

Citizens' Group on Electoral Process - CGEP

BACKGROUND PAPER

**THE CALCULUS OF ELECTORAL POLITICS
IN PAKISTAN (1970-2008)**

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Preface

Based on the electoral analysis of **Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani**, Chairman Gallup Pakistan and an esteemed member of the Citizens Group on Electoral Process – CGEP, the paper on *The Calculus of Electoral Politics in Pakistan (1970-2008)* analyses the voting patterns across Pakistan during the past 8 nation-wide elections to assess the prospects of Election 2008.

The paper is an attempt to go beyond the popularly-held perceptions in Pakistan on the likely outcome of the coming election and assesses the scenario based on scientific data of the past elections. The analysis of the voting pattern of the past is of special significance in the backdrop of the tragic demise of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, Chairperson of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and the widespread perception that the PPP may “sweep” the polls on the crest of a “wave of sympathy” for Ms Bhutto. The author provides the necessary historical data on voting patterns to judge whether or not this perception is valid. In the author’s view the outcome of the 2008 elections is still unpredictable.

Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani holds a doctorate from MIT and is considered an authority in the study of Pakistani Elections as well as a specialist in Public Opinion research. Under his leadership, the Gallup, Pakistan has studied the past 8 nation-wide elections. The paper is based on the invaluable research and analysis of the past elections.

PILDAT and the Citizens Group on Electoral Process – CGEP are grateful to Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani for sharing of his analysis, gratis, from the platform of CGEP.

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Islamabad
January 2008

Abbreviations & Acronyms

ANP	Awami National Party
IJI	Islami Jamhoori Ittehad
JI	Jamaat-i-Islami
JUI-F	Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazlur Rehman
ML	Muslim League
MQM	Muttahida Quami Movement
NA	National Assembly
PAI	Pakistan Awami Ittehad
PDA	Pakistan Democratic Alliance
PIF	Pakistan Islamic Front
PML	Pakistan Muslim League
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz
PML-Q	Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-e-Azam
PNP	Pakistan National Party
PPP	Pakistan Peoples Party
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf

Executive Summary

What are the prospects of various political parties in the coming election in Pakistan? The question assumes special significance in the backdrop of the tragic demise of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, Chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) when it is widely perceived that the PPP may "sweep" the polls on the crest of a "wave of sympathy" for Ms Bhutto.

The paper on the *Calculus of Electoral Politics in Pakistan (1970-2008)* is based on the electoral analysis of **Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani**, Chairman Gallup, Pakistan and an esteemed member of the Citizens Group on Electoral Process - CGEP. The paper analyses the voting patterns and electoral behaviour across Pakistan during the past 8 nation-wide elections to assess the prospects of Election 2008.

Explaining the overall electoral landscape in the country based on the voting behaviours across provinces, the clusters of political parties that have shaped up as a result of the voting behaviour, the system of elections in the country and the uneven size of the provinces in terms of the overall electoral composition, the paper puts forward that until the tragic demise of Benazir Bhutto the Election 2008 were expected to follow the general pattern of the 1997 elections. It is however too early to predict both the size of the sympathy vote and the vote bank that it cuts into.

Elections since 1970 show that there are four clusters of voters in Pakistan namely the **PPP** cluster, the **Muslim League(s)** cluster, the **Religious Parties** cluster and **Regional parties** cluster. Roughly 60 to 75% of votes are claimed by the first two clusters (PPP and ML) while the remaining gets distributed among the other two clusters as well as independents and miscellaneous. Coupled with this, there are fairly distinct patterns to elections in each one of the four provinces of the country that affect the overall results. The electoral system of "First Past the Post" or "Winner Take All" electoral system produces reasonably predictable and instinctively acceptable ratio between popular vote (*ratio of votes polled*) and parliamentary seats, when the game is uni-polar (*one dominant player*) or multi-polar (*several important players*). However, the paper emphasises that a bi-polar game can be very unpredictable and this is amply demonstrated in the pattern of our past elections. The unequal size of four (4) provinces in terms of population and as a result in the National Assembly is also a factor which can not be ignored as Punjab accounts for roughly 55% of the seats; Sindh: 25%; NWFP: 15% and Balochistan: 5% of the National Assembly.

In this backdrop, the paper analyses the likely provincial picture for Election 2008. In Karachi, the MQM enjoys a predominant position and the situation is unlikely to change. In interior Sindh, the PPP retains its stronghold. The past elections show that the PPP edge has been progressively shrinking even though the runner-ups in all five (5) elections during the last twenty (20) years scored less than half of the votes polled by the PPP. However, this is where the sympathy wave may be at its most effective. It might restore PPP's popularity to its earlier heights; however since PPP is already substantially ahead of runner-ups, the additional votes may not mean many more seats. It would be winning by higher margins. Balochistan, due to multi-

polarity of voting structure combined with its small share of seats in the National Assembly, has little room for influencing electoral victory at the national level. In the NWFP, there is some room for manoeuvre as the voting structure is Quad-polar and the outcome of the election has generally been a product of alliances.

