

Factors Responsible For The Decline Of Pakistan Peoples Party In Electoral Politics: A Case Study Of General Elections 2013

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Abstract

Pakistan Peoples Party is one of the most powerful liberal political parties in the Pakistan since its founding in 1967. In addition to being elected into power five times (1970, 1977, 1988, 1993, and 2008); the PPP has also emerged as the main opposition party four times (1990, 1997, 2002, and 2013). It suffered one of its worst setbacks in the 2013 general elections. No other political party in the 2013 parliamentary elections suffered as much as the PPP. With 31 seats in the National Assembly, it has just about made it to second place. Only in Sindh has it managed to keep its grip. In this brief article an attempt is made to highlight the main reasons behind the party decline in electoral politics particularly in 2013 general elections. This article also attempted to find out the responsible factors that even though it was the first civilian government to serve the entire five-year term (2008–2013), it was unable to win over the electorate. This article is based on secondary data collection and applied through the qualitative method. Secondary data included books, journal articles and mostly reliable newspaper articles.

Key Words: Pakistan Peoples Party, Electoral Politics, General Elections, Charismatic Leadership, Security Threats, Factionalism

Introduction

On November 30 and December 1, 1967, in Lahore, at its founding convention, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was officially established. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a former foreign minister, was chosen to preside over the meeting. The creation of a “egalitarian democracy” and the “application of socialist concepts to accomplish economic and social justice” were among the

stated objectives of the party. The struggle against General Ayub Khan's rule was a more pressing matter. On March 26, 1969, Ayub Khan gave in to political pressure and appointed General Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan as Pakistan Army Commander-in-Chief. The 1962 Constitution was repealed and martial law was declared by President Yahya Khan. Direct elections to a unicameral legislature were mandated by a Legal Framework Order (LFO), which President Yahya Khan issued on March 31, 1970. The Peoples Party held its National Conference in Hala Sharif, Sindh for the decision either to take part in electoral politics or not. Z.A. Bhutto addressed a crowd in Nishtar Park, Karachi, in January 1970 to officially open his election campaign. He thereafter held similar gatherings in NWFP and Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi (Dawn, 2012, January 8).

At the 1970 General Election, the People's Party dominated West Pakistan with 81 seats out of 300. After fall of Dacca, Bhutto assumed the control of West Pakistan. The PPP swept to victory in the general election of 1977. However, protests over alleged election manipulation were launched by the PNA-led opposition. Despite an agreement between the opposition and PPP, tensions grew, martial law was enacted, and as a result Bhutto was hanged in 1979. In 1979, his daughter Benazir Bhutto and his wife Nusrat Bhutto were chosen to co-chair the Peoples Party. One of the largest nonviolent democratic movements against General Zia-ul-Haq's military rule in the world, the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy was led by the PPP in 1982 (Shaikh, 2000).

After serving as the ruling party for eleven years, the People's Party won the 1988 general election, making Benazir Bhutto the first female head of state in the Muslim world. Due to the economy's downturn, problems with national security, and nationalization, the People's Party government was overthrown in 1990. Benazir and the Peoples Party, which had been in opposition since the party's founding in 1967, lost the 1990 general election. The Pakistani Supreme Court determined in 2012 that the PML (N) had been the beneficiary of a rigged election. In the 1993 General Elections, the PPP took back control in a partnership with the JUI (F). Farooq Leghari, the party's elected leader, however, overthrew the government in September 1996 (Gohar, 2015). February 1997 saw the holding of general elections. PPP and PML (N) engaged in a bitter election battle. The PML (N), which at the time garnered the most votes ever obtained by an opposition party, won by a landslide as a result. In the meantime, Bhutto's declining popularity caused the PPP to be completely defeated, losing 71 seats and winning only 18. Despite claiming that election authorities had corrupted the results by putting in extra ballots, Benazir Bhutto did not call for protests because she believed Pakistan needed political stability. She had warned to refuse to recognize the results if the PPP lost (Shaikh, 2000). The party served as the main challenger to the Pervez Musharraf government. In October 2002, general elections were conducted. Under Pervez Musharraf's military regime, the elections were held. The two major parties, PPP, were subject to a number of limitations. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) established the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) under the direction of Ameen Faheem to fight the elections on its behalf in order to overcome the constraints. In spite of Benazir Bhutto's absence, PPPP emerged in second place and really won the majority of the public vote. At the provincial level, PPPP became Sindh's dominant party (Ansari & Moten, 2003). Benazir Bhutto was assassinated on December 27, 2007, and as a result, the January 2008 parliamentary elections were moved up to February 18. The PPP

achieved a significant victory over all political parties, securing 121 seats from all provinces in the Parliament, while the PML (N) came in second with 91 seats from throughout the nation (Khan, 2016).

