

## Decline of Peoples Party as Political Force

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**Abstract** Pakistan People's party from the day it was formed connected with the masses like no other party in the history of Pakistan. Its socialist slogans and the laborer and peasant friendly policies discussed in their manifesto made Peoples Party a popular party in lower and middle class. People's party was a center-left party which had Charismatic leadership. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and all his associates were intellectually and politically strong. Moreover Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was a great orator and he always succeeded in connecting with people through his speeches. After Bhutto was hanged Benazir Bhutto daughter of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto took charge of party. Benazir also as her father emerged as a charismatic leader as she took her political training from her father. Benazir for two times became Prime Minister of Country and went to self-exile in 1999 and returned to Pakistan in 2007 for the elections of 2008. She was assassinated on 27<sup>th</sup> Dec 2007 but her party won elections of 2008 and PPP formed its government. Yusuf Raza Gilani became Prime Minister and Asif Ali Zardari became party head and later Head of State of Pakistan. PPP was not able to perform well during its tenure from 2008-2013. Government was alleged of corruption Asif Ali Zardari was a controversial personality and many diehard 'jayalash' parted their ways from PPP as he was leader. During last days of PPP government opposition raised slogans of "GO ZARDARI GO". There was security and energy crisis throughout the tenure of PPP. After death of charismatic Benazir There was leadership crisis in the party and government there was no face in Peoples Party with which the masses would be able to connect. In result of all this PPP badly failed in 2013 elections. This research paper is based to find out what were the major reasons which resulted in the worst defeat of PPP. To find this out interviews of important personalities which were associated with PPP will be studied and survey and interviews among the masses

of such constituency will be conducted which was stronghold of PPP in 2008 but in 2013 elections PPP faced defeat. This research paper will help us to find out why and how such popular party is facing decline these days. And is its decline momentary like previously it was in Zia-ul-haq's and Musharraf's era or it will remain with the party for longer period of time.

### INTRODUCTION

"Islam is our faith, Democracy is our politics, Socialism is our economy, All power to people" was the agenda on which the most popular Political party of Pakistan was formed. These words were coined by J.K Rahim who was close associate of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (founder of Peoples Party) and was one of the founder members of Pakistan People's party. On 30<sup>th</sup> November 1967 Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto along with some of his fellows ( notably Shaikh Rashid J.A.Rahim, Dr.Mubnashir Hassan, Ghulam Mustafa Khar, Rafi Raza, Abdul Hafeez Peerzada, Hayat Sherpao and Meraj Mohammad Khan) founded P.P.P. at house of Dr.Mubashar Hassan in Lahore. Peoples Party was founded as a Center-Left Progressive party, many people with socialist believes joined PPP Shaikh Rashid one of founding member of PPP was also known as Baba-e-Socialism among his fellows. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto traveled across the country, made speeches and Peoples Party as its name suggest became the party of masses. Ayub Khan's falling Popularity, Charismatic Leadership of PPP and its Socialist slogans which attracted working class, all collectively became reasons that people embraced PPP warm heartedly. In the general elections of 1970 Pakistan People's Party emerged as the most successful party of West Pakistan and Awami League was able to secure most seats in East Pakistan. After the separation of East Pakistan and West Pakistan in 1971 Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto on 20<sup>th</sup>

December 1971 replaced Yahya Khan as President and Chief Martial Law administrator. The first thing Bhutto and his cabinet focused on was the making of a new constitution which should be based on the consensus of all Political forces. Finally Pakistan got its new and 3<sup>rd</sup> constitution in 1973 after which Bhutto became Prime Minister of Pakistan in August 1973. Many major events happened during the regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto; following their socialist slogans Bhutto's Government did the Nationalization of Private sector Industries and Institutions. This action was taken to empower the poor people of country. Land reforms were done two times during the Regime of Bhutto. First Bhutto introduced Land reforms in 1972 then he introduced land reforms in 1977. According to one of his close associate and founder member of People's Party Dr. Mubashir Hassan who also served as Finance minister in Bhutto's cabinet, Bhutto did not want land reforms in his Manifesto. Dr. Mubashir Hassan during his interview answering a question he said "Bhutto never wanted the word "land Reforms" in his manifesto. Sheikh Rashid was the one who used to make this demand and I would support him. Bhutto would say: "Don't start a fight with both capitalist and Feudal at the same time. Let us take on Capitalist first, and later we will deal with the feudal lords." (2017, November 22). The News line. Bhutto tried to justify the foundation slogans which were based on equality and initiated these policies. After Bhutto was hanged and Zia Ul Haq became the Military Dictator of Pakistan there was a temporary decline on PPP during this period many of Bhutto's close friends and so called "Uncles" of her daughter Benazir left the party, the people who were loyal to the party faced many problems including political jails. Party faced downfall during this period but after death of Military Dictator Zia Ul Haq on 17 August 1988 PPP once again emerged. PPP secured most of the seats in the General Elections which were held on 16 November 1988. Benazir Bhutto who received her political training from her Charismatic father became Prime Minister for the first time. However PPP even after attaining good number of seats was not able to run its government and the government was dissolved due to allegation of corruption. In 1990 elections were held again PPP had to face