It is really the province of Punjab, due to its share in the seats, where the contest will be at its most unpredictable due to its bi-polar (turned tri-polar) structure of voting. In all elections since 1970, around 80% of the total votes were split between the two poles of the Muslim League(s) and the PPP. But a modest edge by one of the parties in voting ratios brings a massive swing in the seats in the National Assembly in its favour. Our research shows that an edge of up to 5% by one pole over the other still means a neck and neck outcome in the Assembly seats. But a further 5% edge, thus raising the total edge to 10% brings a massive swing that under the current strength of the Assembly could be as many as 100 or more seats in the National Assembly.

Going by past history in Punjab, the PPP vote is around 25%, the Muslim League(s) vote is around 55% and the balance 20% is shared among other parties and the independents. A split of 30%: 25% between two Muslim League factions creates a neck and neck situation between the PML-N, the PML-Q and the PPP. However a 5-10% en bloc rallying of votes from the small parties, or from within the key parties, in favour of the leading contender can bring a massive swing in its favour. The swing phenomenon in Punjab is further reinforced by the fact that, despite some exceptions, the competitive positions of the key contenders as well as smaller parties are spread out fairly uniformly throughout this populous province. Since Punjab accounts for more than half of all seats in the National Assembly and because of the bi-polar turned tri-polar character of its voting structure, the most interesting electoral decisions are going to be made here, by voters as well as leaders of both large and small parties.

The sad assassination of Benazir Bhutto has lent a new element of unpredictability to the crucial race in Punjab. The 2002 electoral races in Punjab are mostly tri-polar. Whose share will the possible sympathy wave in favour of PPP eat into: PML (Q) or PML (N), or both? That is uncertain, but quite crucial to the electoral outcome under the new circumstances.

Swing Factor and The Calculus of Electoral Politics in Pakistan (1970-2008)

A frequently asked question these days is: Should elections be held, what are the prospects of various political parties? This paper attempts to answer this in the light of lessons learnt from the patterns of voting behaviour in 8 nation-wide elections held in Pakistan years since 1970. One might ask at the outset: Are there any patterns to our electoral behaviour? The answer is Yes and these are unravelled below before future prospects based on these are discussed.

Four Clusters of Voters

Firstly, all elections since 1970 show that there are four clusters of voters: The **PPP** cluster, the **Muslim League(s)** cluster, the **Religious Parties** cluster and **Regional Parties** cluster. Past electoral behaviour shows that roughly 60 to 75% of votes are claimed by the first two clusters (PPP and ML) while the remaining gets distributed among the other two clusters as well as independents and miscellaneous.

Provincial Voting Patterns

Secondly, there are fairly distinct patterns to elections in each one of the four provinces of the country. This is particularly true of elections during the last twenty (20) years, since 1988. While provincial calculus holds the key to the outcome of the national elections, the electoral landscape in each province is quite distinct in terms of key contestants and the balance of forces between them.

First Past The Post System

Thirdly, Pakistan's "First Past the Post" or "Winner Take All" electoral system produces reasonably predictable and instinctively acceptable ratio between popular vote (*ratio of votes polled*) and parliamentary seats, when the game is uni-polar (*one dominant player*) or multi-polar (*several important players*). But it is extremely dicey when it comes to a bipolar game, even though bi-polar contests lie at the heart of a "Winner Take All" electoral system. This system is better suited to our heterogeneous society compared to the Proportional Representation System. But that is a different debate. What is to be emphasised for now is that bi-polar games can be very unpredictable and this is amply demonstrated in the pattern of our past elections.

Uneven By Size

Fourthly, an important feature of Pakistani elections is the vastly unequal size of the four (4) provinces in terms of population, which roughly corresponds to the number of seats in National Assembly. Thus Punjab accounts for approximately 55% of the seats; Sindh: 25%; NWFP: 15% and Balochistan: 5%.

Who gets what in each of four Provinces?

Sindh

Let us proceed to see how the electoral landscape is structured in each of the four provinces. **Sindh** is a uni-polar contest in both **Karachi**, where the MQM enjoys a uni-polar domination and **interior Sindh** where Pakistan People's Party (PPP) enjoys the same status. Since 1988, the MQM has never scored less than 40 per cent of the vote in **Karachi** and except for 2002, the runner up is generally well below half of that. In **interior Sindh**, the PPP enjoys the same status, never below 40%, and the runner up is way behind.

Table 1: Sindh

Major Political Parties		1970	1988	1990	1993	1997	2002
PPP and PPP-led Alliances	% of votes	45%	47%	42%	51%	32%	37%
	No. of seats	18	31	24	33	18	27
MQM	% of votes	NA	25%	27%	Boycott	18%	15%
	No. of seats		13	15		12	13
Others	% of votes	55%	28%	31%	48%	50%	48%
	No. of seats	9	2	7	13	16	21

Table 1.1: Karachi

Major Political Parties		1970	1988	1990	1993	1997	2002
PPP and PPP-led Alliances	% of votes	27%	18%	18%	41%	13%	18%
	No. of seats	2	3	2	10	2	3
MQM	% of votes	NA	56%	65%	Boycott	48%	38%
	No. of seats		13	14		12	13
Others	% of votes	73%*	26%	17%	59%	26%	44%
	No. of seats	5	0	0	8	2	6

