

# Political Journey Of Pakistan Peoples Party Through Decades (1967-2018) An Appraisal

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## Abstract

The Pakistan Peoples Party, one of the oldest and major political parties in Pakistan has completed more than fifty years of their political journey. It has the most distinct struggle for democracy, as well as for the supremacy of Pakistan's Parliament and constitution. During this political journey it has seen its rise and endured falls and inarguable sacrificed in term of leadership. This study describes the PPP's political history up to 2018 since its inception in the light of decades with specific name. This study highlights the political struggle of PPP for democracy against military regimes in Pakistan. The study also discusses the party role as governing and parliamentary opposition during different eras.

**KeyWords:** Pakistan People's Party, Charisma, Democracy, Alliances, Reconciliation, Parliamentary opposition, Pragmatism

## Introduction

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto established the Pakistan Peoples Party on December 1st, 1967 in Lahore. At the historic location of Mubashir Hassan's mansion, Bhutto was joined by steadfast ideological figures such Mubashir Hassan, J.A. Rahim, Mairaj Mohammad Khan, Mumtaz Bhutto, Rafi Raza, Mustafa Khar, and Hayat Sherpao. "Islam is our faith; Democracy is our politics; Socialism is our economics; All power to the people," was the party's adopted motto. J.K. Rahim, a close friend of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and one of the original Pakistan Peoples Party founders, is credited with

coining these remarks. In order to address the prevalent attitude, the ideological foundation's explanatory slogan Roti, Kapra, and Makan (Bread, Clothing, and Shelter) was added. Many people with socialist beliefs joined the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), which was created as a center-left progressive party. One of the PPP's founding members, Shaikh Rashid, was also known to his contemporaries as Baba-e-Socialism. Traveling the nation and giving speeches, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto helped Pakistan Peoples Party as its name implies become the party of the people. Since its founding in 1967, the party has been a powerful force in Pakistani politics, holding the reins of power several times. In each of the state's four federating units up to 2018, the PPP alternated between being the opposition, a coalition partner, and the ruling party. Additionally, the PPP continues to be a significant oppositional force thanks to its participation in the national parliament and grassroots organizing, even though it currently functions outside the national power structure. This paper explores the political history of PPP, including its rise and decline as well as the difficulties it faced during the last 50 years. The study is broken up into five distinct decades or periods and is given a situation-appropriate name. The first phase, which lasted from 1967 to 1977, is known as the "decade of charisma" because Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was such a charismatic leader during that time. The second phase (1977–1987) is referred to as the PPP's "survival and revival decade" during the Zia government and its struggle for the revival of democracy. The third phase (1988–1998) was dubbed the "decade of troika politics" due to the conflict with the opposition, military, and judiciary. The fourth decade of 1998–2008 is known as the "reconciliation decade" due to the policy of reconciliation with the Musharraf dictatorship and the PML (N). The fifth phase (2008-2018) as described as 'decade of Pragmatism' due to the pragmatic approach of PPP as governing party and opposition party in Parliament. During all decades the role of PPP in politics of Pakistan, are briefly discussed.

### **Evolution of PPP as Political and Ruling Party (1967-77): Decade of Charisma**

The charismatic leader in democratic politics is traditionally defined by the social thinker Max Weber as "a figure obeyed by pupils not by virtue of tradition or statute, but because they believe in him". His person and its attributes are the focus of his disciples', followers', and party buddies' devotion. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was possibly the first Pakistani leader to live up to these values. Millions of Pakistanis were motivated by his enthralling and attractive presence (Shaikh, 2021). It was the decade when PPP emerged on political scene as political party in 1967 and evaluated as ruling party while contested the first ever general election in Pakistan in 1970. It was perhaps due to the charismatic personality and leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. At a time when the nation was experiencing a political crisis and the imposition of military rule was having a negative impact on the country's general governance, he emerged as a charismatic leader, introducing the genuine spirit of democracy to the country, and launching PPP (Shaikh, 2020). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto took over as party chairman thanks to his charming demeanor and ground-breaking speech. Bhutto's western-style campaigning gave the people authority. He made housing, clothing, and food promises (Zehra, 2015). Before Bhutto, the common man was ineffective or inactive in politics. Feudal were decisive factor. There was no role of middle class to play. Bhutto emphasized the role of the common man and the middle class. When Bhutto came, the common man felt that the person

in front of him now was an intellectual and belonged to a big family, so it carries weight. Hence, the common man, whether he was a farmer or a laborer, followed Bhutto. The left-wing organizations were also active, but they failed to change the political system because of strong nexus of feudalism and bureaucracy. When Bhutto emerged, an influential alternative challenging the traditional political foundations, which also carried the slogan of socialism, he supported this alternative. Bhutto was a risk-taking politician. At the same time, he succeeded in uniting the opposing classes, which made him a charismatic leader (Sangi, 2020).

