

Politics Of Pakistan People's Party (Ppp) In Senate Elections 2018 A Critical Appraisal

Shaista Gohar¹, Safia Jawad², Ambreena Begum³, Sumayya⁴, Afzaal Amin⁵, Sayyed Junaid Shah⁶, Syed Kazim Ali Shah⁷, Imad Ali⁸

¹(Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan). Email: shaistagohar@awkum.edu.pk

²(Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan). Email: safiabahadur@awkum.edu.pk

³(Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan). Email: Ambreen@awkum.edu.pk

⁴(Visiting Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan). Email: Summaykhan1995@gmail.com

⁵(PhD Scholar Department of Political Science AWKUM).

⁶(Mphil Scholar Department of Political Science AWKUM).

⁷Demonstrator Department of Political Science, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan. Email: Kazimshah442@gmail.com

⁸(PhD Scholar Department of Political Science AWKUM).

Abstract

The Pakistani Senate, the upper house of the country's bicameral legislature, was established in 1973. The National Assembly is not given many exclusive powers that the Senate enjoys. Therefore senate election is more important for major political parties in Pakistan. This brief article re-contextualized the senate elections in Pakistan generally and PPP performance in it particularly. This article presented a brief review of the Senate election, 2018 as well as assessed the potential strategies of PPP in Senate elections, 2018. The article also critically analyzed the PPP approach and attempts to woo regional parties and dissident legislatures to make an electoral dent. For data collections secondary source is used and applied qualitative method.

Key Words: Pakistan People's Party, Politics, Senate elections, Horse-trading, Alliance

Senate of Pakistan: Historical Perspective

The responsibility of drafting the Pakistani Constitution was given to the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, which was elected in December 1947 following the country's division. On March 12, 1949, this Assembly adopted the Objectives Resolution, outlining the guiding principles that ultimately found significant inclusion in Pakistan's Constitution. However, it was disbanded in October 1954 before it could

finish drafting the constitution. The Second Constituent Assembly was then called by the Governor General in May 1955, and on February 29, 1956, it drafted and approved Pakistan's first Constitution. On March 23, 1956, that Constitution was ratified, and it established a unicameral, parliamentary system of government. However, the Government of India Act 1935 remained the Pakistani Constitution from 14 August 1947 to 1 March 1956.

The Constitution was revoked and martial law was proclaimed on October 7, 1958. In February 1960, the Military Government created a Constitution Commission to draught the 1962 Constitution. A presidential form of government with a unicameral legislature was provided for by that constitution. On March 25, 1969, the 1962 Constitution was declared invalid. A provisional Constitution was adopted by the country in 1972 by the Civil Government, which took office in December 1971 as a result of elections held in 1970. The 1973 Constitution was drafted by the 1970 Assembly and adopted by all members on April 12 before being proclaimed on August 14 of that same year. The 1973 Constitution established a bicameral legislature made up of the National Assembly and the Senate and a parliamentary style of government.

The original number of senators, 45, was raised to 63 in 1977 and to 87 in 1985. The Senate's membership rose from 87 to 100 under Gen. Pervez Musharraf's administration by the Legal Framework Order (LFO), 2002, which took effect on August 21, 2002, and from 100 to 104 under Asif Ali Zardari's government with the 18th amendment in 2011 (four minority members from four provinces). The Senate's membership was decreased to 96 after the 25th Amendment as the seats for FATA were eliminated following its merger with KP. The current FATA representatives will remain in office until 2024. FATA won't have any separate Senators after 2024.

PPP Performance in various Senate Elections (1973-2015): An Overview

The 1973 constitution for the first time created the upper house 'Senate' for equal representation of four provinces. The first Senate elections were held in 1973 and the second in 1975. Khan Habibullah Khan Marwat of PPP was nominated as the first Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan. He held the position of Chairman of the Pakistani Senate for two terms during the PPP government.

It is noteworthy because he was also a judge on the Peshawar High Court, Pakistan's 10th Interior Minister under the Ayub Khan Regime, and a supporter of the Khaksar movement in the then NWFP that is now KP (Sabir, nd). The Senate was disbanded in 1977 by the military government of General Zia-ul-Haq. The Senate was reinstated in 1985 once democracy was reestablished. In 1988, additional Senate elections were held to fill the fifty percent remaining seats (Shafqat & Khosa, 2015).