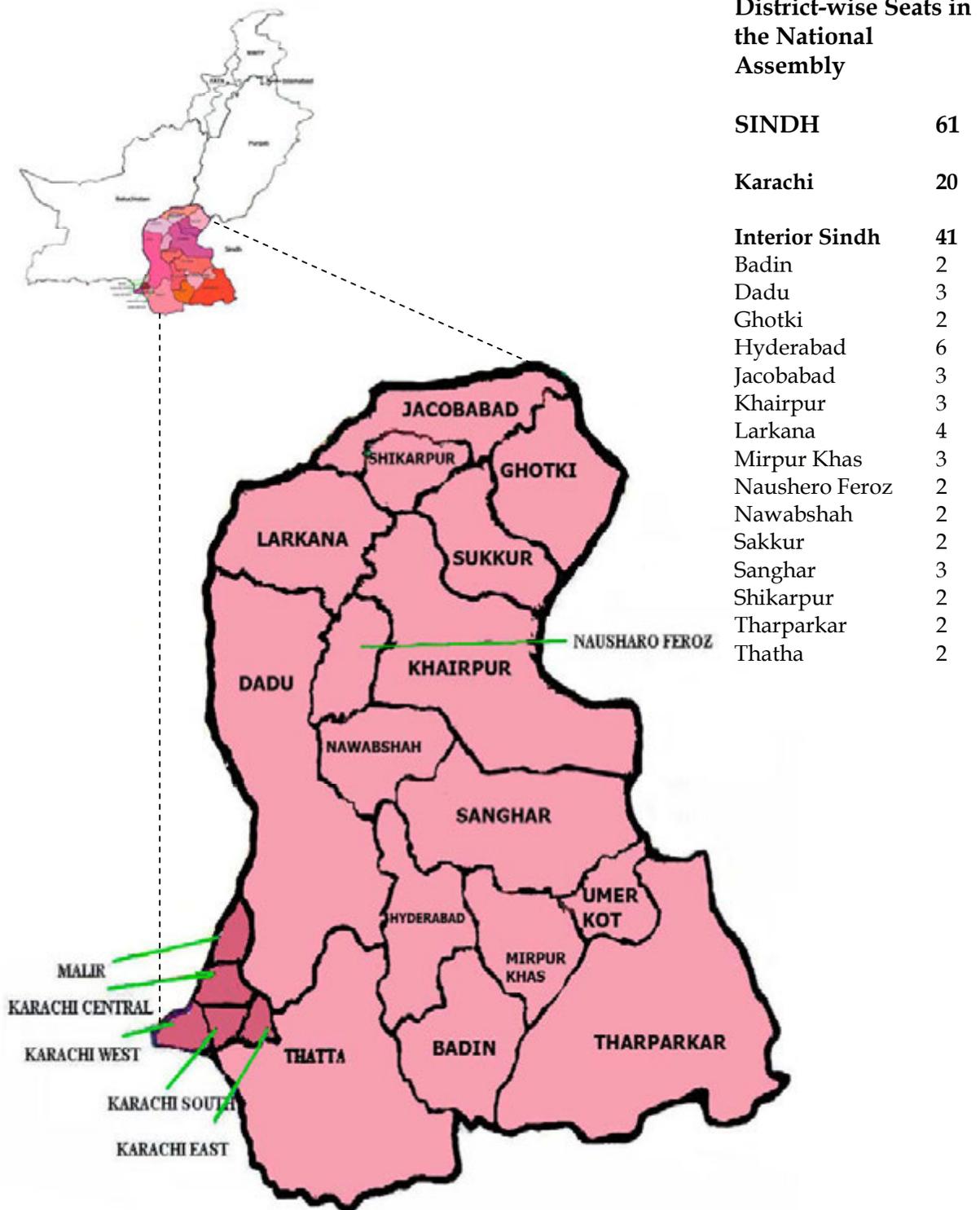
* In 1970, the Religious Parties received 45 % votes and the ML(s) received 10 % votes.

Table 1.2: Interior Sindh

Major Political Parties		1970	1988	1990	1993	1997	2002
PPP and PPP-led Alliances	% of votes	51%	68%	58%	57%	42%	45%
	No. of seats	16	28	22	25	16	24
MQM	% of votes	NA	3%	3%	Boycott	0%	5%
	No. of seats		0	1		0	0
Others	% of votes	49%*	29%	40%	43%	58%	49%
	No. of seats	4	0	7	3	12	15

* In 1970, the Religious Parties received 15 % votes and ML(s) received 22 % votes.

Figure 1: The Electoral Game in Sindh



NWFP

The situation in **NWFP** is quite different. It is in the multi-polar mode with four major players, one can call it Quad-polar: the PPP, the ML(s), the Religious parties (JUI, JI) and the Regionals (ANP). During the last twenty (20) years, each one of the four (4) has touched around 20% of the vote although there have been ebbs and flows from election to election. All the same, at one or another election, none has ever crossed 40% limit on its own. The NWFP electoral politics is one of alliances. This was witnessed by the success of the religious parties alliance, MMA, in the 2002 elections. This surprising success owned itself partly to the loss of vote by the Regional parties and Independents and partly to the consolidation of the rightist vote, which had rallied behind the ML(s) in previous elections.