Islami Jamooriya Ittehad (IJI) which was under leadership of Nawaz Sharif. People's party lost these elections badly and Nawaz Sharif became Prime Minister of Pakistan. IJI government failed to complete its tenure and assemblies were again dissolved. On 6<sup>th</sup> October 1993 elections were held again and this time Peoples party under leadership of Benazir Bhutto won most of the seats and with the help of small parties and some independent candidates Peoples Party made a coalition government. Benazir Bhutto for the second time became Prime Minister of State. This time too Benazir's government did not complete its term. The Government was dissolved by President Farooq Leghari. Government was also alleged by charges of Corruption and financial mismanagement. On 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1997 general elections were held and PML(N) of Nawaz Sharif had a Glorious victory over Peoples Party. This Time Nawaz Sharif became Prime Minister for 2<sup>nd</sup> time. This Government who received overwhelming majority was overthrown through a Military Coup on 14 October 1999 by General Pervez Musharraf who was Chief of Army Staff at that time. The coup was held because the Civil-Military tension.

Benazir Bhutto during all this Period was in self-exile and stayed in Britain and Dubai. She directed her part from abroad as Leader of Peoples Party. On 10<sup>th</sup> October 2002 general Elections were again held under the observation of Military Government of General Pervez Musharraf. Muslim league (Q) won the elections under the leadership of Zaffarullah Khan Jamali. Peoples Party under the leadership of Amin Fahim a loyalist to party and Benazir emerged as a second largest party with respect to seats. Benazir came back to Pakistan after 8 years of self-exile in October 2007 as 2008 was the year of elections and Peoples party was fully prepared for elections. Benazir's welcome rally was attacked by a suicide bomber fortunately Benazir was saved during this attack. Peoples Party was once again on peak of its Political career, People showed their love and respect for the party in the public meetings. On December 28 2007 Benazir was addressing the crowd in Liaquat bagh Rawalpindi in her specific signature way but this unfortunately was her last

speech. She was assassinated after the meeting. Many of the supporters flooded on the streets after this incident, the elections which were to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> January were postponed till 18 February 2008. The assassination of Benazir Bhutto who was very popular at that time raised the sentiment of sympathy in masses towards Peoples Party. Many people voted for Peoples Party, many of votes were based on Sympathy towards the sacrifice of Benazir Bhutto. In elections of 2008 Peoples Party after a very long period emerged as a political force and was able to gain most seats in Parliament. PPP formed its government in Sindh and Center. Yusuf Raza Gillani became Prime Minister of Pakistan. Peoples Party was working under the leadership of Asif Ali Zardari husband of Benazir as her son Bilawal Bhutto who had to be the leader of party was young at that time. Asif Ali Zardari later became President of Pakistan.

Peoples Party in their Tenure was not able to perform well. Many things collectively became factor for disliking of people towards Peoples Party. After death of Benazir Bhutto there was a shift in Party leadership. Now this time most of the things were in hands of Asif Ali Zardari and his sister Faryal Talpur. Mumtaz Bhutto one of associates of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and 'uncle' of Benazir in one of his recent interviews cleared that main leadership of PPP is shifted he said. "Bilawal can't do much he is a hostage to his father and his sister Faryal Talpur." (NewsLine. (2017, November 21). Retrieved from <http://newslinemagazine.com/magazine/bilawalis-hostage-father-aunt-sardar-mumtaz-ali-bhutto/>) This shift in the leadership of PPP and half-blood Bhuttos being face of Party made many 'Jayalas' to turn away from the Party. In addition to this the party ideology also changed, the party which was formed on progressive ideas, whose core values were socialism and democracy which played a very important role in connecting with masses. PPP with the passage of time changed this ideology and became like other pro Capitalist political parties. Dr. Mubashir Hassan (minister in Z.A. Bhutto Cabinet) in his interview said "Bhutto's PPP was anti-imperialist and Socialist party. Today it