Bhutto's refusal to acknowledge the Awami League's victory in the 1970 election resulted in a political and sectarian catastrophe. Bhutto took office as Pakistan's first chief civilian martial law administrator following the Bangladesh Liberation War. A new constitution for Pakistan was adopted by Bhutto as part of national progress. Bhutto nationalized a lot of industries after ascending to the position of prime minister. The originator of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (Shaikh, 2020). Nine political parties came together to create the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) in 1976. Prime Minister Bhutto promptly began campaigning in January 1977 after calling for fresh general elections. The PNA unified behind religious slogans. The PPP, on the other hand, ran its campaign on the promise of social justice in business and agriculture. Despite sizable attendance at PNA campaign rallies, the Pakistan Peoples' Party won 155 of the 200 seats in the National Assembly, while the PNA won only 36. The PNA leadership wisely refused to accept the results and charged that the Government had rigged the results on purpose. The PNA quickly demanded that Prime Minister Bhutto resign, sparked major civil unrest, and called for a street boycott. Return to PNA negotiations (Hussain, 2008). On June 8, 1977, a deal was reached that called for new elections to be held in October of that same year. Martial Law was nevertheless enacted on July 5, 1977, by COAS General Zia-ul-Haq. The military coup that was put down on July 5, 1977 was code-named 'Operation Fair Play'. Bhutto, his ministers, and other PPP and PNA officials were detained by Zia-ul-Haq. Zia suspended the Constitution, disbanded the Pakistani National Assembly, all provincial assemblies, and enacted martial law (Burki, 1988). On the grounds that they had murdered political rivals, Bhutto and the PPP were subject to persecution. On September 3, 1977, Bhutto was once again taken into custody in Karachi on suspicion of the murder. The Supreme Court executed Bhutto after finding him guilty of murder-related charges. In those trying times, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto fought with bravery and commitment. Under the weight of a harsh military dictator, he remained unmoved (Shaikh, 2021). The decade of charisma of PPP in the shape of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto ended.

### **PPP Re-organization and Struggle for Democracy (1978-88): Decade of Survival and Revival**

Begum Nusrat Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto was the centre of attention from 1978 and 1988. The real successor to her father emerged as Benazir Bhutto, despite Begum Bhutto's strong emotions and dedication. Then, in 1978, the "Bhutto Bachao Tehreek" movement which aimed to save Z.A. Bhutto's life became very well known. Benazir Bhutto and Nusrat Bhutto, his daughter and wife, respectively, were in charge of this initiative. The campaign that was launched to save Bhutto was a resounding failure. Dynastic politics made it easier for Bhutto's party to continue following his

death in 1979. His daughter Benazir and widow Nusrat co-chaired the party and oversaw its planning (Gohar, 2015). The PPP collaborated with ten other parties to form the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) during martial law in order to put pressure on the Zia administration to hold free elections in accordance with the 1973 constitution. The MRD campaign, which had been started in February 1981, appeared to gain traction. But in March 1981, terrorists commandeered a plane operated by Pakistan International Airlines and demanded the release of political detainees. The organization “Al-Zulfiqar”, which Murtaza Bhutto was said to run, is responsible for the hijacking. The hijacking was a serious blow for both the PPP and the MRD. 1983 saw the failure of yet another MRD protest. After being banished to London in January 1984, Benazir Bhutto carried on her fight for the restoration of democracy there (Khohru & Soomro, 2011). She ended her self-imposed exile in London and travelled back to Pakistan on April 10, 1986. In addition to participating in the 1987 local body elections, the party underwent reorganization. The MRD was disbanded upon Zia’s death in 1988, and the PPP, the alliance’s largest party, ran unopposed in the 1988 elections ((Sultana & Jaffery, 2011).

### **PPP as Governing and Major Parliamentary Opposition (1988-98): Decade of Troika Politics**

During 1988-99 the PPP had remained in government twice during 1988-90 and 1993-96 respectively while remained in opposition twice during 1990-93 and 1996-98 respectively. The PPP involved in the politics of troika during the whole decade and remained in squabble tussle with president, opposition, military and judiciary etc.

