

# Changing Patterns of Political Dynamics in Pakistan

Exploring Grassroots Social and Political Realities

Nazeer Mahar  
Tarik Malik





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Authors:

**Nazeer Mahar**

**Tarik Malik**

Responsible:

**Dr. Jochen Hippler** | Country Director

**Abdullah Dayo** | Programme Coordinator

**Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)**, Pakistan Office

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1st Floor, 66-W, Junaid Plaza, Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area,

P.O Box 1289, Islamabad, Pakistan

Phone: +92 51 2803391-4

Fax: +92 51 2803395

Website: <http://pakistan.fes.de>

Facebook: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Pakistan

Twitter: @FES\_PAK

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To order publication: [info@fes-pakistan.org](mailto:info@fes-pakistan.org)

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## Preface

Social and political change are closely linked to each other. When society gets more educated, for instance, or when the middle classes are growing, this will change not just society, but also politics. It will change the atmosphere, public debates, and values, and, down the road, it will also change power relationships. What “democracy” means in a “feudal” society, in a society dominated by big business, or in one dominated by the middle classes, will differ considerably. And the spread of literacy or the rise of what we often call “social media” can have grave impact on society and politics alike.

At the same time, social and political change can only be fully understood if we appreciate that they occur both at the national/provincial and at local levels. Here we are less concerned with the fact that they are also deeply embedded in global developments, because those are widely discussed anyway, in many countries. The local level of society and politics, on the other hand, is often ignored or not fully taken into account. It should not be forgotten, that even national politics, e.g. national elections, is firmly rooted in local circumstances and changes. While national trends surely play an important role, so also do local conditions, local interests, and local power relationships. In Pakistan, more than in some other countries, local considerations play a big role in regard to both provincial and national elections and politics. The dialectics between national and local politics have not always been fully appreciated.

Therefore, we are pleased to present the study at hand, “Changing Patterns of Political Dynamics in Pakistan - Exploring Social and Political Realities at the Grassroots”. Researched and written by Nazeer Mahar and Tarik Malik for The Research Initiative (TRI), an old partner of FES, it explores basic trends of social change in Pakistan, e.g. demography, level of education, and media use, and then looks at four local areas, Lyari (in Karachi), Nankana (in Central Punjab), Multan (Southern Punjab), and Larkana (Northern Sindh). These changes are finally linked to local elections trends, which allow to better understand the restructuring of the party system on the national level. The

study illuminates the big diversity of politics in the different constituencies, and in this way makes the restructuring in the party system over the last twenty years better understandable.

**Dr. Jochen Hippler**

Country Director  
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES),  
Pakistan

**Abdullah Dayo**

Programme Coordinator  
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES),  
Pakistan

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# Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CM	Chief Minister
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
CWS	Church World Service- Afghanistan/Pakistan
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan
FAFEN	Free and Fair Election Network
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FM	Frequency Modulation
FY	Financial Year
GDA	Grand Democratic Alliance
GE	General Elections
HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory
IJI	Islami Jamhoori Itehad
JI	Jamat-e-Islami
JUI	Jamiat-Ulama-e-Islam
JUP	Jamiat-Ulama-e-Pakistan
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KP	Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa
LFO	Legal Framework Order
MJUP	Markazi Jameat-Ulama-e-Pakistan
MMA	Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal
MNA	Member National Assembly

MPA	Member Provincial Assembly
MQM	Mutahida Qaumi Movement
NA	National Assembly
PA	Provincial Assembly
PAK	Pakistan
PB	Petabyte
PCSW	Punjab Commission For Status Of Women
PDA	Peoples Democratic Alliance
PIF	Pakistan Islamic Front
PKR	Pakistan Rupee
PML	Pakistan Muslim League
PMLQ	Pakistan Muslim League Qayyum/Pakistan Muslim League- Quaid
PNA	Pakistan National Alliance
PPP	Pakistan Peoples Party
PS	Provincial Assembly of Sindh
PSDP	Public Service Development Program
PSP	Pak Sarzameen Party
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-i- Insaf
ST	Sunni Tehreek
SUV	Sports Utility Vehicle
TB	Terabyte
TLP	Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan
TRI	The Research Initiative
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USA	United States of America

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Social and political context

Pakistan is in a flux. Over the decades, it has witnessed creeping demographic and social changes. Increasing urbanization, rising young population, digital empowerment, sectoral shifts in economy, changing class composition, increasing religiosity, and emergence of new political actors are increasingly impacting the power dynamics, and political choices and outcomes.

The Green Revolution of the 1960s, Gulf migrations of the 1970s and 1980s, incremental urbanization, youth bulge and the proliferation of digital technologies have transformed the social and political order by challenging the hegemony of the traditional elite that used to wield power at various levels in social and political hierarchy.

In the 2018 elections, Pakistan's political landscape was transformed beyond recognition. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has put an end to 30-year duopoly of the Muslim League factions and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the electoral arena by nearly doubling its votes between 2013 and 2018. The PTI's rise in popularity neatly coincided with the decline in vote share for both the PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Nearly three years later in 2021, there is a reversal of sorts happening in the electoral arena. As of May, 2021, PML-N has won all of the by-elections held in Punjab and one election in KP. Likewise, PPP has won all the bye elections in Sindh including one NA seat vacated by PTI incumbent in Karachi. Opposition parties' overwhelming success in the by-polls indicates a growing disenchantment of the electorate with the incumbent governments at federal and provincial levels.

While the PTI clearly remains a strong political contender, the results of about a dozen by-polls have thrown open the fate of next elections. Combine this with the fast changing demographics in the country, and predicting the outcome of any elections becomes even trickier.

Most research on the electoral politics tends to follow the national and provincial trends which do not sufficiently capture the complexity of nuanced behavior of a voter in a rural or a semi-urban locality. Nor do the political parties and policy makers in the government adequately zero-in on it. As a result, the evidence base of policies - focusing only on the national or provincial level indicators, and believing the generalized and exaggerated reality perceived from an urban lens -- remains narrow, and therefore unreflective of a deeper understanding of the issues and changing trends at the micro level.

Therefore, the first objective of this research is to analyze the complex web of social, demographic and power dynamics operating in rural/semi-urban context and delineate any variations from the broad national trends. Another objective of this research is to inform the policy making process of the political parties and the government who, for their administrative and fiscal constraints, take a piecemeal view of the development needs and aspirations of the citizens. Keeping in view these objectives, The Research Initiative (TRI) studied the changing social and political trends; contours of power dynamics and responsiveness of the political parties.

## **1.2. Scope**

First, the study looks at a range of variables including, but not limited to education, digital empowerment, class, employment, urbanization, gender and religiosity to assess as to how are the ideological and political trends shaped at the micro level, mainly in the rural or semi-urban context of Punjab and Sindh provinces. Second, it tries to determine changing group/class dynamics at the grassroots level. The study particularly looks at the role of caste/biradari, vote bloc, development, patronage and religiosity in shaping political choices of individuals. Three, the study assesses the comparative political and electoral participation trends and voting behavior since the 1970 elections. Four, it analyzes (i) the existence, influence and structure of political parties at the local level, (ii) how has it changed/not changed over the years, and (iii) impact of the changing trends on policies of the political parties besides the way the parties have responded to the changing trends. Five, the study explores as to how the local dynamics inform the national level political and ideological trends as well as the policy framework.

### 1.3. Questions of the study

Keeping in view the scope of the study the following five questions have been formulated.

- 1) How do power dynamics impact the political decision making at local level and more broadly equitable access to upward mobility at macro level? What are the significant linkages of power dynamics and politics in four different locations, reflected in the case studies, in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh?
- 2) How have digital empowerment and urbanization impacted/not impacted the patterns of local politics?
- 3) How are religiosity and conservatism shaping political and ideological trends across the country? What are significant variations at the grass-roots in rural and semi-urban locations in Punjab and Sindh?
- 4) What is the current state of political parties at the local level? How have the local dynamics informed the national level political and ideological trends as well as the policy framework of political parties?
- 5) Has the representational and electoral politics, during the recent years, corresponded with and articulated the aspirations of the new social classes and demographic dynamics witnessed at local level? Or has it lagged behind the new realities?

