had opposed India's division, recognized Pakistan as their motherland and denounced their affiliation with the Indian National Congress. However, like the Indian National Congress, it advocated for secularism, the fundamental rights of all people, the equality of all faiths, and the protection of ethnic and religious minorities. (MacTrumen, 1967) In addition to this, the party, on one side, pledged goodwill and harmony between the newly created states of Pakistan and India and, on the other, resisted the repression of the anti-democratic forces of the country. Pakistan National Congress also opposed the rise of extremism in the country's society, politics, culture, and administration. Even the Bengali language movement was further backed by this party. In one way or another, PNC fought for democratic elections, equality before the law, and secular politics.

It participated in discussions over Islamic laws, voting procedures, and fundamental rights inside the Constituent Assembly (Parveen, 1958). East Pakistan was where it mainly existed. Up until 1954, the PNC sat on the opposition benches. It joined coalition administrations in both the center and East Pakistan. Even though it collaborated with governments to shape policy, it could not stop the damaging effects of power on party cohesion. There was disagreement regarding the party's representation in the cabinets. The politicization of electorate issues also aided its horizontal rise. It is often held responsible for East Pakistan's political unrest because of its continual switching between the opposition and government benches.

This study aims to explore, investigate, and analyze the role of PNC as a main opposition political party after inception of Pakistan in 1947. It is an attempt to know the purpose of forming this political party. Who were the people who established this political party? Pakistan National Congress was formed at the time of the creation of Pakistan; what role did this political party play after the independence, and what role did this political party play during the constitution-making process of Pakistan?

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is enough research on the political parties of Pakistan and on what role they played in the creation of Pakistan and after the creation of Pakistan. There is a need to study the importance and significance of PNCs in depth. However, only some of the researchers have focused on writing about the role of the political party Pakistan National Congress. There is also a lack of data on this current

research topic. It is not readily available in one book, library, Article, thesis journal, etc. For that purpose, this research topic attempts to fill such gaps and investigate the main reason behind the formation of the political party Pakistan National Congress.

K. K. Aziz, in his book *Party Politics in Pakistan 1947 -1958* (1976), discusses the political and constitutional background of Pakistan and also discusses the major political parties like the Muslim League and describes their role in the creation of Pakistan and its function, the objective for the framing of the Constitution of Pakistan and also analyze about the minor political parties of Pakistan how it has played a role for the objectives and benefits for Pakistan. The author discusses and explains Religion and Politics. How do political parties see Islam in Pakistani politics, and what role is Islam playing in Pakistani politics? The author also explains the anatomy of party politics, how the political leaders led the party, and here also describes the pattern of political leadership, but very shortly this is not enough to understand the role of the political party Pakistan National Congress, and it also does not focus on the formation of the party.

Haroon K. Ullah, in his book *Vying for Allah's Vote* (2014), discusses Islam and democracy in Pakistan, how democracy plays a role in the Islamic state Pakistan and how Islam plays state and talks about how the Muslims of the subcontinent achieve the Islamic state on behalf of Islam and what did play the Islamic political parties their roles for the Islamic state of Pakistan and also explains the party formation in developed democracies and describe Islamist Party Formation, The Sharia-Secular Model of Confessional Party Behavior, Islamic Confessional Party Organization, Typology of Islamic Confessional Parties in Pakistan. The author explains the Muslim Democratic Parties: Origins and Characteristics, Ideology and Structure of democratic political parties, Pakistani Independence, Modern Muslim Democrats: The Muslim League and Its Competitors, but he does not describe the proper objectives and formation of the political party Pakistan National Congress. He did not wholly focus on the primary purpose of the political party Pakistan National Congress.

Mariam Mufti, Sahar Shafqat, Niloufer Siddiqui in their book *Pakistan's Political Parties Surviving Between Dictatorship and Democracy* (2020) describe the Formation, Development, and Decay of the Pakistan Muslim League-N Pakistan People's Party: From Populism to Patronage, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf: From a Movement to a Catch-All Party, What Remains of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, Leftist Parties in Pakistan: Challenges and Limitations, Religious Parties: The Politics of Denominational Diversity in the Islamic Republic and roles of all these parties for the benefits of Pakistan. The writers also discuss the participation of women in the electoral process, the role of military dictatorship in Pakistan, and the role of political parties at that time. However, the authors do not focus on the political party Pakistan National Congress, which did not successfully fulfill the current research topic of Pakistan National Congress. The current research topic fulfills the knowledge gap.

