

PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL ELECTION IN 2013

**Report # 4****ANALYSIS OF ELECTION OUTCOME**

Analysis of Electoral Outcome in a series
of 3 Articles: How do we know who voted
for whom;

The Veil of Reticence in
electoral assessments;

looking ahead from the perspective of
key political players



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Article # 1

HOW DO WE KNOW 'WHO' VOTED FOR WHOM

In the excitement and the expectancy of run-off to the electoral contest, analysts have little occasion to think about anything other than the simple question: Who will win and who will lose? This all-engaging controversy now stands resolved, thanks to the results of what has been described by experts and participants alike as, save a few exceptions here and there, "*Pakistan's most free and fair elections yet*". A new series of governments, both at the centre and in the provinces, will soon be sworn in. The whole structure of our winner-take-all electoral system is designed around answering this single question - determining winners and losers. For the practical purpose of ensuring a fair and peaceful transfer of power, in line with the democratic ethos of our Constitution, this is quite sufficient.

The study was supervised by Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani, Chairman of Gallup Pakistan. This article summarizes the findings of "2013: Who Voted for Whom?" a detailed scientific study by Gallup Pakistan, will soon be available.

But, for both analysts and long-term political players, there is another question about the electoral process which is equally engaging and worth our attention: Who voted for whom? And why? These are questions to which, the election data released by the Election Commission of Pakistan, can provide only a very rudimentary answer. When a voter casts his ballot on the fateful day, his ballot tells us who he is voting for, but says nothing about who he himself is; affording voters this anonymity is in fact an important element of a free and fair election system. As a result, when the ECP counts these ballots, it can tell us about the number of people who voted for a particular party, let's say, the PML-N, in each constituency; and after aggregating that data, also at the provincial and national levels. But the general rule is that election data, by its nature, does not tell us very much about the various kinds of people who voted for each particular party. That question, then, often becomes the subject of wild conjecture, even in the discussions of otherwise well-informed commentators including the political parties themselves.

We may begin by looking at the broad election data does tell us. Some popular myths can be answered by just looking at the data provided by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

THE DISAPPERANCE OF NATIONAL PARTIES

For one, there is a perception, about the PTI being the choice of the Pashtuns and the PML-N being the choice of the Punjabis. The PTI's success in the province of KPK, its weak performance in the Punjab, the PML-N's clean sweep in the Punjab, and its inability to win comparable number of seats outside this province – all of these factors lend credence to this popular image. These “facts”, lead some of the bold commentators to go further and analyze the situation in terms of the intrinsic ‘character’ of the various “races” and “ethnicities”. That might be misplaced instead we should take a closer look at the ECP data which dispels this image. True the PTI won only 9 out the 148 NA seats from Punjab, while the PML-N won 117. But this seat count does not have a one-on-one correspondence with vote count. Of the PTI's total of 7.5 million votes, more than 5 million were cast by voters registered in Punjab;

while only 1.6 million were cast in KPK. In other words, out of every three person who voted for PTI, at least two reside in the Punjab. Now, that does not exactly fit with the perception about PTI being the choice of the Pashtuns.

When we analyze the election data with some precision and fairness, it becomes clear that the PTI has emerged as very much a national party with a presence in every province. Its seat count may not be impressive in provinces other than the KPK, but its vote count is: 27% in KPK, 17% the Punjab, 7% in Sindh (almost entirely from Karachi) and 3% in Balochistan.

The PML-N's image of a Punjab-only party also requires further elaboration. Of the PML-N's own 15 million votes, 90% were indeed cast by voters in the Punjab. But it received nearly one million votes in Sindh, and sizeable ratio of all votes cast in KPK and Balochistan. More importantly, it seems that the PML-N deliberately chose the path of forming alliances with regional parties outside the Punjab, instead of assembling its own cadres

over there. If the vote bank of the PML-N's regional allies is counted in, then that too constitutes an impressive presence all over the country: It scored 46% of all votes cast in the Punjab, 15% in KPK, 15% in Sindh (5% of PML-N and 10% of PML-F) and 5% in Balochistan. Clearly, we have not one but two large 'national' parties emerging from these elections: PML-N and PTI. Both have garnered the largest chunk of votes from the Punjab, but that's primarily because more than 55% of total voters reside in this most populous of our provinces.

