

# MULTI-MEMBER CONSTITUENCIES

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### MULTI - MEMBER CONSTITUENCIES

It is now almost established that national elections are going to be held on a non-party basis. In this context if elections are held on majority principle on the basis of single-member constituencies this would be a sure recipe for chaos, and would constitute the most "majestic gift" that can be given to the PPP on a silver plate.

- (i) It would ensure division of votes on an unparalleled scale, as there would be a large number of independent candidates plus dissident elements from all the "parties" in the election arena. The PPP would benefit most from this situation.
- (ii) The possibility of split within PPP, because of official party-tickets, would be gracefully avoided and its 'finally' elected affiliates would be able to form a powerful group in the National Assembly/Provincial Assemblies.
- (iii) The influence of baradaries would be highest, even decisive in certain areas, which would help in perpetuating these non-ideological divisions in the society and further strengthening the vested interests.
- (iv) Regionalists would have a powerful platform. If, for instance, a party has to contest elections in Sind and Punjab both, its stance in Sind cannot totally be based on ignoring the fact that voters have to be faced in the Punjab as well. But, in a non-party election most devastating regionalist stance can be adopted in one area/region-without any fear. In fact, the danger that the largest member of regionalist elements would be sent to the National Assembly under this system is a very real threat. This would weaken the forces which stand for 'national' unity and solidarity.

In view of these and other weaknesses embedded in single-constituency system under non-party elections it is suggested that some other arrangements must be devised which may capture at least some, if not all, the benefits of the PR system.

2. It is suggested that "Multi-member Constituency System" may be sympathetically considered as an alternative. It can be the "second best" choice as it has the capability of capturing some sixty to seventy per cent of the benefits of the PR system in national elections organised on non-party basis. The benefits of the system would be as follows:

- (i) The constituency would be large enough to minimize/dilute the direct regional, local or Baradari influences.
- (ii) The extent of wastage of votes, which takes place in the single-member constituency system and could be as large as 70 to 80 per cent of the votes cast in cases where the number of candidates is very large, could be reduced. It may be possible for the constituency to elect to the Parliament candidates who have received an overwhelming majority of the votes (e.g. upto 80-85 percent) even if the number of contestants is pretty large. This fact has been acknowledged in literature on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In a single-member constituency all the votes not cast for the winning candidates are wasted, since they have not been able to elect anyone. This is the inevitable consequence of having only one MP per constituency. If a group of neighbouring -

- (iii) It would be possible for the major shades of opinion obtaining amongst the voters in a maxi- constituency to be reflected in the parliament and, as such, would ensure strengthening parliamentary channels for the articulation of different viewpoints/approaches and reduce the dangers of extra-parliamentary practices, particularly in moderating the regionalist elements. This has been the experience in the Netherlands and the Scandanevian countries.
- (iv) In the special circumstances of Pakistan the dangers of a particular group's benefitting from over-splitting of votes among Islamic/ rightest groups would be minimized. It can be reasonably expected that the PPP votes would also be divided in this situation and that it would be impossible for this group to gain majority in the National Assembly. Even if this group gains 20-30 per cent of seats in the Parliament, the possibility of a rightest/Islamic coalition would be far greater. If this group somehow tries to form government, it will have to seek the cooperation of other groups and as such would have to make concessions. It can never be powerful enough to do whatever it likes. And for that matter, .any group would not be in a position to adopt absolutist policies.

In view of these considerations, it is advisable that the system of multi-member constituencies be adopted. The consequences of the other alternative (single-member constituency) are too disastrous to be ignored.

4. A major objection against this arrangement is that the constituency would become too large and it would be physically cumbersome and financially burdensome for the candidates to cover the whole constituency. But this objection is superficial, because every candidate would concentrate only on areas where he enjoys some influence. Widening of the constituency would give him new opportunities and would not in any way constrain him from concentrating on his pockets of influence. No vote would be wasted as we are suggesting the system of single non-transferable vote. From the viewpoint of the present political climate this would reduce the chances of overheating in any election campaign. In fact, in case of a wider constituency, greater reliance would have to be placed on meetings arranged under the auspices of the Election Commission providing every candidate with an opportunity to present his message before the voters. Similarly radio and television can be used for this purpose. Mass campaigns by individual candidates, other than door-to-door contact can be eliminated or reduced and this would reduce the cost of electioneering in the country.

