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[Pakistan](#)

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Political Parties at a Glance



PPP – Pakistan People's Party

- Founded in 1967 in the Sindh province by wealthy landowner Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who became Pakistan's first elected Prime Minister in 1971.
- Rewrote Pakistan's Constitution in the 1970s; attempted liberal and socialist reforms under the banner "Bread, [Clothing](#), Shelter."
- Reinvigorated by Bhutto's daughter, Western-educated Benazir, when she returned to Pakistan upon his execution in the late 1970s.

- Alternated being in power with the Muslim League throughout the 1990s.
- Declined in late 1990s when Benazir Bhutto was removed as Prime Minister for a second time and sent into exile on corruption charges.
- Came back into power [following](#) Bhutto's return and assassination. Formed a ruling coalition with the PML-N after the 2008 Parliamentary Elections.
- Currently co-chaired by Mrs. Bhutto's widower Asif Ali Zardari and college-age son Bilawal.
- Often seen as more effective in opposition than in government.

The Pakistan Muslim League – PML-N and PML-Q

- Split in 2002 into two factions, one headed by Nawaz Sharif (PML-N) and one headed by Pervez Musharraf who was in power at the time (PML-Q).
- The PML-Q lost the majority of seats in [Parliament](#) in 2008 elections to a coalition of the PPP and PML-N.
- PML-N is seen as the party of industry and [business](#), and has favored the reinstatement of judges dismissed by Musharraf in 2007 during Emergency Rule.

Nationalist, Ethnic, and Religious Parties

- The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) is a party founded originally by Muslim Indian migrants to Pakistan following partition called Mohajirs. It is consolidated in the Sindh province and is often co-opted by mainstream parties.
- The Awami National Party (ANP) is a party active in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and is opposed to the radicalization of the region by Islamic parties and militants. The party contested seats held by Islamist factions after 2002 elections and won them in 2008. Seen as a bulwark of Pashtun rights and interests. Typically does not advocate for Pashtun separatism.
- Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) is an umbrella organization comprising different anti-modern Islamist parties who advocate making Pakistan officially an Islamic state ruled by Sharia law. Clerics gained seats in the NWFP and Balochistan in 2002 and are thought to sympathize with and support the Taliban in Afghanistan. The MMA lost seats in the wake of sectarian violence in 2008, and the party is currently considered in chaos and decline. It is subject to “mullah fatigue” as Pakistan's Islamic identity ebbs and flows.

[Next: Internal Players: The Political System](#)

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