is neither of two, today it has become like all other parties; a pro capitalist party. Benazir and Bilawal turned party upside down." (NewsLine. (2017, November 22). Retrieved January 10, 2018, from <http://newslinemagazine.com/magazine/24954-2/>)

Energy crisis during PPP regime was one of major issue due to which masses parted their ways with PPP in elections of 2013. In addition to this there were severe security crisis throughout the regime of PPP after 2008. The tide of suicide bombings which started in 2008 during Musharraf's regime continued and PPP was not able to control that. Army Headquarter in Rawalpindi was also attacked by terrorists in 2009, Mehran Naval Base was attacked on 22 May 2011. "According to the National Crisis Management Cell of Interior Ministry, 1835 people lost their lives and 5,194 suffered injuries in the 1,906 terror attacks which occurred in 2009-10. The continuing security crisis led a US index published in foreign policy magazine in June 2010 to rank Pakistan as 10<sup>th</sup> most failed state in the World, just three places below Afghanistan in a list headed by Somalia." Talbot, I. (2015). *Pakistan: a new history*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Last but not the least PPP government was highly alleged of corruption. There were many charges against PPP of corruption. Moreover the person who was leading PPP Asif Ali Zardari was a controversial man. The stories of PPP corruption were being discussed in the public meetings of PML(N) and PTI. PML(N) raised the slogans of "GO ZARDARI GO". Rise of PTI was also a major threat for PPP in the upcoming elections of 2013 along with their poor performance. All these above discussed factors became reason of PPP being alienated from the masses. Masses parted their ways from PPP in 2013 elections and PPP faced its worst defeat achieving least amount of votes in its history. Even many of the "jayalas" (Followers) of PPP did not vote for their party which was so important for them. Now the question is, What is the actual reason which played key role in alienating PPP from masses? Was it the Stories of corruption of PPP or the

controversial personality of Asif Ali Zardari as head of PPP? Did shift in leadership of Party played role in creating divide between PPP and masses or was it the shift of ideology of the Party? Was poor governance of PPP during its tenure from 2008-2013 and security and energy crisis during their government contributed most in their historical defeat? Unilateral operation carried out by USA to Kill Osama Bin Ladin which was breach of Sovereignty of Pakistan and Raymond Davis case also produces anti-America and anti-government sentiments among common people. How can we ignore the rise of PTI, how it emerged as strong political force in 2013 elections and how it played role in downfall of PPP? Only the masses that did not invested their trust in PPP during elections of 2013 and caused its historical defeat can answer these questions.

We will try to analyze through the views of people and some major personalities related to PPP what was the major contributor in the decline of PPP which was once strongest party in Pakistan. And is its decline momentary or the masses have discarded the party permanently.

### **METHOD**

this research Paper is based on the interviews of the masses the people who voted for PPP in 2008 but they did not chose PPP in 2013 on basis of their statements it will be assessed why they changed their vote, and voted for other political party. The people who were interviewed belonged to different social classes and genders that helped us to find the view of different classes and genders that either the reason for not voting for PPP differs from class and gender too. The constituency from where the sample is taken have both rural and some urban areas, it will help us to have a view of that if rural or urban atmosphere affected the view of people. In addition to this the interviews and the statements of the important people who are associated with the PPP were also analyzed which will help us to have a view of what they think about the decline of the party. The collective assessment and synthesis of the view of masses and the personalities associated with the PPP will give us a better view of what actually became the factor of

decline of Peoples Party as Political force. The People who will be interviewed belong to NA-111 this is the constituency from where in 2008 Dr.Firdos Ashiq stood victorious but with the same candidate in the same constituency PPP faced a shameful defeat in 2013 elections. When the people of constituency were visited the view of people on shift of votes was different. The people being interviewed were picked from 5 different parts of constituency which are Gohudpur, Ugoki, kotli loharan, Gondal and Chapprar among these Gohudpur and Ugoki are kind of urban areas while other three are rural areas. 125 people on whole were interviewed 25 people from each area 20 males and 5 females.