The Senate elections, 1991 was held on March 14 for 46 seats in the Senate on the normal expiry of the member's term of office. The IJI headed by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, captured 24 seats while PPP gained 5 seats as before five month of senate elections IJI swept to victory in the National Assembly elections. The PPP accused the IJI Government for vote rigging and intimidation (Dawn, 1991, March 15).

The Senate elections, 1994 were held on March 2 for half of the 87 senate seats. The PPP had won 16 seats, PML (N) 6 seats, Awami National Party (ANP) 3 seats, PML (J) 2, Jamhoori Watan 2 and MQM (A) also 2 seats. A number of other parties each won single seats. The PPP total Senate seats rose to 22 with support from PML (J) and JUI (The Herald, 1994, March 03).

The Senate elections, 1997 were held on March 12 for 44 seats in the Senate on the normal expiry of the member's term of office. The ruling party PML (N) gained 27 seats while PPP captured 19 seats. Thus PPP remained the major opposition party in both houses, the National Assembly and Senate (Dawn, 1997, March 13). The Senate was disbanded once more by General Musharraf's military government in 1999. It was dissolved for four years until being reestablished in 2003. A staunch leader of PPP Raza Rabbani was appointed as Senate opposition leader in 2005 (Shafqat & Khosa, 2015). In 2006 the Senate elections were held on 6-10 March for half of the

100 seats was up for election with the winning candidates serving six years term. The pro-Musharraf party PML (Q) captured 20 seats, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) 10 seats, PPP 5 seats, MQM 3 seats and independents 4 seats. Other political parties each gained single seat (Iqbal, 2006). The Senate elections, 2009 were held on March 4 for a half of the (50) senate seats. The PPP had won 27 seats, PML (Q) 21 seats, independents 13, MMA 9, PML (N) 7. MQM and ANP each gained 6 seats. Similarly other regional parties each gained 1 or 2 seats. Subsequent the PPP remained the largest party in the Senate. Farooq Hamid Naek, a high ranking member of the central committee of the PPP and personal lawyer and legal counselor in the legal cases of Benazir Bhutto and Asif Ali Zardari since 1996, was elected unopposed Senate chairman (Dawn, 2009, March 13) and he served as Senate Chairman till 2012 (Pakistan Tribune, 2012, March 06). Another senior leader of PPP, Nayyar Hussain Bukhari served as the 6th Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan from March 12, 2012 to March 12, 2015 (Ali, 2012).

The next Senate elections were held on March 2, 2012 for 54 of the 100 seats. PPP gained 19 seats, PML (N) 7 seats, ANP 7 and PML (Q) and MQM each gained 4 seats. Independents received 5, JUI, BNP (Awami) and PML (F) gained 3, 2, and 1 seat respectively (Dawn, 2012, March 03). Thus the ruling PPP bagged most seats in senate elections 2012. Pakistan's opposition parties have blamed the PPP of bribing lawmakers to elect their candidates. Chaudhry Nisar, opposition leader in national assembly of Pakistan, whose PML (N) had won seven seats in the senate, said that Pakistan's biggest problem was corruption and corrupt politicians, eluded to President Zardari and Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani. The Senate elections 2012 were significant for PPP to gain more seats in Senate as the PPP government was facing an unfolding scandal known as "memogate" and corruption cases in