Elections were slated to take place on May 11, 2013, following PPP's five-year term. After the Caretaker Government was established, the Parties campaign began on March 27, 2013. The national and provincial elections featured 148 political parties. PPP, PML (N), JI, MQM, ANP, JUI (F), and a newly formed national political party, PTI, were the primary contenders. Together with the PML (Q) and ANP, the PPP formed a coalition for the elections. The PML (N) had formed an alliance with Balochistan parties (F). As an example, the PML (N) insisted on the Centre-right constituency, the PTI on youth, the MQM on Karachi-based Muhajirs, and the PPP on rural Sindhis and the liberal elite (Haider & Ali, nd). Along with its traditional motto during the election campaign, the PPP ran two distinct programmes, "Massawaat" (Egalitarianism) and "Peoples' Employment Program", for the youth voters. The PPP also noted that the implementation of its nationalization and welfare programmes began in 2008 (Central Committee, 2014, May 29). The PPP also made a substantial contribution to the country's attempts to reduce gas shortages, increase social economic awareness, support higher education, develop a sound foreign policy, and promote social economics (The Nation, 2013, March 12). However, terrorism-related violence and threats of attacks ruined the ambience of the election campaign. The Pakistani Taliban targeted the PPP, MQM, and ANP while they were in power as part of the outgoing coalition government because to their perceived secular policies. Despite still holding onto its provincial government in Sindh, the party was severely trounced in the 2013 federal election for a variety of reasons (BBC News, 2013, May 2).

Before 2013 Elections: Political Scenario

General elections from the past took place on February 18, 2008. A coalition government between the PPP, PML (N), and Awami National Party (ANP) was decided upon for both the national capital and the provinces. By a margin of more than two-thirds, these coalition allies in the National Assembly chose Mr. Yousaf Raza Gillani as Pakistan's prime minister in March 2008. The Prime Minister promptly authorized the release of Superior Court judges who had been removed from office but had been detained for more than four and a half months. Later, the PML (N) left the ruling coalition in August 2008 due to disagreements with the PPP on a number of topics. In 2008, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari succeeded General Pervez Musharraf as Pakistan's president. On April 8, 2010, the National Assembly approved the 18th Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution, which brought the 1973 document's democratic elements back (Khan, 2016). On June 19, 2012, a seven-judge panel of Pakistan's Supreme Court deemed Prime Minister Mr. Yousaf Raza Gillani ineligible to hold elective office as of the date of his conviction for contempt of court. The PPP's Raja Pervez Ashraf was chosen to be the new prime minister. The elected governments in Pakistan served out their constitutional terms of five years in office for the second time in the country's democratic history, and the dissolution of the Assemblies was seamless (Kanwal, 2017).

General Elections, 2013: PPP Performance

On May 11, 2013, general elections for the NA and PAs were conducted. Punjab was completely swept, winning 117 out of a possible 148 seats, and the PML (N) emerged as the NA's lone main party, winning 167 seats. The PPP suffered a crushing defeat, winning 42 seats in total, 31 of which came from Sindh and two from Punjab. In KP and Balochistan, the PPP was completely eliminated and failed to win even one seat. Additionally, the seats designated for minorities and women were distributed. Following it, PML (N) gained 167 seats, PPP had 42, PTI had 32, MQM had won 23, PML (F) had won 5, and PKMAP had won 4. 55.02 percent of eligible voters participated in the National Assembly election (Khan, 2016).

In elections for the Provincial Assemblies, the PPP won 6 general seats in Punjab and 3 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but none in Balochistan. But in Sindh, the PPP won 94 seats in total, taking the top spot. 55.26% of eligible voters participated in the Provincial Assemblies election. The outcome demonstrates that PPP only had political sway in Sindh and some optimism in Punjab (Haider & Ali, nd).