These questions cover power dynamics and its impact on politics, digital empowerment, religiosity and conservatism, role of political parties and responsiveness of representative politics to social and demographic changes. We have tried to focus on these questions while applying all the instruments i.e. literature review, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

### 1.4. Methodology and limitations

The study reviewed existing literature and primary data on social and demographic changes, electoral politics and voting behavior in Pakistan and the mechanics of political parties' policy formulation. To dig deeper into the local dynamics, focus group discussions and interviews with Key Informants -- drawn from local political and social leadership including village elders and biradari/caste chiefs -- were held.

This study is mainly based on qualitative data. However, during the course of the study, the absence of the corresponding quantitative data generated through scientifically designed research methods was seriously realized. The research team considers that an authentic, periodic and updated quantitative data on social, demographic, political and ideological patterns of Pakistani population is not only a substantial source of information but it also helps triangulate the information collected through qualitative methods.

Besides, the state of authentic quantitative data in Pakistan is not very enviable. The national decennial census was delayed by thirteen years; the 1998 census was also delayed by seven years. Likewise, surveys on social and demographic indicators reflecting the opinions and needs of the marginalized groups and regions are almost non-existent.

## **1.5. Case selection**

The study focused on four rural and semi-urban constituencies from the provinces of Punjab and Sindh. In the process, four case studies – two from each province – have been developed. For the purpose, the study followed the geographic regions as defined by Gallup Pakistan and picked one constituency each from central Punjab, south Punjab, north Sindh and Karachi region.

The two constituencies in the Punjab province are: National Assembly constituency NA-118 in Nankana district in central Punjab and National Assembly constituency NA- 154 in Multan district in south Punjab. Nankana is a heterogeneous land housing a significant Sikh population. It has a special significance among the Sikh community as the birth-place of Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion. This constituency qualified as a case study from the central Punjab, an otherwise single largest region that determines the fate of the political parties vying for the highest office in the land, for the following reasons:

- 1) *Tahreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan* (TLP) secured the highest number of votes in this constituency.
- 2) No party has won more than one election here since 2002.

The focus of the case study was to i) explain the rise of TLP phenomenon and assess whether it was sustainable ii) explore factors that helped PTI's win for the first time in this constituency and iii) find out whether PPP was permanently irrelevant in the politics of central Punjab.

NA-154 Multan, a key constituency in south Punjab region, was selected for the following reasons:

- 1) The usual monopoly of a feudal and a custodian of a shrine broke for the first time as PTI won in the constituency. The PTI went from under 1% in 2002 to 19% in 2013 to 34% of votes in 2018, breaking the old modes of politics here.
- 2) This is one of the rare pockets in southern Punjab where PPP still holds ground. It has polled 1% more votes in 2018 elections than in the previous one.

The focus on this constituency helps to throw light on the dynamics of a triangular fight among the pirs, the landlords and the economic middle class, a phenomenon prevalent across most parts of the Punjab province.

NA-246 located in Lyari, Karachi South District was chosen for the following reasons:

- 1) PPP lost the National Assembly seat in Lyari for the very first time since the 1970 elections.
- 2) The two provincial assembly seats in the same constituency were won by the religious parties – *Mutahida Majlis e Amal* (MMA) and TLP.

The case study attempts to explore the causes of the PPP and Mutahida Qoumi Movement (MQM) defeat and a significant win for religio-political parties and tries to establish whether it was a one-time phenomenon or new political players such as PTI and TLP could repeat their 2018 performance in the next elections. The lessons from the constituency also offer us some insights into dynamics playing into the politics of Karachi.

In north Sindh, provincial assembly constituency PS-11, a provincial constituency in Larkana district, was chosen as Larkana, the hometown of PPP founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and a traditional stronghold of the party, handed the PPP two consecutive defeats. The case study, while focusing on the reasons for the defeat of the PPP, tries to find out if this was the beginning of a changing voting behavior in the province.

## **1.6. Structure of the study**

Chapter one of the study briefly explains the social and political context, methodology and limitations, scope and questions of the research study. Chapter two basing its analysis on extensive literature review gives a macro picture of the major social and demographic determinants, which potentially shape the politics. Chapter three provides an analysis of the contours and drivers of power dynamics at macro level. Chapters four to seven give a detailed analysis of social, political and power dynamics at the local level. The analysis is based on KIIs and FGDs conducted in four rural and semi-urban constituencies in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh. Chapter eight provides conclusions deduced from the findings of four case studies and literature review.

## 2. Social and demographic determinants of politics

For necessary context, this chapter deals with seven basic social and demographic variables – education, digital empowerment and media, urbanization, employment trends, gender and religiosity– showing how and to what extent the changes under these heads have or have not impacted the political trends and electoral outcomes in the recent elections.

### 2.1. Education: Electoral disengagement and discontent

Pakistan has glaring educational disparities based on gender, socio-economic status and geographic location. With Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.557, Pakistan sits at 154 out of 189 countries in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) ranking.<sup>1</sup> Its overall literacy rate is 57%<sup>2</sup> which is way behind its neighboring countries. The primary school dropout rate is 22.7%<sup>3</sup> which is 3rd highest in the region after Bangladesh and Nepal. Pakistan also has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children. Over 22 million of Pakistan's 77 million children of school-going age (5-16 years) remain out of school.<sup>4</sup> While enrollment and retention rates have been improving slowly, the provision of good quality basic education for all remains a distant dream.<sup>5</sup>

The literacy rate in urban areas is higher (74%) than in the rural areas (51%).<sup>6</sup> The chronic disparity between male and female literacy rate remains at 22 %

- 
1. UNDP Human Development indicators <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/PAK> (accessed Jan15, 2021)
  2. Pakistan Economic Survey, 2019-20 p.197
  3. Ibid p.198
  4. Unicef. Giving every child the right to education. <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/education> (accessed Jan 18, 2021)
  5. Muhammad Ali, Syed, Pakistani Children's Right to Education, (2020). Express Tribune. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2267549/pakistani-childrens-right-to-education> (accessed Dec 21, 2020)
  6. Ibid

at the national level. While in the urban areas this difference is narrower (13 percentage points), in the rural areas it widens up to 27 percentage points.<sup>7</sup> Among the provinces Punjab has the highest literacy rate with 64 % followed by Sindh with 57 %. In rural Punjab a male is 15% less likely to be educated than any male living in urban Punjab. A Punjabi rural woman is 20% less likely to have an access to education than her male counterpart and 26% less likely to get an education as opposed to a woman living in the urban Punjab.<sup>8</sup> Surprisingly though, in Punjab the ratio of girls in higher education is significantly more than of boys.

Of over 1.1 million enrolments in the province, girls' enrolment accounts for 57%. For bachelors and masters this ratio goes up to 70% and 75% respectively<sup>9</sup>.

In Sindh province the disparity between the rural and urban males is more pronounced as the difference goes up to 24%. Gender disparity patterns in the Sindh province put women at a further disadvantage. In rural Sindh female literacy is as low as 21 % as opposed to 55% for the male. A Sindhi rural woman has nearly half as much a chance at getting an education as an urban Sindhi woman.

**Table 1: Literacy rate ( 10yrs and above) Pakistan - 2018-19**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Pakistan	71	49	60
Rural	65	38	51
Urban	80	67	74
Punjab	73	57	64
Rural	67	47	57
Urban	82	73	77
Sindh	68	44	57
Rural	55	21	39
Urban	79	64	72

*Source: Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2019-20*

7. Ibid

8. Ibid

9. Punjab Development statistics 2017, Bureau of Statistics. Punjab, Lahore. P.138

Table 2: Ratio of boys and girls in higher education in Punjab

Study Group	Total	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Total	1,186,281	43	57
Intermediate Classes	878,266	46.8	53.2
Pre-Medical	215,403	35	65
Pre-Engineering	167,166	69	31
Computer Science	130,795	55	45
Humanities	305,637	38	62
Degree Classes	221,416	30	70
Post Graduate Classes	27,784	25	75

Source: - Punjab Development statistics 2017, Bureau of Statistics. Punjab, Lahore.

### **The relationship between education and voting is more nuanced:**

While education is a vital variable when it comes to political and electoral participation, it is never by itself a sufficient condition to judge whether a certain level of education has caused the voter turnout to go up or down in any region or a country. It is the type and length of education besides other factors such as income, rural-urban dynamic, quality of democracy, mobilization, partisanship, knowledge of and ease of access to voting processes that affect a person's decision to whether and how to vote.

