



## “Election Audit & Proposed Reforms”

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(Aug 23, 2014) Article on the current situation in the country.

The stubbornness of both the parties has brought the country in a dead-end street. The present political crises have caused a loss of billions of rupees to the national economy. Read President Ayub Khan’s book ‘Friends not Master’ and one will be ashamed what the politicians at that time were doing. The present situation is no different than that, everybody is trying to grind his own ax.

Coming to the solution of the political deadlock, it is simple, provided the judiciary, election commission and senior bureaucracy has the will to do so and the politicians have the courage to accept the change. The newly established commission by the Prime Minister should open all the constituencies of MNAs as well as MPAs and re-counting and verification of votes in all the constituencies should be done. It is a fact that because of poor thumb impressions [over or less use of ink], quite a heavy number of votes could not be verified, but still more than 50% thumb impressions are verifiable. Technically there is no need to verify all the casted ballot papers; it should be based on a sample. The ideal sample size would be to keep on verifying the verifiable ballot papers of each candidate until the bogus number of votes reaches to 5% of the total of a given candidate or else all the votes are verified. For example, if a candidate has earned a total of 30,000 votes then the 5% of that will be 1,500. During the verification process, as the number of bogus votes of a candidate reaches to 1,500, the candidate should be declared as a culprit and no further verification of votes will be done for that candidate. The process should continue for all the candidates contesting from a given constituency. If the winner of the constituency is found guilty, then re-election should be held. The same process should be repeated for all the constituencies.

The process should begin simultaneously for all the provinces following the numeral order of constituencies. Keep the number of MNA seats in Balochistan [14] as the base, and work out constituencies to be opened based on the number of seats for all the provinces in a relational manner. Meaning, if 1 constituency is opened in Balochistan, then 3 will be opened in KPK, 4 in Sindh and 9 in Punjab- based on the total of number of seats of a province in the National Assembly, in relation to the base.

The punishment of candidates for arranging casting of bogus votes [5% of the total] should be life-term ban on participating in any national or provincial election by him/her or his/her close blood relatives [spouse, son, daughter, brother and sister].

To curb bogus voting in future elections, the verification of thumb impressions and photographs should be made at the spot with the NADRA database [like being followed in Pakistan and many countries at the immigration desks]. After verification, the ballot paper should be appearing on the computer screen and the voter should be putting his/her thumb impression on an electronic thumb pad or touch screen. Then the completed ballot paper should be generated through the computer with voter details and the voter should verify his/her details and sign and put his / her thumb impression to complete the process which is recorded in the computer system in the form of a videoclip. This system is being practiced

by large in all the passport offices. Simultaneously, the database should be archived online in the Election Commission Headoffice, Supreme Court and GHQ. The contesting candidates should be able to see all the ballot papers at the end of the poll. Since the system will be electronic it will be faster to count the votes and keep the record of all the ballot papers, and the results will not be maneuvered. All these measures could be adopted immediately through an Ordinance issued by the President of Pakistan to satisfy all the stakeholders. The process could take more time which could be tackled by according more number of days for voting, depending upon the capacity of NADRA and Election Commission. This should resolve the major concerns of PTI and PAT and bring a change in the election process. It is true that if the results of the National / Provincial Assemblies are not reliable then it also jeopardizes the election of Senators and the President. The process should be fool-proof to the extent that even if a dishonest official desire to hijack the process it could not be hijacked. This policy change will bring a change in governance of the country which is the fundamental issue of Pakistan.