PPP candidates, office holders, and a few central figures gathered in Punjab on May 20, 2013, for a special meeting with Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari. Latif Khosa, Manzoor Wattoo, Yousaf Raza Gilani, Ahmad Mukhtar, Raja Riaz, and Nazar Gondal were among those that participated. The meeting included scathing criticism for some of the PPP's top figures, including Yousaf Raza Gilani, Samina Ghurki, Manzoor Wattoo, Raja Pervez Ashraf, and other key position leaders. They assumed it was as a result of his underwhelming performance. President Zardari told the gathering that the PPP had conceded loss despite its concerns, stating that both domestic and international players had rigged the polls in the PPP's favour. He added that the outcome would not dim the hopes of Bhutto's party members, though. He noted that there were some people who were angry about the 1997 elections. He asserts that it will continue to be impenetrable in the future. He thought it will still be around in the future. Zardari claimed that Taliban terrorism was the primary cause of the PPP's electoral defeat since there was no fair playing field for the party and it was unable to plan an election campaign. He hinted that he will return to politics after serving as president. He declared that all of his children would serve as party leaders and workers in the future. According to Senator Farhatullah Babar, that Asif Ali Zardari commended the populace and all political parties on their election participation and for paving the way for the nation's first democratic transition. (The Pak Tribune, 2013, May 21).

Decline of PPP in Electoral Politics: Responsible Factors

Lose of Charismatic Leadership: Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the charismatic leader of the PPP, was surrounded by strong intellectual and political allies. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was a skilled orator who always excelled in engaging listeners in his lectures. Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, gained control of the party after her father was hanged. Because she learned about politics from her father, Benazir also developed into a captivating leader (Abbas, 2015). Benazir served as Pakistan's prime minister twice before leaving the country in 1999 and returning in 2007 in time for the 2008 elections. The murder took place on December 27, 2007. Following this occurrence, a large number of supporters flocked to the streets, and the elections that were scheduled for January 8 were moved to February 18. The assassination of Benazir Bhutto, who was quite well-liked at the time, increased public sympathy for PPP. Many

people supported PPP because they were sympathetic to Benazir Bhutto's sacrifice. After a very long time, PPP finally became a political force in the 2008 elections and was successful in winning the majority of seats in Parliament. The PPP consolidated its power in Sindh and the Center. There was a change in the Party leadership following the passing of Benazir Bhutto. This period, Asif Ali Zardari and his sister Faryal Talpur held the majority of the power. Mumtaz Bhutto, a Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto associate and Benazir's "uncle", stated in one of his interviews that the PPP's senior leadership had changed. Bilawal is his father's and Sister Faryal Talpur's hostage, hence he is powerless to do much (News Line, 2017, November 21). When the PPP's leadership changed and half-blood Bhutto became the party's face, many "Jayalass" who had voted for their party in the crucial 2013 elections began to distance themselves from the party.

Bad Governance during Zardari Era: PPP was unable to function effectively during their reign. The patterns and standards of investment in the education sector were unchangeable under PPP Government. Actual development spending in the education sector fell far short of the budgeted amount, while the defiance and non-development budgets both saw noticeable increases during this time. This suggests that the government did not place a high priority on social development, as the PPP had pledged during the election campaign. The budget for education represented 2.10 percent of GDP in the fiscal year 2008-2009 but fell to 0.50 percent in the following year. Ironically, during the fiscal years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, just 0.9% of the GDP was designated for the improvement of education (Talbot, 2012). In terms of public investment on education, Pakistan was placed 177th internationally in the Human Development Report 2013. In the various budgets produced during this time, substantial subsidies were given to PIA, Pakistan Steel Mill, and Railways, which were higher than funds budgeted for the health and education sectors (Kanwal, 2017). Similar to this, the health sector's budget distribution practices show no signs of reform or progress. In the government budget year 2009-2010, the health sector received 23.15 billion rupees. Long-awaited problems such as an ineffective regulatory structure, a lack of efficiency, and inadequate resources were not resolved by the government. The PPP Government did not make any structural or operational reforms to the healthcare sector to benefit the populace. In 2010, the government neglected to offer the devastation's victims prompt and adequate help. Additionally, there were major security crises after 2008 that persisted throughout the PPP rule. PPP was unable to stem the flow of suicide attacks that began in 2008 while Musharraf was in power (Talbot, 2012).