In general elections, 1988, PPP took 94 and IJI 56. Benazir Bhutto, the head of the victorious PPP party, should have received the keys to the country based on the election results, but the army resisted the transfer out of certain democratic traditions. According to the army officers, the PPP had only offered some recommendations and had not struck any agreement with them. Benazir decided not to meddle in the important military matters. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan offered Benazir Bhutto a heartfelt homage on December 2, 1988. By PPP deal, GIK was chosen president of Pakistan on December 12, 1988. However when Benazir utilized her powers as prime minister to pick members of the military and the judiciary, the gap between her and Ghulam Ishaq Khan grew daily (Gohar, 2015). President Ishaq Khan founded the Combined Opposition Parties (COP), an alliance of all the political parties in the National Assembly, with the assistance of Nawaz Sharif and Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi. A formal motion of no confidence in Benazir’s administration was introduced, and a new phrase, “horse trading” was coined to win over the MNAs. The COAS Aslam Bag’s participation in overthrowing the government was openly acknowledged. Voting was held in November 1989, and PPP won by a margin of 12 votes. President GIK used the authority granted to him by the constitution’s article 58(2) (b) on August 6, 1990, to dissolve the government (Sultana & Jaffery, 2011). In contrast to the PPP, which was only able to win 45 of the 207 seats up for election in 1990, the IJI won the election with 106 seats and went on to form the government. Unfortunately, rather than reaching a compromise with the PPP, IJI’s government from 1990 to 1993 was characterized by constant conflict. As the head of the opposition, Benazir Bhutto made no effort to support the IJI government. A mockery of the democratic system, resistance was frequently made solely for the sake of opposing. Widespread electoral cheating, according to the

PPP opposition, made the IJI Government illegal. Against the IJI Government, PPP periodically conducted long marches, train marches, protests, and rallies between 1990 and 1993. This opposition stance persisted until 1993, when President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, acting within the bounds of the Eighth Amendment, disbanded the National and Provincial Assemblies (Gohar, 2015).

With the aid of some independents and other small parties, Once again PPP formed the government after winning the majority of seats in the 1993 elections. In October 1993, Benazir Bhutto assumed control of the post. After gaining office, it appeared that Benazir had grown significantly as a result of her prior errors and was extremely cautious when interacting with the army. She stayed out of the army's internal concerns. But when tensions between Benazir and the president grew, the military did not act impartially and continued to lend the president considerable support (Sultana & Jaffery, 2011). Benazir Bhutto promised to choose judges after consulting with the opposition and modernize the judiciary, but she actually did the exact opposite. Undemocratic behavior on the part of PPP and PML (N) was the most concerning aspect of this political era. Finally, on November 5, 1996, President Farooq Ahmed Laghari used the authority provided by section 58 (2) (b) of the constitution to dissolve the Benazir Government and NA (Shafqat, 1996). Out of 207 seats up for election in 1997, PML (N) won 137 and PPP won 18. The PML (N) won a resounding majority and established the government. Benazir Bhutto, the leader of the PPP, criticized the election results. She did, however, take over as the opposition's leader in the legislature. Once more, the PML (N) administration and the opposition PPP party engage in hostile and confrontational politics rather than conversing and forging a national consensus (Sultana & Jaffery, 2011). Even the PPP opposition said nothing in support of General Musharraf when the Pakistani Armed Forces started the coup in 1999. PPP opposition hailed the PML (N) government removal when Pervez Musharraf gained complete control of the government in his role as chief executive (Gohar, 2015).

### **PPP Politics of Alliances and Dealings (1998-2008): Decade of Reconciliation**

During this decade, the PPP adopted the policy of reconciliation, which was when it played its most significant role in alliances and transactions. The Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), which was an alliance of political and religious parties against the Nawaz authoritarianism, was most notable and was created by Nasrullah Khan. This alliance was created with the primary goals of saving the federation and ousting an increasingly domineering PM Nawaz Sharif. The PPP had more impact because it was more important to it (Hussain, 2008).

The GDA expressed its gratitude for the departure of the government and hoped that the military will start the process of holding corrupt politicians accountable (Kumar, 2001). The PPP, which formerly felt like the military's crown jewel, is now focusing on a higher degree of agreement among political parties at the GDA's request. On December 3, 2000, in Islamabad, a new alliance known as the "Alliance for Restoration of Democracy" was formed after the alliance chose to join forces with the PML (N), however it lost eight of its component parties (Nawa-i-Waqat, 2000, December 4). Nawabzada Nasarullah Khan was selected as its President. The ARD united the PPP

and PML (N), two adversarial parties, despite their differences. The ARD requested the return of democracy, the exiled leaders Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, as well as the military's return to the barracks. But because of Nawabzada Nasarullah Khan's passing on September 27, 2003, the fight for democracy ceased, and the government was successful in involving all parties (Hussain, 2008).

