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## Reviewing the PPP and PML in Pakistani Politics

### Shrinking of PPP Voters:

In 1970, the PPP attracted 42 per cent of the votes polled in Punjab. A total of eight elections — spread over a thirty-seven year time span — PPP's vote bank in Punjab has been shrinking. In 1988, the PPP got 40 per cent of the Punjab vote, 39 per cent in 1990 and 1993, 22 per cent in 1997, 27 per cent in 2002 and 29 per cent in 2008.

**43 per cent of the PPP voters are “illiterate” while only 26 per cent of the PML voters are “illiterate.”**

In 1970, the PML attracted a mere 23 per cent of the votes polled in Punjab. In 1988, the PML got 38 per cent of the Punjab vote, 49 per cent in 1990, 45 per cent in 1993, 59 per cent in 1997 and 52 per cent in 2002. In 2008, the combined PML-N-PML-Q vote stood at 69 per cent.

### What Party & Which Voter:

According to a 2008 exit poll by Gallup Pakistan, 43 per cent of the PPP voters are “illiterate” while only 26 per cent of the PML voters are “illiterate.” Furthermore, a mere 5 per cent of the PPP voters are “college-educated” while the PML's “college-educated” voters are twice that many.

Next: A typical PML voter is urbanized, relatively better educated and upwardly mobile. This is the Pakistani that's growing. A typical PPP voter lives in a rural area with almost no education. This is the Pakistani that's shrinking. No wonder, PML's constituency is growing and PPP's is shrinking.

### People of Pakistan Know Democracy:

We have had nine elections in the past 37 years, and the one lesson that stands out is: if non-political forces do not interfere in Pakistan's natural political evolution then the process is definitely heading towards a two-party system. Those two parties are: the PPP and the PML, and the two collectively take away a good 75 per cent to 80 per cent of the national vote. In essence, the national race becomes a bi-polar contest.

Interestingly, some 15 per cent of all Pakistani voters have a family member employed outside of Pakistan. According to Gallup, 13 per cent of overseas

Pakistani families voted for PPP and 18 per cent for PML.

### The Voters Divide:

Yes, interior Sindh with its rural, untutored population-base voted the PPP but Punjab's urbanized, educated population-base voted the PML-N. History is witness that Punjab is where governments are made — or broken. And, Punjabi politics is fast becoming issue-based as opposed to emotion-driven. The PPP, once again, is behind the PML-N on issues. The PML-N won in Punjab because its politics was issue-driven; unambiguously anti-Musharraf and categorically pro-judiciary. The PPP lost out in Punjab because its politics revolved around emotions more than issues.

The PPP has been out of power for 12 years. For a decade, the PPP's leadership has either been in exile or in jail. It now seems that the PPP is having difficulty grasping the emergence of at least two new centers of power — the electronic media and the lawyers' community both as parts of the new, reawakened civil society.

### Old Wine New Bottle – Works No More:

The PPP needs to repackage itself. Clearly, the politics of ‘Roti, Kapra and Makaan’ (food, clothing and shelter) work no more (even less so in a future election). Punjabi vote is moving away from personalization of politics to issues. So should the PPP. Pakistani vote will be a cult no more in the next election. At 41, it's time for the PPP to develop formal structures that transcend individuals. To guarantee permanence, the PPP should have a social purpose. The PPP ought to become an institution. It should have a life of her own; a life that is beyond the ‘conscious intentions’ of the PPP's individual leaders.

Is the PML the party of the future? Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's PPP must reinvent itself. Benazir Bhutto's PPP must recreate itself. Otherwise, examples cited from the past pretty much dictate the future.

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