The obstacles to be overcome on the economic front included the fiscal deficit, high inflation, energy shortage, decreasing investment, unemployment, and huge indebtedness. In order to cover the budget deficit, the federal government heavily relied on borrowing. Four State Bank governors resigned because they had strong disagreements with the government's anti-fiscal discipline measures. Budget deficit: Non-development expenses accounted for more than 80% of the available funding. Government spending on development was substantially reduced while no stimulus plan for the economy's recovery was introduced. The striking factor contributing to this dire economic crisis was the 3000 megawatt energy shortfall (Kanwal, 2017) due to which masses parted their ways with PPP in elections of 2013. The PPP government was also heavily accused of corruption. There were numerous allegations of corruption against PPP. Furthermore, Asif Ali Zardari, the leader of the PPP, was a divisive

figure. In the open meetings of PML (N) and PTI, the allegations of PPP corruption were discussed. In the 2013 elections, large numbers of PPP supporters defected, and the party suffered its worst defeat ever by receiving the fewest votes ever (Haider & Ali, nd).

Vanished Appeal among the Masses: In Pakistan, political party ideology is the primary tool for establishing legitimacy across the political and social spectrum and it reflects the shared values and perspectives of the party's members. PPP was established as a progressive party whose fundamental principles were socialism and democracy, which were crucial in gaining the support of the general public. Many people who believed in socialism joined PPP. One of the PPP's founding members, Shaikh Rashid, was also known to his contemporaries as Baba-e-Socialism. With time, PPP modified its ideology and aligned itself with other pro-capitalist political parties. In an interview, Dr. Mubashir Hassan, a minister in Z.A. Bhutto's cabinet, stated that the PPP was an anti-imperialist and socialist party. It is neither of the two now; instead, it is now a pro-capitalist party, just like all the other parties. Bilawal and Banazir completely upended the party (NewsLine, 2017, November 22). Nevertheless, despite its political heritage, PPP has lost support from the general public, as evidenced by the general elections of 2013.

Security Threats: The Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Pakistani government were engaged in a protracted fight in May 2013. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and the Awami National Party (ANP) were specifically singled out by the TTP as being targets in the run-up to the 2013 general election. Nearly every day during the month running up to the election, attacks on candidate and election rally locations were recorded. As a result, the 2013 election was dubbed the “bloodiest” in Pakistani history in a macabre manner (BBC News, 2013, May 2).

In April, political parties were the target of a number of terrible attacks. On April 27, a shooting at a PPP electoral gathering in Karachi left three people dead and 20 more injured. On April 25, eight people were murdered in Taliban-claimed strikes in Karachi, while two others were hurt in a grenade attack on a PPP election headquarters in Noshki, Balochistan. Three people were hurt by a bomb on April 24 in Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, close to the residence of a PPP politician (Human Rights Watch, 2013, April 29). Due to the continuous violence, the PPP's top leaders were unable to publicly campaign in any of the provinces other than Sindh's interior (Dawn, 2013, May 3). A survey by the Heinrich Boll Foundation in March 2013 revealed that while PPP would receive support from 29% of voters, PML (N), the main opposition party, would receive support from 25% of voters. And 20% of the populace would back the PTI (The Express Tribune, 2013, March 7). According to veteran political analyst and journalist Najam Sethi, President Zardari's efforts in assembling a large number of parliamentarians who previously opposed him allowed the PPP's popularity graph to increase by up to 3 percent. (The News, 2013, March 7). Asif Ali Zardari would be the next contender for prime minister, according to the PPP, as Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was not yet qualified. Asif Ali Zardari, however, abruptly announced on May 5, 2013, that he had left Pakistan for Dubai and would not be speaking at any of the party's gatherings or rallies. He wouldn't be sent back until after the elections, according to the PPP. Amin Fahim and other

PPP leaders, including Aitizaz Ahsan, Taj Haider, Raza Rabbani, and Yousaf Raza Gillani, took charge of the party's election campaign as a result (Dawn, 2013, April 25).

