

# ETHNO-REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTY SUCCESS IN PAKISTAN (1970-2013): AN ANALYSIS

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## **Abstract**

*The propensity to organize parties along ethno-regional lines has remained alive in most multi-ethnic states. Additionally, the growing ethnic strife and political fragmentation in the recent past has resulted in the proliferation of ethno-regionalist parties worldwide. These parties have attracted considerable electoral support and, resultantly, have moderately influenced public policy in several cases. This paper attempts to determine the role of ethno-regionalist parties in the politics of Pakistan by examining their electoral performance in general elections. The evidence demonstrates that the influential role of ethno-regionalist parties in the politics of Pakistan will prevail until a significant shift in behavior of the national electorate occurs.*

**Key Words:** Ethno-regionalist Parties, Electoral Support, Electoral Process

## **Introduction**

Ethno-regionalist parties<sup>1</sup> have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. There are several studies available on ethno-regional parties.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, considerable literature on the electoral politics of Pakistan is available.<sup>3</sup> But the ethno regional parties of Pakistan have remained overlooked, as no study has exclusively reviewed the dynamics of electoral support of ethno-regional parties of Pakistan. In this context, this paper attempts to grasp ‘whether the electoral support of ethno-regionalist parties in Pakistan will persist or it is likely to wither away’?

Investigating the electoral support of ethno-regional parties in Pakistan is important for several reasons. First, the ethno-regionalist parties of Pakistan originate from the smaller provinces and are supposed to be a

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vehicle of political incorporation for minority groups. Second, some ethno-regionalist parties have received stable electoral support in federal and regional elections over the years. Third, these parties have joined various coalition cabinets and, resultantly, have moderately influenced the public policy. Finally, the recent debates over party politics and electoral studies have overlooked the ethno-regionalist parties of Pakistan.

The ethno-regional political parties have attracted stable electoral support in many diverse societies. The meaningful electoral support for such parties in Quebec, Catalonia, Scotland, and the Basque Country has been noticed by the scholars on ethnicity and party politics.<sup>4</sup> In the Subcontinent, the ethno-regionalist parties have successfully challenged the mainstream or multi-ethnic parties. The proliferation of Ethno-regional Parties (ERPs) in India has resulted in the continued decline of electoral support for the 'two genuinely national parties, the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janta Party.'<sup>5</sup> In the case of Pakistan, several Ethno Regional Parties are registered with the election commission of Pakistan. This paper does not aim to describe the development of these ERPs, but to evaluate their electoral support in the general elections over years.

## **Ethnicity and Electoral Politics in Pakistan**

The Pakistani federation consists of four provinces and capital territory, Islamabad besides state of Azad and Jamu Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit Baltistan (GB). Each of its provinces is associated with a certain ethno-linguistic group – Punjab with Punjabis, Sindh with Sindhis, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with Pashtuns, and Balochistan with Balochis. Similarly, each province has a substantial geographically concentrated minority: Seraikis in South Punjab, Mohajirs in urban Sindh, Hazarewals in Hazara region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pashtuns in north Balochistan. This diversity has a great impact on the electoral politics of Pakistan.

Owing to their numerical strength and the relative adventurous position in the power-structure of Pakistan, the Punjabis have remained centrist in their approach.<sup>6</sup> Conversely, the ethno linguistic groups based in the smaller provinces have been asserting for greater degree of autonomy. Majority of the ERPs of Pakistan have demanded autonomy, equitable share in the state institutions, and recognition of cultural and linguistic identity. They have sought fiscal autonomy, ownership rights of the natural resources, extended role of the Senate in certain policy domains and territorial accommodation.

Generally, the 'first past the post' electoral system tends to strengthen the two-party system by excluding the parties with geographically-dispersed electoral support. However, the ERPs of Pakistan have geographically-concentrated electoral support and get fair representation in the parliament. Like many other multi-ethnic states, Pakistan has a multi-party system. Now, there are 321 political parties registered by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Though, only 18 political parties have representation in the National Assembly and 13 in the Senate after the elections of 2013 and 2015 respectively. The political parties of Pakistan can be grouped into three broad categories: first, the mainstream political parties that have stable electoral support across the regions; second, the religious political parties which have mostly geographically-dispersed electoral support, and third, the ethno-regional parties whose electoral support is geographically concentrated and confined to the respective ethnic groups.

Historically, Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League have remained the leading political parties in Pakistan. Both parties have displayed stable electoral support across the groups and regions in several elections. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Pakistan Movement for Justice) of Imran Khan emerged as a third mainstream party in the general elections of 2013 by winning the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and getting considerable support in Punjab. The religious political parties represent the

various factions and sects of the Muslims. These parties lack adequate representation in the parliament, because of their geographically-dispersed electoral support. However, some parties such as Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (F) have traditional electoral support concentrated in certain regions. Ethno-regional parties are operating in all regions of the state. However, majority of these parties have no attraction for the Pakistani electorate. The ethno-regional parties of rural Sindh, South Punjab, and the Hazara region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have remained unable to attract the masses. However, the MQM in urban Sindh, ANP in Pashtun region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, PKMAP in Pashtun Balochistan and the Baloch Nationalist groups in Baloch region of Balochistan were able to gain electoral support in several elections. The detail of ethno-regional parties of Pakistan is presented in the following table.

