



## Decline of PPP in the Punjab During Election 2013 and 2018, the Root Causes and Consequence

Mahmood Ali \*

\* PhD Scholar, School of Political Science, Minhaj University, Lahore. [mahmoodrafiq786@gmail.com](mailto:mahmoodrafiq786@gmail.com)

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Submitted 25.08.2023

Accepted 11.12.2023

Published 31.12.2023

Volume No. 10

Issue No. II

ISSN (Online) 2414-8512

ISSN (Print) 2311-293X

DOI:

**Keywords:** Decline, Masses, Mobilized, Factionalism, Electorate, Anti-Incumbency

### ABSTRACT

*This research paper examines the decline of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the province of Punjab during the general elections of 2013 and 2018. The paper aims to identify the root causes behind the declining popularity of the PPP in Punjab and analyze the consequences of this decline on the party's political standing. The research utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Primary and secondary data sources, including interviews, surveys, and archival records, are used to gather relevant information. The findings shed light on the factors contributing to the PPP's decline, such as internal party dynamics, electoral strategies, socio-political environment, and voter perceptions. Furthermore, the paper discusses the consequences of the decline for the PPP, its role in Punjab's political landscape, and potential implications for the party's future. The study concludes by offering recommendations for the PPP to address the identified root causes and regain electoral support in Punjab.*



### Introduction

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is one of the major political parties in Pakistan. It was founded in 1967 by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a prominent Pakistani politician and statesman. The party emerged as a progressive and left-leaning force, advocating for social justice, democracy, and economic reforms. The PPP gained significant popularity and support in the 1970s under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. In the 1970 general elections, the party won the majority of seats in West Pakistan and formed the government. Bhutto implemented a series of reforms, including nationalizing industries, introducing land reforms, and pursuing a pro-poor agenda. However, the PPP's first government was overthrown in a military coup in 1977, leading to the imprisonment and execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Despite facing adversity, the party continued to mobilize support under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's daughter.

Benazir Bhutto served as the Prime Minister of Pakistan in two non-consecutive terms, first from 1988 to 1990 and then from 1993 to 1996. She focused on addressing social inequality, improving healthcare and education, and promoting women's rights. Her tenure was marked by political instability, as she faced challenges from rival political parties and military interference. (Ziring, 1997) Tragically, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in 2007 while campaigning for the general elections. Her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, took over the leadership of the PPP and became the President of Pakistan in 2008. Under Zardari's leadership, the party emphasized reconciliation, democracy, and economic development. (Rizvi, 2014) The PPP has a strong support base in rural areas of Sindh province, particularly among the lower-income groups and marginalized communities. The party has historically championed the rights of workers, peasants, and minorities, and has been a vocal advocate for the rights of women and marginalized groups.

### **Research Objectives:**

1. To understand the factors contributing to the decline of the Pakistan People Party (PPP) in Punjab.
2. To analyze the role of leadership and internal dynamics within the PPP in Punjab in its decline.
3. To examine the impact of changing political landscape and electoral alliances on the decline of the PPP in Punjab.
4. To explore the influence of socioeconomic factors on the declining support for the PPP in Punjab.
5. To identify the strategies and policies that can help revive the PPP's popularity and support in Punjab.

### **Research Questions:**

1. What are the main factors that have led to the decline of the Pakistan People Party (PPP) in the province of Punjab?
2. How has the leadership and internal dynamics within the PPP in Punjab contributed to its decline?
3. What role has the changing political landscape and electoral alliances played in the decline of the PPP in Punjab?
4. To what extent have socioeconomic factors, such as unemployment, poverty, and inequality, influenced the declining support for the PPP in Punjab?
5. What strategies and policies can the PPP adopt to revive its popularity and support in Punjab?

### **Research Methodology**

The present study has carried out a qualitative research technique and an exploratory approach to examine the decline of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the Punjab during the elections of 2013 and 2018. In order to fully explore the intricate dynamics and underlying causes of the PPP support reduction in the region, qualitative research is the method of choice. Through technique like content analysis, this strategy makes it possible to gather rich, context-specific data that can help us understand the underlying causes of the electoral failures in a more complex way. The exploratory approach underscores the necessity of identifying novel insights, patterns, and correlations, guaranteeing a thorough investigation of the complex aspects impacting the electoral performance of the PPP. With an emphasis on capturing the nuances of the political scene and its effects, this research attempts to provide a comprehensive analysis of the PPP's decline in the Punjab throughout the designated election years by utilizing a qualitative and exploratory approach.