### **The educated voter is disillusioned with democratic institutions:**

In Pakistan's case, there is an inverse correlation between increased literacy rate and voter turnout. The country's literacy rate in 1972 was 21.7%<sup>10</sup> whereas the 1970 elections witnessed the highest turnout of 61%. In the following elections (held between 1988 and 2008) when literacy was growing the voter turnout hovered around the 30s and 40s. Post 1997 while this trend witnessed a rise, it never crossed 55% (2013 elections). While the quality and level of engagement in advanced and consolidating democracies suggest that education increases political participation, it can also do the opposite when the educated feel that their participation in the electoral process was futile.<sup>11</sup>

10. Roof, David J: Problems of Common Interest: The Shaping of Education in Pakistan, 1970-2014 (2015) p.38 <http://www.jespk.net/publications/220.pdf> (accessed Jan 10, 2021)

11. Kevin, Croke, Deliberate Disengagement: How Education Can Decrease Political Participation in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes, Cambridge University Press, (2016) [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/kcroke/files/cglm\\_sept2015.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/kcroke/files/cglm_sept2015.pdf) p 1.(accessed Jan 10, 2021)

Karachi, with a significantly higher literacy rate than the national average, posted 12% lower turnout in 2018 elections as people were found to be indifferent due to the non-level political field and poor performance of the political parties.

## **2.2. Digital transformation: Access, accountability and polarization**

Almost 85% of Pakistanis have cellular connections. Between June 2019 and February 2020 alone, the number of cellular subscribers rose from 161 million to 168.9 million registering a growth of 5.9 %.<sup>12</sup> People are increasingly reliant on mobile technologies for their everyday transactions. In 2019 there were over 1,309 million annual mobile banking transactions (3.6 million per day) with an annual volume of over PKR 4.5 trillion.<sup>13</sup>

Broadband connections stand at 101million.<sup>14</sup> Data usage over broadband networks was 2,545 Petabyte (PB)<sup>15</sup> for Financial Year (FY) 2018-19 up from 1, 207 PB in FY 2017-18 showing a growth of 113%.<sup>16</sup>

**Digital media and politics:** Political parties, sensing the opportunity, during the 2018 elections, ran targeted campaigns sending out text and robocalls<sup>17</sup> to the people. Parties across the political spectrum made use of online platforms such as facebook and twitter to amplify their campaign messages. Digital technologies also have proved an equalizer as when certain political parties' coverage was censored by the mainstream media, they still managed to reach out to the electorate through social media.

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12. Pakistan Telecommunication Authority <https://www.pta.gov.pk/en/telecom-indicators> (accessed May 9, 2021)

13. Ibid

14. Ibid

15. A petabyte (PB) is a unit of digital information storage used to denote the size of data. It is equivalent to 1,024 terabytes or 1,000,000,000,000 bytes. <https://www.techopedia.com/definition/2738/petabyte-pb>

16. Pakistan Telecommunication Authority <https://www.pta.gov.pk/en/telecom-indicators> (accessed May 9, 2021)

17. Automated telephone calls which deliver a recorded message, typically on behalf of a political party or telemarketing company.

## **A digitally empowered boy in Sanghar holds governments accountable**

A grade-one, eight-year old boy in a small village in Sindh province stands waist-deep in a contaminated pool of water. A dead rooster hangs from the crook of his left arm. The boy, staring into a handheld mobile phone camera, blurts out an impassioned few lines to the political elite of the country, naming and shaming them for failing to come to their rescue: him and his other fellow villagers who were forced out of their homes due to rain-induced floods of August, 2020.

The boy's name is Ahmed Marri<sup>18</sup> who claims that three of his four roosters have died of consuming contaminated water. He says humans and livestock too shall die if the government did not come to their help. In a practiced fashion, he takes a dig at the Prime Minister Imran Khan for failing to deliver the 'new Pakistan' that he had promised as part of his election campaign. Ahmed taunts if this was 'new' Pakistan where people of his village were left to fend for themselves then they were better off with the 'old' Pakistan. A member of National Assembly Shazia Marri (no relation) from the area confirmed in a tweet later that nearly 200,000 people were displaced in Sanghar district due to the floods.

The one-minute video clip that we later knew was scripted and filmed by Ahmed's father, went viral and within days not only was Ahmed a social media celebrity, as media crew lined up to interview the eight-year-old activist; military personnel, representatives of various political parties reached out to Ahmed and handed him food-items and other gifts. Ahmed beamed in another video as he received roosters from a political party.<sup>19</sup>

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18. Samoon, Hanif. Help, my rooster is dead: eight-year-old raises Sindh's contaminated water problem. (2020). Samaa TV. <https://www.samaa.tv/news/pakistan/2020/09/sindh-contaminated-water/> (accessed Dec 21, 2020)
  19. Samoon, Hanif. Family of eight-year-old Sanghar boy Ahmed Marri gets relief goods (2020). Samaa TV. <https://www.samaa.tv/news/pakistan/2020/09/family-of-eight-year-old-sanghar-boy-ahmed-marri-gets-relief-goods/> (accessed Dec 21, 2020)

Ahmed and his father pledged to continue to highlight the issues of their village. While this episode might soon be forgotten, it highlights one incremental revolution that has taken place in this country, ie: moderately priced, camera-supported and 3G/4G enabled smart handheld phones. What Ahmed, thanks to technology, could achieve today was almost unthinkable only a few years ago.

Ahmed's video clip highlights the deep disconnect that exists between the people and the political parties. There is a perception gap between what a common person feels their issues are and what the political parties deem they are. Nevertheless this new 'middle class' that is connected to the globe via the internet is likely to transform the political field.<sup>20</sup>

**Increasing political and ideological polarization:** Pakistan has many ethnicities, religions and sects and political views at times bordering on extremes. While these clashing worldviews already existed, these have been brought to the fore by the digital media. Micro-blogging platform – twitter – which until a few years ago was solely used by the upper-middle class and English-educated urbanites has become a battleground of competing narratives just as the various groups found it to be a useful tool to amplify their message. Every day it is either the various political interest groups or the religious organization which dominate the top trends on the microblogging platform.

Furthermore, digital technology has also transformed how the media is consumed in our society.

**Shift in media consumption patterns:** Pakistan's media landscape has experienced mushroom growth since the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It went from a single state-owned television channel, a radio channel and an odd private FM radio to allowing the private sector to enter the fray en masse. Media industry has grown, in the last decade, with a cumulative investment of approximately \$4-5 billion. The sector is believed to be

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20. *New Perspectives in Pakistan's Political Economy: State, Class and Social Change.* (2019). edited by Matthew McCartney and S. Akbar Zaidi p.71

providing employment to more than 300,000 people. There are some two dozen news TV channels running transmissions in Urdu and other national languages. For all their round-the-clock news cycle, a Gallup Pakistan Exit Poll post the 2018 elections indicated a very little efficacy of the medium in opinion-making.

Every four in five persons questioned said the TV campaigns did not change their choice of vote whereas only 18% said their views did change.

**Mainstream media censorship pushes audiences towards digital platforms:** Arbitrary as well as self-censorship has brought down quality of programming triggering a crisis of credibility.

Media is controlled by a 'mutually accommodating troika' of military, commercial interests and the middle classes from Punjab and urban Sindh (from among the top 100 columnists and anchors more than 50 are from Punjab; one-third are Urdu-speaking).<sup>21</sup> The media content is overwhelmingly dictated by the state institutions,<sup>22</sup> and media self-censors any content that the deep state might find unpalatable.

Censorship and layoffs of journalists have triggered growth of online TV channels. These ventures are gaining traction with viewers both for their bold content and easy access via cellular devices which attract three-fourths (76%) of the total web traffic. There are over 37 million – and growing – social media users most of whom access the internet via the cell phone.

Advertisers too are increasingly moving towards the online platforms. In the fiscal year 2017-18, although out of over PKR 81 billion worth of media market, 46% went to electronic media, this was 2% less than the previous year resulting in a net loss of PKR 4 billion for TV media. During the same period, the volume of digital marketing increased by PKR 2.5 billion.<sup>23</sup>

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21. New Perspectives in Pakistan's Political Economy: State, Class and Social Change. (2019), edited by Matthew McCartney and S. Akbar Zaidi p. 251

22. Ibid p.248

23. Freedom Network. Media market: Money and control. <https://pakistan.mom-rsf.org/en/findings/market/> (accessed Dec 25, 2020)

This gradual yet certain variation in media consumption suggests that the media's future is digital and it is only a matter of time before the electronic media collapses under its own weight. Digital media, although fraught with pitfalls in the absence of the institution of gatekeeping, is the future favored destination of a news consumer, hence a space to watch out for.