**Table 1: Ethno-regional Political Parties of Pakistan**

Province	Region	Ethno-regional Political Parties
Punjab	South Punjab	Pakistan Sariaki Party
		Sairkistan Qaumi Ittehad
		Seraiki Sooba Movement Pakistan
	Bahawalpur	Bahawalpur National Awami Party
		Awami Tehreek Bahali-e-Soba Bahawalpur Pakistan
Sindh	Urban Sindh	Mohajir Qaumi Movement Pakistan
		Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan
		Mohajir Ittehad Tehrik
	Rural Sindh	Sindh Democratic Alliance
		Sindh Dost Ittehad
		Sindh National Front
		Sindh Taraqi Passand Party (STP)
		Sindh United Party
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Pashtun Region	Awami National Party
		Awami National Party (Wali)
	Hazara Region	Hazara Awami Ittehad Pakistan
		Hazara Democratic Party
		Hazara Qaumi Mahaz
		Ittehad Milli Hazara
		Tehreek-e-Suba Hazara
		National Party

Balochistan	Baloch Region	Jamhoori Wattan Party
		Balochistan National Congress
		Balochistan National Democratic Party
		Balochistan National Movement
		Balochistan National Party
		Balochistan National Party (Awami)
		Mutahida Baloch Movement Pakistan
		All Muttahida Baloch Qaumi Movement
		Pakistan Brohi Party
	Pashtun Region	Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party
		Pashtoon Quomi Tehreek
		Pakhtoonkhwa Qaumi Party
		Kakar Jamhoori Party Pakistan
		Jamote Qaumi Movement

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan<sup>7</sup>

## Pattern of Electoral Support in Pakistan

Pakistan is a parliamentary federation. The federal parliament is bicameral, consisting of the National Assembly and the Senate. However, the provinces have unicameral legislature, the provincial assembly. Each assembly has general and reserved seats for women and religious minorities. The members of National Assembly and provincial assemblies on general seats are elected through first-past-the-post electoral system for five years' term. However, the members for reserved seats are elected through 'proportional representation system of political parties' lists of candidates on the basis of total number of general seats won by each political party" in the respective Assembly.<sup>8</sup> The members of Senate are elected through proportional representation system by provincial assemblies and national assembly for the period of six years.<sup>9</sup>

Pakistan has had a checkered history of electoral politics. The first general elections on the basis of adult franchise at national level were held in 1970. Awami League, a party that contested election on its 'six points' agenda for provincial autonomy, won all except two of seats in Bengal. In the West Pakistan, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto won 62 out of 82 seats in Punjab and 18 out of 27 seats in Sindh. Although Pakistan People's Party (PPP) emerged as the second largest party in the

National Assembly, it lost elections in Karachi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (the then North-West Frontier Province-NWFP), and Balochistan. National Awami Party (W), won three seats each in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Pakistan Muslim League (Qayyum Group), Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (Hazarvi group) won seven and six seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa respectively.<sup>10</sup> After the separation of Bengal in 1971, PPP became the largest party in National Assembly. Subsequently, the 1973 constitution was passed by National Assembly and Mr Zulifqar Bhutto became the prime minister of Pakistan.

The second general elections were held in 1977. The Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) that consisted of the nine opposition parties contested the election against PPP of Bhutto. PPP won the elections but the opposition parties did not accept the results and accused Bhutto of rigging. The opposition protested and the Army imposed the martial law. The next elections were held in 1985, but on non-party basis. After the demise of Zia-ul-Haq regime in 1988, Pakistan returned to the constitutional democracy once again.

Since 1988, Pakistan has held seven general elections. With some exceptions, the ethno-regional parties, besides the mainstream parties, have contested the general elections.<sup>11</sup> Overviews of the results of several elections are summarized in the following paragraphs.

In the general elections of 1988, PPP emerged as a leading party in National Assembly by securing 94 seats out of 207. In the province of Sindh, while Sindhis overwhelmingly voted for the PPP, the Mohajir Qaumi Movement<sup>12</sup> won majority of seats in urban Sindh, particularly in Karachi and Hyderabad.<sup>13</sup> Islami Jamhoori Ittehad-IJI (Islamic Democratic Alliance) won the election in Punjab and succeeded to set-up its government in the province. The Baloch and Pashtun nationalist parties received considerable electoral support in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan respectively. The government of Benazir Bhutto was sacked and the mid-term elections were held in October 1990. IJI, a nine-party coalition, won the elections in