The data (*see Table 2*) show that until 1997 the Muslim League vote had been steadily rising since early nineties (a gain of 10% points since 1988) cutting into the earlier vote bank of PPP, which had been losing its share of votes (a loss of 11% points since 1988). In the extraordinary circumstances of the 2002 Elections in which PML (N) was severely handicapped due to government pressure against it, a large number of its voters polled in favour of MMA. According to the Gallup Pakistan Exit Poll, 54% of MMA voters in 2002 had voted for the PML in 1997, 14% had switched in its favour from PPP and the remaining 32% came from its own constituent parties, of JUI and JI.

Table 2: NWFP

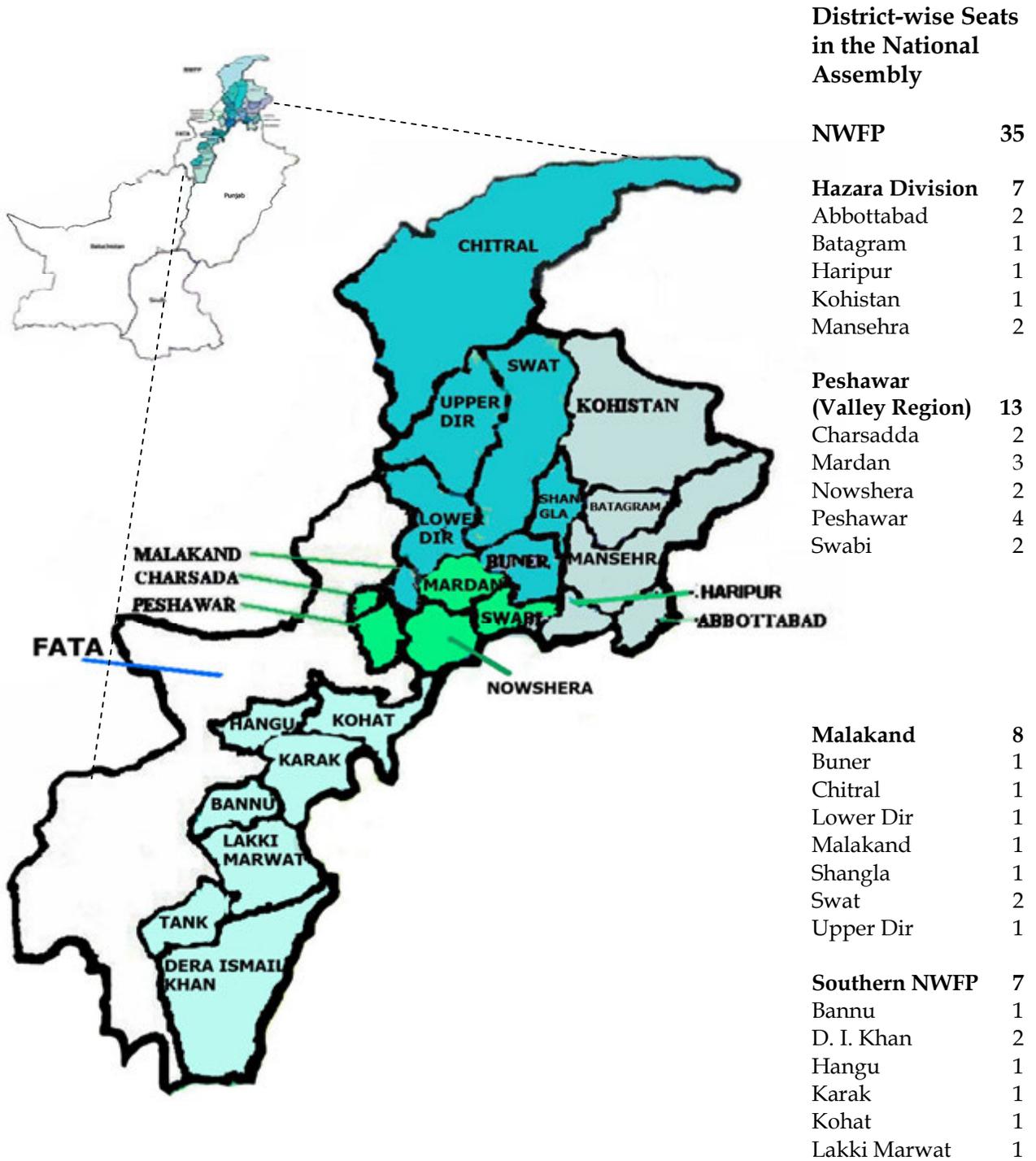
Major Political Parties		1970	1988	1990	1993	1997	2002
PPP and PPP-led Alliances	% of votes	14%	23%	23%	16%	10%	12%
	No. of seats	1	8	5	5	0	2*
PML and PML-led Alliances	% of votes	27%	27%	24%	32%	37%	18%
	No. of seats	7	8	8	10	15	4**
Religious Parties (Primarily JUI, JI and MMA in 2002)	% of votes	33%	JUI-F: 11%	JUI-F: 20%	PIF: 11% MDM: 2% IJM: 11%	JUI-F: 8% JI: Boycott	MMA: 45%
	No. of seats	6	4	JUI-F (4)	PIF (2) MDM (1) IJM (2)	0	MMA: 36
Regional parties (Primarily ANP***)	% of votes	19%	18%	15%	15%	19%	9%
	No. of seats	3	2	6	3	9	0
Others	% of votes	7%	21%	18%	13%	26%	16%
	No. of seats	8	3	3	2	1	5

* In 2002, PPP received 9% votes and won 1 seat; PPP (Sherpao) received 3% votes and won 1 seat.