Hamid Khan, in his book *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan* (2020), discusses the subcontinent's pre-partition constitutional and political history. How did the Constitution come into India? How did the changes in the Constitution keep happening? What was the role of the British in it, and for which reasons did the Muslims of India start trying for a separate homeland for themselves and in this struggle? What was the role of Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the rest of the Muslim League leaders? It has also clarified how the leaders of the Indian National Congress

played their role, what difficulties were faced in making the constitution after the formation of Pakistan, and which political parties interfered in the resolutions very shortly. The author did not briefly explain the role of the Pakistan National Congress political party and its formation. The Current research topic helps to fill the knowledge gap and discuss how the Pakistan National Congress was formed and how it plays its role in objective resolution.

Kousar Parveen, in her article "The Role of Opposition in Constitution-Making: Debate on the Objectives Resolution" (1961), explains the role of opposition in the making process of the future constitution of Pakistan. She describes very well how two main and significant political parties, the Pakistan Muslim League and another party, the Pakistan National Congress, debated on the Objectives and Resolutions and how political parties gave their stance about their rights. The author did not briefly explain the Pakistan National Congress in this article.

The current research attempts to fill the knowledge gap, discusses how this political party was formed and explains the role of the Pakistan National Congress political party. All the cited books and articles relate to the Pakistan National Congress political party and its role in the Objectives Resolution. Still, it is not enough to understand the aim of the Pakistan National Congress and how this political party came into being. Who were the founders of this political party, and how did this political party play its role in the resolution objectives? The mentioned books and articles are enough to understand and explain the role of the political party Pakistan National Congress in the debates of objective resolution but not enough to describe how this political party came into existence and the purpose of forming this party. How did this political party play its role in Pakistani politics? This current research topic is helpful for students in Pakistan Studies, History, and Political Science because it fulfills the aims of the Pakistan National Congress political party.

METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative and employs descriptive and historical techniques. It relies on primary and secondary sources, including historical documents, scholarly articles, and books. It examines the archives and records of the PNC, as well as newspapers and periodicals of the time. Interviews with historians and political analysts provide additional insight. A qualitative content analysis of speeches, statements, and party manifestos is included to identify key themes and trends. A historical approach is used to contextualize the findings and trace the development of party-political ideology.

FORMATION OF PAKISTAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Any democratic system must allow for opposition. The official opposition in a parliamentary democracy is defined as the second-largest party. Its standing is raised to that of an institution inside the Legislative Assembly, with its leader being recognized as the "Leader of the Opposition" and receiving special privileges. According to their strength, the opposition parties are represented in each parliamentary committee and are consulted on all issues. Parliamentary operations deteriorate, and the political system cannot run properly without the opposition's cooperation. Therefore, the administration and opposition's mutual tolerance improves the political system and establishes the precedents for further changes (Parveen, 1958; Khan et al., 2017; Rehman et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2021).

Allen Octavian Hume started creating the Congress (1829-1912). In 1880, he left the Civil Service and moved to Shimla. He encouraged the "Graduates" of Calcutta University to work for the nation's moral, material, social, and political advancement in a letter he wrote to them in 1883. To organize a union for the job, he appealed to 50 people. Thus, the Indian National Union was established. In 1885, this Union became the Indian National Congress (INC). It is INC, where the PNC derives its lineage; it promoted secularism, composite nationalism, and religious tolerance while opposing the Muslim League's push for Pakistan. However, the ensuing religious strife resulted in the division of India and the founding of Pakistan from the regions with a Muslim majority (Niaz, 1987).

