

Gilani Research Foundation
studies on
PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL ELECTION IN 2013



Report # 5

REFLECTIONS ON ELECTION OUTCOME

Dr. Gilani's Reflections on Electoral
Outcome: The end of Bhutto-anti Bhutto
politics in Pakistan



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UNSOUND GOVERNANCE IN A SOUND SOCIETY

A sound society punished its unsound governance on
May 11 at Pakistan's 10th National Election

Key Findings from Gallup Pakistan's Exit Poll Survey

across rural and urban polling stations in 77 districts covering
all provinces and regions. Interviews were conducted with 4636
statistically selected voters as they exited after casting their vote

UNSOUND GOVERNANCE IN A SOUND SOCIETY

The foremost learning from the outcomes of Pakistan's national election is that this nation rests on sound fundamentals. The election outcome has not only revealed the sound fundamentals of Pakistani society but also demonstrated its rising capacity to punish unsound governance.

Pakistani state has been in constant turmoil since its first election in 1970. Following that election the country tore into two pieces, and what remained to be Pakistan was polarized across two bitter political groups which came to be known as the Bhutto and anti Bhutto political factions. A divided house of civilian politicians and their followers allowed repeated military interventions which pitched one faction against the other and ruled the country beyond rule of law, though often under veil of constitutionally sanctioned governments. The 2013 elections is a formal pronouncement on the passing away of Bhutto-anti Bhutto politics, which was also known as the left and right schism in the country's politics. In our judgment none prevailed over the other.

But the partisans of the two tendencies gradually blended into each other to produce a vast mainstream politics.

To put it more succinctly, polarization has lost out to mainstreaming of Pakistan's political space. This has in turn facilitated genuine rule of law, and the removal of military's role in nation's elections, as well as, hopefully, post-election political developments. There are no political polar opposites whose mutual bitterness would allow the military to intervene after the election of 2013. 2013 Elections reveal that there are no notable ideological poles in Pakistan's political space. Nearly everyone (upwards of 85%) is in the middle of road mainstream. This commonly shared Mainstream is constituted by a '**Midscale-Downscale Political Class**, led by **PML-N**; and '**Upscale Political Class**', led by **PTI**.

MAINSTREAMING OF PAKISTAN'S POLARIZED POLITICS

The second most important lesson from this election is that democratic politics has healed and mitigated Pakistan's ethno-linguistic and social divisions.

Pakistan's first competitive election in 1970 had revealed the regional and social divisions in its society. The 10th election has shown that these divisions have gradually healed, and the nation is beginning to learn the ropes of a political process to manage and mitigate them. This show up in two ways, first through the expansion of electoral participation across social classes, and second though the regionalization of vote banks. Electoral data suggests that class differences and regional (ethno-linguistic) differences have not disappeared, but the political process is providing a mechanism to manage them rather than becoming a battle ground to display their ugly side. Pakistan is a vast country of 180 million people. A sound society would not wish its variety to disappear artificially by congregating under one or two political actors. It sounds most reasonable to choose a variety of political

actors, each of whom represents its constituent's dominant aspirations, but is willing to be part of a wider coalition in which their peculiar and legitimate interests are negotiated. It took many elections and political tragedies for Pakistan to learn this, but apparently the new beginning is in sight.

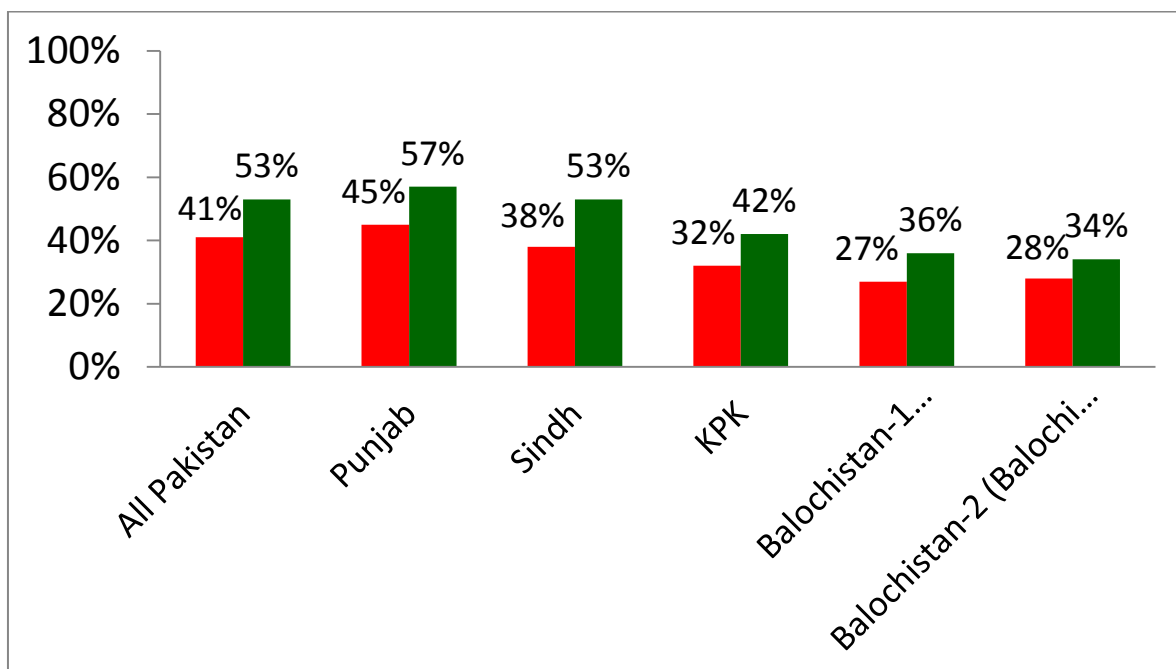
To recapture the historical evolution of this process, we need to note that until 1970, the vast majority of Pakistan's rural and urban poor were marginalized in political affairs. The process of expanding political participation began in 1970. The underprivileged masses from rural and urban Pakistan were first mobilized by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the elections of 1970. Later the conservative middle class and urban trading communities were mobilized by PNA (1977), IJI (1988) and PML-N (1993 onwards). The upscale college graduates and a newly emerging middle and upper professional class has now been mobilized by Imran Khan's PTI in 2013.