### **RESULTS**

NA-111 is a constituency where in 2008 PPP's candidate Dr.Firdos Ashiq Awan won elections by attaining 78925 votes, leaving behind Ch Amir Hussain of PML (Q) with huge margin and PLM (N) candidate stood third. But the results shifted in 2013 elections PML (N) candidate Armaghan Subhani obtained 136991 votes delivering Dr.Firdos Ashiq a shameful defeat who was just able to bag 51,230 votes.

The opinion of middle class People of Urban area was divided on their shift of vote from PPP to other parties. In Gohudpur 4 out of 20 men changed their votes due to the allegations of corruption on PPP. 15 shifted their votes due to corrupt leadership of the Party and 1 chose not to vote for PPP because of security crisis. Mian Ahmed who owns a kiryaana store in Gohudpur Bazar said "I was a jayala (followers) of PPP at times of Benazir Bhutto, But her Peoples party is no more now, this party now is party of dacoits and loots." Shahbaz Pervaiz a motor mechanic who runs a small shop in Gohudpur commented on poor governance "the corrupt government of PPP made it difficult for a normal mans to even live a simple life, even the basic commodities are out of range for a normal man. In Ugoki which is another sub-urban area 9 people believed that the corrupt leadership of party resulted in the shift of their vote, 4 changed their vote due to the failed security 5 changed their vote due to bad governance of PPP 2 people voted for PTI. Ahsan



Bajwa lecturer in private college commented about his shift of vote as “PPP failed to deliver in past 5 years so I voted for a new political party PTI which had much more charismatic leadership than PPP, who looked much more promising”. In rural area the major reason in shifting the votes was the change of leadership of PPP and personal image of Armaghan Subhaani and his family background. In Chapraar 13 people changed their votes as they believed that the PPP now is not actual people’s party 68 years old Ghulam Baksh who stayed loyal with PPP since long said “said it is not the people party I believe in, I don’t believe in this fake party, PPP is not PPP without a Bhutto leading it”. 7 people shifted their voted because of the poor governance and due to increased pricies of basic commodities during the time of PPP. In Gondal and Kotli Loharaan the major vote change was due to the personality of Armaghan Shubbani as people believed he was a better candidate due to his strong Political background. 9 in Gondal and 13 in kotli loharaan changed their party loyalties to PML(N) due to Armgan Subhani. In Gondal 6 people changed their votes due to corrupt party leadership and 5 changed their votes due to corruption and poor governance while in kotli loharan 4 shifted votes due to corrupt leadership of PPP and 3 shifted their votes due to bad governance. As it comes to females 50% of total sample voted under influence of their family both in 2008 and 2013 election 6 ladies said they voted for Benazir factor in 2008 but now the party did not had any such leadership they can vote for, 4 ladies shifted their votes because PPP government was not able to provide security. A lady who was a house wife in urban area of NA 111 commented on security crisis during PPP government “we don’t need such government which cannot protect our children in playgrounds and schools, our husbands and our loved ones in markets and mosques” When it comes to the Personalities associated with PPP , everyone differently views the lost of PPP in 2013 elections. Dr. Mubashar Hassan the founder member of PPP believed that the change in the ideology of PPP and lack of leadership both added to the failure of PPP as political party. He believes that if PPP will turn back to Socialism then it will be able

to connect with the masses which it is failing to do from long period of time as socialist views are attractive for poor working and middle class. He said “If the PPP adopts a socialist agenda, it can become a popular party once again because socialism has the strength and penetration that can win the hearts of the poor. Today, those with wealth have a monopoly over the entire system; ordinary people do not matter”( Benazir and Bilawal have turned party upside down. (2017, November 22). *News Line.*) When it comes to leadership of the party he believed that even the current leader of the party is not able to connect with the people saying on this he commented “If Bilawal could learn the art of oratory and articulate what lies in the heart of the people, he can emerge as a leader” ( Benazir and Bilawal have turned party upside down. (2017, November 22). *News Line.*)