For the first time since 1970, the PPP's vote bank is not as well nationally distributed as in previous elections. PPP scored a little less than 7 million votes all over the country. Of these exactly 50% are in Sindh; 42% in Punjab and 8% in the other two provinces. Whether the party will ever be able to rebound from its partial retreat into interior Sind, and resurge at the national level, remains to be seen. With two strong rival already competing at the national level, it is would certainly be a hard fight.

To cut the story short, the myth that in 2013 Pakistan has been left without any 'national parties' is not well founded.

Once we investigate into the social and economic origins of voters, we will discover that the real difference between the PTI and the PML-N, our two largest parties, is not that of provincial origins. The question arises, how do we determine the social origins of votes? The scientifically valid answers to this question come from what is known the world over as Exit Polls, or surveys based on interviews with voters coming straight out of their polling station. These Exit Polls, which Gallup Pakistan has been conducting without fail for every election since 1985, tell us parts of the election saga beyond the official election data.

Are Elections an Antidote to VEIL OF RETICENCE

In a strange and tragic way, the episode from Elections 2013 which is likely to leave the most indelible impression on our public imagination is the squabble in NA-125, Lahore. The constituency straddles Pakistan's sub-urban dream, DHA, as well as a number of adjacent slums and villages. The electoral battle over there pitted the PML-N's Khawaja Saad Rafique, one of the country's prominent youthful politicians, against PTI's Hamid Khan, an equally well-respected leader of the legal fraternity, author of treatises on Pakistani constitutional history and a fresh entrant into the political arena. Around mid-day on May 11, the social media went abuzz with allegations of massive rigging in that constituency by Khawaja Saad Rafique. The PTI's supporters could hardly contain their anger. Soon after the elections, sit-ins and *dharnas* by PTI supporters erupted and the controversy shifted to the nation's TV screens for many weeks after that. Ultimately, when the dust settled a bit, the ECP decided in Khawaja Saad Rafique's favour. The lead in that hard-fought constituency turned out to be

no less than 40,000 votes. Any dispassionate analyst would have to conclude that a lead this big can hardly be explained away in terms of sporadic electoral malpractices, however reprehensible such practices may be. A more likely explanation, it seems, is that the PTI's enthusiasts in that constituency were expecting an imminent victory, because they were reticent to the fact that the vast majority of their co-voters were either lower middle or low income voters, residing in middle class and poor housing areas adjacent to their upper income enclave. Democracy is a process meant to heal social divisions. Different social classes are reticent to each other existence. On election day many nameless and faceless men and women suddenly appeared on the radar and gave everybody a pretty rude shock. Whatever the final legal settlement, this controversy is likely to go on and will continue to intrigue analysts.

One of the thing that can greatly help us in coming to terms with what happened in NA-125 and even more so, everywhere else in the country - is scientific analysis of vote banks of various political

parties. As mentioned in the first part of this article, Exit Poll studies are quite helpful in this regard.

VOTER PROFILE OF PML-N AND PTI

For the Exit Poll study conducted on May 11, we conducted face-to-face interviews with 4,633 voters, in rural and urban polling stations in 77 districts spanning all provinces and regions of the country. They were selected through a scientifically randomized method. Many readers would recall that the reliability of our pre-election polls came under severe criticism from several observers and political leaders. However, the results of the election have reinforced the predictive validity of our method. The results of the Exit Poll are, likewise, as reliable as an exercise in estimation would normally get. These results confirm that the PTI's voters are, on the average, younger, richer and more highly educated than the PML-N's voters. Here are the details. The PTI vote bank is distinctively 'upscale' while the vote bank of PML-N is distinctively mid-scale' and 'downscale'.

Amongst voters of over the age of 30 years, the PML-N enjoyed an edge of 19%. But amongst those younger than 30 years old, the edge is considerably less: only 8%. The average for all ages is, therefore, 16%.