Following the partition, the INC was split into two distinct parties, one operating in India and the other in Pakistan, following the example of the All-India Muslim League (AIML). Due to migration, there was a negligible Hindu population in West Pakistan. Different circumstances existed in East Pakistan. Out of a total 41,932,000 Hindu population, 4,349,000 belonged to the caste Hindus. Bengal's INC provincial chapter had an excellent organizational structure. The forty Caste Hindus who were left after the split of the Bengal Assembly served as the legislative opposition for East Pakistan. Ten of its PNC members were elected to the Pakistani Constituent Assembly (Pobre, 1976). These participants attended the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) conference in New Delhi on November 17, 1947, under the leadership of East Pakistani Kiran Shankar Roy, the leader of the opposition in the Bengal Assembly. The subcommittee on the constitution of the Congress suggested the elimination of Congress organizations outside of India. The East Bengal Congressmen asked the AICC to delay the decision until the following session. However, in April 1948, the AICC ratified the new constitution and confided the INC to India (Chowdhury, 1980).

The Pakistani Congressmen disapproved of the INC's choice. Most of them, including Sris Chandra Chattopadhyaya (leader of the Congress Party in the Constituent Assembly), Satin Sen, Monoranjan Gupta, Suresh Chandra Das-Gupta, Basanta Kumar Das (leader of the Congress Assembly Party), and Monoranjan Dhar (assistant secretary of the Assembly Party), wanted to re-establish the party in Pakistan. They planned a conference for August 18 in Dhaka. Suresh Chandra das Gupta, who moved the resolution establishing the PNC, praised the INC's liberation fight and said that Gandhi's values, which were ingrained in the Congress, had worldwide applicability (Chowdhury, 1980).

A few people, notably MCAs Kamini Kumar Dutta, Dharendra Nath Dutta, and Pravash Chanera Lahiry, wanted to start a new party under a different name. Kamini Kumar Dutta opposed the Congress' resurgence since, before independence, the bulk of East Pakistan's Hindus and Muslims were not members. Additionally, migration has reduced its membership. As a result, they established a new, exclusively East Pakistan-focused party called Pakistan Gana Samiti (PGS) during a convention held in Comilla in July 1948. Kamini Kumar Dutta, a founding member and eventually party chairman, said the new organization was not set up for legislative operations and would fight for people's rights and privileges. (Chowdhury, 1980) Despite this, as Monoranjan Dhar and Bhabesh Chandra Nandayxi noted, the PGS collaborated closely with PNC representatives in the Constituent Assembly because Dharendra Nath Dutta, a founding member and general secretary of the PGS, was also the deputy leader of the Congress Assembly Party (Pobre, 1976). Najma Chaudhry ascribed this muddle to a fight for dominance among several PNC factions. Additionally, they had to cooperate in the Assembly because of concerns that may serve the interests of the minority group (Chaudhry, 1980).

The number of Hindus, Sikhs, and other non-Muslims in Pakistan had dramatically decreased because of religious conflict and mass migration caused by partition. PNC was created by the leaders and activists of the INC who continued to reside in Pakistan along with members of the Christian, Sikh, Hindu, and Buddhist minorities. The members of the new party accepted Pakistan as it was and cut all ties with the INC even though most of them had opposed India's partition (Pobre, 1976). A political group that largely stood up for Pakistan's Hindus and other religious minorities was the PNC, subsequently known as the Bangladesh National Congress (BNC). The party promoted secularism in the Muslim-dominated state, and East Bengal, also known as East Pakistan, which is now the independent state of Bangladesh, was where it had its most robust electoral and organizational base.

PAKISTAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The All-Indian Muslim League was the founder political party that, after independence, became the Muslim League Pakistan, but as Pakistan adopted the democratic form of government so, along with ML, the other small parties also took part in the day-to-day politics. Pakistan National Congress was one of those small parties that remained active during the initial days of Pakistan. This Party changed its name from the Indian National Congress to the Pakistan National Congress and started participating in politics, especially in constitutional steps. PNC served as the main opposition party, while Pakistan Muslim League, the governing party, ruled till 1954. When the PML was forced to establish a coalition government in 1955, PNC joined Chaudhury Muhammad Ali's alliance. Based on the Islamic laws and voter problems, it departed the Coalition. PNC participated in the coalition government that the Awami League and the Republican Party created in 1956. PNC shifted to the opposition benches during the third coalition administration between the PML and the Republican Party. On the condition that the alliance would be committed to joint elections, it joined the fourth coalition administration of the Republican Party in 1957 (Afzal, 1976; Zahra & Iqbal, 2021).

