

## Real Change Cannot be Expected Through Elections Under Democracy

### News:

The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) of Imran Khan on 17 July 2022 routed the PML-N by winning at least fifteen seats, in crucial by-elections. The fifteen seats were within twenty seats that were vacated, after the disqualification of PTI members, who had voted for PML-N's Hamza Shehbaz for Punjab chief minister's office.

### Comment:

Pakistan's military leadership's deal with the opposition PDM, including the PML-N, was to not pressurize them into leaving office. The deal was to allow them to complete the term of present assemblies till August 2023. As for elections, PDM parties wanted the establishment to stay away from elections. They were confident they can win the elections on their own. Both PML-N and PPP prefer to manage electables themselves, instead of outsourcing their management to the establishment.

The Supreme Court decision to not allow the votes of dissenting members, to be counted in the election of the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister, was when the establishment was preparing for early elections. However, the IMF vetoed early elections. The Supreme Court then tried to manage the fallout of its decision. The PML-N was confident that it will win the by-elections. It hence agreed with the Supreme Court formula to resolve the crisis in Punjab, Pakistan's largest province.

PTI's victory is the result of the masses being angry with the IMF dictated policies implemented by the PDM government. The economic crisis and the resultant inflation hit Punjabi voters hard. PML-N, in its efforts to dislodge Imran Khan's government promised electoral tickets to candidates who were not very popular in their constituencies. This angered some of the electables who left PML-N and joined PTI and won the election on PTI seat.

This is a surprising result for both the PDM and the establishment. The establishment didn't abandon the PDM. It actually stayed away from elections as the PDM demanded, and was surprised by the results. However, the establishment staying away from elections will release pressure on General Bajwa from within the rank and file of the armed forces. The rank and file wanted General Bajwa to use his power to dislodge the PDM government and call early elections.

After the election results, the PDM parties would not want early elections, especially when the massive impact of inflation is still being felt by the masses. Imran Khan will push for early elections sensing he can win a majority. Time will tell now how the military leadership will act.

No significant change is expected in policy by PTI's win in Punjab elections. If the PTI forms the government in Punjab and cannot force early elections, it would be forced to operate within IMF mandated budgetary restrictions. This election and the current politics in Pakistan is nothing more than a power struggle between the establishment led by General Bajwa, Imran Khan and the PDM parties. Nothing good is expected of it. Elections under Democracy will only return failed politicians to rule with the same old failed policies. It is only the Khilafah (Caliphate) which will end this vicious cycle of elections, which only serves to recycle politicians, who were rejected by the masses a few months previously.

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