Another close associate of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and founding member of PPP Mumtaz Bhutto think that PPP is going through a leadership crisis, PPP don’t have a leader which can connect with people and talking about Bilawal Bhutto he said “Bilawal can’t do much, even if he wants. He is a hostage to his father and his aunt, Faryal Talpur. The two of them have been on a money-making spree, and Bilawal doesn’t seem to have it in him to grow out of their shadows.” (*NewsLine.* (2017, November 21). Retrieved from <http://newslinemagazine.com/magazine/bilawalis-hostage-father-aunt-sardar-mumtaz-ali-bhutto/>) this statement of him reflects that Bilawal is still as a puppet in his father’s hand and PPP still lacks a strong leadership. Former senator of PPP Dr. Safdar Abbasi in one of his interviewed commented about the leadership of the party that he do not feel as sorry about the party what the current leadership have done to it but he feel sorry that the old members who have always loved the party cannot save it. On another occasion Nahid Khan who was Political secretary of Benazir till the end of her life was asked a question in an interview that what she thinks that did PPP died with the death of Benazir Bhutto? “She answered that only time will tell but indicators are pointing in that direction.” This reflects her opinion that there is a leadership crisis in PPP and after the

Death of Benazir Bhutto the Party was not able to have a leader who could be face of party.

### CONCLUSION

If we assess the results from the interviews of the voters of NA111 we will see that 22.2% of sample did not voted for PPP due to its Poor governance and allegations of corruptions on government. 7.2% of people did not voted for PPP because of the factor they failed to maintain law and order and security in the country and during their time there were severe security crisis. 1.6% of sample voted for PTI as it was a new party and People wanted to vote for them as they found PTI and Imran Khan more promising (though PPP was not able to perform in NA 111). 17.6% of people changed their votes because of the personality of the candidate who was opposing Dr. Firdos who won in 2008 as Armaghan Subhani himself belonged to a family with a strong political background. 8% did not voted for PPP as they voted before because of the influence of their family. 42.4% of people who voted for PPP previously changed their vote as they found the current leadership of PPP weak. They chose not to vote for Peoples party as they felt that the current leadership of Peoples party was a corrupt leadership, Peoples Party did not have any such face with people can relate to, the current leadership of PPP failed to gain trust of PPP. The Charismatic Leadership of PPP was considered as a backbone of the party. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was a man of intellect and charisma after him his daughter Benazir who also was a strong leader and a brilliant orator just like his father and Political mentor. Both Father and daughter connected with masses with their specific style but the current leadership and current Bhutto of PPP lacks that charisma and spark. He lacks his own style he has failed to connect to the people through his speeches which his mother and grandfather was able to do. The interviews of former members of PPP also reflect that the major reason behind the current situation of PPP is the current leadership of the party. As Nahid Khan political secretary by her comment that momentary it looks like PPP died with Benazir reflects that the party did not have a strong leadership which will take out party from this situation. Many

of the jayalas (followers) turned away from the party despite of their love for Peoples Party, most of them believed that current PPP now is not Bhutto's PPP it is the Zardari version of Peoples Party, His personal image, his image as mr. 10 percent during the tenure of PPP have affected the party and it turned away many of jayalas (Followers) of PPP. In past too Party faced many crises, there were times when it seemed like that PPP will disappear from the political map but it reemerged, only reason it always reemerged stronger than before was the strong leadership. The leadership on which people had faith, the leadership in which people invested their trust, the leadership with which they always stood to give sacrifices. Allegations of corruption could also be reason of shift of many loyal voters of PPP towards other parties but if we observe history of Peoples Party we will see that PPP had allegations of corruption on its every government since 1988. The 1988 Government of Benazir was dismissed due to allegations of corruption in 1990, after this the government of Benazir formed in 1993 was also alleged of corruption but still it was just the charismatic leadership of Benazir Bhutto which bring party out of crisis and PPP always stood as a strong Political party. This Decline of PPP could be momentary; Party just needs a strong leadership which will connect with the masses. Peoples Party Need such face in which can people invests their trust. Bilawal Bhutto needs to develop "Bhuttoism" to gain his lost jayalaas. If Peoples party will succeed in reorganizing the party according to the core values of Peoples Party and will be able to develop a strong charismatic leadership which will have connection with masses then Peoples can once again emerge as a strong Political party otherwise this decline of Peoples party can end up in the death of this glorious party.

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