** In 2002, PML (Q) received 13 % of the votes polled and won 4 NA seats while other Muslim Leagues including PML (N) received 5% votes.

*** ANP is the successor of the National Awami Party (Wali) that contested general elections in 1970.

Figure 2: The Electoral Game in NWFP



Balochistan

Lastly, the contest in **Balochistan** is multi-polar. There are a host of parties and factions, most of which score less than 10% of the vote and rarely does any one of them cross the 20% mark. It is a good case of extreme multi-polarity.

Table 3: Balochistan

Major Political Parties		1970	1988	1990	1993	1997	2002
PML and PML-led Alliances	% of votes	22%	21%	12%	7%	NA	17%
	No. of seats	0	2	2	0	3	2*
PPP and PPP-led Alliances	% of votes	2%	7%	15%	18%	NA	10%
	No. of seats	0	1	2	1	0	0
Religious Parties (Primarily JUI)	% of votes	21%	17%	19%	10%	NA	19%
	No. of seats	1	4	2	2	2	6
Regional Parties (Balochistan Pakhtoon Parties and their factions, including the National Alliance in 2002)	% of votes	45%	19%	29%	22%	NA	33%
	No. of seats	3	2	3	4	2	3
Others	% of votes	10%	35%	25%	42%	NA	22%
	No. of seats	0	2	2	4	1	1

* In 2002, PML (Q) received 16 % of the votes polled and won 2 NA seats while other Muslim Leagues including PML (N) received 1% votes.

Figure 3: The Electoral Game in Balochistan



Punjab

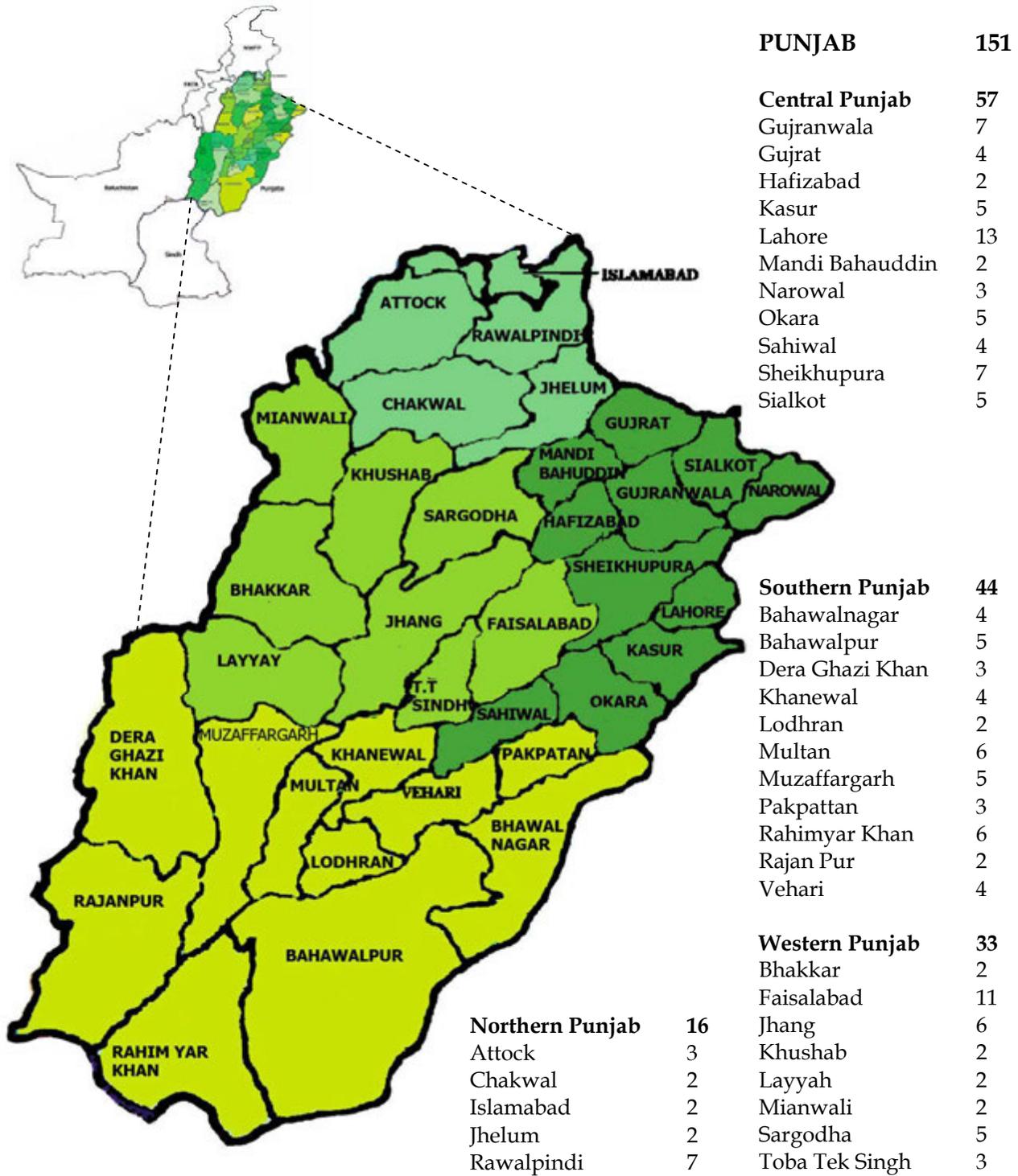
In **Punjab**, the contest is bi-polar with the PPP and the ML(s) as the two poles since between them they scored an average of more than 75% during all recent elections. All other parties competed for the remaining 25% or less. However, the bi-polarity of Punjab has been destabilized since 1997. In 1997, the historical bi-polarity changed to uni-polarity, as ML(s) vote bank became more than twice as high (59%) as PPP (22%). In the following election in 2002, the bi-polarity turned into tri-polarity as ML was split into PML-N and PML-Q. But this development was not organic to the political process; the effective split was the result of massive extra-political (coercive) influence of the establishment. This basic instability of the structure combined with the possible sympathy wave in favour of PPP, as a result of Benazir Bhutto's assassination, make the Punjab electoral contest rather unpredictable, at the least in the initial days of January 2008.