### **2.3. Urbanization: Increased demand for service delivery**

At an annual rate of 3.06%, Pakistan is the fastest urbanizing country in South Asia with a total projected population of 335 million by 2050.<sup>24</sup> Consequently it is experiencing the growth of urban centers. Pakistan's 10 largest cities have a population of 41 million, (which have grown by 71% over the past 19 years) which is 20% of the total population.<sup>25</sup> About 50 % of the population is projected to be urban in 2030.<sup>26</sup> Historically, there are six major migrations from rural to urban centers.

- 1) As a result of Partition, 4.7 million Hindus and Sikhs left for India whereas 6.7 million Muslims came into Pakistan. Poor refugee families occupied homes abandoned by the outgoing population and open spaces were turned into squatter settlements. These settlements only expanded with time and became a permanent feature of Pakistan's urban landscape.<sup>27</sup>
- 2) Rural landless moved from villages to towns and cities for better wages, health, sanitation, education facilities and comparative social freedom. As for Sindh, robberies, water shortage and a freeze on government jobs pushed Sindhi labor and youth to move to urban centers.<sup>28</sup>
- 3) As a result of the Afghan war some 3.7 million Afghans were in Pakistan by 1992. Most of them moved to the urban centers; Karachi alone received an estimated 600, 000 Afghan refugees.<sup>29</sup>

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24. Mustafa Daanish et al: Urbanisation and Political Change in Pakistan: Exploring the known Unknowns, (2013) p.1293 file:///C:/Users/Dell/Downloads/MustafaSawas2013.pdf (accessed March 5, 2021) Daily Dawn.

25. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1354653> (accessed Dec 22, 2020)

26. Mustafa Daanish et al: Urbanisation and Political Change in Pakistan: Exploring the known Unknowns, 2013 p.1295 file:///C:/Users/Dell/Downloads/MustafaSawas2013.pdf (accessed March 5, 2021)

27. Ibid p.1296-1300

28. Ibid

29. Ibid

- 4) Military operations in the erstwhile FATA forced hundreds of thousands of youth to move to the urban centers.
- 5) Invisible yet pervasive state repression against ethnic peripheries -- the Baloch and Pakhtuns -- has compelled workers, students and small businesspeople to migrate in their millions to urban centers across Pakistan.<sup>30</sup>
- 6) The 2010 floods forced many Sindhis and Seraikis to migrate in unprecedented numbers to Karachi.<sup>31</sup>

Urbanization and its attendant vertical social mobility and increased and diversified formal labor force participation are likely to change the political behavior. While vertical patronage networks in the urban areas – manned by labor contractors, traders, business and bureaucratic elites - can continue to lord over dispensation of patronage to the urban poor, the educated urban youth shall increasingly demand better service delivery in return for their electoral favors.<sup>32</sup>

## **2.4. Employment trends: Modernizing of economy to the exclusion of youth and woman**

An overwhelming 61.4% of people in Pakistan fall in the 15-64 age-group which makes it the 9<sup>th</sup> largest labor force with 1.94% growth rate which means 2.5 million new jobs are needed every year. Our existing workforce is 65.5 million.<sup>33</sup>

**Agriculture Sector:** The labor force participation ratio for the year 2017-18 in the agriculture sector was 51.9% of which men are 81.1% whereas women are 22.8%, just a little over one-fourth of the men's ratio. For the Punjab province, the labor force participation ratio is 55.1%; men are 82% whereas women are 29.6%. For the Sindh province, it is 50%; men are 81.1% whereas women are 14%. Share of the agriculture sector in employment is 37.4%; of which men make 29.6%. This sector has been heavily tilted in favor of women (66.1%). The agriculture sector in the Punjab province accounts for 39% of the economy, accommodating 29% of male and 66.3

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30. Khan, Mubarak Zeb. 20pc of Pakistanis live in 10 cities, census reveals. (2017). Daily Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1597719/circle-of-dissent> (accessed Dec 25, 2020)

31. Ibid

32. Akhtar, Aasim Sajjad. Circle of dissent. (2020). Daily Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1597719/circle-of-dissent> (accessed Dec 25, 2020)

33. Pakistan Labour Survey, 2017-18 p.24

% of female population. The Sindh province's agriculture contributes 35.8% to its economy; employing 31.9% of men and 64.1% of women. **In the last one decade this share in national employment has decreased by 5% and the trend is likely to continue. The surplus pool of 5% has gone to the industrial sector which has progressed from 21% to 24% in the last decade whereas the remaining 2 % went to the services sector.**<sup>34</sup>

**Industrial Sector's** share in employment is 24% with men at 26% while women at 16.6%. In the province of Punjab this ratio is 25%; where the male share is 28% and the female share is 17%. In Sindh province, the industrial share is 22.2 % with men claiming 23% share and women 16.2%.

**Services Sector** which has a share of 38.6% in employment is again skewed in favor of men who have 44.7% while women have 17.3% of the share. This sector in the Punjab province has a share of 35.9 %; 43% men and 16.7% women. As for Sindh province the sector's share stands at 42%; of which men claim 45.1% whereas women 19.7%.

The overall share of informal employment (in manufacturing and services) remains at 71% of the total labor force. Such work is mostly located in urban areas and is outside of the remit of extant labor regulation and employment-based social protection.

**Marginal increase in women employment ratio:** According to the latest labor force survey, between 2008 and 2018, female labor force participation rate rose from 19% to 22.5%. However, this is still much lower compared to the world average of 39.2% as per the World Bank data of 2018. The female share of employment in senior middle management is merely 4.2%.<sup>35</sup> Some of the reasons that prevent women from entering the labor market include unfavorable social norms, restrictions on mobility, gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, safety concerns, and all-consuming household duties.<sup>36</sup>

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34. Javed, Umair. Structural transformation. (2019). Daily Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1517346> (accessed Dec 23, 2020)

35. UNDP Human Development Index 2019 p.336

36. Ali, Noor Anwar et al, Pakistan's growth story. (2019).<https://pakistangrowthstory.org/2019/10/16/women-want-to-work-and-employers-want-to-hire-women-where-is-the-disconnect/> (accessed Dec 25, 2020)

**Overseas workers:** An estimated 11.11 million Pakistanis are registered as overseas employees. In 2019, the Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment <sup>37</sup> registered 625,203 persons for overseas employment as compared to 382,439 in 2018, showing an annual increase of 37%; 50% of these are from the Punjab province whereas just over 9% are from Sindh province. Saudi Arabia is the main destination for Pakistani workers where more than 53% of workers went followed by UAE (33.78%), Oman (4.54%), Qatar (3.09%), Malaysia (1.81%) and Bahrain (1.31%).

**Age-group with highest unemployment rate registers lowest voter turnout:** The unemployment rate is 5.8 %; 4.9% for men and 8.5% for women. The Punjab province has an unemployment rate of 5.7%; 5% for men and 7.7% for women. The Sindh province has a 5% unemployment rate; 4% for men and 11.8% for women.<sup>38</sup>

At the national level, “[t]here are as many as 27 million ‘idle’ or unemployed young people in Pakistan. One-quarter are young men, while most (three-quarters) are young women.”<sup>39</sup> The highest unemployment (11.56%) is among the age bracket of 20-24 years, indicating youth unemployment. This is the age-group that showed low level of interest in voting in 2018 as the turnout among new voters was observed to be 22 % which is a whopping 30 % below the average turnout.<sup>40</sup> This also busts the myth that political parties were successful in mobilizing the youth during the cycle of the two previous elections.