Minorities held 47 seats in the East Pakistan Assembly. Six Hindus were furthermore chosen from unique constituencies. Monoranjon Dhar said thirty-eight (38) members of the PNC (Chaudhry, 1980). Due to SCF's collaboration with the government, PNC, the official opposition in the province parliament, solely represented the caste Hindu minority. Despite being a legislative opposition, PNC could not propose a replacement administration. It also pushed for minority rights and interests and opposed the government's administrative, budgetary, and legislative policies (Chaudhry, 1980). It remained active in East Pakistan until separation, and after separation in 1971, it became the Bangladesh National Congress (McTernan, 1963). This party stood for secularism, religious equality, rights, and protection of Minorities and supported the Bengali language movement of East Pakistan. During these days, some of the politicians who belonged to this party were arrested and called Indian Agents. They were harassed by the people again and again, and one of them was killed inside the jail (McTernan, 1963; Khan & Rahman, 2018).

Pakistan National Congress and Objective Resolution

Although the PNC was not very active in the politics of West Pakistan, it played an essential role as an opposition party during the adoption of Objective Resolution. The "Objectives Resolution" outlining the "Aims and Objects" of Pakistan's future constitution is the first step in formulating the country's first constitution (Binder, 1961). On March 7, 1949, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan

proposed the Objectives Resolution. The Objective Resolution was not open to people until adoption, as it contained essential ideals on which the future constitution would be based; members of the PNC requested that the Resolution be disseminated to gather public opinion. However, the PML opposed this (Khalid, 1995). The minority Hindu population was concerned that the way various religious organizations interpreted some Islamic precepts may harm minorities' interests. However, the Congress members frantically concluded that the Resolution did not represent the Quaid's or the Prime Minister's opinions but rather the aspiration of the "Ulama of the Land" (Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 1949). East Pakistani PNC member Bhupendra Kumar Datta suggested many amendments in the discussion session. "I feel I have every reason to think that were this Resolution to come before this House during the lifetime of the Great Creator of Pakistan, the Quaid-I-Azam, it would not have been in its current configuration," Datta said in his statement to the Constituent Assembly. They suggested changes to the Objectives Resolution, and their statements revealed their concern about the potential repercussions of these sections (Parveen, 1961).

- That the first paragraph of the Resolution be deleted (Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 1949).
- He emphasized that "the relationships between a state and its people have been... the objects of politics" and "the relationships between man and God come under the domain of religion." Politics is under reason, while religion belongs under the category of faith. Intermingling religion and politics runs the danger of exposing religion to criticism, which would be seen as sacrilegious on its face. It would also paralyze reason and stifle criticism of government policy (Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 1949).
- Datta further cautioned that this resolution was prone to be abused by a political rogue who would exploit the phrase referring to transferring the Almighty's power to the state via its citizens as justification for his aspirations. He may claim to be the Ruler of Pakistan, chosen by his Creator.

Another strong leader of PNC was Chandra Chattopadhyay, who was also against the current position of Objective Resolution. According to him, the Quaid-I-Azam's announcement in the Assembly on August 11, 1947, was a strong signal that Pakistan would be founded on "eternal ideals of equality and democracy."

- He said that the proclamation served as a safeguard for minorities from being forced into an Islamic state (Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 1949).
- In addition, Chattopadhyay said that "people of many faiths coexist in a state." Therefore, it must take an impartial stance that is not biased against any religion and should support all faiths equally. A state religion is a risky idea since the state must respect all faiths. People have been burned alive in the name of religion before, so that should be enough to forewarn us. Sovereignty must thus belong to the people and no one else (Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 1949).

East Pakistani PNC member Raj Kumar Chakravarty proposed a second amendment to the same sentence, "people of many faiths coexist in a state." replacing the phrase "the state of Pakistan through its people" with "people of Pakistan." "A state is the organized desire of the people," he said.