the Supreme Court. Political commentators used to say that President Zardari could heave a sigh of relief after his party's good performance in senate elections as it would be allowed him to pass legislation easily and would give him an upper hand in Pakistani politics for at least three more years, even if his party did not perform well in the general elections due in early 2013 (Shams, 2012). The 12th Senate elections were held on March 03, 2015 for 52 retiring senators. It is interesting to note that PPP in the past leading party now lose 21 members. Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari of PPP was also included in retired senators. According to the Election Commission of Pakistan four candidates from Sindh were elected without opposition, including Sassui Palijo of the PPP and Nighat Mirza of the MQM against Senate seats designated for women, Farooq H. Naek of the PPP and Muhammad Ali Saif of the MQM against seats designated for technocrats. (Business Recorder, 2015, March 01). The PPP consolidated its position in the Senate by winning seven seats from Sindh, becoming the prospects of winning the support of the MQM using the reconciliation mantra of Asif Ali Zardari in a bid to retain its dominance in Senate. The PPP candidates who won the senate election, included Sassui Palijo (PPP), Farooq H Naek, Gyan Chand, Islamuddin Sheikh, Latif Ansari, Saleem H Mandviwala and Rehman Malik. PPP dominated upper house of parliament once again as it had managed to take its numerical strength to 26 compared to ruling PML (N) 24 seats in the elections. The PPP, previously had 19 seats in Senate, and with the success of seven of its candidates, it had become the single largest party in the upper house of parliament. Its total strength has now risen to 26 (Business Recorder, 2015, March 06). After the retirement of its 21 senators PPP had already 19 seats in Senate the number had now gone up to 26 as the party successfully elected 7 senators from Sindh provincial assembly. Leader of the opposition in Sindh Provincial Assembly,

Sheheryar Khan Mahar conceded that horse-trading marred the Senate polling process as PPP and MQM candidates' polls seven more votes than their collective strength (Ghori, 2015). In Punjab all the eleven candidates fielded by PML (N) emerged victorious, defeating the candidates of rival political parties despite strong lobbying by PML (Q) president Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain and Manzoor Wattoo of PPP. However, the PPP retained the coveted slots of chairman and deputy chairman Senate by garnered the support of PTI, MQM, ANP and PML (Q) (Wasim, 2015). Mian Rabbani, a consensus candidate for the office of Chairman, was put out by the PPP under the direction and inspiration of former President Asif Zardari. Senator Rabbani, a well-known and well respected senator, is a rare breed among Pakistani lawmakers (Dawn, 2015, March 13). He is well known for being a democrat, someone with integrity, principles, and an advocate for the rule of law who is beyond partisanship. He also played a key role in guiding and supervising the passage of the important 18th Constitutional Amendment. Since 1993, he has received six Senate victories. In March 2015, he was unanimously chosen to lead the Pakistani Senate as its 7th Chairman (Ashfaq, 2015). He took office in that capacity from March 2015 to March 2018.

Senate Standing of Retirements, 2018: Implications for PPP

The retirement dates for the 52 senators (elected in 2012) were set for March 2018. The other 52 were chosen in 2015 and would be vacated their positions in 2021. The four provincial assemblies filled 46 of the 52 Senate seats that were up for election, the National Assembly filled two, and legislators from Fata filled four. Twenty candidates ran for each of the twelve Punjab seats, thirty-three for each of the twelve Sindh seats, twenty-six for each of the eleven KP seats, eleven Balochistan seats, four for each of the four Fata seats, and two for each of the two seats in the

federal capital (Dawn, 2018, March 04). Term-by-term data on senators shows that the PPP lost the most representation in the Senate; after a six-year term, almost 70% of its members retired the largest percentage of any one political party. Raza Rabbani, Chaudhry Aitzaz Ahsan, Farhatullah Babar, and Taj Haider, the PPP parliamentary leader and most outspoken senator, were among the 18 PPP senators who announced their retirement in March 2018. The majority held by the PPP in the Sindh Assembly made it evident that Mr. Rabbani and Mr. Haider would be able to return to the Senate, but Mr. Ahsan and Mr. Babar would find it difficult to do so without a compromise with other parties, according to the PPP's position in Punjab and KP. On March 11, additional PPP senators were retired. Among them Ahmad Hassan, Saifullah Bangash, Rubina Khalid, and Mohammad Yousaf from Balochistan, Osman Saifullah Khan from Islamabad, Sardar Fateh Hasni, Nawabzada Saifullah Magsi, Rozi Kakar, and Dr. Karim Khawaja from Punjab were included (Dawn, 2018, January 22).