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37. Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment <https://beoe.gov.pk/files/statistics/yearly-reports/2019/2019-full.pdf> p. 7-16

38. Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment <https://beoe.gov.pk/files/statistics/yearly-reports/2019/2019-full.pdf> p.35

39. UNDP. Pakistan National Human Development Report 2020, p 77.

40. Gallup Pakistan. Pakistan’s 11th GE Elections 2018, Who Voted for Whom and Wh. (2018). p.20

Table 3 : Key indicators of labor market in Pakistan/provinces

	Pakistan	Punjab	Sindh
<b>Labour Force participation ratio</b>			
Combined	51.9	55.1	50
Male	81.1	82	81.1
Female	22.8	29.6	14
<b>Share of agriculture in employment</b>			
Combined	37.4	3%	35.8
Male	29.6	29	31.9
Female	66.1	66.3	64.1
<b>Share of industry in employment</b>			
Combined	24	25	22.2
Male	26	28	23
Female	16.6	17	16.2
<b>Share of services in employment</b>			
Combined	38.6	35.9	42
Male	44.7	43	45.1
Female	17.3	16.7	19.7

*Source: Pakistan Labour Survey 2017-18*

## 2.5. Religiosity: Paradox of piety and pragmatic politics

Islam has been considered central to Pakistan's existence which prides itself upon being a few rare states which were created in the name of religion. Unlike India, upon its creation the Muslim-majority Pakistan needed a new identity that could keep the two-part country - separated by over 1, 000 miles and riven with ethnic, linguistic and sectarian divisions - untied. Hence religion was employed for state and nation-building projects as a unifying force. Since the colonial India, liberal and religiously conservative world views have existed side by side and after the partition have vied for influence over the state narrative and its apparatus. The conservative element succeeded in shaping the country in their image as it found fertile ground in the form of a society with strong undercurrents of conservatism. The religious right had foundational success in Objectives Resolution being passed by the first Constituent Assembly which provided the guiding principles rooted in religion for the future constitution of Pakistan. Later in 1985 through the

8<sup>th</sup> amendment in the Constitution the Objective Resolution was made a substantive part of the constitution, making Islam an integral part of the state identity.

Political class also found it expedient to adopt religious ethos in its rhetoric and outlook to garner electoral support. Not only that, as occasion demanded, they acquiesced to demands of the religious political parties. Pakistani state's overwhelming reliance on religion since 1947 as a social and cultural adhesive as well as an instrument to govern an ethnically diverse country has always kept religion at the core of its functioning. However during the 1970s and 1980s certain developments exacerbated this trend.

According to a 2017 Pew survey, 84% Muslims in Pakistan support Sharia as the official law of the land.<sup>41</sup> In another Pew survey, an overwhelming 79% of voters<sup>42</sup> in Pakistan identified themselves as a Muslim first and a citizen later which is significantly higher than other major Muslim countries. As many as 48% of respondents said that Islam plays a very large or fairly large role in the political life of their country. Pakistanis who believe Islam's political role is increasing are unanimous (94%) in thinking that this was a good thing. At the same time, most Pakistanis (69%) who saw Islam playing a lesser role in politics view this as bad for Pakistan.<sup>43</sup> These overwhelming numbers nonetheless sharply contrast with the humble numbers the religious political parties in Pakistan have been able to garner in the elections since 1970.

Intriguingly, there are varying patterns of religiosity among the people. There is a cognitive dissonance in the middle class in general and among the middle class of 80s in particular, who while want to become better Muslims and practice Islamic rituals are partial to 'western' lifestyle choices and cultural consumption patterns.

While worship and religious festival attendance is on the rise, in private lives, there are non-linear trends. Religiosity is increasing among all segments of the society but this increase is more pronounced among the upwardly mobile lower/middle classes who while adopt certain aspects of religion such as Islamic banking, at the same time keep cultural consumption, gender

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41. Lipka, Michael. Muslims and Islam: Key findings in the U.S. and around the world (2017). Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/09/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/> (accessed Dec 21, 2020)

42. Ibid

43. Ibid

relations, or life choices such as free-will marriages not always informed by religious beliefs.<sup>44</sup>

**Shifts in social basis of military and civil bureaucracy:** Over time, the affluent classes have opted for more lucrative vocations leaving the once most sought after military and civilian jobs in the officer cadre to upwardly mobile lower middle classes.

As social scientist Saeed Shafqat notes that the social class origins of key state institutions, i.e. the military and civil bureaucracy are undergoing change as the recruitment increasingly comes from the lower middle class rather than the upper middle class. Saeed observes that *“the emerging elites have humbler origins, hold conservative social and political views and reflect authoritarian tendencies in society rather than democratic values.”*<sup>45</sup>

As for the military, *Jamaat e Islami* (JI)<sup>46</sup> and *Tablighi Jamaat*<sup>47</sup> were allowed inroads into the institution by General Zia.<sup>48</sup> This neatly coincided with the decade long war in Afghanistan after the 1979 Soviet invasion which further infused religious sentiments among the rank and file of the military.

Moreover, in the mid 1980s, about 50 thousand personnel were deputed to Saudi Arabia besides deployment of additional technical support by former Air Force personnel to the United Arab Emirates. They were exposed to Wahabist interpretation of Islam during their stay in the Gulf Region.<sup>49</sup> For all the military's direct and indirect role in Pakistan's politics, its social composition of its cadres as well as its religious ethos shall have far reaching consequences for the political and ideological direction of the country. Besides repeated changes to the curriculum have increased religiosity.

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44. Views expressed by a Key Informant in Lahore during an interview arranged by TRI (October 2020)

45. The Research Initiative. *Decade of democracy in Pakistan*. (2018). p 7

46. Established in August 1941, *Jamaat e Islami* is considered a leading religious political party of Pakistan. It has played a leading role in Islamization of constitutional and legal framework of the country.

47. *Tablighi Jamaat* (Party of Preachers)[ is a transnational Sunni Islamic missionary movement that focuses on exhorting Muslims to return to practicing their religion in its original form.

48. Fair, Christine. *Armed Forces & Society*. Vol. 38, No. 3 (July 2012), p 447. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/48608975?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A8643a3add2b11d0ae7a8cbf24795f48b&seq=6#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/48608975?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A8643a3add2b11d0ae7a8cbf24795f48b&seq=6#page_scan_tab_contents) (accessed Apr 17, 2021).

49. *Ibid*, p 448

**Middle East-returned Conservative middle class:** In the 1970s and 80s millions of laborers went to the Middle East. Remittances not only increased consumption, their families moved to towns to access education and other facilities. These people imported Wahabi interpretations of Islam and adopted overt religious symbolism – beards, hijabs – and are keener on observing religious rituals.

Overseas workers, during the 80s, of these new upwardly mobile families while returned healthy remittances, also imported the Wahabi brand of Islam. Electronic media has regular presence of religious scholars on their TV shows.<sup>50</sup>

**Urban youth are more prone to conservatism:** Against the common perception that cosmopolitanism breeds liberal outlook, the increase in urbanization and education in Pakistan has witnessed a corresponding increase in conservatism. Urban Islam is observed to be more puritanical and textual where rural Islam as more ritualistic.<sup>51</sup> In a fast-urbanizing Pakistan, a British Council survey focusing youth reveals it to be “*a deeply conservative generation*” as nearly two-thirds of men and women across the urban-rural divide prefer to call themselves as religious or conservative.<sup>52</sup>

**Paradox of social conservatism and political moderation:** The middle class conservatism does not translate into electoral outcomes for the religious parties. Support for religious political parties happens only when there is a vacuum (such as in 2002 elections) or when there is an emotive religious issue as in the case of TLP before and around 2018 elections. While religious political parties raise moral questions, voters consider various pragmatic things alongside the moral question while deciding on their vote. There are always a small number of one-issue voters as we witnessed in the case of ‘blasphemy’ issue in 2018 elections.<sup>53</sup>

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50. Maqsood, Ammara. *The New Pakistani Middle Class*. Harvard University Press. (2017). p 8.

51. Fair, Christine. *Armed Forces & Society*. Vol. 38, No. 3 (July 2012), p 444. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/48608975?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A8643a3add2b11d0ae7a8cbf24795f48b&seq=6#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/48608975?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A8643a3add2b11d0ae7a8cbf24795f48b&seq=6#page_scan_tab_contents) (accessed Apr 17, 2021)

52. *Next generation goes to the ballot box*. 2013. British Council. [https://www.britishcouncil.pk/sites/default/files/next\\_generation\\_goes\\_to\\_the\\_ballot\\_box.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.pk/sites/default/files/next_generation_goes_to_the_ballot_box.pdf) (accessed Apr 18, 2021)

53. *Ibid*

The increasingly socially conservative outlook among urban youth and middle classes tends to favor the right-of-the-center political parties such as the center-right PML-N and PTI.