- In the second paragraph, Raj Kumar Chakravarty made another modification. He suggested that the term "democratic" be substituted for "independence," since this phrase describes the

nature of the future Constitution, it is essential to make this distinction apparent (Parveen, 1961).

- Raj Kumar Chakravarty proposed changing the third paragraph to read: "Wherein the elected representatives of the people shall exercise their powers through such people as they are authorized to do." Instead of "Wherein the state shall exercise its powers and authority through the chosen representatives of the people," he said, "wherein the elected representatives of the people shall be centered and to whom shall belong legislative as well as executive authority" (Parveen, 1961).

Another PNC member from East Pakistan, Prem Hari Barma, offered a change to the "people of many faiths coexist in a state." exact phrase, saying that the constraints should not be expressed in the sentence and that the words "within the boundaries given by Him" should be removed. The Objectives Resolution, which will serve as the foundation for the future constitution, must be clear.

- He suggested an amendment: "Wherein the elected representatives of the people shall exercise their powers through such people as they are by law authorized to do."
- He also said it would "cover a far larger spectrum of the ideas of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance, and social justice." However, if these phrases are kept, the paragraph would only include those democratic, free, tolerant, equal, and social justice principles articulated by Islam, leaving out many widely acknowledged democratic, free, tolerant, and social justice principles (Parveen, 1961).
- In addition, Barma suggested adding the phrase "but not inconsistent with the Charter of the Fundamental Human Rights of the United Nations Organization" after the same sentence since Pakistan has already joined the UNO, and the Charter applies to our state (Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 1949).
- The fifth paragraph, which states that Muslims "will be entitled to conduct their lives in the individual and communal realms by the teaching and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah," was amended twice by Prem Har Barma. He suggested that the words "Muslims shall" be replaced with the phrase "Muslims and non-Muslims must equally" and the phrase "Islam as laid out in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah" with the phrase "their respective faiths."
- Prem Har Barma suggested changing the phrases "and depressed classes" to "classes and scheduled castes" in the ninth paragraph. He argued that the term "depressed" primarily connoted social degradation and that the term "scheduled castes," as it was used in the Government of India Act 1935, "did not imply any status or position in the society but implied only a list of castes that required special safeguards for their educational, political, and economic advancement" (Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 1949).

All these, with many amendments, were suggested by the members of PNC during the adoption of Objective Resolution but were not accepted by the leaders of Pakistan, which resulted in insecurity among the small political parties, opposition, and religious minorities.

Electoral Performance of Pakistan National Congress

Although the Indian National Congress, formed in 1885, had no separate branches during the colonial era, it is representative of all Hindus of India. It remained a solid and dominant political party before the partition of the subcontinent. It was against the partition of India; it supported a united India. After the partition of India, only twenty percent of Hindus left in East Pakistan. To represent their interest, PNC was formed. It later represented Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians.

The PNC was a party of minorities. It represented the rights of Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, and other marginalized groups present in Pakistan. It favored the religious freedom policy for all and represented the interests of the lower class, especially peasants. In the beginning, during the colonial era, it was against the idea of Pakistan. It supported the idea of a united India in which all classes of people would be given constitutional protection. At that time, it was a purely Hindu-dominated party, but after the partition, it also represented other marginalized classes, like Buddhists and Christians (Kamal, 1976). The PNC has an influential and pivotal role in representing the oppressed and marginalized classes of East and West Pakistan after the partition of the Sub-Continent. It not only represented the interest of their people but also took part in provincial elections and won a majority of seats.

Pakistan, the land of the pure, was beset with myriad challenges when it emerged as an independent state in 1947. It had no constitution. Only the India Act of 1935 was amended and adopted as an interim constitution. Besides this, due to political instability, no general elections were held. Only one election was held in 1954, in which most parties participated. PNC ran in the 1954 elections with the Minorities United Front (MUF), mainly for Caste Hindu Seats. PNC and MUF attempted to agree on a single list of candidates, but they were unsuccessful. PNC gained 24 minority seats, which eventually increased to 29 when two representatives, one Christian and one Buddhist, joined the party after the election. Shortly after the elections, the MUF and a portion of the Scheduled Caste Federation established the United Progressive Party (UPP), a legislative group headed by PGS officials (Chowdhury, 1971).