Pre-Senate elections Politics of PPP: Toppling of Balochistan Government

In Balochistan's 2013 elections, no party won a clear majority leaving the country in a hung parliament. The PM (N) and NP signed a power-sharing arrangement, popularly renowned as a "Marri Deal", for the provincial chief minister. It was determined that the two parties would alternate holding the position of chief minister. As a result, Nawab Sanaullah Khan Zehri of the PML (N) would take over as Chief Minister of Balochistan at the end of 2015, succeeding Abdul Malik Baloch of the NP (Dawn, 2018, January 07). Sanaullah Zehri, however, was unable to serve out his full term since a no-confidence resolution was introduced against the Chief Minister by a number of dissident Balochistan PML (N) coalition government members. The PML (N) leader and former prime minister

Nawaz Sharif was informed by Sanaullah Zehri, the chief minister of Balochistan, that especially with a Senate election set for March, the no confidence motion was an attempt to overthrow the PML (N) administration in Balochistan. Parvez Rashid, a senator for the Pakistan Muslim League (N), described the motion of no confidence as a well-planned attempt to disrupt the democratic process (The Express Tribune, 2018, January 09). In vain did the PML (N) attempt to save the Zehri administration in Balochistan and see it through to the end of the agreed-upon term (Dawn 2018, January 08). The opposition legislator Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo of the PML (Q) was elected to lead the province as its next chief minister. The Balochistan Assembly's house change was critical for the run-up to the March 2018 Senate election. Additionally, the PPP and PTI were successful in creating an alliance for the Senate Chairman election. The opposition coalition had won six of the province's twelve seats, leaving the PML (N) without a seat (Dawn, 2018, March 04). As a result, there was speculation that PPP had a hand in the transition of the Balochistan province government. At a gathering in Lahore, PPP leader Asif Ali Zardari claimed "Keep in mind that I have always followed through on my claims. I told you I could overthrow their government, and it did." He was subtly gone after the PML (N), which was humiliated when the elected government in the restive province was overthrown last month. Along with the security establishment's purported assistance in overthrowing the PML (N) government, the PPP unquestionably played a significant role in the entire episode. In Punjab and KP assemblies, the PPP also made an effort to woo regional parties and oppositional members in order to secure seats as the maximum number of retired Senators were from PPP (Sharma, 2018)

Summit of PPP in Sindh: Start of Horse-Trading

Murad Ali Shah, the chief minister of Sindh, was visited by newly elected Balochistan Chief Minister Abdul Quddus Bizenjo and his cabinet at a summit that PPP's Zardari presided over on January 25, 2018. The gathering served as a launchpad for serious Senate campaigns in 2017. Chief Ministers, cabinet members, and lawmakers were present when PPP co-chairman Zardari presided over a meeting to mobilize support of Balochistan and Sindh for the Senate elections (Dawn, 2018, January 26). Regarding the election of Abdul Qudus Bizenjo as Balochistan chief minister, Asif Ali Zardari said during the meeting that the province assembly had changed the Balochistan government through a democratic process and derailment of democratic system were not allowed. According to Zardari, the PPP had kept a long tradition of defending rights of citizens in sparsely populated provinces. Asif Ali Zardari of the PPP was praised by Balochistan Chief Minister Bizenjo for being a politically astute and sincere democratic leader who understands how to maintain democracy in any circumstance. PPP chairman Zardari has given Balochistan Chief Minister the responsibility of negotiating with coalition partners and other party members to promote PPP Senate candidates. If true, the PPP will be the first party to elect Baloch lawmakers without fielding any candidates for office (The Express Tribune, 2018, January 26). On the other hand, PML (N) leaders have "condemned" the PPP's participation in the Balochistan province assembly and the change in provincial administration. They believed that Asif Zardari, the co-chairman of the PPP, had stoked political unrest in Balochistan and brought down the government of Sanaullah Zehri did this on purpose to refute the PML (N) Senate seats in the province. The PML (N) anticipated to win three seats in Balochistan as nine of its 27 senators were slated to retire (Dawn, 2018, January 31). The meeting between the PPP stalwart and the "puppet Balochistan's Chief Minister," according

to Khawaja Saad Rafique, a top PML (N) leader and Minister for Railways, signalled the start of horse trading before the 2018 senate election. He had charged PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari of horse trading in Balochistan. Rafique referred to the expulsion of Sanaullah Zehri from the PML (N) as "horse-trading in the name of democracy" and vowed to put an end to this "shameful deed under the garb of democracy". He continued by asserting that Zardari adopted an anti-democratic ideology in order to win Balochistan Senate seats. He added that a scheme to buy lawmakers from all parties by the PPP leader had been hatched in order to seize control of the Senate. He further claimed that Qayyum Soomro was complicit in the plot to install a "puppet administration" and that Zardari attempted to buy Senate seats in the previous election but was unsuccessful (The Express Tribune, 2018, January 26).