The socially conservative voter has also switched political allegiance from religious political parties to right of the center mainstream political parties which not only reflect social conservatism by appearing to perpetuate the existing social forms, rituals, beliefs etc in their rhetoric, organization, appeal and outlook of their leadership but also offer a surer access to state patronage.<sup>54</sup>

The previous seven elections have handed overwhelming victories to the PML-N in urban Punjab. In the 2018 elections, the PTI took away a significant chunk of the conservative vote from PML-N.<sup>55</sup> While religious parties garner massive support from these middle classes on issues such as blasphemy, this support seldom translates into electoral victory for them. The middle class conservatism as witnessed during the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) Movement and Lawyers' Movement while may have the potential to bring down a government, it still has to prove it could replace one.<sup>56</sup>

**Shift from left-of-the-center to right-of-the-center:** Over the last five decades the increased religiosity has translated into another gradual yet decisive shift; while in the 1970 elections electoral verdict was overwhelmingly in support of the left-of-the-center political parties, in the 2018 elections it is the right-of-center parties that dominate the legislative bodies.

## **2.6. Gender: The politics of exclusion**

The electoral arena is heavily skewed in favor of men as representatives, in leadership positions and on electoral rolls.<sup>57</sup> This gap is visible in almost all indicators of female political participation in Pakistan including electoral rolls, voter turnout, representation on general seats and committee chairs.

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54. Next generation goes to the ballot box. 2013. British Council. [https://www.britishcouncil.pk/sites/default/files/next\\_generation\\_goes\\_to\\_the\\_ballot\\_box.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.pk/sites/default/files/next_generation_goes_to_the_ballot_box.pdf) (accessed Apr 18, 2021)

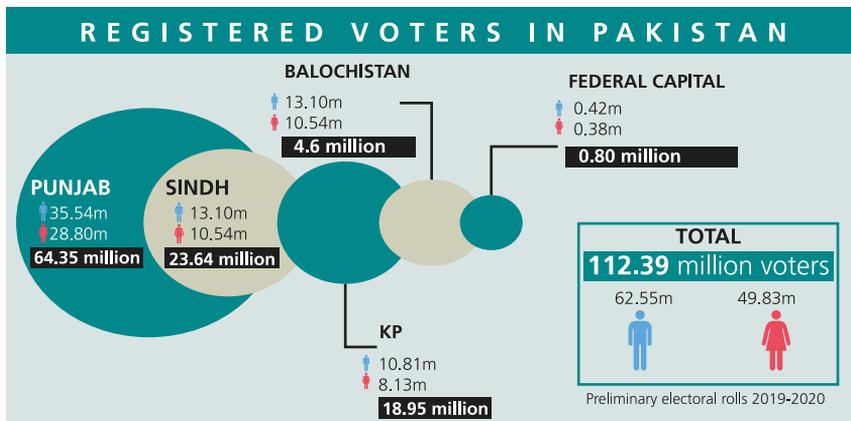
55. Views expressed by a Key Informant in Lahore during an interview arranged by TRI (October 2020)

56. Ibid

57. Pakistan's Political Parties, Surviving between Dictatorship and Democracy (2020), edited by Mariam Mufti et al p.197

**There is a significant gender gap in voter registration in Pakistan.** Men who are 52% of the population are over represented in the registered voters by 3% whereas women who are 48% of the population are under represented by 4%.<sup>58</sup> There are a total of 112.39 million registered voters. And the gap between male and female voters has gone up to 12.72 million.<sup>59</sup> Both Punjab and Sindh provinces account for a gender gap of 11% each, having a difference of 6.73m and 2.56m votes respectively.<sup>60</sup>

Illustration 1: Number of registered voters in Pakistan<sup>61</sup>



**Gender Gap in voter turnout:** Electoral reforms enacted in the aftermath of the Elections Act 2017 ensured for the first time that women’s turnout data shall be separately tabulated.

While during the earlier elections there was no way of knowing the true extent of women disenfranchisement, the general trend, more so in rural areas, was to discourage the participation of women in the voting process. There were frequent reports of entire polling stations going without polling a single vote by women.

The 2018 election data reveals a substantial difference in voter turnout for men and women. About 56% of registered male voters turned out on the

58. Gallup Pakistan. Pakistan’s 11th GE Elections 2018, Who Voted for Whom and Why. (2018).p.76

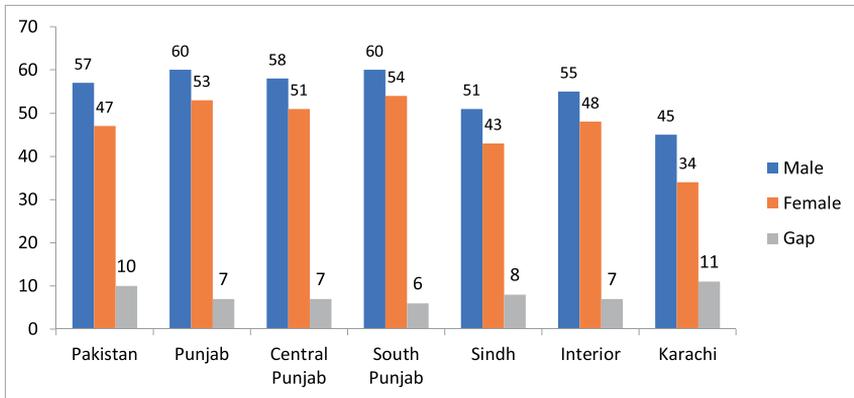
59. Khan, Iftikhar A. Gender gap in voters climbs to 12.72m. (2020). Daily Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1569839> (accessed July 19, 2020)

60. Ibid

61. Ibid

elections day to cast their votes as compared to 47% of registered women voters.<sup>62</sup> In terms of regional variations, Punjab and Sindh had a voter turnout gap of about 8% between men and women.<sup>63</sup> While countrywide there was a 10% gap between the male and female voters, Punjab did better on this count as the difference was 7%. South Punjab did slightly better (6%) than central Punjab (7%).<sup>64</sup> In Sindh the gender wise voting gap was 8% but when Karachi is looked at separately, the gap widens to 11%.

Figure 1: Gender gap in voting in 2018 elections



Source: ECP

**Women are treated as part of the bargain:** Women do not figure in any political party's calculations at the time of canvassing, mobilizing as well as any rare consultations for the development schemes in any given constituency.

One possible reason put forward for this is that since party organizers are overwhelmingly male, they hesitate to interact with women voters. Also culturally women are understood to be part of the bargain i.e. if a male voter of a family was convinced, it is understood that female voters will automatically follow the lead.<sup>65</sup>

**Women's legislative representation and contribution in legislative business:** Since the creation of Pakistan, the status of women political

62. Fafen's Election Observation Report: Voter Turnout in GE 2018. (2018) <https://fafen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FAFEN%E2%80%99S-Analysis-of-Voter-Turnout-in-GE-2018.pdf> accessed May 15, 2021)

63. Ibid

64. Ibid

65. Waseem, Muhammad et al. Political Parties in Pakistan (2012) p.25

participation has gone through many highs and lows. There was a noticeable increase in women's political representation between 1985 and 1990.<sup>66</sup> *"This improvement can be attributed to the start of a powerful women's rights movement in Pakistan and the historical elections of 1988, as a result of which, late Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto became the first woman Prime Minister in the Muslim world. Nevertheless, the momentum was disrupted in 1990 as a result of a constitutional leave of women reserved seats. The number of women in parliament drastically reduced in 1990 and remained immensely low until 2002."*<sup>67</sup>

Before the elections in October 2002, major amendments were made to the 1973 Constitution in the form of the 'Legal Framework Order (LFO) 2002' and which was made part of 17th Constitutional Amendment in 2003.

From 1990-2002, two major factors contributed to opening a new avenue for women's political participation: 1) Pakistan ratification of the CEDAW in 1996 which obligated it to take affirmative action to improve women's participation in public and political spheres; 2) a women rights movement successfully advocated during the development of the LFO to bring back women reserved seats. As a result, the LFO reserved 60 seats for women in the National Assembly (out of 342 seats) and 17 in the Senate (out of 100). Consequently, the 2002 elections resulted in a considerable increase in the number of women in the National Assembly and the Senate. Since then women lawmakers' contribution on the legislation front is disproportionately greater than their numerical strength in the house.

Their visibility has also increased due to their ability to present their respective parties' perspective on prime-time television talk-shows.