Table 1. Results of the Elections on Minority Seats of East Pakistan Assembly 1954

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats</i>
PNC	24
Minorities United Front	10
Schedule caste Federation	27
Communists	4
Ganatantri dal	3
Buddhists	2
Christians	1
Independent	1

Source: Afzal, M. R. (1976). *Political parties in Pakistan, 1947-1958* (Vol. I). NIHCR, p. 118.

The PNC was a member of Abu Husain Sarkar's coalition government. On September 5, 1955, Basanta Kumar Das said, "We had to select between two different alliances, each with its distinctive leaders. We collaborated with the United Front for reasons that are better guessed than explicitly expressed, but we maintained an open mind (Callard, 1957). Basanta Kumar Das, the PNC's minister for economic affairs, resigned in February 1956. On March 12, 1956, S.C. Majumdar, the other minister, resigned from the cabinet in protest over some elements of the Draft Constitution and the Chief Minister's refusal to abide by a seven-point ultimatum that included His party's demands (Huda, 1984). After that, in August and September of 1956, PNC backed AL's accession to

power, and Aaur Rahman Khan established the Ministry. PNC disagreed on who should be represented in the coalition Cabinet.

One faction backed Basanta Kumar Das, vice-president of the organization and leader of the assembly Party. He led the legislative party while having little influence over the organization since he was a senior member of Congress. The opposing camp favored Monoranjan Dhar, the assembly party's secretary. Except for Basanta Kumar Das' area in Sylhet and the Khadi group in Dhaka, he was in-charge of the organization. Basanta Kumar Das had previously served in the UF administration, according to the Dhar group, who felt that young individuals should represent PNC in the cabinet. Basanta Kumar Das was chosen to represent the party in the coalition administration at the center when the issue was settled, but he resigned in April 1957 (Harun, n. d). There were disagreements inside the party on the government's strategy of using the army to stop border smugglers. PNC (Das group) had thirteen members at the beginning of the June 1958 session, after which it severed ties with the AL alliance and joined the opposition ranks. As a result, on June 18, 1958, the opposition received 138 votes to 126 for the administration (Dawn, 1958).

The Das and Dhar groups were in opposing camps in the East Pakistan Assembly from June to September 1958. In September 1958, R. N. Sarkar, a member of the Das-Mohitra group, joined the AL coalition government with the backing of five other members but preserved his independent identity from the Dhar group. Another event was the alignment of the Dhar faction with Suresh Chandra das Gupta, head of the PNC. In response to the PNC Executive Council's decision to exclude some dissident organizations from core party membership, he submitted his resignation as president in September 1958 (Dawn, 1958). Owing to unstable political conditions, Iskandar Mirza declared Martial law on 7 October 1958, and Ayub Khan took charge of the government. Taking charge of the government, Ayub Khan banned all political parties and sent his opponents to their goal. In 1962, he framed the second constitution of Pakistan, which was presidential. All political were against this Constitution. They formed a National Democratic Front against Ayub, which opposed Ayub's policies. Besides these, eight opposition parties from East Pakistan formed a unit known as the Democratic Action Committee to resist Ayub's autocratic government. Although PNC could not play its direct role during these times, it played its indirect role, joining one of these groups to further its interests (Askari, 2000).

From the Pakistan National Congress to The Bangladesh National Congress

The Pakistan National Congress had its roots in the Indian National Congress, which played an essential role in preserving the constitutional rights of minorities. After the secession of East Pakistan from West Pakistan, the Pakistan National Congress changed into the Bangladesh National Congress, and it continued its struggles to safeguard the interests of marginalized classes. The Indian National Congress had no separate branch to represent minorities in united India; it represented all Hindus of the subcontinent. After the partition of the subcontinent, the Pakistan National Congress emerged to represent the Hindus and other minorities living in Pakistan. It was dominant in East Pakistan, as it had twenty percent of the population of Hindus. Its role in West Pakistan was not significant. However, in all of this, the party protected and safeguarded the interests of the minorities, especially Hindus. The party represented lower classes of society, like peasants and laborers, and worked for their betterment and prosperity. It was a socialist party that

avored complete freedom of religion for all people, irrespective of color, caste, religion, and age. However, as a minor party, its role was remarkable (Aziz, 1958).