The Political Parties Order 2002 was issued by Pervez Musharraf prior to the 2002 general elections (PPO-2002). Undoubtedly, the clauses in the order were meant to keep Benazir in exile in Dubai (Kennedy, 2006). The public office order, 2002 was issued by Musharraf in July 2002 which forbade politicians from holding office more than twice or three times. Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif's removal from office was devastating (Talbot, 2002). Therefore PPP created Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarian under the leadership of Amin Fahim to participate in elections according to circumstances.

Benazir resolved to strengthen Pakistan's democracy in light of the current situation after learning her lesson. In 2006, Benazir signed the "Charter of Democracy (COD)" with other political parties, particularly the PML (N), in an effort to put her ideas which she had first proposed into practice. She signed the National Reconstruction Ordinance (NRO), which was intended to restore democracy in the country, in 2007 while also taking a realistic approach. In accordance with this agreement, Musharraf would continue in office while Benazir was permitted to return to Pakistan, engage in real politics, and have all cases against her and her husband Zardari withdrawn (Chawla, 2017). According to the agreement, Benazir Bhutto travelled to Pakistan on October 18, 2007, where she was warmly welcomed by her supporters. Oddly, though, four hours later, she was the target of a brutal suicide attack, which she miraculously survived despite the fact that the attack resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people. On the same day as the declaration of emergency, President Musharraf then signed a provisional constitutional decree suspending the fundamental rights (Ahmad & Afridi, 2014). Benazir Bhutto ultimately made the decision to participate in a long March, but she was kept at home right away due to a difficulty with internal security. Benazir then requests cooperation from the foreign media in order to expose Musharraf's autocratic behaviour (Shahzad & Kokab, 2013).

Pakistan's general elections were set for January 8, 2008, according to the election commission of Pakistan (Dawn, 2007, 21, Nov). Due to a lack of time, the coalition of political parties known as the All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM), which includes the PML (N), PTI, Jamaat-e-Islami, and Pukhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, boycotted the polls (Dawn, November 30, 2007). But immediately after speaking with Benazir Bhutto, they decided to reverse course and run in the elections. However, a combination of anti-democratic and Islamist extremist elements led to Benazir's murder on December 27, 2007. On December 27, 2007, she tragically and unexpectedly passed away; leaving a political void that Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto filled (Ahmad & Afridi, 2014). Following Benazir's assassination, Zardari and Mian Nawaz Sharif advanced the politics of reconciliation that had been espoused by Benazir. Nawaz Sharif felt hopeless under the Musharraf administration and planned to boycott the elections, but Zardari persuaded him to run

nonetheless and pledged to uphold the COD in letter and spirit with him. The murder of BB inevitably generated sympathy across all political parties, but it also heightened political tension because the PPP's democratic credentials were compromised by the possibility of a deal with Musharraf (Chawla, 2017).

### **PPP as Governing and Major Parliamentary Opposition (2008-18): Decade of Pragmatism**

Under the new direction of Asif Ali Zardari and his son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the PPP underwent a transformation during this decade. This new leadership and its pragmatic politics dominated the whole decade. The PPP adopted a practical approach to political issues, remained in power or as possible opposition, and as a result had a significant influence on policymaking at the federal and provincial levels. The killing of Benazir Bhutto, who was quite well-liked at the time, increased public sympathy for the Peoples Party. Many votes cast in favour of the Peoples Party were motivated by sympathy for Benazir Bhutto's sacrifice. The lengthy military dictatorship of General Pervez Musharraf was ended by the 2008 elections, which also brought back civilian government under the Pakistan People Party (PPP) (Goodson, 2008). Following the passage of the Charter of Democracy (COD), a coalition led by the PPP was able to approve the important 18th amendment to the 1973 constitution, converting Pakistan from a presidential to a parliamentary republic, with the support of all parties in the parliament. The constitutional amendment's 18th amendment reduced the president's authority and gave it to the Prime Minister and the Parliament instead. The executive power, which had previously been held by the president, was transferred to the prime minister through the 18th amendment. Article 58(2) b of the constitution was repealed by the constitutional 18th amendment, which limited the president's ability to dissolve assemblies (Khan, Ullah & Khan, 2021). Now, under a new arrangement for dissolving the National assembly, the president must take the prime minister's advice, which is in line with the true spirit of parliamentary democracy. The prime minister of Pakistan now has the authority to name the chief of the Army staff, the chief of the Pakistani Air force and Navy, and the chairman of the Public Service Commission, which was before the president's prerogative. In order to further improve parliamentary democracy, the PPP led the government by implementing the committee system and establishing a culture of consensus politics (Shah, 2012). The treasury and opposition benches of the legislature made up the parliamentary committees. This procedure not only recognized the opposition's role but also guaranteed the smooth operation of parliament. To ensure a peaceful transition of power from one party to another through an impartial electoral process, legislative committees are crucial in the nomination of judges, senior ECP officials, including the chief election commissioner, and caretaker governments (Shafiq, Khan & Shah, 2020). To reinforce Pakistan's federalism, the amendment revised the relationship between the centre and the provinces. Along with other revisions, the amendment gives the provinces more power by removing the concurrent list, which transferred 47 subjects and 20–25 ministries to the provincial governments. Under the terms of the NFC award, the national revenue was divided between the federal and provincial governments; a formula for resource sharing was established. Under the leadership of the prime minister, the council of common interests (CCI) and national economic council (NEC) were resurrected and strengthened as emblems of parliamentary democracy (Khan,

