
TRANSPARENCY THROUGH ELECTION OBSERVATION

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Emergence of Election Monitoring

- Before 1980s
 - No serious, impartial “referees”
 - Regime change often only by extra-constitutional means
- 1980s - informal, ad hoc
 - Philippines
 - NAMFREL, 1983-84
 - “Snap” Election – Marcos vs. Aquino, 1986
 - Others
 - Chile, 1988
 - Panama, 1989
 - Nicaragua, 1990
 - Bulgaria, 1990

State of International Election Monitoring

- 1990s
 - growing international interest in elections
 - elections and democracy major priority of intergovernmental organizations
- Organizations Involved
 - Multilateral
 - Bilateral (governments, local diplomats)
 - NGOs
- Major International Activity
- Institutionalization

Jimmy Carter in Indonesia: 2004



Goals: Contribute to Democratic Transition

- Objective assessment
- Transparency – deter fraud, reduce irregularities
- Public confidence in integrity – fairer electoral rules, better campaign practices, more informed electorate => incr. participation
- Moral support
- Complement and encourage domestic engagement in democratic politics
- Inform/educate international community

Comprehensive Monitoring: Over Time

- Pre-election period, including campaign period
- Election day - balloting and initial counting
- Post-election phase
 - aggregation and tabulation of votes
 - the adjudication of complaints
 - formation of a new government

Comprehensive Monitoring: Substance

- Administration and conduct of election
- Legal/institutional framework
- Political environment
- Violence or intimidation
- Media access and news coverage
- Access to campaign resources/campaign finance rules

Fundamental Problems for Election Observation

- Absence of specific, operational **international standards**
 - Assessing elections
 - Conduct of observers
- Pass/fail standard – whether election is “**free and fair**”
- Methodology and professionalism improving – but still:
 - Danger of superficiality
 - Bias
 - Politically motivated (or outcome oriented) assessments
 - Overemphasis on elections

Shortcomings of Election Observation

1. Expectations too high
2. Methodology still suspect
3. Biases – importance of mandates, interests and constraints of monitoring groups
4. Inconsistency, relativism
5. Failure to recognize, reinforce domestic monitoring groups

Observing the Polls



Problem – Election Day Observation

- Difficult to evaluate **extent and significance** of problems observed on election day
 - Serious problems => dilemma: whether to question **overall quality** or **legitimacy** of an election
 - Risks
 - Superficiality
 - Providing unintended legitimacy
 - Overemphasizing problems, inappropriately calling legitimacy into question, unsupported allegations

Current Responses to Election-Day Problems

- Alternatives
 - Pointing out problems while avoiding overall judgments
 - Glossing over problems
 - Emphasizing problems
- Applying instinct, judgment, and experience to essentially anecdotal evidence, but
 - Standard of proof?
 - Bias?
- Continuing challenge – how to make findings **less anecdotal** and impressionistic

Drawing Conclusions

- All elections have administrative and other problems
- Irregularities threaten freedom and fairness only to the extent that they are
 - “extensive”
 - “systematic”
 - “decisive in a close race”¹
- Must assess credibility and extent of alleged deficiencies and irregularities/put problems in context

¹Jorge Elklit and Palle Svensson

Incremental Improvement through Random Deployment?

- Improve established methodology – strengthen inferences
- Deployment to specific locations chosen in a statistically random manner
 - In theory, allows greater confidence in drawing inferences from existing observations
- Adding to standard observation form/checklist: overall judgment of overall quality of each polling station

Biased, Unprofessional Observers

- Sponsored by undemocratic governments
- With strong partisan agenda, preconceived views
- With goal of countering other observers
- Examples: Cambodia (1998), Zimbabwe (2000, 2002, 2005)

Transparent Ballot Count



Vote Count Verification – Competing Techniques

- Comprehensive Independent Count
 - Too much data
 - Uneven coverage – missing data not random
- Exit Polls – but:
 - Importance of historical data/key precincts
 - Climate of intimidation – hurts participation
 - Voter motivation vs. Verification
- Public Opinion Surveys
- Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT)/Quick Counts
- Post-Election Statistical Analyses