Amongst the poorest voters, those in the bottom two percentiles, the PML-N's edge is 23%. As we move up the economic scale, the edge dwindles. Amongst those in middle percentiles, the edge is 14%. And amongst the top two percentiles, the edge is only 10%. The average amongst voters of all economic backgrounds comes to 16%.

It is in educational levels, however, that the vote banks of the two parties differs most. Amongst illiterates and those who schooled under matric, the edge is highest: 23%. As we move up the educational curve, this edge dwindles quickly. For those who are schooled up to intermediate, PML-N's edge is only 8%. And amongst college graduates and post-graduates, the situation is totally reversed: here, the PTI comes to enjoy an edge over PML-N

of no less than 5%. In other words, if we had an election where franchise was restricted to college graduates, it is the PTI which would be in government, with a comfortable majority.

When we further segment the vote banks, the situation becomes even clearer. Amongst those who are college educated, under the age of 30 and male, the PTI comes to enjoy a thumping majority, with an edge of 18% over PML-N.

It is an interesting fact of modern-day life that people in various population segments often know very little about others. In that context, if you were a college graduate under the age of 30 years and a PTI supporter, and on night of 10th May, you had a look at those around you – mostly falling in the same bracket – you would have gained the impression that your party was on the brink of a nation-wide victory. In the segment that you were looking at, that impression was not ill-founded. But among all voters across Pakistan, most of whom are neither college graduates nor under thirty nor in top two economic percentiles, the situation was vastly

different – something which expert political analysts and opinion pollsters, for sure, were pointing to. By the 12th of May, their assessment of the situation stood vindicated. Whether sporadic electoral malpractices took even in as many as 8,000 of the 70,000 polling stations, is a separate question – one which must be answered in accordance with the law. But if you were trying to figure out why the electoral victory you were anticipating never arrived, looking towards rigging would be misplaced. To find the real answer, you need to look at those segments of society who disproportionately voted the PML-N to power. As non-partisan analysts of political phenomena, we are not suited to give you the answers to your question; but we can tell you where it is that you need to be looking for them. In NA-125, this might require reaching out to polling stations outside the DHA, while lie the humble abodes of several hundred thousand nameless, faceless figures who showed up on the radar on election day and gave dwellers of Pakistan's suburban dream a rude shock. A closer look at Gallup Pakistan's data from a pre-election poll in NA-125 indicates that vast majority of voters in NA-125 did not have the benefit of a college education or an income in top two percentiles. The

challenging exercise of reaching out to previously untapped voters holds the key to building citizen solidarity across national mainstream. And that solidarity is, in turn, perhaps the greatest and most-valuable gift of democratic governance.

NEW VOTERS AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Those of us who either went to or observed the polling stations on May 11 in other ways, noticed the very conspicuous presence of 'new faces' in this election – not as much amongst the contestants, as amongst the voters. A new profile of voters was queuing up in the market place of democracy. Who were they?

The popular observation that the turnout in 2013 was significantly higher than that in the last three decades, stands confirmed by the election data. In the six national elections between 1988 and 2008, the average turn-out was 41%, being roughly 50% amongst men and 30% amongst women. In 2013, the turn-out surged up to around 55%, being 60% amongst men and 50% amongst women registered to vote. Given the massive size of our electorate, this means the entry into the electoral arena of an additional 12 million voters, who would not have voted if turn-out was the same as on previous elections.

We can also tell from the election data that this upsurge in turn-out happened in all provinces. So the suggestion the ferment about elections was only a Punjab phenomenon, which was made by some in the run-up to the elections, has not been borne out. The turn-out figures tell us that in each and every province, people showed up to vote in greater numbers than in the last 25 years.

But who exactly were these new voters? And even more importantly, who did the new ones vote for? This question again requires us to dig into the findings of the Exit Poll Study.

