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Pakistan

Election 2013: A right wing victory

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A right wing wave swept Pakistan general elections on 11th May 2013. At Federal level, conservative Muslim League Nawaz will form the government with 35 percent of votes at federal level. Pakistan former cricket captain Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf came second with 19 percent of vote and surprised many. Pakistan People's Party, the Bhuttos' ruling party for the last five years came third with only 15 percent of votes, thanks to Sindh where it was able to fetch most of the votes.

Here is brief of the election results and percentage of votes by different political parties:

National

Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN); 35%, Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf (PTI); 17.8%, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP); 15.7%, Mutihida Qaumi Movement (MQM); 5.6%, Jamia Ulmai Islam (JUIF); 2.9%, Pakistan Muslim League Q (PMLQ); 3.2% , Pakistan Muslim League F (PMLF); 2.2%, Jamaat Islami (JI) 1.6%;

Sindh

PPP; 38%, MQM; 26%, PMLF; 10%, PMLN; 5%, PTI; 8%, National Peoples Party (NPP); 2%

Punjab

PMLN; 49%, PTI; 19%, PPP; 11%, PMLQ; 5%

Khaiber Pukhtoonkhawa

PTI; 31%, JUIF; 18%, PMLN; 16%, Awami National Party (ANP); 5%, JI; 6%, PPP; 6%, Independents; 11%,

Baluchistan

Pukhtoon Khawa Mili Awami Party (PKMAP); 25%, JUIF; 22%, Independents; 17%, PMLN; 6%, PTI; 2%, PPP; 4%, National Party (NP); 5%, Baluchistan National Party (BNP); 4%.

Almost 62 percent of total votes went to right wing and religious parties for the first time in history of Pakistan. Although the religious parties were not united in one single platform, despite that pro Taliban JUIF got 10 seats at national level and got 22 percent of votes in Baluchistan and 18 percent in Khaiber Pukhtoon Khawa province, the two provinces bordering Afghanistan. Unlike 2002 general elections, they will not be able to form governments in these provinces; however, they will be considerable force of reaction that will try their best to increase their support by opposing Tehreek Insaaf government in KPK and nationalist cum PMLN government in Baluchistan.

The elections took place despite consistent attacks by the religious fanatics on the election rallies and candidates leaving over 200 dead in different parts of Pakistan, mainly in Khaiber Pukhtoonkhawa, Sindh and Baluchistan. Taliban and other fanatic groups were able to carry out deadly attacks despite all the security measures taken by the police, paramilitary and military forces deployed on the occasion.

The PPP was punished for their absolute obeying the orders from IMF and World Bank to implement all the conditional ties of hiking all the basic services and for massive load shedding of electricity. The prices had gone up and no comparison for the pay raises of the public sector employees during the PPP government. Private sector workers were the most exploited sector of working class during PPP government. It was government littered with corruption and bad management of all sector of life. The vote of PPP dropped from 2008 general elections 36 percent to little over 15 percent in 2013.

The PPP election campaign was restricted to newspapers and television and no mass activity on the ground. Unlike PTI and PMLN, they did not have one major rally or public meeting during the election campaign. PPP was able to retain Sindh support by securing 38 percent of votes because of spending almost all federal state resources during five years on Sindh for a very volatile opposition alliance of 10 parties with nationalist, right wing and religious fanatics together, They even could not agree to contest elections on one single election symbol.

The right wing PMLN got the best result because of their Punjab government performance during the last five years. They were able to construct 27 kilometer long Metro Bus route in Lahore and advocated such development projects in other cities. Although, the Lahore Metro Bus project was completed at the cost of the other district of Punjab who were left far behind in development projects than Lahore.

The PTI of Imran Khan was able to replace PPP in Punjab and ANP in KPK because of total bankruptcy of the policies and strategies of these parties with a more right wing liberal programme. It could not do it in Punjab with the same success of KPK because another right wing political force PMLN almost similar ideas but an experience of fighting back and with a vibrant political campaign.

The Left

The Awami Workers Party decided to contest from limited seat in Pakistan. It contested 12 National seats, 10 provincial seats from Khaiber Pukhtoonkhawa, 10 from Punjab and 2 from Sindh. It was routed out by the voters in almost all seats apart from one national assembly seat in KPK where chairman AWP Fanoos Gujar was able to fetch over 10,000 votes. I received little over 2 percent of the total votes in my constituency. In Faisalabad, one textile worker contesting election on AWP nomination got over 3 percent of total votes. Although, the election campaign gave us an opportunity to popularize the name of AWP and some new membership, despite that we were unable to break through.

I felt during election campaign where we organized over 60 corner meetings that we had some sympathetic view of the voters but we were not seen as the top two who were in the race. Also the massive use of money, violation of code of conduct and the experience of contesting and winning elections were the main basis for a total domination of this constituency and many others like this one.

There were a lot of rigging allegations by almost all the parties. The rich spent money like anything in this election and violated election commission of Pakistan code of conduct in almost all the seat particularly the condition of maximum expenditure of Rupees one million (\$10,000) for provincial assembly and 1.5 Million Rupees (\$ 15000) for national assembly elections.

In Toba Tek Singh, where I contested unsuccessfully elections for Punjab Assembly seat, the code of conduct was violated with setting up camps near polling stations, canvassing inside the polling stations, providing free transport to their voters and spending millions of rupees on election campaign. Despite my several applications to the district administrations, no effective action was taken to stop these violations.

Future

Not much will change for working class under PMLN government. It might go worst. PMLN is committed to implement neo liberal agenda with more effective means. PPP government was unable to carry out privatization under a

massive resistance of masses against it. Privatization under Musharaf was very visible at the time and there was no support for this action. PMLN with its mass support and no resistance by any political party will carry out mass privatization of public sector departments on the excuse of reducing state losses on these institutions. It will try to do that in its first 100 days in power. Trade unions will have hard time under PMLN.

The soft strategy of PMLN towards Taliban will pave the way for more right wing forces to popularize themselves among masses. The proposed talks with Taliban by PMLN will have no positive results. Its failure can pave the way for a more aggressive military solution towards religious fundamentalism. This was the strategy adopted by ANP government in KPK during 2008-2013 but failed miserably and was wiped out politically. PMLN will try to do with more sensitivity but will not succeed.

The fight against religious fundamentalism can only be carried by making fundamental changes in state structure, separating state from religion, no state subsidy for private religious educational institutions, nationalization of all madrassas and introducing far reaching reforms in educational system including spending at least 10 percent of state budget on education.

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