Haji Ali Madad Jattack, the head of the Balochistan PPP, predicted during a news conference in Quetta that the party will win at least six seats in the province's Senate elections. He claimed that with the assistance of province residents, his party was ready for the upcoming General Elections 2018. He acknowledged that the PPP was the only party capable of truly changing people's lives in Balochistan who had their rights abused by previous governments.

He added that the party, led by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, would form a successful government in the province of Balochistan following the impending general elections in 2018. According to him, Balochistan's province would see economic growth as a result of PPP. Facilities for youth social development and education would be offered. He claimed that schemes to derail the CPEC were in the works. The PPP would exert all reasonable efforts to ensure the significant project's success (Dawn, 2018, January 31). Three political activists from various parties, Nazeer Kurd, Sharif Khan Khilji, and Najeebullah Jattack proclaimed their support for the PPP during the news conference. It is

significant to note that the PPP was absent from the Balochistan Assembly because none of its candidates in the 2013 national elections had been successful in obtaining a seat in the province. Yousaf Badini, who represented the province in the Senate, on the other hand, later joined the PPP. After being elected to the Senate, his late father, Wali Muhammad Badini, joined the PPP (The Express Tribune, 2018, January 26).

Allocation of PPP Senate Tickets:

Selection of Influential Candidates

Anyone interested in standing for the PPP's Senate ticket in 2018 had received an invitation. Taj Haider and Senate President Raza Rabbani are only two of the retired senators from Sindh who have registered to run on a party ticket. Abdul Qayyum Soomro, Hina Dastagir, Nauman Sheikh, Rashid Rabbani, Javed Nayyb Leghari, Moula Bux Chandio, Humaira Alwani, Waqar Mehdi, and Hari Ram were some of the other famous PPP candidates (Dawn, 2018, January 31). MNA Faryal Talpur presented the Sindh candidates with PPP tickets in the presence of PPP's Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, former Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah, and current Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah. Seven tickets were available for the public sitting, including two for technocrats and women from the province and one for the minority seat. Those who received tickets included ex-PML (F) MPA Ali Jamote, former Sindh information adviser Moula Bux Chandio, Nawaz Khokhar, Imamdin Shokeen and Ayaz Mehr Mustafa. Rukhsana Zuberi and Dr. Sikandar Mandhro, the minister of health for Sindh received tickets from the party for the technocrat positions. A Hindu Tharparkar woman named Krishana Kolhi was given one of the two women reserved seats. Quratulain Marri received the second woman-reserved ticket that was made available. Shazia Atta Marri, a PPP MNA, was her sister (The Express Tribune, 2018, February 07).

Result of Senate Elections 2018 and PPP Performance

The NA, the four provincial assemblies, and the FATA members decided on the 52 Senate seats that were vacant on March 3, 2018. According to the official results, candidates supported by the PML (N) received 15 seats. There were two from KP, two from Islamabad, and eleven from Punjab. The PPP was able to win 10 of the 12 seats in Sindh and two more in KP thanks to the MQM's internal divisions. The PTI won six seats, five in Punjab and one in KP (Data stories, March 17, 2018). The PML (N) won 33 seats, making it the most numerous party in the 104-member legislature. It was followed by the PPP, got 20 seats. The PPP won a handful of seats that were expected to go to the PML (N) and the PTI (Aljazeera, 2018, March 6). But the PPP won the most votes in Sindh. Raza Rabbani, the outgoing Senate chairman, Imamuddin Shaqeen, Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, Maula Bakhsh Chandio, and Mohammad Ali Jamot won the general seats. PPP candidates Rukhsana Zuberi and Sikandar Mendhro won election to both technocrat positions. Quratulain Marri and Krishna Kohli won the women's reserved seats. Being the first Dalit woman elected to Pakistan's Senate, Krishna Kohli's election was significant. Anwar Laal Deen won the minority-reserved seat. Bahramand Tangi of the PPP and Rubina Khalid of the PPP respectively won general and female seats in KP. Six senators from Balochistan were elected by a coalition of PML (N) and PML (Q) dissenter. For the general seats, Ahmed Khan, Anwarul Haq Kakar, Sadiq Sanjrani, and Kuhda Babar were elected. Sana Jamali won the election for the female reserve seat. Naseebullah Bazai won the technocrats' seat (Dawn, 2018, March 04).