Table 4: Punjab

Major Political Parties		1970	1988	1990	1993	1997	2002
PML and PML-led Alliances	% of votes	23%	38%	49%	45%	59%	52%
	No. of seats	10	45	92	52	107	85*
PPP and PPP-led Alliances	% of votes	42%	40%	39%	39%	22%	27%
	No. of seats	62	53	14	47	0	33
Others	% of votes	35%	22%	12%	16%	19%	13%
	No. of seats	10	17	9	13	7	20

* In 2002, PML(Q) received 34 % of the votes polled and won 67 NA seats, PML(N) 16% votes and 15 NA seats, while 2 % votes and 3 NA seats went to PML led alliances

Figure 4: The Electoral Game in Punjab



Prospects for Election 2008

Now looking ahead to prospects in the forthcoming election, we shall assess the situation in each of four provinces.

Sindh

One must take into account that elections in Sindh are uni-polar. In **Karachi**, the MQM enjoys a predominant position and the situation is unlikely to change. This is not to forget that its edge over runner-ups had been shrinking from election to election. It was the lowest in 2002. In **interior Sindh**, the PPP has enjoyed a predominant position and the situation is unlikely to change. Even though the PPP edge has been progressively shrinking, the runner up in all five (5) elections during the last twenty (20) years has scored less than half of votes polled by the PPP. In the wake of the tragic assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the PPP is likely to further consolidate its vote bank and restore the earlier heights of its edge over runners-ups, at least for one election.

NWFP

In **NWFP**, the voting structure is Quad-polar. The average vote scoring ability of the four (4) clusters of voters, namely the Religious Parties, the Regional Parties, the PPP and the Muslim League(s) has been neck and neck, each claiming around 20% of the vote and the remaining going to Independent candidates or allying temporarily with one of the four clusters. The outcome of the election has generally been a product of alliances. There have been exceptions nevertheless, especially in 2002, when the Regional party cluster and independents lost votes and a substantial section of the Muslim League vote gravitated in favour of the Religious Parties alliance, the MMA. Thus there is some room for manoeuvre in NWFP.

Balochistan

Moving on to **Balochistan**, the immense multi-polarity of voting structure in Balochistan, combined with its small share of seats in the National Assembly, provides it little room for influencing electoral victory at the national level.

Punjab

The most unpredictable situation has always been in the province of **Punjab**. Its unpredictability owes to the Bi-polar structure of voting in the province. In all elections since 1970, around 80% of the total votes were split between the two poles of the Muslim League(s) and the PPP. A bi-polar competition under the "Winner Take All" system is rather queer. If the poles are neck and neck in voting ratio in the province, the outcome by way of seats is also neck and neck. But a modest edge by one of the parties in voting ratios brings a massive swing in the seats in the Assembly in its favour. Our research shows that an edge of upto 5% by one pole over the other still means a neck and neck outcome in the Assembly seats. But a further 5% edge, thus raising the total edge to 10% brings a massive swing which under the current strength of the Assembly could be as many as 100 or more seats in the National Assembly. The bi-polar contests in Punjab during four (4) elections between 1988-1997 provide revealing evidence to support this thesis, and are given at the end of this paper in tabular form.

