Pirates, hyenas and vultures

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That PTI has emerged as the single largest party in the national elections 2018 has long term implications. Voter turnouts indicate a rising confidence that shall grow with time. As George Orwell wrote in Animal Farm, “Soon or late the day is coming; tyrant Man shall be o'erthrown. And the fruitful fields of England shall be trod by beasts alone”. The people of Pakistan treated as animals and fodder by the elites are slowly but surely turning the corner propelling PTI as the third force in Pakistani politics. They have already outlived the stage where the proverbial pigs ruined their aspirations and expectations. It is now up to PTI and Prime Minister elect Imran Khan to stick to ideology and agenda to remain part of the farm. It is only here that he shall succeed.

The implications of change are many.

First, the swell shall continue to grow and Imran should feel reassured with his tiny majority. Over the next years, this should prove his best and most reliable strategic weapon.

Secondly, good governance, ruthless accountability and investment in human resource will become a force multiplier swelling with time the vote bank of PTI. This could reduce the two major political parties defending the status quo into minions.

Third and most important, the above two factors will create very high synergy in national character and morale providing the direly needed impetus to Pakistan. The effects will become visible and pronounced in the next three months.

These three implications will be the best offence against a Senate with two thirds opposition. The monuments of inertia will be ultimately swept aside.

PTI leads the National Assembly seats in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Federal Capital. That PTI has emerged as the single largest party in Punjab, cut into vote bank of MQM and PPPP in Sindh and won seats in Balochistan means emergence of a federalist party.

Baloch separatism and Pashteen rights are already becoming history. Landslide effect in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa means reinforcement of trust factor and an indication that the snowballing effect will spread to other areas and strengthen a party of future and social reform. If the party stays its course, it could emerge as the biggest party in Sindh with stakes in Balochistan.

This sounds very good but only so. The fight and struggle is far from over and the definitive battle for change has just begun.

Barring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the party lacks a simple majority at Federal and Punjab levels to form a government. It will need allies and independents to reach the magic line of the summit. In Balochistan it will be a junior coalition partner and most likely the opposition in Sindh. In Senate it could concede two thirds majority to the combined opposition and even the seat of present Chairman Senate.

The biggest challenge is that elected on the slogan of change and social reform, PTI may just have to trim its sails in a coalition at federal level. The opposition hopes it could exploit such compromises to jeer and criticise Imran Khan for abandoning his electoral promises. Even if he delivers on bare minimum agenda, he would have done his job.

PTI has yet to prove its majority in the National Assembly whereby the President will ask PTI to form the next government and seek a vote of confidence. This phase will be adulterated with a massive influx of dirty money. A hundred billion could do the trick in buying commensurate number of independents.

PPPP has slightly improved its standing while PMLN has lost its past majority and won only 64 seats. It remains a Punjab centric party.  Surprisingly, though it has lost to PTI in national assembly seats, it has emerged as the single largest party in Punjab by a slender margin that may change when some independents join PTI. The game is into proverbial sudden death.

Considering the marginal rise in voter turnout, PTI jumped leaps and bounds. Voter turnout for PTI jumped from 7,679,954 in 2013 to 16,858,900 in 2018. PMLN dropped from 14,874,104, in 2013 to 12,896,356 in 2018. This is a significant development where voters voted for ideology but stayed away from professional and traditional politicians even within PTI. The previous analysis of skewed elections in 2013 has proved accurate because it is these seats where PMLN has been routed.

Yet PMLN, though it lost in National Assembly by a larger margin, won more seats in the provincial assembly. PTI was the loser in major areas of Lahore, Kasur, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Sargodha, Khanewal, and Bahawalpur.

Rather than popularity of PMLN, PTI losses in these areas were caused more by wrong candidate selections and internecine conflicts within the party. Had there been a fair distribution of tickets, PTI could have secured twenty additional National Assembly and forty Punjab Assembly seats. The team that acted so callously is the same that had cost PTI Cantonment Board and Local Body elections in the past. Prime Minister elect Imran has to do serious soul searching and recreate a systems and institutional approach in the party.

Here comes the biggest surprise. It is clear that PTI voters went for the ideology and not individuals. This is most true in areas of washouts.

In contrast to much touted Electable Strategy, it is mostly the ideological cadres of the party that won. Even some independents who won against PTI have rejoined the party. Internal Surveys of PTI Election Management Cell to justify award of tickets to new entrants at cost of old party cadres were a disappointment. It was part of pre poll rigging within the party.

The combined opposition has laid an ambush in the Senate or so they think. But Imran Khan should give up on any new bills and legislations that bog him. His governance should focus on existing laws that need to be implemented across the board and even within his own ranks. This will deprive the cunning foxes, pirates, hyenas and vultures their last hurrah. But for this to happen, Imran Khan has to create and shape an enabling environment.

He must appoint efficient and honest professionals in all transparency, regulatory and watchdog organisations.

The investigations and oversight by State Bank of Pakistan, SECP, Competition Commission, FBR, FIA and ECP must be effective. Particular attention must be paid to PSO, OGRA, NEPRA and IPPs. Accountability through NAB and Judiciary should be quick and exemplary.

Enforcement and investigating agencies like Police, CAF, FIA, IB and FBR must be strengthened with professional civil servants.

At the top of these organisations, the Prime Minister himself and his team of select advisors should ensure transparency, fair play and justice.

Immediately after installation of the new government, the ECP should take on the task of political party reforms and audit of asset declarations by elected parliamentarians.

Because armed forces and Judiciary do not fall in the purview of NAB, these institutions should exercise more vigilance and investigations into corruption. In tandem with the national mood, these ruthless proceedings must extend to retired officials.

 Prime minister must select the best economic team. New initiatives through expatriates not conversant with Pakistani politics should be avoided. There is already best talent available within Pakistan.

Pirates, hyenas and vultures will make a last ditch effort but the Kaptaan must firmly stay on course.

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