Punjab. Besides its governments at center and in the province of Punjab, IJI installed coalition governments in Sindh, Balochistan, and then the NWFP in collaboration with the ethno-regional parties of respective provinces. Once again, the elected federal and provincial governments were dislodged, and the elections were scheduled on October 6, 1993. In the elections of 1993, the mainstream parties i.e. Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) and PPP made notable inroads into the provinces.<sup>14</sup> While MQM boycotted the elections, the regional parties of the then NWFP and Balochistan suffered defeats in the national and provincial elections. The Islamist parties could not attract the Pakistani electorate. PPP formed coalition government at center and in the province of Punjab. PML-N and Awami National Party (ANP) succeeded in setting-up coalition government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. MQM demonstrated its electoral strength in the urban Sindh during provincial elections. Once again, the early elections were announced owing to the dismissal of the government. PML-N won the general elections of 1997 convincingly. It not only won the Punjab but also successfully made inroads in the rural Sindh. The ethno-regional parties such as MQM, ANP, BNP, JWP managed to win the elections in their respective traditional constituencies. The JUI-F also won two seats in the National Assembly.<sup>15</sup> PML-N formed coalition governments in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with MQM and ANP respectively. Again, the governments were dismissed, but this time because of the military takeover on October 12, 1999. After almost three years of military rule, once again general elections were held in Pakistan on October 10, 2002. The most interesting feature of these elections was the sizeable electoral support for the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. PPP won the elections in Sindh and PML-Q in Punjab. MQM successfully maintained its electoral support in urban Sindh. The next general elections were held in February 2008. PPP won the elections in Sindh and PML-N emerged as the leading party in the Punjab. MQM, once again won the elections in Karachi and Hyderabad. ANP won the election in Pashtun region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Baloch and Pashtun nationalist parties of Balochistan

boycotted the election. After the elections, PPP formed a coalition government in collaboration with PML-N, ANP, MQM, and JUI-F. In addition, coalition governments were formed in all provinces.

The next general elections held in May 2013. PML-N won the elections in Punjab decisively. PPP maintained its electoral support in rural Sindh and the MQM in urban Sindh. PTI emerged as the leading party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The nationalist parties of Balochistan, PKMAP, and NP accomplished considerable electoral support in respective regions.

This brief description of the elections results seems to suggest that Pakistani electorate is quite dispersed. The regional political parties are generally able to attract electoral support in respective regions. Historically, the Punjab has remained centrist in its approach and has overwhelmingly polled votes for mainstream parties. Even, the Seraiki nationalist parties could not appeal to the electorate of southern Punjab. But, the voting behavior of the smaller provinces exhibit persistence of electoral support for regional political parties. The urban Sindh has outrightly voted in favor of Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) in all provincial elections since 1988. Similarly, many voters in rural Sindh have constantly cast votes for Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The voting behavior of Pashtun region in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is not in line with the non-Pashtun region of Hazara. Previously, the Awami National Party (ANP), Qaumi Watan Party (QWP), and PPP demonstrated stable electoral support. However, in the 2013 elections, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has emerged as the leading party in this region. In contrast, the Hazara region has remained a stronghold of Pakistan Muslim League for years. The mainstream political parties have limited electoral support in Balochistan. While the PKMAP, a Pashtun nationalist party, and JUIF, an Islamist party, enjoy electoral support in north Balochistan, the Baloch nationalist parties have strong electoral support in the Baloch countryside. The membership of political parties in the contemporary parliament is provided in the following table.



**Table 2: Representation of Political Parties in the National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan**

S. No	Political Party	National Assembly	Senate
1	Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N)	187	26
2	Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP)	46	27
3	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	34	7
4	Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)	23	8
5	Awami National Party (ANP)	2	6
6	Jamiat-Ulema-e-Islam-F (JUI-F)	13	5
7	Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q)	2	4
8	National Party (NP)	2	3
9	Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP)	4	3
10	Balochistan National Party-M (BNP-M)	0	1
11	Balochistan National Party Awami (BNP-A)	1	2
12	Pakistan Muslim League-F (PML-F)	5	1
13	Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	4	1
14	National People's Party (NPP)	2	0
15	Qaumi Watan Party (QWP)	1	0
16	Pakistan Muslim League-Z (PML-Z)	1	0
17	Awami Muslim League (AML)	1	0
18	Awami Jamhuri Ittehad Pakistan (AJIP)	1	0
19	All Pakistan Muslim League	1	0
20	Independents	9	10

Source: National Assembly & Senate of Pakistan<sup>16</sup>

## **The Continuity and Change in Electoral Support of Ethno-Regionalist Parties**

The previous sections illustrate that MQM in urban Sindh, ANP in Pashtun region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the ethno-regional parties of Balochistan had sustained considerable popular support in several elections in Pakistan. Hence, this section analyses the continuity and change in the electoral support from 1988 to the 2013 elections in Pakistan. This section

discounts the ethno-regional parties of south Punjab, rural Sindh, and Hazara region of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, owing to their minimal level of support.