**Women on reserved seats do not graduate to running on general seats:** Women parliamentarians selected on reserved seats largely have a symbolic role. They seldom graduate to running on the general seats. Reserved seats also deny them the opportunity to cultivate their own constituency.<sup>68</sup> Women, although present in the assemblies in large numbers thanks to a healthy reserved quota, have not been able to break into political party decision-making to any significant degree. Most parties, with the exception of ANP, have separate women wings which in fact are a tool to ensure that

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66. The Research Initiative. Decade of democracy in Pakistan. (2018). p 68

67. Ibid

68. Pakistan's Political Parties, Surviving between Dictatorship and Democracy. ( 2020) edited by Mariam Mufti et al p.205

women never become a part of the mainstream decision making process in any political party.<sup>69</sup>

**Number of women winning on general seats is negligible:** In political empowerment Pakistan ranks at 93 among 152 countries.<sup>70</sup> Although the number of women candidates contesting on general seats has steadily been rising since the 2008 elections, yet the number of women winning those seats has gone down.

In the 2008 elections, there were 72 candidates of which 16 won. In the 2013 elections, nine of the 135 contesting women candidates won. In the 2018 elections, of the 183 contesting female candidates only eight were elected to the parliament.<sup>71</sup> Except for one all of these women came from established political families. Among the possible reasons for their landing a candidature could be either there were no eligible male candidates or there were potentially more winnable seats than the number of eligible male members in her family. Of these eight successful legislators, four were elected from Sindh, three from Punjab and one from Balochistan.

The increase in the number of women candidates from the political parties' platform can be attributed to the Election Act 2017 which made it mandatory for the parties to allocate at least 5% of their total tickets to women.<sup>72</sup> The political parties were barely able to meet this requirement as ANP that fielded the largest number of women candidates could only reach 7.5% of the total candidates.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, this requirement was met only in the name as most women candidates across the party lines complained of being fielded in uncompetitive constituencies. Notwithstanding the gains made so far, concerted efforts are still needed to make women's participation in the parliament proportionate to the population.

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69. Waseem, Muhammad et al. *Political Parties in Pakistan*. (2012) p. xxiv

70. World Economic Forum. *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*. P13. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf) (accessed May 17, 2021)

71. *Pakistan's Political Parties: Surviving between Dictatorship and Democracy* edited by Mariam Mufti et al. (2021) p 197.

72. Chaudhry, Fahad. Only 8 of 183 women candidates elected to NA in July 25 polls, ECP data shows. (2018). *Daily Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1431514> (accessed Sep 7, 2018)

73. *Political Parties in Pakistan: Surviving between Dictatorship and Democracy* edited by Mariam Mufti et al. (2021). P 199

### 3. Contours of power dynamics

Entrenched structural inequalities in the shape of disproportionate land ownership, skewed distribution of wealth and a governance model favoring the rent-seekers' club give a few a head start over many in economic and political spheres, and help maintain the undue influence of a tiny elite in the power calculus. The 1% economic elite maintain firm control over the country's resources.<sup>74</sup> Around 200 families dominate the highest revenue and profit making businesses in Pakistan.<sup>75</sup> The privileged groups such as landlords, businesses and military benefit to the tune of PKR 2.66 trillion, - 7% of GDP – by availing tax breaks and concessions.<sup>76</sup> There is PKR 168 billion worth of tax evasion by the urban elite<sup>77</sup> whereas only 20% of public expenditure in Pakistan is spent on human development.<sup>78</sup>

There is however incremental pressure brought on by the more urbanized middle classes aided by the onset of 4G digital technologies who are challenging unequal distribution of resources, and lack of opportunities for upward social mobility, rule-based political order as well as nondiscretionary service delivery.

Income inequality provides a perfect backdrop to growing chorus against the exploitative conditions favoring the special interest groups. Some 50 million people (24.3%) in Pakistan earn less than \$1.90 per day. This could go up to 60 million (29%) thanks to Covid-19.<sup>79</sup> According to the World Bank, the Gini coefficient for income inequality rose by 1% between 2001 and 2015, further widening of the gap between the rich and the poor.

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74. New Perspectives in Pakistan's Political Economy: State, Class and Social Change (2019), edited by Matthew McCartney and S. Akbar Zaidi p.153

75. Pasha, Hafiz. UNDP. Pakistan National Human Development Report 2020, published in April 2021. p.156. <https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/human-development-reports/PKNHDR-inequality.html> (accessed May 18, 2021)

76. Ibid, p 115.

77. Ibid, p 117.

78. Ibid p 113.

79. Pakistan Economic Survey 2019-20 p.287

*"The poorest 1 percent of the population, [ ] hold only 0.15 percent of the national income, compared to the richest 1 percent, whose share of national income exceeded 9 percent in 2018–2019."*<sup>80</sup> The top 10% of the population earn five times more than the bottom 10%.<sup>81</sup> Inflation and poor growth in GDP due to Covid-19 may only have worsened the rate of inequality.

**Geographic and ethnic basis of economic disparity:** The economic disparity has a strong urban-rural as well as geographic bias that adds to disenfranchisement of people on political and economic peripheries. *"About 70 % of bottom 50 % earners live in rural areas as compared to 53 % among the top 10 %. Sindhi and Saraiki speakers are poorer than the rest of the population, representing 39 % of the bottom 50 % but only 17 % of the top 10 %. Native Urdu and Pashto speakers are slightly richer than other ethnolinguistic groups, while the Punjabi cut across all social classes."*<sup>82</sup>

**Feudal power survives threat to its political hegemony:** The most prominent manifestation of power imbalance in the rural context is in the distribution of farmland among rural households. Gini coefficient for land in Pakistan is 0.83.<sup>83</sup> The top 1% of farmers own as much as 20% of the farm area. About 11% of landowners control half of total farm area in Pakistan.<sup>84</sup> At the bottom, a small farmer has only 0.3 hectare on average.<sup>85</sup> Nearly half of all rural households do not own any land.

The extractive feudal class pays low tax rate on its agricultural income. Total annual revenue yielded by agriculture is less than PKR 3 billion.<sup>86</sup>

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80. Pasha, Hafiz. UNDP. Pakistan National Human Development Report 2020, published in April 2021. p 13. <https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/human-development-reports/PKNHDR-inequality.html> (accessed May 18, 2021)

81. Kirmani, Nida. The spectre of inequality. (2020). TheNews. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/610312-the-spectre-of-inequality#:~:text=Is%20inequality%20a%20problem%20in%20Pakistan%3F&text=According%20to%20the%20World%20Bank,the%20poor%20in%20the%20country.> (accessed Dec 22, 2020)

82. Mehmood, Sultan et al: Social Inequality and the Dynamics of Political and Ethnolinguistic Divides in Pakistan, 1970-2018 p. 10

83. Mohmand, Shandana Khan: Crafty Oligarchs, Savvy Voters: Democracy Under Inequality in Rural Pakistan, (2019) p.12

84. Ibid p.11

85. Pasha, Hafiz: Growth and inequality in Pakistan. (2018).FES. <https://www.fes-connect.org/people/growth-and-inequality-in-pakistan/> (accessed Dec 22, 2020)

86. Pasha, Hafiz. UNDP. Pakistan National Human Development Report 2020. Published in April 2021. p 107. <https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/human-development-reports/PKNHDR-inequality.html> (accessed May 18, 2021)

They procure subsidized electricity for tube wells and are obliged to pay nominal water charges. Large-scale farmers also get preferential access to bank credit. Overall, the total volume of the benefits availed by Pakistan's feudal class is PKR 370 billion.<sup>87</sup>

Aided by their economic clout, the rural landed elite have maintained their grip on rural politics as they readily provide political parties with both candidates and votes, retaining key positions and roles within these parties. According to a research in Punjab, since 1970 only about 400 families have been members of parliament. Between 1985 and 2008 two-thirds of all elected legislatures and half of the top three contestants for each constituency were dynastic.<sup>88</sup>

While monopoly of the landed over rural politics is pervasive, it is not unchallenged. There are creeping social and demographic changes that have begun to alter the electoral behavior of a rural voter. Over all, in rural Pakistan landholdings have substantially fragmented. Compared to 1972, in 2010, the number of farmers holding 100 acres was halved to 14pc. In Punjab this was 7pc.<sup>89</sup> With agriculture sector losing 5% share in national employment between 2007 and 2018,<sup>90</sup> off-farm jobs in the formal and informal urban economy available on the periphery of a village have increased, making the rural poor relatively economically independent of the feudal influence.