Emergence of PTI as Challenge: The PTI's ascent posed a serious threat to the PPP in the 2013 elections. The PTI was established in 1996. Since 1996, Imran Khan and the PTI have made it clear that corruption and the destruction of civil state institutions by dynastic political elites are the root causes of Pakistan's woes. Therefore, the PTI was ideally positioned to represent widespread complaints as it was the only major political party that was not in power. The PTI ideology's peculiar catchphrases of "change", "anti-elite" and "anti-corruption" kept the other two parties clearly apart from the PTI. The PTI further asserts that it promotes "tolerance", calls for "national unity", and works to "eradicate bigotry and religious prejudice". It claims a type of radical and inclusive ideology that appeals to Pakistan's increasing middle-class electorate, differentiating itself from extremist parties with Islamic ideas (Ghosh, 2018).

The PPP is considered a "clientelistic party" from the perspective of organizational structure. Such a party often lacks organizational strength and lays little to no emphasis on philosophy, structure, or programme. The PTI became the first political party in Pakistan to organize a widespread, extensive intra-party election (Rizwan, Ahmad & Bilal, 2016). The PTI declared in March 2012 that it will implement local pre-selection meetings at various districts across the nation and hold intra-party elections using the American-style nomination process. To be eligible for the party ticket for the provincial or National Assembly, prospective candidates must participate in debates and win primary elections (Flamenbaum, 2012). From October 2012 to March 2013, an unprecedentedly massive intra-party election was held. More than 4 million officially enrolled party members cast ballots. The PTI president, the National Committee, and the candidates for federal and provincial parliament were all elected after a protracted election process. PTI quickly increased its representation in the National Assembly and the four provincial assemblies during the general election in May 2013, establishing a government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Despite the PML (N)'s political situation remaining stable, the PTI gained ground and became the third-largest party, splitting the vote and winning nearly as many seats as the PPP (Khan, 2016).

Factionalism: When Murtaza Bhutto returned to Pakistan in the 1990s, the party's factionalism grew (Michael, 1993). In 1995, Murtaza Bhutto broke away from Benazir and Asif Ali Zardari's political philosophies and founded the more potent but more left-leaning Bhuttoist faction. Aftab Sherpao left the party in 1999 after a dispute with Benazir Bhutto about the direction of the party, founding the Pakistan Peoples Party (Sherpaoist), which was more reformists and had a libertarian platform. When the PPP fired Mahmood Qureshi over the Raymond Davis incident in Lahore in 2011, factionalism continued. Later, Qureshi switched over to PTI. Malik Ali Khan, another left-wing figurehead, left the party as well, citing his disagreement with President Zardari's leadership, particularly in reference to the party's affiliation with the center-right PML (Q) and its foreign policy (Daily Times, 2011, December 10). Due to dissatisfaction with Asif Zardari's leadership and policies regarding interactions with the liberal MQM in Sindh, the PPP's influential leader Zulfiqar Mirza left the party in 2012 despite requests for him to stay (Tunio, 2015). Due to these internal opposition badly affected the electoral politics during 2013 general elections.

Conclusion

The outcome of the 2013 general elections demonstrates how poorly the PPP performed. The PPP's defeat at the federal level has reduced them to the status of a provincial party in Sindh. The PPP was somewhat successful in maintaining its core political base in Sindh's rural districts despite its unsatisfactory election performance. However there were many factors which were responsible for the decline of PPP in electoral politics in 2013. Firstly, the PPP's charismatic leadership was regarded as the foundation of the party. But it was loss by the party with the execution of Z. A. Bhutto and assassination of Benazir. The current leadership lacks that charisma and spark. Secondly, on the front of governance, PPP's performance under Zardari was not sufficient. As a result, the PML (N), the PPP's bitter adversary, obtained a commanding majority in the National Assembly in 2013. Thirdly, with the passage of time the ideological shift of PPP slowly and gradually lost its appeal among the masses and as a result PPP badly failed in 2013 elections. Fourthly, Following 2008, there were significant security crises that PPP's government was unable to contain. The main leadership was not led to campaign peacefully before the elections. Thus it resulted of poor performance in 2013 elections. Fifthly, the emergence of PTI on political scene as a third force divided the existing vote bank of PPP especially in Punjab and KP. PTI is more ideological and having charisma in shape of Imran Khan therefore people parted their way from PPP and voted in favour of PTI. Sixthly, the internal opposition of PPP led to factionalism which weakened the party internally. Many leaders defected either to PTI or make their own groups which badly affected the electoral politics of PPP during 2013 elections. Despite all of the issues inside the party, PPP is still the only significant centrist party that supports progressive and liberal ideologies and has the power to stop the nation's spreading intolerance.

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