### **Awami National Party (ANP)**

ANP is a Pashtun nationalist party that derives its electoral support exclusively from the Pashtuns. Though the party has membership statewide, its stronghold is the Pashto-speaking region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>17</sup> The party had won several seats in several national and provincial elections in the Pashtun region, particularly in the districts of Peshawar, Charsada, Nowshera, Mardan and Swabi. During the seven general elections of National Assembly (1988-2013), its electoral support has revolved around 20-30% of the votes in Pashtun belt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>18</sup> However, it could not appeal the non-Pashtun electorate of Hazara region. The table illustrates that the party had stable electoral support between 1988 and 1997. However, its vote bank reduced in the general elections of 2002. The Mutahida Mujlis Amel (MMA, an alliance of religious political parties) contested this election in province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (that is adjoining Afghanistan) with an anti-America slogan. This campaign policy of MMA contributed to its victory and fractured the Pashtun nationalist appeal for ANP. The party came back strongly in 2008 by winning the provincial elections and forming a coalition government. However, ANP lost elections of 2013. The party asserted that it was the major victim of terrorist attacks during the election campaign. Several of its workers and supporters were killed and injured during the terrorist activities, mostly in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In a letter to the Election Commission of Pakistan, it expressed its concern that it was not provided with a level playing field during the election campaign.<sup>19</sup> The table demonstrates symmetry in terms of electoral support of ANP for the national and provincial elections. The party remained unable to attract the non-Pashtun constituency of the province over the years.

**Table 3: Electoral Support of Awami National Party**

Elections	National Assembly Elections			Provincial Assembly Elections		
	KPK	Pashtun KPK	Non-Pashtun KPK	KPK	Pashtun KPK	Non- Pashtun KPK
1988	17.67	26.26	0.58	15.98	21.69	1.20
1990	13.35	20.15	0	14.97	20.72	1.89
1993	14.34	21.75	0	15.39	21.47	0.95
1997	19.90	31.62	0	20.92	29.34	3.07
2002	9.39	14.00	0	11.34	15.88	1.26
2008	17.58	26.56	0.76	16.66	23.29	1.81
2013	7.66	10.99	0.41	10.34	12.77	2.18

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan<sup>20</sup>

### **Mutahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)**

Though Mohajir Qaumi Movement (Mohajir National Movement) was renamed as Muttahida Qaumi Movement (Joint National Movement) in 1997 to 'adopt a more inclusive outlook away from Mohajirism', yet the pattern of electoral support for MQM suggests that it relies fundamentally on the Mohajir constituency in urban Sindh.<sup>21</sup> The results of several elections depict that Karachi and Urban electorate of Hyderabad has voted overwhelmingly for MQM in national, provincial, and local bodies election since 1988. During the seven elections, the voting share of MQM in Mohajir constituency has remained stable. Its vote shares in 'Mohajir constituency has remained between 40-70% in the national and provincial elections. When it boycotted the national assembly elections in 1993, the turn out in urban Sindh remained substantially lower.'<sup>22</sup> However, beyond urban Sindh its support has remained nominal. The detail of the electoral support of MQM is given in the following table.

**Table 4: Electoral Support of Muttahida Qaumi Movement**

Elections	National Assembly Elections			Provincial Assembly Elections		
	Sindh	Rural Sindh	Urban Sindh	Sindh	Rural Sindh	Urban Sindh
1990	27.18	1.74	68.95	27.76	4.96	67.49
1993	N/A	N/A	N/A	24.86	4.42	64.62
1997	14.26	2.45	43.03	20.13	3.01	56.72
2002	15.37	3.86	40.31	14.88	3.37	40.17
2008	31.00	1.21	70.94	30.88	2.23	70.78
2013	24.60	2.90	59.69	25.53	2.81	60.43

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan<sup>23</sup>

### **Pakhtunkhwa Mille Awami Party (PKMAP)**

The Pakhtunkhwa Mille Awami Party (PKMAP) is a Pashtun nationalist party that was formed by Khan Abdul Samad Khan in 1987. The party derives its electoral support from the Pashtun region of Balochistan. The results of national and provincial elections (1988-2013) reveals that the party has sustained its support in several elections. However, outside the Pashtun region of Balochistan its electoral support shrinks markedly.

**Table 5: Electoral Support of Pakhtunkhwa Mille Awami Party**

Elections	National Assembly Elections			Provincial Assembly Elections		
	Balochistan	PB*	NPB**	Balochistan	PB*	NPB**
1988	6.68	11.22	2.14	2.27	6.00	0
1990	7.84	16.46	1.16	7.10	18.15	0
1993	12.31	26.26	1.34	7.83	20.74	0
1997	7.74	13.03	2.40	6.20	16.06	0
2002	8.31	19.37	0.80	6.62	18.46	0
2013	15.61	28.06	2.12	12.80	22.91	0
* Pashtun Balochistan						
** Non-Pashtun Balochistan						

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan<sup>24</sup>

### **Baloch Nationalist Groups**

The Baloch nationalists protested against the amalgamation of Balochistan into the province of West Pakistan under the One-Unit scheme in 1955. Ustoman Gal (People's Party), a political party was formed in 1955 that "opposed the One-Unit scheme and demanded for the formation of

unified Balochistan province.”<sup>25</sup> Yahya Khan (1969-71) regime broke up the One-Unit scheme and reinstated the provincial status of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (then the Northwest Frontier Province), and Sindh. In addition, Balochistan was granted the provincial status. In the general elections of 1970, Khair Bakhsh Marri and Ataullah Mengal contested the election under the banner of National Awami Party (W). However, Akbar Bugti, another prominent Baloch leader did not join the party.<sup>26</sup> The NAP (W) won eight out of twenty provincial assembly seats and formed a coalition government in Balochistan.<sup>27</sup> Ataullah Mengal remained the Chief Minister from May 1, 1972 to February 13, 1973. As it has been mentioned earlier, the general elections of 1977 remained controversial. The political parties were not allowed to contest in the non-party elections of 1985.

