

Election 2024:

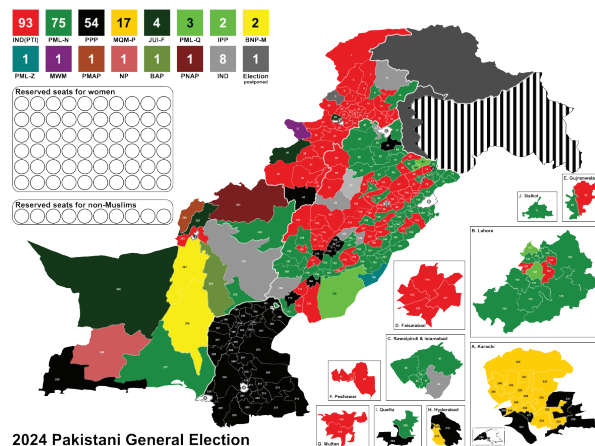
National Healing or Divided Nation?

Summary:

- Political chaos and uncertainty is prevailing in Pakistan, both domestically and internationally and it highlights the polarization and disconnection among political factions within the nation.
- The international community has raised concerns about irregularities in the democratic process, putting a question mark on the country's democratic credentials.
- There is a recognized need to uplift the morale of the people amidst the political chaos and uncertainty.
- Historical examples, such as the Charter of Democracy in 2006, are mentioned as potential lessons for fostering political consensus and stability.
- The report emphasizes the necessity of political consensus to break the cycle of political maneuvering and establish a more stable governance framework.
- Education and civic awareness are highlighted as crucial factors in engaging and empowering the youth to participate meaningfully in politics.
- Structural reforms, such as empowering the Senate and reimagining Pakistan's federal design, are proposed as measures to address underlying governance challenges.
- The need for transparency in electoral processes and access to accurate information, particularly for the youth, is emphasized to counter the spread of disinformation and populism.



- Recommendations include engaging marginalized regions like Balochistan through political reforms and equitable representation in governance structures.
- A national dialogue involving all stakeholders, including political parties, civil society, and the public, is proposed as a long-term solution to address systemic challenges and foster unity.
- The aim of this report is to examine the political landscape of the nation, particularly focusing on the challenges of political chaos and uncertainty. It seeks to analyze the root causes of polarization and disconnection within the domestic political sphere while also addressing concerns raised by the international community regarding the democratic process.



Introduction:

Amidst a backdrop of political turmoil and uncertainty The Sanober Institute's held a dialogue titled Election 2024: National Healing or Divided Nation? Featuring Adnan Amir, Nikkei Asia Correspondent, Dr. Yaqoob Khan Bangash a historian of Modern South Asia and a current Fulbright Fellow at the Mittal Institute and Dr. Qamar Cheema Executive Director, Sanober Institute, to discuss the intricate web of challenges facing the nation's democratic landscape, aiming to dissect the root causes of polarization, disconnection, and institutional irregularities while charting a course towards national healing and political consensus.



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Key Takeaways:

Political Chaos and Uncertainty:

Refers to the prevailing atmosphere of instability and unpredictability in the political landscape of the nation, characterized by conflicts, power struggles, and frequent changes in government.

Polarization and Disconnection:

Reflects the deep divisions and lack of communication between different political factions and communities within the country, leading to a breakdown in governance and decision-making processes.

International Scrutiny:

The international community's scrutiny of the country's democratic process highlights concerns about the fairness and integrity of elections, as well as the overall state of democracy within the nation.

Morale Boosting:

Recognizing the importance of uplifting the spirits and confidence of the population amidst political turmoil to maintain stability and social cohesion.

Historical Lessons:

Drawing insights from past experiences, such as the Charter of Democracy in 2006, to learn from successes and failures in fostering political consensus and stability.

Political Consensus:

Emphasizing the need for political parties to set aside differences and work together towards common goals to break the cycle of political manipulation and establish effective governance.

Education and Civic Awareness:

Highlighting the role of education and civic engagement in empowering the youth to participate meaningfully in political processes and make informed decisions.

Structural Reforms:

Proposing changes to the political system, such as empowering the Senate and restructuring provincial boundaries, to address underlying governance challenges and promote equitable representation.

Transparency and Information Access:

Advocating for transparency in electoral processes and ensuring access to accurate information, especially for the youth, to counter disinformation and promote informed decision-making was stressed.

Engagement with Marginalized Regions:

Recognizing the need to engage marginalized regions, like Baluchistan, through political reforms and equitable representation in governance structures to address grievances and promote inclusivity.

National Dialogue:

Calling for a comprehensive national dialogue involving all stakeholders to address systemic challenges, foster unity, and develop consensus on critical issues affecting the nation's future.



Empowering the Senate:

Suggesting reforms to strengthen the role and powers of the Senate to create a more balanced and effective governance system, reducing the concentration of power in the hands of the executive.

Promoting Quality Education:

Prioritizing quality education over quantity to equip the youth with critical thinking skills, public awareness, and a deeper understanding of national issues, fostering a more informed and engaged citizenry.

Addressing Regional Disparities:

Proposing measures like dividing Punjab into smaller administrative units and granting provincial status to Gilgit-Baltistan to address regional disparities, promote local autonomy, and ensure equitable development.

Long-term Vision:

Emphasizing the importance of adopting a long-term vision and committing to sustained efforts by all stakeholders to overcome political polarization, promote democratic values, and build a more resilient and inclusive society.

Recommendations:

- Political parties should prioritize national interests over partisan agendas and work towards consensus on critical issues through dialogue and compromise.
- Implement Electoral reforms to ensure transparency, fairness, and integrity in the electoral process, including measures to prevent rigging and irregularities.
- The role and powers of the Senate should be strengthened to act as a check on executive authority and promote balanced representation of diverse regions within the federal system.
- Prioritize quality education over quantity, focusing on civic education, critical thinking skills, and a deeper understanding of national history and issues to empower the youth as informed and engaged citizens.



- Facilitate a comprehensive national dialogue involving all stakeholders, including political parties, civil society, and marginalized communities, to foster unity, address grievances, and develop consensus on key national priorities.
- Regional disparities should be addressed by implementing structural reforms, such as dividing provinces into smaller administrative units and granting provincial status to marginalized regions like Gilgit-Baltistan, to promote local autonomy and equitable development.

- Enhance transparency and accountability in governance processes, including access to information and public participation, to build trust in institutions and combat corruption.
- Engage and empower the youth through access to accurate information, civic education programs, and opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making processes to counter disinformation and promote civic responsibility.
- Strengthen diplomatic efforts to address concerns raised by the international community regarding democratic processes and governance, demonstrating a commitment to upholding democratic values and standards.
- Adopt a long-term vision for national development that prioritizes sustainable growth, social cohesion, and inclusive governance, focusing on building resilience and addressing systemic challenges for the benefit of future generations.



Conclusion:

In conclusion, the discussions underscored the urgent need for political consensus-building and electoral reforms to address the prevailing political chaos and uncertainty. Participants highlighted the importance of empowering the Senate to provide effective checks and balances and ensuring equitable representation within the federal system. Moreover, education reform emerged as a critical priority, emphasizing the need for quality education to empower the youth with public knowledge and critical thinking skills. Additionally, fostering national dialogue, addressing regional disparities, enhancing transparency and accountability, engaging the youth, and strengthening international engagement were identified as essential components of a comprehensive approach towards national healing and overcoming divisions. Ultimately, a long-term vision for sustainable development, social cohesion, and inclusive governance is imperative to navigate the challenges and forge a path towards a more united and prosperous future for the nation.