Senate Chairmanship Election and PPP Politics of Alliance

The elections for the Senate Chairman and Deputy Chairman were scheduled on March 12th.

Before deciding the names of the candidates for the posts of senate chairman and deputy chairman, the PPP called a six-hour meeting. "We have agreed on the name of Sadiq Sanjrani for the role of chairman Senate and Saleem Mandviwala for deputy chairman and have the necessary number of votes to elect both of them," said Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the PPP's chairman. According to Bilawal, the uplift projects in Punjab accounted for 90% of the PML (N) government's budget. Aiming to lessen the sense of deprivation felt by smaller provinces, PPP, which has always supported Federation politics and made sacrifices for all provinces, is currently pursuing this goal. Abdul Qudus Bizenjo claimed, "The PPP has created history by making sacrifices for Balochistan,". Bizenjo was given permission by Imran Khan to select a joint candidate for the positions with the aid of recently elected independent senators from Balochistan. The PTI has also backed Sadiq Sanjrani. Independent senators from Balochistan and Fata supported him. The PTI had already declared that it will not support the candidates for Senate chairman from the PPP or PML (N). Asif Ali Zardari, the co-chairman of the PPP, consented to collaborate with Imran Khan of the PTI in order to build an alliance against the PML (N) in the Senate elections. Even though the PML (N) won the majority of seats, the Zardari-Khan accord garnered enough support from the opposition to install a new chairperson. Imran Khan was visited by a group of independent senators from Balochistan at his Bani Gala residence, led by Bizenjo. The PTI stated its willingness to support a PPP candidate for deputy chairman as part of an arrangement with Bizenjo (The News, 2018, March 12). Raja Zafarul Haq of the PML (N), who earned only 46 votes, lost to Sadiq Sanjrani, an independent senator from Balochistan who received backing from the PPP, PTI, and independent candidates from FATA and Balochistan. Saleem Mandviwalla of the PPP won the position of deputy chairman with 54

votes, defeating Usman Kakar of the PkAMP, a PML (N) member who gained just 44 votes (Khan, 2018).

Conclusion

One of the most important Senate elections in PPP political history may have been the Senate Elections of 2018. Who holds the Senate majority vote has been significantly impacted by the intense rivalry for upper house seats brought on by the enormous number of retirements, particularly in the months before the general elections in July 2018. To benefit from the difficult times under the PML (N), the PPP had to play a strong game of politics. Few months before the senate elections, in January, Balochistan's Chief Minister and member of the PML (N), Sanaulah Zehri, lost the backing of the majority of assembly members. The PPP had attempted to elect its senators from Balochistan in order to secure the support of Bizenjo, the newly elected chief minister, and this cast doubt on the PML (N) chances' of winning a sizable number of Senate seats in Balochistan. Similar political maneuvers were used to secure seats in the Punjab and KP Assemblies, when PPP leader Zardari tried to woo regional parties and dissenter MPs. PPP tried to form political alliances outside of Sindh, such as with PML (Q) in Balochistan, and approached opposition parties and dissident lawmakers, like Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazlullah (JUI-F) or Quami Watan Party (QWP), in order to make an electoral dent in KP and outperform PML (N), even though PPP might not be able to win the top Senate position numerically. In Sindh all Senate tickets were allotted to influential people in order to gain all seats in senate from Sindh. In order to defeat the PML (N) in the elections for senate chairman and deputy chairman despite winning the majority of seats in the Senate, the PPP formed an alliance with the PTI. Conclusively PPP had played an enormous political game during the 2018 Senate Elections in order to secure and maintain its strong hold in the senate.

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