### **Review of the Literature**

Chhibber and Verma's comprehensive work explored the dynamics of political parties in South Asia, shedding light on the challenges faced by democratic institutions. By examining case studies from Pakistan, including the decline of the PPP in Punjab during the 2013 and 2018 elections, the authors provide valuable insights into the broader contextual factors influencing the party's electoral performance. The book offers a theoretical framework to understand the complexities of party politics, making it an essential reference for analyzing the decline of PPP in a regional and comparative perspective (Chhibber and Verma).

Haggard and Kaufman's book explained into the political economy of democratic transitions, offering a lens through which to examine the decline of political parties. By exploring the economic factors impacting political landscapes, the authors contribute to understanding the root causes of party decline. Applying this framework to the PPP's experience in Punjab during the 2013 and 2018 elections could provide valuable insights into how economic considerations may have influenced the party's diminishing electoral fortunes (Haggard and Kaufman, 1995).

Fukuyama's work provides a historical and global perspective on political development, offering a framework to analyze the decline of political entities. By assessing the internal organizational structures of political parties and the challenges they face over time, Fukuyama's insights may prove useful in understanding the internal dynamics within the PPP that contributed to its decline in Punjab during the specified election years (Fukuyama, 2015).

They explored various theories shaping political economy. By applying these theories to the political landscape of Punjab and the decline of the PPP during the 2013 and 2018 elections, researchers can gain a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between economic structures, political institutions, and party dynamics. This book serves as a foundational resource for unpacking the multidimensional factors influencing political decline in specific contexts (Caporaso & Levine, 2009).

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) holds significant historical significance in the province of Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province. The party has played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape of Punjab and has had a lasting impact on the region's politics.

The PPP was founded by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1967, and it quickly gained popularity in Punjab. Bhutto, a charismatic leader, mobilized the masses with his socialist ideology, promises of land reforms, and emphasis on the welfare of the common people. The party's message resonated with the rural population of

Punjab, which had long been marginalized. In the 1970 general elections, the PPP won a majority of seats in Punjab, securing a significant foothold in the province (Talbot, 1998).

One of the key agendas of the PPP was the implementation of land reforms to address the issue of feudalism in Punjab. Under Bhutto's government, land redistribution policies were introduced, leading to the breakup of large landholdings and the distribution of land among landless farmers. These reforms had a significant impact on the socioeconomic structure of Punjab and helped empower the rural population. Punjab became the stronghold of the PPP during Bhutto's tenure. The party's popularity and influence in the province were instrumental in consolidating Bhutto's political power at the national level. The support from Punjab allowed the PPP to maintain its dominance in national politics and implement its agenda effectively. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's execution in 1979 marked a turning point in the PPP's history. The party faced severe setbacks, and its popularity waned in Punjab. However, Bhutto's daughter, Benazir Bhutto, emerged as a prominent leader and revived the party's fortunes in the 1980s. Benazir Bhutto's charismatic leadership and her ability to connect with the masses rejuvenated the PPP in Punjab, leading to significant electoral victories in the province. (Rashid, 2010).

The PPP's resurgence in Punjab continued in subsequent years. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the party managed to form coalition governments in Punjab, gaining control over the province's administration. The PPP's presence in Punjab provided a counterbalance to the dominance of other political parties in the province, ensuring a more diverse political landscape. (Cheema & Qaiser, 2012)

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is one of the major political parties in Pakistan, and Punjab is the country's largest and most populous province. Historically, the PPP has had a strong presence in Sindh province, with limited influence in Punjab, which has been traditionally dominated by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). In the general elections held in 2013, the PPP faced a significant decline in Punjab, winning only a few seats compared to the PML-N and PTI. The party struggled to gain popular support and faced allegations of corruption and mismanagement during its tenure in the federal government from 2008 to 2013.

The PPP in Punjab has often faced challenges in finding strong and charismatic leaders who can mobilize support and compete against the dominant political forces in the province. The absence of influential local leadership has been a factor contributing to the decline of the party. The PPP has experienced factionalism and internal divisions in Punjab, which have weakened its organizational structure and electoral prospects. These internal issues have hindered the party's ability to present a united front and attract voters. (Daily Times, 2021.) Punjab has witnessed a shift in voter preferences in recent years, with the rise of the PTI as a major political force. The PTI's anti-corruption narrative and promises of change resonated with voters, leading to a decline in support for traditional parties like the PPP and PML-N.