Development of PVTs/Quick Counts

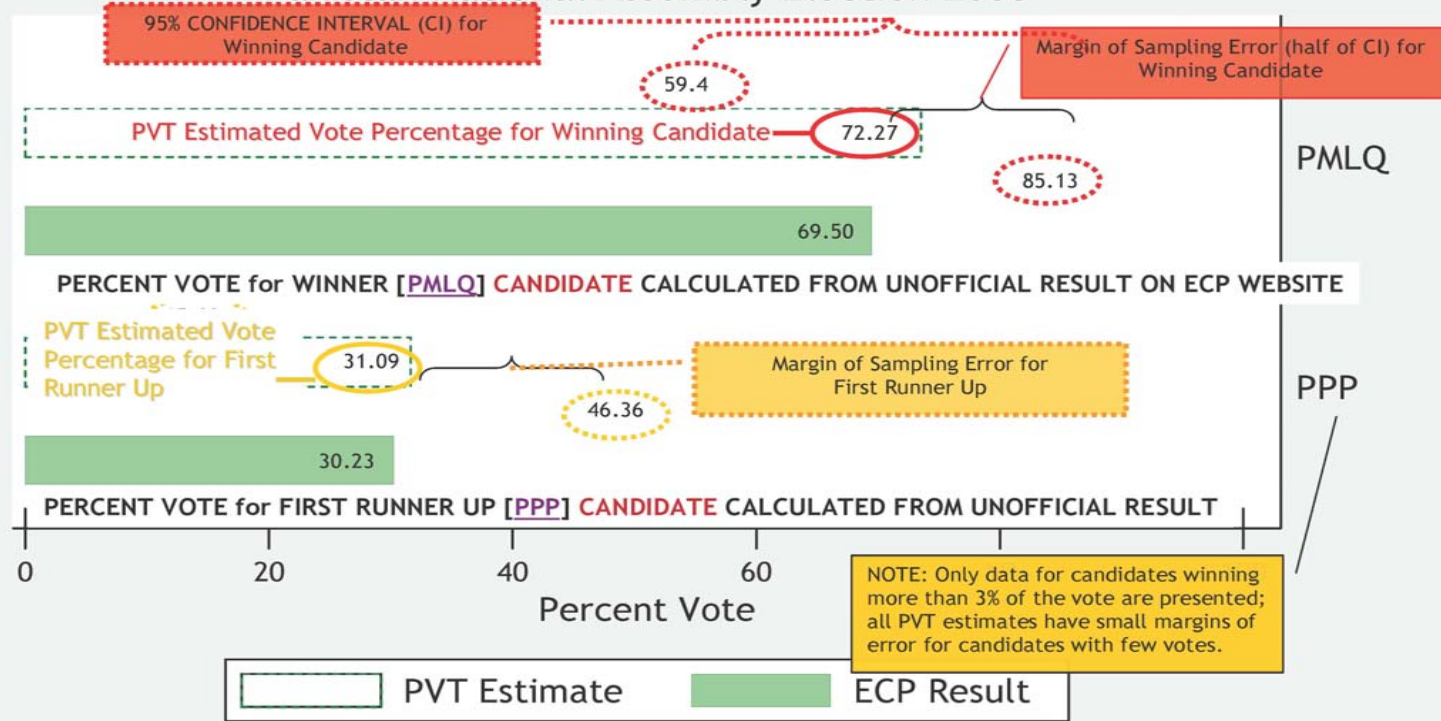
- Response to manipulation of election results
- Invention of Parallel Vote Tabulation
 - “Quick Count” in the Philippines (1984, 1986)
 - Referendum in Chile (1988)
 - Refinement and growing acceptance of technique
- Use of sampling methodologies
- Continued salience of VCV for election monitoring

Understanding Pakistan 2008 PVT

NOTE: Margins of Sampling Error are DIFFERENT for each candidate in each constituency and must not be compared between candidates. ME depends not only on sample size but also vote variation for that particular candidate!