Punjab
Electoral Performance of Muslim League(s)
(1970-2002)

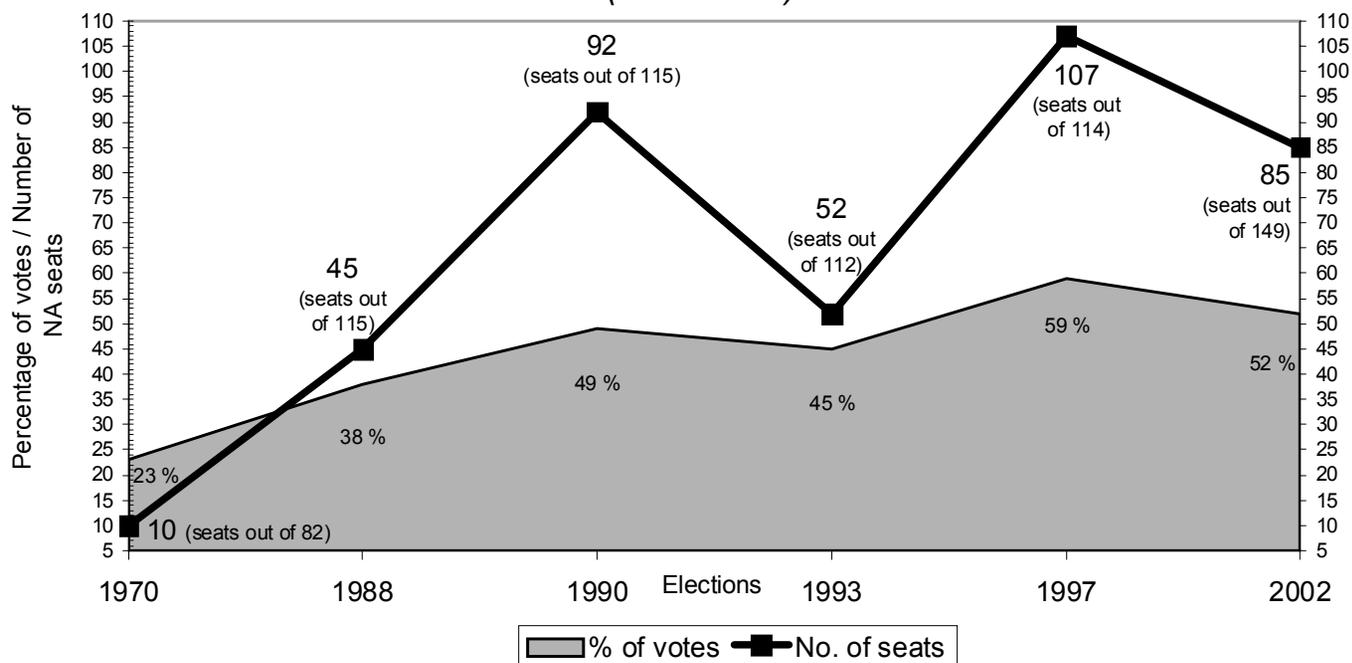


Figure 5

Note: All data are for Muslim League(s) or Muslim League led Electoral Alliances. In 1970, there were 3 ML(s); in 1988 and 1990, ML led IJI; in 1993 and 1997, ML contested as one party; in 2002, there were two major ML(s): PML (Q) and PML (N). In each case, minor ML factions existed in addition to this description.

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan; Compiled by Gallup Pakistan.

Punjab
Electoral Performance of Pakistan People's Party
 (1970-2002)