The Pakistan National Party (PNP) of Ghous Buksh Bizenjo and the Balochistan National Alliance (BNA) contested the general elections of 1988.<sup>28</sup> BNA emerged as the leading party in Baloch region and Akbar Bugti formed a coalition government. The alliance of Akbar Bugti and Ataullah Mengal proved short-lived. Mengal founded Baloch National Movement (BNM) and Bugti formed Jamhoori Wattan Party (JWP) in the general elections of 1990, BNM, JWP, and PNP contested elections in the Baloch region of the province.<sup>29</sup> The JWP of Akbar Bugti remained winner in this contest. BNM of Ataullah Mengal was further divided into BNM-M (Mengal group) and BNM-H (Hayee group) before the general elections of 1993. So, in the elections of 1993 four Baloch factions contested the elections: JWP, PNP, BNM-M, and BNM-H. This polarization contributed to the defeat of Baloch nationalist groups in the election. Then, PNP of Bizenjo and BNM-M (Mengal) were merged and Ataullah Mengal found Balochistan National Party (BNP) in 1996. The party won 1997 elections and formed coalition government in Balochistan.<sup>30</sup> Later on, Bizenjo formed another political party, namely the Balochistan National Democratic Party (BNDP). Subsequently, National Party (NP) was established by merging the BNM and the BNDP. “Abdul Hayee Baloch became the first chairman of the National

Party and Mir Hasil Khan Bizenjo became the secretary general of the new party.”<sup>31</sup> The Baloch factions had boycotted the 2008 elections. In 2013, National Party (NP), Balochistan National Party (BNP), and Balochistan National Party-Awami (BNP-A) had contested the general elections. NP had won the election and emerged as an important political player in the province. It set up its coalition government in the province. The electoral support of various Baloch nationalist groups has been summarized in the following table. The table illustrates lack of stability in the electoral support of Baloch groups.

**Table 6: Electoral Support of Baloch Nationalist Parties**

Region	Year	National Assembly Elections				Provincial Assembly Elections			
		BNA/ JWP	PNP/ BNDP/ BNP-A	BNM-M/ BNP	BNM-H/ NP	BNA/ JWP	PNP/ BNDP/ BNP-A	BNM- M/ BNP	BNM- H/ NP
Balochistan	1988	7.77	7.50	-	-	10.49	5.75	-	-
	1990	16.74	9.64	6.40	-	17.38	9.09	-	-
	1993	8.28	4.99	11.65	2.82	10.12	7.65	5.85	6.99
	1997	10.12	-	19.68	11.41	9.00	-	8.39	16.21
	2002	8.34	1.35	5.12	9.50	9.73	3.10	6.08	3.82
	2008	-	5.46	-	-	-	5.27	-	-
	2013	-	1.0	6.95	4.64	-	0.81	6.19	5.80
Baloch Region	1988	18.52	9.91	-	-	14.98	8.52	-	-
	1990	24.68	16.70	10.35	-	19.60	13.66	-	11.49
	1993	38.53	8.59	20.19	12.36	15.60	11.01	9.30	9.89
	1997	15.20	-	27.43	17.48	13.14	-	16.59	25.03
	2002	13.86	0.79	6.91	15.40	8.67	5.19	6.42	2.87
	2008	-	9.55	-	-	-	9.10	-	-
	2013	-	2.0	9.82	7.18	-	1.5	9.95	10.63
Pashtun Region	1988	-	-	-	-	3.11	1.20	-	-
	1990	6.51	-	-	-	13.91	1.97	0.16	5.92
	1993	4.78	0.11	-	-	1.08	2.11	2.29	2.17
	1997	0.87	-	5.43	0.52	2.41	4.10	-	1.72
	2002	0.21	-	2.49	0.83	-	0.61	-	-
	2008	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2013	-	0.08	4.29	2.29	-	0	2.5	1.2

