**Election Diary: Post-Elections**

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It is not every day that a country of over 240 million heads to a nationwide exercise to choose the next set of leaders tasked with the crucial and most significant responsibility: governance. Now that the dust has settled, political parties are ready to proceed in full knowledge of their split mandate and there’s a general feeling of back-to-routine in the air, it would be noteworthy to call February 8 a true watershed moment. As the people of Pakistan exercised their democratic right and elected their political representatives in elections, they made it clear to the outside world that no matter how crippled, no matter how tainted and no matter how controversial, they were still willing to take a chance on their beloved democracy. This is not to say the entire operation went on smoothly and therefore, the Election Commission of Pakistan would have to prove its mettle by addressing every single discrepancy in the electoral results. Still, putting aside the grievances of particular constituencies, it has become absolutely crucial for all political parties to recognize their responsibility towards resolving the real issues faced by the nation. Amidst prevalent challenges staring in the face of the incumbent government, these parties must prioritize the needs of the people and contribute positively to bring about tangible change.

The post-election period presents an opportunity for political leaders to set aside their differences and work collectively towards addressing pressing concerns such as poverty, unemployment, education, healthcare, and security. That the major six parties have decided to not cost the nation an unaffordable burden of a run-off election and proceed to form a government should be celebrated as the return of sanity and cool-headedness. Charged emotions would have to be shelved for the sake of the greater good in the upcoming days as well. The issues that directly impact the lives of millions of Pakistanis who have entrusted their hopes and aspirations to these elected officials should form the cornerstone of all consequent policies. To effectively tackle these challenges, political parties must engage in constructive dialogue and collaboration.

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It is essential that they develop comprehensive strategies and policies that address each issue holistically rather than engaging in superficial rhetoric or divisive tactics. For starters, the PPP’s announcement to neither sit in the opposition nor take cabinet positions hints at countless rounds of debates on the assembly floor. If both sides play along realising the value of the end-affectee – the common man walking on the street–there could not be a better governance model.

In addition, it is vital for leadership within these parties to exhibit transparency, accountability, and integrity. By demonstrating a commitment to good governance practices, they can regain public trust while ensuring the effective implementation of policies aimed at improving the lives of ordinary citizens.

It would be crucial for political parties to prioritize certain areas. First and foremost, they must concentrate on improving governance and ensuring transparency in decision-making processes.

This will not only enhance public trust but also create an environment conducive to sustainable development. Furthermore, attention should be directed towards resolving economic woes that burden ordinary citizens. There’s growing concern about the efficacy of the agreement with the IMF and what the upcoming meetings would reveal about the next set of conditions. Tired of bleeding at the altar for an exceptionally long time, Pakistanis are in no mood to make any sacrifice. Hence, any further attempts to build on the tax net would have to be directed towards the property elite and the industrialists. The caretaker experiment has well explained how if there’s a will, those at the helm of the affairs find some way or the other to tackle the untouchables. A democratically-elected government would have to show the same resolve in its crackdown against smugglers and those involved in illicit activities in the currency and valuables market. It is just as vital for political leaders to devise effective strategies aimed at boosting employment opportunities and eradicating poverty. Simultaneously, emphasis should be placed on equitable distribution of resources and narrowing the socio-economic divide.

Political parties must also prioritize social issues such as education and healthcare reforms. By investing in these sectors, they can empower future generations with quality education while providing affordable healthcare services to all segments of society. The need to bring about every historic, headline-worthy reform these leaders harped on and on during the campaign days could not be any stronger. Now is the time to show what they have learned while sitting on the fringes for the past year and observing the caretaker administration take hold of general housekeeping.

Leaders must rise above partisan interests and work collectively towards finding sustainable solutions. To navigate these challenges effectively, parties should emphasize inclusivity and engage in constructive dialogue with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. Collaboration across party lines can foster unity and enable effective decision-making in addressing national issues.

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