Pakistan National Assembly Election 2008



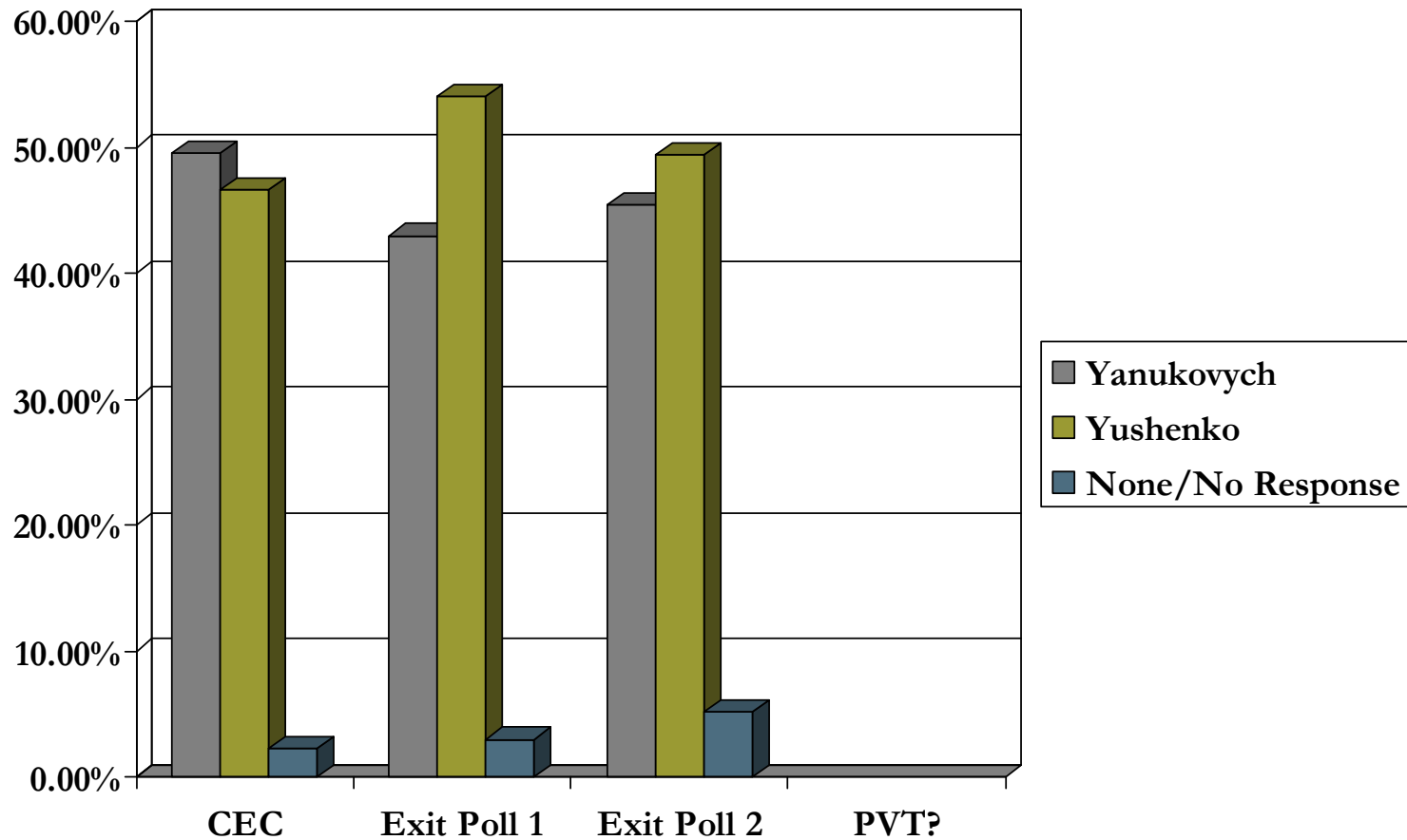
NOTE: Only data for candidates winning more than 3% of the vote are presented; all PVT estimates have small margins of error for candidates with few votes.

NA-203 PVT Sample: 26 of 175 Polling Stations

PVT estimate represented by dashed column with upper and lower margin of sampling error (95% confidence interval).



Ukraine Election Results, Nov. 21, 2004 Runoff



| | | | | |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|---|
| Yanukovich | 49.5% | 43.0% | 45.4% | ? |
| Yushenko | 46.6% | 54.0% | 49.4% | ? |

Primary Goals of VCV

1. Deter vote count fraud
2. Detect specifics of (or absence of) tabulation fraud
3. Project/forecast results
4. Organizational focus for broader election monitoring
5. Qualitative assessment

New Challenges

- Parliamentary Elections/Districts
- Mixed Systems
- E-Voting
- Competition between Sponsors
- Election Laws
- Data Base Availability
- Reporting Technology

Improving Professionalism, Methodology

- Continue to expand focus to election framework, environment, political freedoms
- Reduce emphasis on pass/fail judgments
- Increase emphasis on postelection follow-up by monitoring groups – missions, statements
- Improve techniques
- Improve professionalism
- Examine prejudices and recommit to objectivity
- Maintain independence and ethics

Supporting Domestic Actors

- Support domestic actors
 - Domestic election monitoring organizations, civil society organizations
 - Political parties
 - Advocacy
 - Policy reform
- Provide international moral support

Making Election Assistance Effective

- Election monitoring as part of **longer-term strategies to develop organizations, institutions and processes**
- Nonpartisan ***domestic* election monitoring**