The proposal to resort to the system of second ballot or as the French call it, 'the Alternate Vote', is not going to make much difference. It is based on a different concept: the idea being that in a single-member constituency the elected member must at least have the passive, if not the active, support of the majority of the voters. Two models have been adopted: one in which the winner needs to have 50.1% of the votes cast in the first or the second ballot; the other, where 50.1% vote is required only in the first ballot, failing which the second contest is only amongst

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constituencies is joined up to produce, say, a five-member maxi-constituency, there is a good chance of giving most of the votes, if not all, a useful vote." Parliament for the People: A Handbook- of- 'Electoral Reform, London, 1976.

the two candidates securing highest votes, thus eliminating other candidates, and in the second ballot whoever gets majority of votes cast, whatever be the turn-up, is elected. In the case of Pakistan this would have most of the disadvantage of the single-member constituency "system, with marginal advantages for the PPP candidates in the second ballot. As such multi-member, constituency, with a minimum of four to six members per constituency, would be the only viable alternative.

There are two models of multi-member constituencies. In both of them the country is divided into compact constituencies with multiple seats for each constituency. The difference is in the method of voting:

In model I, which is simple and straight forward, every voter will have one non-transferable vote and would cast it in favour of anyone of the candidates. In this process all shades of opinion within the constituency, with X number of seats, would be reflected in the preferences cast in favour of candidates offered in the constituency. The X number of candidates receiving the highest number of votes from the top of the list would be declared elected.

Model II is more complicated but nearer to the original concept of multi-member constituency. In this system the method of single transferable vote is used, and the voter is expected to give his preference (i.e. ordering his choice as 1, 2, 3, 4 +), or is given a second choice/vote which would be transferred both from the lowest-vote-getting candidates, who are dropped from the race, as well as, from the highest-vote getting candidates, from votes in excess of the votes required to win a seat. It is complicated for the voter who has to cast more than one vote, and for those who compute the results for which an-elaborate system has to be worked out to transfer the second vote, which could be decisive in the final selection of candidates.<sup>2</sup> Although with computer this can be done, but in view of the low-literacy level of Pakistan and the dangers of rigging at the counting stage it is suggested that the simple model of each voter casting one non-transferable vote be adopted as the feasible alternative.

7. If the system of multi-member constituencies is accepted the delimitation of constituencies for the National Assembly can be done on the following principles:

- (i) The smallest constituency would be a 4-member constituency, except where it is impossible for geographic or overriding cultural considerations. The model constituency would be 4-6 member- constituency, but the size of the constituency can range from 4-member constituency to 11-member constituency. Precedents for such multiplicity are available from a number of democratic countries. In France in 1945-46 there were 2 to 10 member constituencies. Sweden had 2 to 12 member constituencies in the 1968 elections and 2 to 36 member constituencies in the 1970 elections. Belgium had 2 to 32 member constituencies throughout 1946-1971. Finland

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<sup>2</sup> For details see: Parliament for the People: A Handbook for Electoral Reform, London, 1976 Chapter 9 and 10 pp. 112-144.

has 9 to 21 seat constituencies. In Italy, there have been 2 to 35 member constituencies.

Malta has 4, 5 and 6 member constituencies.<sup>3</sup>

- (ii) Constituencies should be so delimited that there are no inter-province amalgamations i.e. each province should be divided into a number of multimember constituencies for the National Assembly so that the question of blurring provincial representation within the National Assembly does not arise.
- (iii) Every effort should be made to keep each large city as one constituency. In exceptional cases, like Karachi, which has eleven seats, it may be divided into two constituencies with six (6) and five(5) seats.
- (iv) An effort can be made to maintain each of certain major districts as one multiple-member constituency, e.g. Multan and Faisalabad can be 10-member constituencies; Lahore and Sialkot as eight and seven member constituencies respectively; Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Sahiwal, Sheikhu- pura, Jhang, Sargodha and Hyderabad as 5-6 member constituencies; and Mardan, Qasur, Rahimyar Khan, Nawabshah as 4member constituencies.
- (v) Whole of Baluchistan can be one multi-member constituency with 7 seats or divided into two constituencies; Quetta division (3 seats) and Sibbi, Qallat, Makran divisions (4 seats).
- (vi) 8 seats of Tribal Areas would pose some problem but this can be sorted out as a special case.