The political process has finally become inclusive of all classes of voters. Consequently the voter turn-out has risen from a 25 year

average score of 41% to around 55% in one big leap in 2013. This has happened in all provinces and regions, including Balochistan and those parts of it where voter participation was seen as a vote for Pakistan, irrespective of who they voted for.

Voter Turn-out: TREND ANALYSIS

(Turn-out in 2013 compared with 25 year average of 6 elections since 1988)



REGIONALISATION OF PAKISTANI VOTE BANKS: led by regional actors with national outlook

A third learning from the outcome of this election is that the Vote Bank of nearly all leading players is regionally focused: PML-N (90% of its nearly 15 million voters are in Punjab); PPP (50% in Sindh; 42% in Punjab); PTI (70% in Punjab, 21% in KPK); MQM (98% in Karachi); JUI-F (75% in KPK; 12% in Balochistan); ANP (83% in KPK). At first sight this creates a bit of a stir and scare. But as you look deeper you discover a different story, which is not unpleasant. Despite their regional focus the top 3 national political parties have substantial vote in other provinces. For example PML-N scored nearly 1 million votes in KPK and half a million in Sindh; its coalition partner in Sindh PML-F won nearly one million. The national character of PML-N has emerged through a process of coalition building rather than building a cross-province vote bank of its own. Pakistan's top 3 parties, PML-N, PPP and PTI scored significant votes outside the province where they won a majority.

FEDERAL POLITICS BY COMPULSION: The voice of the people says, 9 rulers are better than one

A fourth learning from the election is that voters and political leaders have quickly adjusted to deal with 18th amendment which devolved power from center to the provinces. Vote banks have become regionalized and this in turn has compelled key political players to engage in MULTI-PARTISAN COALITIONS. Thus, 9 out of 10 political parties scoring more than 1% of national vote will now be ruling at federal or provincial level. Election outcome facilitates the implementation of Pakistan's historic 18th Amendment which devolved power from center to provinces.

The sound fundamentals of Pakistani society are a fairly robust cushion against the fear of regionalization turning into fragmentation. The initial two weeks of government formation indicates that regionalization of Pakistani voters corresponds with the emergence of regional vote banks with a national outlook. A similar tendency in Indian elections over the last 15 years has been characterized as regional base with national dreams (Wallace and Roy book on Indian Election 2009 published by Sage).

A SOUND SOCIETY REJECTED AND PUNISHED UNSOUND GOVERNANCE

The fifth and the final learning from this election concerns the narrative to understand Pakistani society and politics. Much of the world has tried to understand Pakistan through the narrative of its unsound governance, sometimes portrayed as failed state. That is perhaps misplaced. The evidence comes from the outcome of 2013 Election. In this election a seemingly sound society has ruthlessly punished unsound governance which had climaxed the breakdown of welfare and order on home turf and loss of sovereignty on the international turf.

A sound society in Pakistan has achieved to do this by first congregating across political partisanship under rule of law. This happened during the lawyers' movement of 2007. It then patiently put the final lid on Bhutto-anti Bhutto schism (or the left and right conflict) through 5 turbulent years of unsound governance by Mr. Zardari. The political map produced by the 2013 election is in sharp departure from the 1970 election which produced Bhutto-

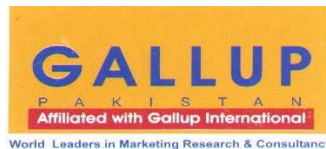
anti Bhutto schism. Apparently the two fault-lines which surfaced in Pakistan in 1970, the regional fault-line, which tore Pakistan into two countries; and social fault-line which harbored the Bhutto and anti Bhutto schism have now been healed. This does not mean that old fault-lines have been completely erased or that new fault-lines have not appeared. A new fault-line has surfaced. This is the upscale-downscale political rivalry, popularly described as the 'burger and bun-kebab' feud. Nevertheless, we do see signs that a sound society has affirmed its role to take charge of its political governance. After much remorse the lesson is that returning the front seat of governance to a seemingly rustic but sound society is better than the illusion of achieving good governance through borrowed shine of an enlightened establishment. The bottom line of reading much data on this election is that while the narrative of 'failed governance' is a correct narrative to understand Pakistan, the narrative of a society fractured into ethnic and ideological schisms is misplaced. A sound society has punished 5 years of unsound governance.

The outcome of Pakistani's national election has reinforced the view that despite being a weak state, Pakistan is a strong and resilient society. This society is undergoing a process of empowerment by healing its social divisions, rallying together under rule of law, punishing poor governance through competitive elections and forestalling against unlawful interventions by holding competitive elections within mainstreamed politics. Social and ideological difference have either been fringed to the extremes or tossed out of politics into the social realm.

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