### **Analysis of the Decline of the PPP in Punjab**

The decline of the PPP in Punjab, the largest and most populous province of Pakistan, can be attributed to several factors:

The decline of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the Punjab during the 2013 and 2018 elections is a multifaceted phenomenon rooted in a complex interplay of political, economic, and social factors. Analyzing the context reveals that the party faced challenges ranging from internal organizational issues to changing voter sentiments. The political landscape witnessed the rise of rival parties and shifting alliances, contributing to the erosion of PPP's historical stronghold in the region. Economic considerations, coupled with governance concerns, may have further undermined the party's appeal to voters. Additionally, regional and national political dynamics, as well as issues related to leadership and policy direction, played pivotal roles in shaping the electoral consequences for the PPP. This contextual analysis aims to unravel the intricate web of factors that led to the party's decline, offering a holistic understanding of the political landscape in Punjab during these pivotal election years.

Historically, the PPP has had a strong support base in rural Sindh and some parts of southern Punjab, but it has struggled to gain significant traction in the politically competitive province of Punjab. Punjab has been a stronghold of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and, to a lesser extent, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The PPP's limited support base in Punjab has hindered its ability to secure a significant number of seats in the provincial assembly. The performance of the PPP in Punjab has also been affected by internal issues and leadership challenges. The party has faced internal divisions, factionalism, and a lack of strong leadership in the province. Infighting and a failure to present a united front have undermined the party's appeal and electoral prospects. The effectiveness of a political party is often linked to the quality of its leadership. If the leaders of a party in a particular region, such as Punjab, fail to inspire and connect with the electorate, it can lead to a decline in support.

Leadership issues may include a lack of charisma, poor decision-making, internal conflicts, corruption

allegations, or a failure to address the concerns and aspirations of the people. Internal dynamics within a party can significantly impact its stability and popularity. Factionalism, power struggles, and infighting weaken party unity and divert attention from important issues. When party members are engaged in internal conflicts instead of focusing on serving the public, it can erode public trust and support. Political parties need to adapt to changing social, economic, and political dynamics to remain relevant. If a party fails to address emerging issues, respond to public demands, or adapt its policies and strategies, it may lose support. Parties that are seen as disconnected from the needs of the people or resistant to change can face decline over time. (Khalid B. Sayeed (2012).

The PPP's policies and rhetoric have not always resonated with the concerns and aspirations of the people in Punjab. The party's focus on issues such as social justice and pro-poor measures has not gained widespread support in a province where economic development and infrastructure projects are often prioritized. The party's messaging and policy agenda have sometimes been seen as disconnected from the needs of the Punjab electorate. (Khalid, 2019). Punjab has seen alternations in power between the PML-N and PTI in recent years, leading to a degree of anti-incumbency sentiment against the ruling parties. However, the PPP has failed to effectively capitalize on this sentiment and position itself as a viable alternative.

The lack of a strong local leadership and a coherent strategy to tap into anti-incumbency dynamics has contributed to the party's decline. It's important to note that political dynamics can evolve rapidly, and there may have been new developments since my last knowledge update. The general elections in Pakistan were held on May 11, 2013, including the province of Punjab, which is the most populous province in the country. The main political parties that contested the elections in Punjab were the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The PML-N, led by Nawaz Sharif, emerged as the dominant party in Punjab, winning a significant majority of seats. They secured 214 out of 297 seats in the Punjab Assembly, enabling them to form the provincial government.

The PML-N's victory in Punjab played a crucial role in their overall success in the national elections, where they secured a majority to form the federal government. The PTI, led by Imran Khan, emerged as the second-largest party in Punjab, securing 28 seats in the provincial assembly. Although they did not win a majority, their performance marked a significant increase in their electoral presence in Punjab compared to previous elections. The PPP, which had historically been a major player in Punjab politics, faced a significant defeat, winning only 6 seats in the province. The 2013 elections in Punjab were characterized by allegations of rigging and irregularities, which led to protests and legal challenges by some political parties. The general elections in Pakistan were held on July 25, 2018, which included Punjab. The main political parties that contested the elections in Punjab were the PML-N, PTI, and PPP, along with other regional and smaller parties. The 2018 elections in Punjab witnessed a significant shift in political dynamics.