8. If National Assembly seats are grouped into different constituencies, in the light of the above mentioned principles, the position would be somewhat as follows. If necessary some modifications can be made on the basis of merit - the principle being that in special circumstances departure from the above norms is possible provided it can be justified on reasonable grounds:

(i)	Tribal Areas	8 seats
	Special Arrangements:	
II.	N.W.F.P.	26 seats .
(i)	Peshawar District (NA-1 to NA-5)	5 "
(ii)	Mardan District (MA-6 to NA-9)	4 "
(iii)	Malakand Division (NA-21 to NA-26)	6 "
(iv)	Hazara Division (NA-1 to NA-12)	6 "
(v)	Kohat and D.I.Khan Divisions	5 "

<sup>3</sup> See: Enid Lakeman, *Hew Democracies Vote: A Study of Electoral Systems*, London, 1974. Food note

NA-10, NA-11, NA-18 to NA-20)

III. Punjab 116 seats

IV.

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|--------|---|----------|
| (i)    | Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Jhelum<br>(NA-35 to NA-41 and NA-44 to NA-46)          | 9 "      |
| (ii)   | Attock, Mianwali, Bhakkar**<br>(NA-41 to NA-43 and NA-60 to NA-63)            | 6 "      |
| (iii)  | Gujrat (NA-47 to NA-52)   | 6 "      |
| (iv)   | Gujranwala (NA-98 to NA-1Q3)  |          |
| (v)    | Sialkot (NA-104 to NA-110)  | 7 "      |
| (vi)   | Sheikhupura (NA-93 to NA-97)  | 5 "      |
| (vii)  | Lahore (NA-81 to NA-88)   | 8 "      |
| (viii) | Qasur - Sahiwal (NA-89 to NA-92<br>and NA-135 to NA-137)                      | 7 "      |
| (ix)   | Sahiwal-Vehari (NA-132 to NA-134 ,<br>NA-138, NA-139 and NA-121 to<br>NA-123) | 8 "      |
| (x)    | Multan (District)<br>(NA-111 to NA-120)                                       | 10 seats |

Note: This can also be divided into two multimember constituencies with 5 member each.

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|-------|---|-----|
| (xi)  | Faisalabad (District)<br>(NA-68 to NA-76)     | 9 " |
| (xii) | Toba Tek Singh (District)<br>(NA-77 to NA-80) | 4 " |

Note: Another possibility is to group it with Jhang.

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|--------|--|-----|
| (xiii) | Jhang (NA-63 to NA-67)                                 | 5 " |
| (xiv)  | Sargodha' - Khushab<br>(NA-53 to NA-59)                | 7 " |
| (xv)   | D.G. Khan, Muzaffargarh, Laiyyah<br>(NA-124 to NA-131) | 8 " |

Note: D.G, Khan (3 seats) and Muzaffargarh, Laiyyah (5 seats) can also have a different grouping as Laiyyah can go with Mianwali-Bhakkar but in view of the fact that the old district of Muzaffargarh was having one seat with Laiyyah it is preferable to keep them together.

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| (xvi) | Bhawalpur - Bhawalnagar | 7 " |
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\*\*Note: Another possibility is to group together Mianwali and Bhakkar with Laiyyah and Khushab; District Jhelum with Gujrat. and Rawalpindi and Islamabad so as to have three multi-member constituencies.

(NA-140 to NA-146)

Note: As one seat (NA-143) is common between the two districts it is advisable to group them in one constituency.

(xvii)	Rahinyar Khan (NA-147 to NA-150)	4"
IV	Sind	43 seats
i)	Sukkur - Khairpur (NA-150, NA-151 and NA-161-162)	4 "
ii)	Larkana Division (Jacobabad, Larkana and Shikarpur districts) (NA-153, NA-156 and NA-163-165)	7 "

Note: Another grouping for (i) and (ii) could be:

(a)	Shikarpur District +	
(b)	Sukkar and Khairpur	6 seats
(c)	Jacobabad and Larkana	5 seats
(iii)	Nawabshah (NA-157 to NA-160)	4 "
(iv)	Hyderabad + Badeen (NA-166 to NA-172]	7 "
(v)	Tharparkar + Sanghar (NA-173 to 175 and NA-179 5c 180)	5 "
(vi)	Dadu and Thatta (NA-176 to 178 and NA-181-182)	
V. Baluchistan		7 seats
i)	Quetta Division (Districts Quetta, Chaghi, Pasheen, Loralai and Zhob), (NA-194 to NA-196)	3
ii)	Sibbi, Qallat, Makran Division (Sibbi, Kuhlu, Nasirabad, Kulih, Qallat, Lasbella, Khuzdar3 Kharan' Darygi, Turbet and Gawadar) (NA-19.7 to NA-200)	4

Constituencies can be worked out on similar lines for the Provincial Assemblies. All difficult cases should be isolated and sorted out separately. It is hoped that, a workable programme for election

on the basis of multi-member constituencies (with 4 seats to 11 seats) can be successfully implemented within a reasonable period of time.

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