

# **General Election 2008: The Role of PPP and Political Parties in Electing Yousaf Raza Gillani as Prime Minister of Pakistan**

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## ***ABSTRACT***

This research delves into the significant events surrounding Pakistan's 2008 general election, with a specific focus on the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and its role in elevating Yousaf Raza Gillani to the Prime Minister's office. It outlines the electoral process, shedding light on the strategies adopted by the PPP and its political counterparts during this crucial period. Additionally, the research investigates the intricate political maneuvers and alliances that culminated in Gillani's appointment, emphasizing their broader implications for Pakistan's democratic trajectory. By analyzing the electoral dynamics and political strategies employed during the 2008 election, this research offers valuable insights into the power dynamics and strategic alliances within Pakistan's political arena. It underscores the complexities of coalition-building and electoral strategies that shaped the outcome of this pivotal election. Moreover, it highlights the role of political parties in navigating the democratic landscape of Pakistan during this critical period. The research also aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the interplay between political actors, electoral processes, and democratic institutions in Pakistan. Through a detailed analysis of the strategies, alliances, and implications of the 2008 general election, this study contributes to a deeper comprehension of Pakistan's evolving political landscape and the challenges and opportunities faced by its democratic institutions.

**Keywords:** General Election 2008, Political Parties, Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Power Dynamics, Political Influence.

On 18 February, general elections were held in Pakistan. The original date of general election was 8th January but was postponed due to the tragic assassination of PPP Chairperson Benazir Bhutto in terrorist attack in Rawalpindi during a public meeting. The original date of the general elections was proposed to 18th February, 2008. PPP and the PML (N) were considered as the two main and powerful contestants. Expectedly, both parties won the maximum seats of National Assembly in the general elections. PPP and PML-N turned out as victorious with 113 and 84 seats out of 342 of National Assembly respectively. Situation in the most populous province of Pakistan Punjab was more suitable for PML-N where party won 102 seats and PPP 78 while PML-Q got only 66. Thus, PML-Q's performance was quite poor in comparison to 2002 elections. A coalition of Islamist religious parties Muthida Majlis-i- Amal (MMA) also lost his position and captured only 6 seats in National Assembly. Awami National Party (ANP) once again gained votes by opposing Musharraf policies against War on Terrorism and impressing Pashtun voters. (Mushtaq, 2010)

“The Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and Pakistan PML (N) agreed to form the new coalition government with Gillani as Prime Minister of Pakistan.”(Dawn 2008)

PPP and PM L-N signed *Bhorban Declaration 8th March 2008* to form the next government (Mushtaq, 2010). After the elections a coalition Government was formed by the PPP, ANP, MQM and PML(N). Gillani began conversation with ex-officio members of his party in the Parliament.

On twenty second March in year 2008, after two to three weeks of deliberation, the selection of “members of the Central Executive Committee accepted the nomination of Gillani over populist Ameen Faheem for the post of prime minister. Meanwhile, the Pakistan Peoples Party completed consultations and negotiations with the other parties to form a coalition alliance and the alliance endorsed the nomination. (Martin & Michael, 2011)

On 22 March at 9:38 PM Islamabad, (16:38 GMT), Gillani was officially announced by PPP as its candidate for the post of prime minister of Pakistan. Many specialists and experts stated that they would not surprise if President Zardari, husband of Benazir Bhutto, succeeded Gillani after a couple of months (Martin & Michael, 2011).

On 24<sup>th</sup> March 2008, President Zardari stated that he was not interested in the position of prime minister and that Prime Minister Gillani would continue until 2013 in the position (Khaliq, 2012).

Fahmida Mirza, the newly elected Speaker of the National Assembly, insisted that there was no plan to replace Gillani. She added, however, that if Gillani did not do a good job, all options were open” (Khaliq, 2012)

On 28<sup>th</sup> March 2008, Gillani was elected Prime Minister by the National Assembly , overcoming his opponent, Chaudhary Pervez Elahi of the PML - Q, by a mark of two hundred and sixty four to forty two votes. He was confirmed in by President General Musharraf on the very next day. On 29<sup>th</sup> March 2009, he secured a common vote of confidence in National Assembly. (The Dawn, 2008)

Gilani took oath as prime minister of Pakistan on March 24, 2008 in a ceremony. A very curious feature of this ceremony was the absence from the ceremony of such prominent political personalities like “Asif Zardari, Asfand Yar Wali, Nawaz Sharif and Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman. (The Dawn, 2008)

This was the indication federation of Pakistan was going to face many serious challenges in coming couple of years. No political party command comfortable majority neither in center nor in any province and every major parties had to make coalitions everywhere. In Punjab PPP and PML-N created coalition government whereas in NWFP, ANP and PPP, in Sindh PPP and Muthida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and in Baluchistan PPP and all other provincial and religious parties created a coalition government or mutual alliance.

A glimpse over the outcomes of the general election 2008 indicates certain development in the federalism of Pakistan after the general election of 2002. It is quite clear that due to General Pervaiz Musharraf’s wrong policies of centralization and his vigorous role in *War of Terrorism*, federalism in Pakistan has to expect many problems at national as well international level. Regional political parties had mustered much support from the constituencies in the general elections of 2008. (Masood, 2007)

People of the cities casted their votes for traditional and nationalist political parties like MQM and ANP. Religious political parties were so divided on different issues that their popularity in NWFP and Baluchistan totally vanished which are not good for federation of Pakistan. (Masood & Gall, 2007)

General Pervez Musharraf had lost support in the politicians after being disliked by crowd. On the other hand, popular support for lawyer's movement has also resulted in the reduction of his popularity. PPP and PML-N had planned for the indictment of President Musharraf.

Different Provincial Assemblies passed resolutions against Musharraf and demanded his resignation. Post 2008 elections scenario was not in favor of Pervez Musharraf. He was losing the support of his own king's party. In this unfavorable scenario he resigned from the office of the President on 18<sup>th</sup> August. Almost nine years ago, when he was saying on television that army has moved in and now he was delivering his news of quitting the office. After Musharraf's resignation issue of judges' restoration became a bone of contention between PML-N and PPP. PML-N opted to left the coalition in central government.

Now the PML-N was putting pressure on PPP for selecting a nonpolitical personality for the post of the president. However, Asif Ali Zardari (who became co-Chairperson of PPP after the murder of Benazir) did not trust PML (N) leader Nawaz Sharif. Asif Ali Zardari himself came out as PPP for presidential election against PML-Q candidate Mushahid Hussian Sayed and PML-N's Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddique and won the presidential elections with an over whelming majority. Now PPP was comfortably in the saddle as they had its own Prime Minister and President. The time had now come for PPP government to justify their election by good governance and this difficult task fell on the shoulders of Gillani. In the following chapter an attempt will be made to evaluate his performance as Prime Minister of Pakistan.

## **Conclusion:**

The conclusion of this research underscores the significance of the 2008 general election in Pakistan and its implications for the country's political landscape. It reflects on the electoral strategies employed by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and other political parties during the election process, highlighting the dynamics that led to Yousaf Raza Gillani's appointment as Prime Minister. Additionally, the conclusion explores the broader implications of the election outcome

for Pakistan's democratic journey and governance structure. It emphasizes the importance of analyzing the interplay of power, alliances, and political maneuvering in understanding the outcomes of electoral processes. Furthermore, the conclusion may discuss avenues for future research, such as examining the long-term impacts of the 2008 general election on Pakistan's political system and society. Overall, this chapter provides valuable insights into the complexities of electoral politics in Pakistan and contributes to the scholarly discourse on democracy and governance in the region.

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