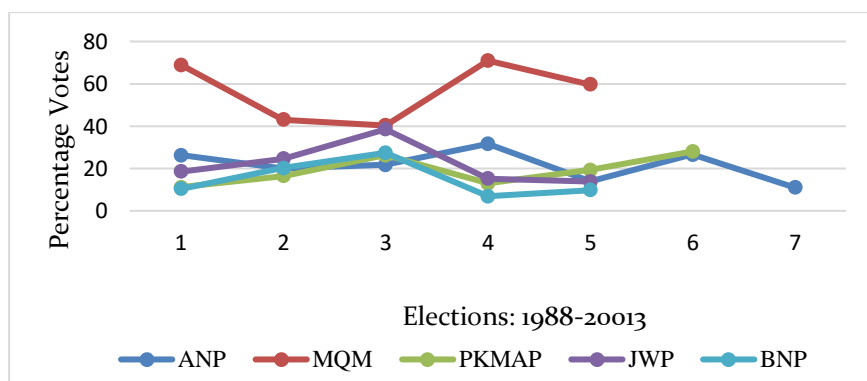
Source: Election Commission of Pakistan<sup>32</sup>

## Comparative Electoral Support of Ethno-regional Parties in Pakistan

This section compares the relative stability of electoral support for ethno-regional parties of Pakistan during 1988 to 2013. The previous section demonstrates that MQM had attracted significant electoral support in the

urban Sindh. The party had won several parliamentary and local elections over the years. Historically, Karachi had remained well-known for its electoral support to the Islamic parties. PPP lost the 1970 elections in Karachi as the city polled more votes (40-45%) to the Islamic parties. But since 1980s, the Islamic parties had lost the ground and proved not a challenge for the stable electoral support of MQM. The statewide parties such as PPP, PTI, PML-N had remained unable to make inroads successfully in the urban constituency of Sindh.<sup>33</sup> The evidence shows that MQM had received more stable and meaningful electoral support in comparison with the other ethno-regional parties.

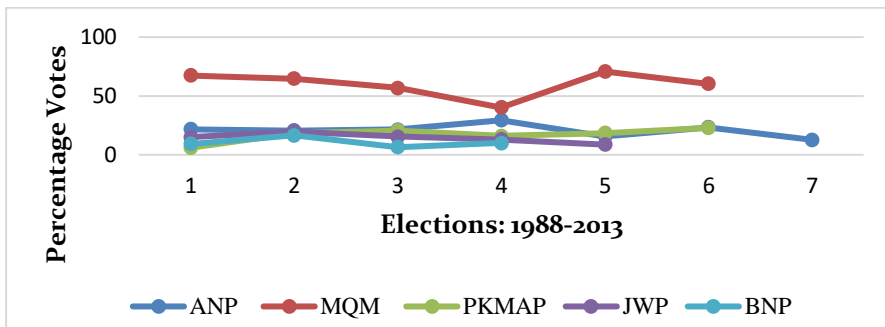
**Figure 1: Electoral support of ethno-regional parties in respective regions: National Assembly Elections (1988-2013)**



ANP, the Pashtun nationalist party of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa traces its origin to the Khudai Khidmatgars (Servants of God) movement of Abdul Ghaffar Khan launched in first half of the twentieth century in British India. Therefore, ANP is the oldest ethno-regional party of Pakistan. The electoral support of party in Pashtun region is strong enough to form coalition provincial governments more than once. However, its support is not comparable with MQM support in urban Sindh. The statewide parties/alliances had earned more electoral support than ANP in several elections. For example, more votes in the Pashtun region were polled for PPP than the ANP in the general elections of 1988 and 1990. Similarly, MMA (an alliance of Islamic parties) 'scored more than 50% votes in Pashtun belt

and left no room for ANP to enter national assembly in 2002.<sup>34</sup> In 2013, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has won the elections in Pashtun region. However, ANP has demonstrated stable electoral support over the years. PKMAP, the Pashtun nationalist party of Balochistan had received considerable electoral support in several elections. In the Pashtun constituency of Balochistan, its electoral support has fluctuated between 11% and 18% of the total polled votes.<sup>35</sup> However, the support of PKMAP was improved significantly in the 2013 elections. The party won elections in the Pashtun region and has joined the provincial government as coalition partner. Hence, it has appeared as an important political player in the politics of Balochistan.

**Figure 2: Electoral support of ethno-regional parties in respective regions: Provincial Assembly Election (1988-2013)**



The results of several elections in Baloch constituency of Balochistan province demonstrate that it is the most electorally diverse region of Pakistan. A number of Baloch factions has had contested the elections and divided the nationalist vote bank among themselves. Owing to the first-past-the-post electoral system that “effectively reward strong parties and penalize the weak ones”, the Baloch groups remained at disadvantage.<sup>36</sup> However, intermittently, the Baloch leadership formed cabinets at provincial level and played vital role in the politics of Balochistan. The election results of Baloch constituency suggest that the state-wide parties had successfully made inroads in the Baloch region. PPP and PML, together, ‘scored 23%, 19%, 26%, 16%, 28%, and 46% votes in national and