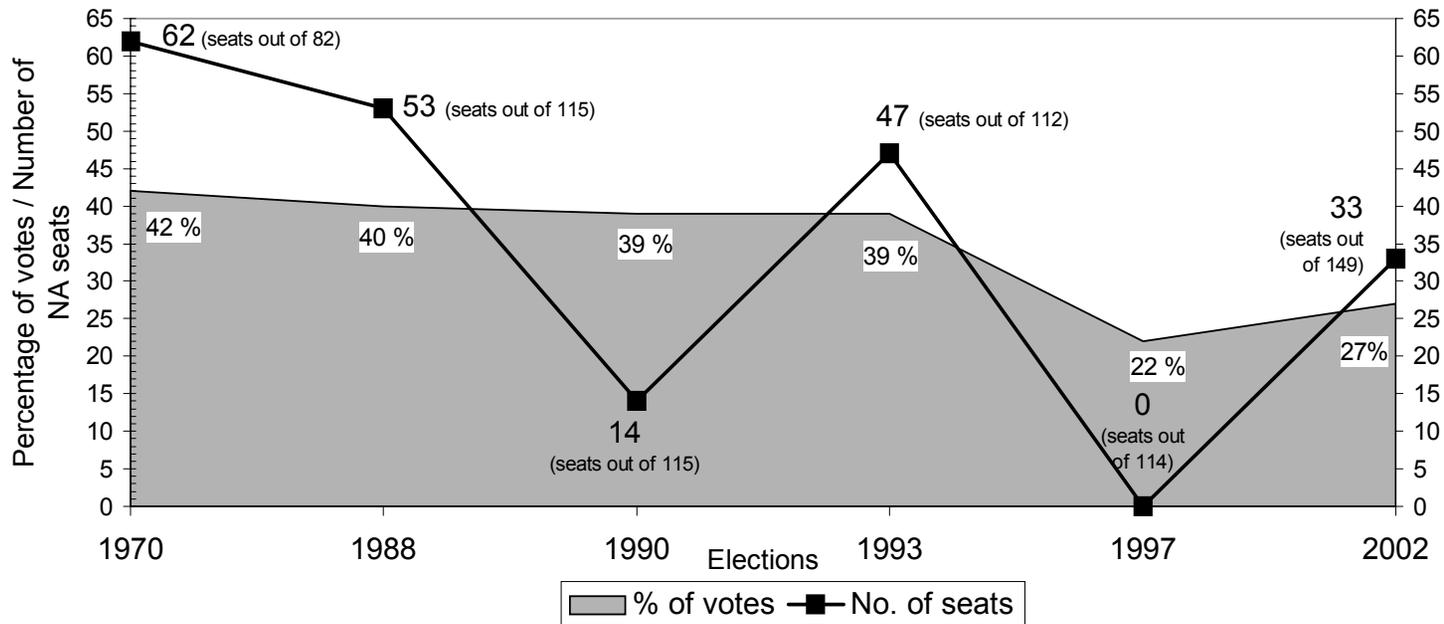


Figure 6

Note: All data are for Pakistan People's Party and PPP led Electoral Alliances. From 1970 to 1990, PPP contested as one party; in 1990, PPP led PDA; from 1993 to 2002, it again contested as a single party. In each case, minor PPP factions and alliances existed in addition to this description.

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan, Compiled by Gallup Pakistan.

The Dramatic 5% Swing Factor in Punjab

The Muslim League (*for the purpose of this paper we are counting Muslim League led alliances as Muslim League*) began neck and neck with the PPP in Punjab in 1988, but started picking up such that it was vastly ahead of the PPP in 1997, scoring nearly three times more votes than the PPP (59%: 22%). Opinion polls suggest that this edge is still intact. But there is one major difference. The historically bi-polar competition in Punjab is in all likelihood (as in 2002) going to be tri-polar in the forthcoming elections. Going by past history the PPP vote is around 25%, the Muslim League(s) vote is around 55% and the balance 20% is shared among other parties: the JI, the JUI, the JUP, other religious parties, the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf, others and the independents. A split of 30%: 25% between two Muslim League factions creates a neck and neck situation between the PML-N, the PML-Q and the PPP. However a 5-10% en bloc rallying of votes from the small parties in favour of the leading contender can bring a massive swing in its favour (*see Table 5*). The swing phenomenon in Punjab is further reinforced by the fact that small party vote is thin but, with few exceptions, spread throughout the province and hence affects the neck and neck competition among the three key contenders across this populous province. Since Punjab accounts for more than half of all seats in the National Assembly and because of the bi-polar turned tri-polar character of its voting structure, the most interesting electoral decisions are going to be made here, by voters as well as leaders of both large and small parties. One wishes best for the health of democracy and successful articulation of the will of the people through the forthcoming elections in Pakistan.

Table 5: Swing Factor In Bi-Polar National Assembly Elections In Punjab

National Assembly Elections	All Pakistan winner in National Assembly	Voting Ratio: ML and PPP in Punjab	Edge of National Assembly Seats in Punjab
1970	PPP <i>(Winner gets 37% vote nationally)</i>	PPP ahead by 19% (42:23%)	PPP ahead by 52 seats (62:10*) seats for ML(s)
1988	PPP <i>(Winner gets 39% vote nationally)</i>	PPP ahead by 2% (40:38%)	PPP ahead by 8 seats (53:45) seats
1990	ML <i>(Winner gets 37% vote nationally)</i>	ML ahead by 10% (49:39%)	ML ahead by 78 seats (92:14) seats
1993	PPP <i>(Winner gets 38% vote nationally)</i>	ML ahead by 6% (45:39%)	ML ahead by 5 seats (52:47) seats
1997	ML <i>(Winner gets 46% vote nationally)</i>	ML ahead by 37% (59:22%)	ML ahead by 107 seats (107:zero) seats
2002	No clear winner PPP (26%), PML-Q (24%), PML-N (11%)	ML(s) ahead by 24% PML(Q) (35%), PML(N) (16%), PPP (27%)	ML(s) ahead by 48 seats PML(Q) (67), PML(N) (16); PPP (34) seats

Table 6: Comparative Table (1970-2002), Pakistan

Major Political Parties		1970	1988	1990	1993	1997	2002
PML and PML-led Alliances	<i>% of votes</i>	23%	30%	37%	40%	45%	39%
	<i>No. of seats</i>	18	54	106	72	134	99*
PPP and PPP-led Alliances	<i>% of votes</i>	42%	38%	37%	38%	21%	26%
	<i>No. of seats</i>	81	93	44	86	18	61
Others	<i>% of votes</i>	38%	30%	26%	22%	32%	35%
	<i>No. of seats</i>	39	57	57	58	52	109**

* In 2002, PML(Q) received 26 % of the votes polled and won 77 NA seats, PML(N) 11 % votes and 16 NA seats, while 2 % votes and 7 NA seats went to PML led alliances

** In 2002, MMA received 11% votes and won 52 seats.



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