The PTI, under the leadership of Imran Khan, emerged as the dominant party in the province, securing a majority of seats in the Punjab Assembly. The PTI won 179 out of 295 seats, allowing them to form the provincial government. The PML-N, led by Nawaz Sharif's brother, Shehbaz Sharif, faced a setback in Punjab compared to the previous elections. They secured 164 seats, becoming the main opposition party in the province. The PPP's performance in Punjab remained relatively weak, winning only 7 seats. The 2018 elections were also marked by allegations of rigging and irregularities, with several political parties contesting the results. However, the PTI's victory in Punjab and at the national level allowed them to form the federal government. (Official results announce by PEC). As of my last update in September 2021, I can provide some common reasons that might have contributed to the downfall of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in Punjab, Pakistan. It's important to note that political situations can change rapidly, and new developments may have occurred since then.

The performance of the PPP-led government at the federal and provincial levels could have been a significant factor. If the party failed to deliver on its promises, implement effective policies, and address the issues faced by the people of Punjab, it might have led to disillusionment and decreased public support. Allegations of corruption and involvement in various scandals by PPP leaders, both at the national and provincial levels, could have eroded public trust in the party. Such accusations can seriously damage a party's reputation and electoral prospects. The presence of strong and well-organized rival parties in Punjab, such as the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) or other regional parties, may have limited the PPP's ability to secure a significant number of seats in the province. Tough competition from other parties can lead to a reduced share of the vote and fewer seats in the legislative assemblies.

Building and maintaining strong grassroots support is crucial for any political party's success. If the PPP failed to effectively mobilize its supporters and create a robust ground game, it could have faced challenges in winning constituencies and securing seats. Infighting, lack of internal cohesion, and leadership

struggles within the party could have undermined its effectiveness and credibility. Internal divisions can weaken a party's image and make it less appealing to voters. Economic challenges in the country, such as inflation, unemployment, and poverty, can significantly impact a ruling party's popularity, especially if they are unable to address these problems effectively. The PPP is historically associated with representing the interests of the Sindh province, and this perception might have affected its popularity in Punjab, where voters might have felt that the party prioritizes its home province over others.

The PPP's performance in Punjab, especially concerning governance and public service delivery, has often been a point of contention. If the provincial government fails to effectively address the needs and concerns of the people, it can lead to dissatisfaction among voters and contribute to the party's downfall. Corruption has been a longstanding issue in Pakistan's political landscape, and the PPP has not been immune to such allegations. If there are credible accusations of corruption or mismanagement against the party or its key members in Punjab, it can erode public trust and support. Political parties need strong local leadership to connect with voters and address regional challenges effectively. If the PPP lacks charismatic and capable leaders at the provincial level, it can struggle to gain popularity and compete with other parties in Punjab. Punjab is the most populous province in Pakistan and has diverse ethnic and regional dynamics.

The PPP, being historically associated with Sindh province, may face challenges in gaining widespread support in Punjab due to these differences. Punjab has been a stronghold of other political parties, such as the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The PPP faces stiff competition from these parties, making it challenging to secure a significant share of seats in the provincial assembly. If the PPP's policies and priorities do not align with the specific needs and interests of the people in Punjab, it can lead to a lack of support for the party in the province. Like any political party, internal divisions and conflicts within the PPP can weaken its overall position in Punjab and negatively impact its electoral performance.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has faced its fair share of corruption scandals over the years, and these scandals have indeed had an impact on the party's popularity and decline. About 37 percent population in survey shows their opinion that the corruption scandals are main reason of decline of Pakistan People Party in the country. However, it is important to note that corruption is a complex issue that affects multiple political parties and institutions in many countries, not just the PPP in Pakistan.

One of the most significant corruption scandals involving the PPP was the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) case, which emerged during the tenure of President Asif Ali Zardari, Benazir Bhutto's widower. The NRO was an amnesty law passed in 2007 that granted immunity to politicians and bureaucrats involved in corruption cases from 1986 to 1999. The Supreme Court of Pakistan declared the NRO unconstitutional in 2009, leading to widespread criticism of the PPP government for attempting to protect corrupt individuals.