28%, 22%, 26%, 13%, 20%, 57% votes in provincial assembly elections during 1988-2008 period respectively.<sup>37</sup> The ethno-regional parties of rural Sindh, south Punjab, and the Hazara region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa seem struggling to attract the masses. The table 7 presents summary of the statistical analysis of the electoral support in National Assembly elections for the ethno-regional parties as well as the statewide parties for the period 1988-2008 for all constituencies of Pakistan. All factions of Pakistan Muslim League are grouped under the label of PMLs and the all offshoots of Pakistan People's party are grouped in the cluster of PPPs in the table. Similarly, the religious groups are grouped and tagged as Islamists in the table. The table compares the strength and stability or volatility of electoral support for ethno-regional parties with the national parties of Pakistan. The value of coefficient of variance is the best measurement to gauge the stability of party support. Among the ethno-regional parties, ANP and MQM have relatively stable electoral support. On the other hand, the level of electoral volatility is relatively higher in Baloch region. Overall, however, "the statewide parties are more consistent in their electoral support than the ethno-regional parties" in Pakistan.<sup>38</sup>

**Table 7: Descriptive Statistics: Federal Election in Pakistan (1988-2008)**

Parties	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	S. D	C.V
JWP	4	0.021	0.612	0.313	0.310	0.243	77.63%
BNM-M/ BNP	4	0.190	0.654	0.328	0.234	0.219	66.76%
PNP	3	0.164	0.601	0.433	0.533	0.235	54.27%
BNM	2	0.238	0.379	0.308	0.308	0.100	32.46%
PKMAP/PM	5	0.121	0.487	0.300	0.307	0.135	45.00%
ANP	6	1.030	2.091	1.725	1.778	0.379	21.97%
MQM	4	3.182	7.400	5.032	4.774	1.856	36.88%
PMLN	6	30.16	49.37	40.47	40.60	6.83	16.87%
PPP	6	23.75	38.52	32.34	34.02	6.42	19.85%
Islamists	6	1.97	11.00	4.76	3.35	3.56	74.78%
Independents	6	9.84	19.55	13.57	11.32	4.50	33.16%

Source: Consociationalism and Multiethnic States: Post-1971 Pakistan- A case study by Muhammad Mushtaq<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

This investigation demonstrates that although the electoral support of ethno-regional parties is not equal to the national level parties, but they have sustained their presence in relevant regional centers over the years. Often, the ethno-regional parties have made formidable presence in the national assembly. By joining coalition governments, they have played important role in federal policy-making. But, ethno-regional parties have played more vital role in the provincial politics. Although the ethno-regional parties have certain challenges, they will continue to play important role in the politics of Pakistan until any significant shift in behavior of the national electorate.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Earlier draft of this paper was presented in the 75th Annual MPSA Conference, April 6-9, 2017, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, IL., USA.
  - <sup>2</sup> See for example, Lublin, David. *Minority Rules: Electoral Systems, Decentralization, and Ethnoregional Party Success*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014; Winter, Lieven De., and Huri Tursan. *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*. London: Routledge, 1998; Ziegfeld, Adam. *Why Regional Parties? Clientelism, Elites, and the Indian Party System*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016; Newman, Saul. "Ethnoregional parties: A comparative perspective." *Regional Politics and Policy* 4 (1994): 28-66; Horowitz, Donald L. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001; Tronconi, Filippo. "Ethnic Identity and Party Competition. An Analysis of the Electoral Performance of Ethnoregionalist Parties in Western Europe." *World Political Science Review* 2 (2006): 137-63; Chandra, Kanchan. *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: patronage and ethnic head counts in India*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
  - <sup>3</sup> See for example, Mujahid, Sharif al. "First General Elections." *Asian Survey* 11 (1971): 159-171; Weinbaum, Marvin G. "The March 1977 Elections in Pakistan: Where Everyone Lost." *Asian Survey* 17 (1977): 599-618; Rais, Rasul B. "Elections in Pakistan: Is Democracy Winning?" *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 12 (1985): 43-61; Syed, Anwar H. "The Pakistan People's Party and the Punjab: National Assembly Elections, 1988 and 1990." *Asian Survey* 31 (1991): 581-597; Ziring, Lawrence. "The Second Stage in Pakistani Politics: The 1993 Elections." *Asian Survey* 33 (1993): 1175-1185; Wilder, Andrew. *The Pakistani Voter: Electoral Politics and Voting Behavior in the Punjab*. London: Oxford University Press,