PNC had emerged as the second largest party after the partition of India, as it acted as an opposition party in the Assembly. It had eleven members in the assembly. When the Objective Resolution was passed on 12 March 1949, they were the members of the Pakistan National Congress who opposed the Resolution. They suggested amendments in the draft of the resolution, but these amendments were not accepted. Bhupendra Kumar Datta made an eloquent speech criticizing the Objective Resolution. Besides this, Prem Hari Barma, Mr. Chandra Chatto Padhyaya, Chandra Mandal, and Dhananjoy Roy were members who opposed the resolution. They suggested that the name of Allah should be omitted from the draft, but their suggestions were rejected (Khan, 2000). The party played an efficient role in the provincial elections of 1954. No general election was ever held during the early periods. Despite this, the party performed well in the elections of 1954. It secured 28 seats from East Pakistan and naught from West Pakistan. From East Pakistan, it emerged as the fourth largest party. Thus, it represented the interests of all minorities well and proved its existence in the political scene.

Although during the military regime, all parties were banned, and opponents of the government were sent to the goal, the party played its indirect role. In 1962, the ban on political parties was lifted; they opposed the constitution framed during Ayub's government. They criticized the constitution because it was autocratic. Besides this, all East Pakistan and West Pakistan parties organized different units in which they put forward their demands. To further their demands, a unit named the Democratic Action Committee from East Pakistan was formed to further their interests, and different parties joined their hands. Realizing the conditions, the PNC indirectly played its role. Its policies included free and fair elections, restoration of parliamentary democracy, joint electorate, and universal adult franchise. However, this unit also criticized Fatima Jinnah as a candidate for the Presidency because she belonged to West Pakistan (Khan, 2000).

After Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan became dictator and took charge of the government. He abrogated the constitution of 1962 and began to suppress political parties. At that time, two parties were on the political scene: one was the Pakistan People's Party, and the other was the Awami League. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto led one, while Shiekh Mujibur Rahman led the other. The political climate in East Pakistan was not favorable. There was the killing and harassment of political opponents by the government (Rizvi, 1997). During these times, Mujibur Rahman presented six points favored by all other parties in East Pakistan. This battle continued, and in 1971, after general elections, Bangladesh emerged as an independent state. In these riots, the Hindu role was dominant. They supported the movement for the freedom of Bengal, where they had twenty percent of the population. After the secession of East Pakistan, the Pakistan National Congress become the Bangladesh National Congress. It took part in the elections of 1973 in Bangladesh but did not own any seats. After 1975, it ceased to exist; it was dissolved when the Bangladesh Krishak Seramik Awami League was formed. Thus, from 1947 to 1973, the party proved its existence in one way or another and played its due role. After the secession of East Pakistan from the West, the Pakistan National Congress converted into the Bangladesh National Congress. It ceased to exist after gaining its status as the Bangladesh National Congress. In 1973, it was contested in general elections but did not win. 1975, it was dissolved when the Bangladesh Krishak Seramik Awami League was

formed. Hence, from its dawn to 1973, it survived in one way or another and proved its existence, taking part in different elections.

CONCLUSION

The Pakistan National Congress, however, has its roots in the Indian National Congress, which was a Hindu-dominated party during the colonial era. It was against the idea of Pakistan and supported a united India. After the partition, it became a part of marginalized and suppressed classes that worked for their interests. In the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, it acted as an opposition party, as it emerged as the second big party after the partition. Moreover, in the election provincial elections of 1954, it performed well and proved its existence. During Martial law, parties were banned, and they played their role indirectly, joining hands with other parties. Thus, the PNC performed well in elections and worked to ameliorate oppressed classes. When Bangladesh emerged as an independent state in 1971, it also favored the movement for freedom. After 1971, its name was changed to the Bangladesh National Congress, which, after contesting one election, disappeared from the political scene. However, as a minor party, it remained active and alive in every election and proved.

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