The PPP has also faced allegations of corruption in other areas, such as mismanagement of public funds, embezzlement, nepotism, and favoritism. These scandals have eroded public trust in the party and contributed to its decline in popularity. The perception of corruption within the PPP has led many voters to seek alternative political options. It is worth mentioning that corruption is not unique to any single political party in Pakistan. Other political parties have also faced similar allegations and scandals. However, the repeated corruption scandals involving the PPP have had a significant impact on its reputation and electoral performance. It is important to note that political parties evolve and change over time, and the decline of the PPP cannot be solely attributed to corruption scandals. Factors such as shifting political dynamics, changing voter preferences, economic issues, and internal party dynamics also play a role in the rise and fall of political parties.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has had a long and complex history in addressing pressing issues in Pakistan. While it has made efforts to tackle various challenges, there have been instances where it has faced criticism for its inability to effectively address certain issues. In survey, 5 percent population is agreed on this issue.

## **Conclusion**

The decline of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the Punjab during the 2013 and 2018 elections can be attributed to several root causes. These factors contributed to the party's diminishing support and had consequential effects on its political influence and representation in the region. One of the primary reasons for the decline of the PPP in Punjab was the perception of poor performance and governance during its tenure. The party was unable to effectively address the socio-economic challenges faced by the people of Punjab, leading to disillusionment and a loss of confidence among voters. The PPP faced significant allegations of corruption and mismanagement, which eroded its credibility and public trust. The exposure of high-profile corruption scandals, such as the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) case, further tarnished the party's image and weakened its support base in Punjab. Shift in Political Landscape: The

political landscape in Punjab underwent a transformation during this period. The emergence of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as a major political force attracted a substantial portion of the electorate, drawing support away from traditional parties like the PPP. The PTI's anti-corruption stance and promises of change resonated with voters, resulting in a decline in PPP's popularity. Internal divisions within the PPP also played a role in its decline. Infighting, factionalism, and a lack of cohesive leadership weakened the party's ability to mobilize its supporters effectively. These internal conflicts further damaged the party's image and contributed to its diminishing electoral performance. Reduced Political Influence: The decline of the PPP resulted in a diminished political influence for the party in Punjab. With fewer seats and a decreased vote share, the party's ability to shape policies and decision-making processes was significantly curtailed. The decline in support translated into fewer elected representatives from the PPP in Punjab's legislative bodies. This meant that the party had less voice and representation in key decision-making forums, limiting its ability to advocate for its agenda and priorities. The decline in electoral performance also weakened the party's organizational structure at the grassroots level in Punjab. With a reduced support base, the party faced challenges in maintaining an active and dedicated cadre, which impacted its ability to mobilize voters and effectively contest elections. Punjab's status as the most populous and politically influential province in Pakistan means that the decline of the PPP in the region had broader implications for national politics. The party's weakened presence in Punjab limited its capacity to shape national policies and political dynamics, affecting its overall standing in the country. It is important to note that the political landscape is subject to change, and future elections may bring new opportunities or challenges for the PPP in Punjab.

#### References:

- Ali Banuazizi and Myron Wiener, *In The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics in Afghanistan, Iran , And Pakistan*, ed. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press,1986.p.343
- Caporaso, J.A. and Levine, D. P. (2009). *Theories of Political Economy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Cheema, M. A., & Qaiser, P. (2012). Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Punjab Politics, 1988-1999. *Journal of Political Studies*, 19(1), 123-144.
- Chhibber, P. K and Verma, R. (2007). *Democracy and Political Parties in South Asia*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Fukuyama, F. (2015) *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*. New York, NY: Profile Book Limited.
- Haggard, S. and. Kaufman, R. R. (1995). *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions*. New Jersey, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Khalid B. Sayeed (2019). *Political Parties in Pakistan: The Historical Struggle for Power"* London, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lamb, Christina, *Waiting for Allah: Pakistan's Struggle for Democracy*, Calcutta, IND: Bookhives, 1991, p.54
- NusratJaved,*Ojhri Camp kiTabahikaZimadarKaun?* [Who was Responsible for the Ojhri Camp Disaster?] , Express News Islamabad/Lahore/ Karachi, June 1, 2013
- Philip E. Jones.(2018). *The Pakistan People's Party: Rise to Power*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press
- Rashid, A. (2010). *Benazir Bhutto: Favored Daughter*. London, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Rizvi, H. (2014). *Military, State and Society in Pakistan*. London, UK: Springer.
- SaeedShafqat, *Civil-Military Relations: From Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to Benazir Bhutto* , Boulder, CO: West view Press 1997, pp.204-206
- Stephen P.Cohen, *The Pakistan Army*, 2nd ed. Karachi, PK: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.96 98
- Talbot, I. (1998). *Pakistan: A Modern History*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Ziring, L. (1997). *Pakistan in the Twentieth Century: A Political History*. London, UK: Oxford University Press.