WHO ARE THESE NEW VOTERS? WHO DID THEY VOTE FOR

The popular conjecture that a majority of new voters are young, better educated and relatively better-off people, voting for the first time in their lives, and spearheading PTI's leapfrog in Pakistan's electoral politics, stands confirmed. Half of new voters, who had

not voted in 2008, were in age group 18-24. This group is better educated, college graduates among them are twice as many (16%) as among the rest than the Pakistani average, their family income profile is also higher than the average. Among them 30% voted for PTI and 34% for PML-N. This means that if everyone had voted like them, PTI and PML-N would have been neck and neck as near equals in this election.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The rise of PTI is, in some ways, the most important change that has marked Elections in 2013. Yet, if the PTI is go further from its present position as a distant second, it would need to seriously examine the composition of its vote bank. If it has lost these elections, it is not because enough of its core constituents did not show up for the polls in sufficiently large numbers, or that their votes did not count because of rigging. New voters did show up and there is no evidence of rigging in sufficiently large numbers to affect the general figure. The explanation for PTI's defeat

ultimately lies in the fact that its core constituents – the young, college educated and relatively well-off – are, despite their great visibility in public and social sphere, a small segment of our polity. As a new entrant in the arena, the party's leadership can hardly be blamed: a new part has to start somewhere, and this segment was promising a place to start as any. But, now when they plan for the future, they would be well-served by a reminder that any party which wishes to govern Pakistan in a democratic manner would, in the long run, have to be a party whose core constituents are not reticent to the relatively less-educated and the lower middle classes, people who earn around Rupees 15,000 a month and are some may pejoratively say, 'under matric'. That is the mainstream Pakistan in which PML-N and PTI are likely to compete over the next 5 years. All electoral contests are about synchronizing and resonating on the same frequency with large and aspiring social groups or classes. The size is important and so is being alive to the changes which alter their sizes. The size of social classes which resonated to PPP in the 1970s is a case in point. In the last century, some of our very well-intentioned and gifted political forces chose to ignore this humbling lesson of democracy, which eventually

brought them at logger-heads with democracy itself. And ultimately, they paid the price that anyone who fails to learn the lessons of history must pay: exit from centre-stage.

The PML-N, on the other hand, needs to be looking at the other side of the same coin. While it enjoys a comfortable majority in the Parliament and a massive edge over the PTI in terms of votes, it has lost the elections in precisely that segment of society from which the social as well as political leadership of Pakistan is likely to emerge in the near future: the young, college educated and relatively well-off. It is true that with wide support among other segments of society, the support of this segment is not necessary for winning elections. But if the experience of Pakistan's unstable democracy over the last four decades is anything to reckon with, it is equally clear that the support of this segment is definitely needed for keeping the system going and, even more so, for creatively reinventing it. Politics, in the longer, is not just about power; it is also about ideas. And the segment of society which, all over the world, produces creative and powerful ideas for governance, is, for good or for worse, not very strongly aligned

with the top most party. There is another side to this too. The experience of governance all over the world reminds us that democracy is not just about ensuring a fair distribution of political power. To be sustainable, it also requires striking a fine balance between those who are empowered by numbers (the masses) and those whose are empowered by other, equally real, sources of power: education, wealth, aspiration and social networks. Any democratic dispensation which fails to strike this balance will have no one but itself to blame. How the PML-N will regain a foothold in this critically important and talented segment is for its own policy makers to decide. Involving these talented young people in a whole new tier of political governance – local government, particularly urban governance – may be one option.

There are times such as the run-up to the elections when democracy seems like a hopelessly divisive system – splitting communities, families, regions and even provinces apart, along party line. But the same system also offers a strong anti-dote too: democracy compels those in the power game to constantly reach outside their existing vote banks. To stay relevant, a party

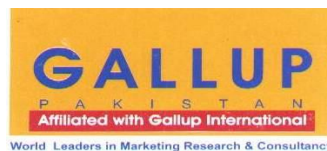
with one kind of voters needs to actively reach out to the other kind of voters, and vice versa – and in the process, there are built thousands of bridges of social solidarity which bind the nation together. It is in the spirit of participatory and representative government that all segments of society get a share in power. To some extent, our present federal system, where 9 out of the 10 largest parties, even those with just 1% of votes, are now getting some stake in the government, be it at the centre or in the provinces, is already achieving this. But in yet other ways, the process needs to go further.

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