- 1999; Waseem, Mohammad. *Democratization in Pakistan: A Study of the 2002 Elections*. London: Oxford University Press, 2006; Adeney, Katharine. "The federal election in Pakistan, February 2008." *Electoral Studies* 28 (2009): 158-163.
- 4 See for example, Linz, Juan J., and Alfred Stephan. "Political Identities and Electoral Sequences: Spain, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia." *Daedalus* 121 (1992): 123-139; Winter and Tursan, Regionalist; Newman, "Ethnoregional parties", 28-66.
- 5 Vaishnav, Milan. "The Complicated Rise of India's Regional Parties". Accessed November 1, 2017. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/11/13/complicated-rise-of-india-s-regional-parties-pub-53585>.
- 6 Punjabis are the largest group in Pakistan consisting of almost 45 % population of the state.
- 7 Data retrieved from, "Election Commission of Pakistan". Accessed January 13, 2017. <https://ecp.gov.pk/>
- 8 Ibid
- 9 The Senate of Pakistan is consisting of 104 members. Each province of Pakistani federation has 23 members in the Senate. In addition, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have 08 members and the federal capital area (Islamabad) 04 members. The National Assembly of Pakistan elects the members of federal capital and members of National Assembly from FATA elect the members of Senate from the FATA. However, recently FATA is merged in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and seats reserved for FATA will be abolished since the next Senate Elections.
- 10 Baxter, Craig. "Pakistan Votes — 1970." *Asian Survey* 11 (1971): 197-218.
- 11 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Jamaat Islami Pakistan and nationalist parties of Balochistan had boycotted the general elections of 2008. Earlier, Muhajir Qaumi Movement did not participate in the elections for National Assembly in 1993.
- 12 Muhajir Qaumi Movement was renamed as Muttahida Qaumi Movement-MQM in 1997.
- 13 Kennedy, "Ethnicity in Sindh", 938-955.
- 14 Amin, Tahir. "Pakistan in 1994: The Politics of Confrontation." *Asian Survey* 35 (1995): 140-146.
- 15 Information retrieved from, "Election Commission of Pakistan". Accessed December 24, 2016. <https://ecp.gov.pk/>
- 16 National Assembly of Pakistan. "party wise list". Accessed January 21, 2017. <http://www.na.gov.pk/en/index.php>; Senate of Pakistan. "Party wise list" Accessed January 21, 2017. [http://www.senate.gov.pk/en/party\\_wise\\_list.php?id=-1&catid=261&subcatid=2&cattitle=Members%20of%20Senate](http://www.senate.gov.pk/en/party_wise_list.php?id=-1&catid=261&subcatid=2&cattitle=Members%20of%20Senate).
- 17 Mushtaq, Muhammad, "Consociationalism and Multiethnic States: Post-1971 Pakistan- a case study," (PhD diss., Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan Pakistan, 2011).
- 18 The vote percentages for certain political parties in respective regions for various elections discussed in this paper are calculated by the author. The all constituencies of Pakistan for national and provincial elections were divided along ethno-linguistic lines: The Pashto speaking belt, the Baloch countryside, Urdu speaking Mohajir constituency, Sindhi-speaking region, Siraiiki belt and Punjabi speaking region. The boundaries of various ethno-linguistic groups

were drawn using the information available in 1998 census report about the language composition of Pakistan. The detailed election results of each constituency are available at website of election commission of Pakistan (Election Commission of Pakistan, 2017). The vote percentages for different political parties in particular region was calculated by dividing the total votes of a particular party by the total valid votes of that particular region. The percentages were calculated for the national assembly and provincial assemblies' elections for the period of 1988-2013.

- <sup>19</sup> Pakistan Today. "ANP writes to ECP, expresses reservations on election campaign". Accessed May 7, 2013. <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/05/07/national/anp-writes-to-ecp-expresses-reservations-on-election-campaign/>.

- <sup>20</sup> Data retrieved from "Election Commission of Pakistan".

- <sup>21</sup> Waseem, *Democratization in Pakistan*.

- <sup>22</sup> Mushtaq, *Consociationalism and Multiethnic States*, 188.

- <sup>23</sup> Data retrieved from "Election Commission of Pakistan". Accessed December 28, 2016. <https://ecp.gov.pk/>

- <sup>24</sup> Ibid

- <sup>25</sup> Siddiqi, Farhan Hanif. *The Politics of Ethnicity in Pakistan: The Baloch, Sindhi and Mohajir Ethnic Movements*. London and New York: Routledge, 2012: 62.

- <sup>26</sup> Ibid

- <sup>27</sup> Baxter, "Pakistan Votes—1970", 197-218.

- <sup>28</sup> Balochistan National Alliance was consisting of Akbar Bugti (ex-governor of Balochistan), Ataullah Mengal (ex-chief minister of Balochistan), and Dr. Abdul Hayee (prominent Baloch leader).

- <sup>29</sup> Mushtaq, *Consociationalism and Multiethnic States*, 190-192.

- <sup>30</sup> Mahmood, Amna. "Regional Political Parties: Challenge to Political Stability of Pakistan." *Pakistan Vision* 15 (2014): 1-39.

- <sup>31</sup> National Party. "National Party Website". Accessed December 2, 2016. <http://www.nationalparty.com.pk/index.php/explorer/history2>.

- <sup>32</sup> Data retrieved from "Election Commission of Pakistan". Accessed December 26, 2016. <https://ecp.gov.pk/>

- <sup>33</sup> Mushtaq, *Consociationalism and Multiethnic States*, 188.

- <sup>34</sup> Mushtaq, *Consociationalism and Multiethnic States*, 186-187.

- <sup>35</sup> Mushtaq, *Consociationalism and Multiethnic States*, 189.

- <sup>36</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed December 23, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/plurality-system>.

- <sup>37</sup> Mushtaq, *Consociationalism and Multiethnic States*, 192.

- <sup>38</sup> Mushtaq, *Consociationalism and Multiethnic States*, 198.

- <sup>39</sup> Mushtaq, *Consociationalism and Multiethnic States*, 196.