Ullah & Khan, 2021). In 2011, the PPP government changed the frontier crimes regulation (FCR) and extended the political parties order 2002 to federally administered tribal areas (FATA), allowing political parties to operate there for the first time. This was done to fulfill their COD and campaign pledge to mainstream the tribal people and grant them their democratic rights. The Aghaz Haqooq-e-Balochistan initiative was started by the PPP government with the goal of integrating Baluchistan into society and bolstering the federation. PPP successfully served from 2008 to 2013 by implementing the politics of pragmatism (Chawla, 2018). The 2013 General Election results demonstrated that the PPP was losing political influence both at the federal and provincial levels. The PPP appeared to be shrinking at the provincial level for the first time. It managed to reclaim stature as a strong opposition party despite continuing to be a significant member of the ruling coalition in the province of Sindh and a national opposition party (Shafiq, Khan & Shah, 2020). Additionally, it was not represented in the Baluchistan provincial legislature and had a minor presence in the provincial assemblies of the Punjab and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP). In the 2018 senate election, the PPP gained ground in Balochistan and restored some of its lost stature. The PPP continued to be amicable with the PML (N) government while serving as the primary opposition party up until 2018 (Chawla, 2018).

In the backdrop of the most important constitutional revisions from 2013 to 2018, PPP also contributed positively to Pakistan's political development. The major purpose of pragmatists is to achieve the intended results to do this; they adapt to changing circumstances and do not give up on anything in order to achieve their objective. Because of this, the PPP leadership harshly condemned Nawaz Sharif in the Panama Gate case. The PPP leadership transformed the party from being the "friendly opposition" to being the "potent opposition" (Chawla, 2017). Prior to the 2018 General Elections, the party obtained political compensation from the Panama leaks scandal and other related concerns. With the exception of Sindh, where it won the most votes, the PPP had poor electoral results in the 2018 general elections. As a result, the party established its own provincial government in Sindh and continued to serve as an opposition force alongside the PML (N) in the Parliament (The News, 2018, July 27). The PPP will continue to be a vibrant party and play a significant role in Pakistan's political evolution in 2022, despite its electoral strength being restricted to Sindh in the 2013.

### **Conclusion**

In short, PPP completed its long political journey of a unique struggle in more than fifty years and almost five decades. The party has celebrated its Golden Jubilee. The PPP, which was established by a charismatic leader, arose as a revolutionary tool to end the dictatorship's authority in the nation. The PPP came into being as a political party with a distinctive struggle for democracy and supremacy of the constitution and Parliament. The Zia regime caused the party great suffering, but they never gave up hope. Following the passing of Bhutto's charismatic leadership, Benazir came on the Pakistani political landscape as a charismatic leader. Her singular struggle for the party's survival and regeneration resulted in the return of democracy to the nation. Although the party produced yet another military dictatorship, the culture of troika politics suffered greatly. The party, having learned from its mistakes in the past, embraced a strategy of reconciliation to open the door



for the country's return to democracy. After losing another charismatic leader, the party reshaped with renewed vigor, adhering to the COD commitments and adopting pragmatist politics to engage in state issues. From that point on, the party played a significant role in Pakistani politics till 2018. The PPP is entering a new decade, but the challenges and struggle are continuing. If the party can return to its heyday under the young leadership of Bilawal Bhutto, only time will tell.

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