Increased literacy and flow of information through digital means of communication have created political consciousness. Besides eight general elections spaced out in three decades have made today's voter more aware of the power of the ballot. Therefore contrary to popular perception, the political factors such as development, party ideology, or issue based politics are seen to at least partially trump the social factors such as faction, family and kinship ties while determining a political choice. The rural voter has gradually learnt to use the vote bloc as a bargain for access to basic services such as health, education, sanitation and public goods – rights, justice and security.<sup>91</sup> To work the levers of the unresponsive, insular and distant state, people find

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87. Ibid

88. Cheema, Ali et al. Dynastic Politics in Punjab: Facts, Myths and their Implications. Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives (IDEAS). p 1. [https://ideaspak.org/wp-content/files\\_mf/1551780853DynasticPoliticsinPunjabFactMythsImplications.pdf](https://ideaspak.org/wp-content/files_mf/1551780853DynasticPoliticsinPunjabFactMythsImplications.pdf) ( accessed May 22, 2021)

89. Mohmand, Shandana Khan. Crafty Oligarchs, Savvy Voters: Democracy Under Inequality in Rural Pakistan (2019) p.12

90. Javed, Umair. Structural transformations. (2019). Daily Dh <https://www.dawn.com/news/1517346> (accessed May 22, 2020)

91. Mohmand, Shandana Khan. Crafty Oligarchs, Savvy Voters: Democracy Under Inequality in Rural Pakistan (2019)

it expedient to engage with a patron to get their rights, justice and services in return for an electoral favor. Therefore, the prevalent perception of a rural voter as being irrational and ignorant looking over their shoulder every time they were to vote may no longer hold water.<sup>92</sup>

It is also observed that competitive electoral politics expands the poor's political space. For example in more egalitarian social settings in the Crown villages, of Punjab<sup>93</sup> there is greater horizontal collective action and voter has more political space and bargaining power. Conversely Proprietary villages<sup>94</sup> are vertically organized, politically less competitive and offer limited bargaining power to the rural voter.

Yet for all relative socio-economic independence of a rural voter, the landed continue to organize the politics for their connection with the state. The British fashioned a property rights regime in which the landed acted as patrons mediating between the landless and the state. Hence the state and landed class had considerable influence over livelihoods, conflict resolution and service delivery.

Nonetheless the increased political competition and the politically aware rural voter in Punjab have forced the entrenched oligarchies to renegotiate the terms of political engagement. There is a new class of agro traders and agro processors who have challenged the landed monopoly over leadership.

There is little data though on how many of the same feudal have invested their agrarian surplus in such businesses in off-farm trade, real estate, industry and entrenched their status as broker of patronage.<sup>95</sup>

The feudals have also invested in their children's education who studied in top universities in Pakistan or abroad to be lawyers, doctors, engineers etc. Unlike the rural poor who have no means to form horizontal supra-village alliances, the landed forge political alliances through old school networks, marriages and extended social circles.<sup>96</sup>

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92. Ibid

93. Where the British gave land to more diverse proprietors without ownership rights as defined by Mohmand, Shandana Khan. *Crafty Oligarchs, Savvy Voters: Democracy Under Inequality in Rural Pakistan* (2019). p 53.

94. Villages that have hereditary large land holdings in Punjab's settled and cultivate districts as defined by Mohmand, Shandana Khan. *Crafty Oligarchs, Savvy Voters: Democracy Under Inequality in Rural Pakistan* (2019). p 50.

95. Views expressed by a Key Informant interviewed by TRI in Lahore (October, 2020)

96. Mohmand, Shandana Khan. *Crafty Oligarchs, Savvy Voters: Democracy Under Inequality in Rural Pakistan* (2019)

In sum, unequal distribution of resources has serious political and social impacts. Most analyses based on landholding data conclude that land inequality translates into economic dependence which leads to dependent voting.<sup>97</sup> It is also observed that in rural areas where social, structural and land inequality is low there are more democratic, inclusive processes. Whereas in areas where it is high, the political process is exclusive and marginalized have little political agency.<sup>98</sup>

**Industrial capital purchases political influence:** Political spending by the industrialist class is a universal practice. In Pakistan too, although prohibited by section 184 of the Companies Act 2017, that the state both lacks the intent and capacity to enforce,<sup>99</sup> the corporate capital bankrolls political parties' election campaigns through off-the-books donations.<sup>100</sup>

Later, having rigged the political field, these corporations and high-net worth individuals force government's hand to squeeze wide-ranging tax exemptions and concessions with minimal regulatory checks for themselves, all in the name of ease-of-doing-business and ensuring growth. Multinational companies' also protect their corporate interests through powerful trade and business associations.

Businesspeople often get elected to the parliament to have a seat at the legislative table that grants them unchecked access to policymaking instruments impacting their businesses. The corporate sector liberally avails of the fiscal incentives in the name of increasing production, exports, employment, and investment. The combined loss of revenue due to these policies exceeds PKR 20 billion each year.<sup>101</sup>

Many industries such as sugar industry pay as low as 8% sales tax as opposed to the standard 17%, magnitude of this tax break was almost PKR 32 billion in 2017-2018.<sup>102</sup> The number of sugar mills almost doubled to 90 since

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97. Ibid p.11

98. Ibid p.190

99. Special report. How much does it cost to organize an election? Daily Dawn. (2018). <https://www.dawn.com/news/1421963> (accessed May 21, 2021)

100. Ibid

101. Pasha, Hafiz. UNDP. Pakistan National Human Development Report 2020, published in April 2021. p 108-109. <https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/human-development-reports/PKNHDR-inequality.html> (accessed April 18, 2021)

102. Ibid p 109-110.

1990,<sup>103</sup> nearly half of which are owned by political class.<sup>104</sup> The industry is given protection against international competition by imposing high import duties.<sup>105</sup>

Five export industries, including textiles, save PKR 95 billion in the sales tax liability besides having access to a special credit line of PKR 0.5 trillion, with lower-than-the-market interest rate.<sup>106</sup> The PTI government provided Rs20 billion (\$120million) in tax relief to banking, manufacturing, textile and fertilizer sectors in 2019 alone.<sup>107</sup>

The corporate collective at the back of their economic clout can be a major driver of change in favor of a rule-based society that encourage economic growth however it never went beyond leveraging its political influence for profit making. The unchecked influence of opaque political finance in electoral politics not only perpetuates rent-seeking culture but also undermines the credibility of democracy and enhances political inequality.

**Bazar economy and politics:** Bazar or trading class is a significant part of power calculus in the country. It has gradually increased its influence particularly in urban centers. Since 1980s trading class has been able to tilt the balance of political power in support of more right leaning political parties. As regards Bazar's contribution to national revenue, the large-scale wholesale and retail traders too easily manipulate the system and have managed to stay out of the documented economy. The bazaar economy that is largely unregulated contributes 18.4% to total GDP.<sup>108</sup> The retail-wholesale sector's estimated value is \$42 billion with annual sales reaching \$155 billion through 1.3 million establishments.<sup>109</sup>

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103. Special report. Samaa. The Sugarland Sadness: Every Pakistan sugar mill mapped. (2020). <https://www.samaa.tv/news/2020/05/the-sugarland-sadness/> (accessed April 21, 2021)

104. Bari, Dr Khadija. The vicious cycle of sugar politics. (2020). <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2176785/2-vicious-cycle-sugar-politics> (accessed April 21, 2021)

105. Ibid

106. Pasha, Hafiz. UNDP. Pakistan National Human Development Report 2020, published in April 2021. p 111. <https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/human-development-reports/PKNHDR-inequality.html> (accessed April 18, 2021)

107. Kirmani Nida. The Spectre of inequality. (2020). TheNews. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/610312-the-spectre-of-inequality#:~:text=Is%20inequality%20a%20problem%20in%20Pakistan%3F&text=According%20to%20the%20World%20Bank,the%20poor%20in%20the%20country.> (accessed Dec 22, 2020)

108. Javed, Umair. Profit, Piety, and Patronage: Bazaar Traders and Politics in Urban Pakistan (2018) p. 22

109. Ibid

This informal economy employs 73% of the total urban labor force who are without any social protection, social security and employment benefits.<sup>110</sup>

The same labor force is exploited by the rich traders by offering crumbs of charity and help in dealing with the coercive state apparatus. All of these patronage roles are made possible by their status as economic elites and through their connections with the state.

Businessmen who started entering the politics in the 1980s, Nawaz Sharif himself being a prime example, have consolidated their position since. Punjab's urban constituencies have elected 75% of legislators<sup>111</sup> with business connections in 2013, making them second biggest group in the provincial legislature after agriculturalists.

During the 2015 city council elections, more than two-thirds of the PML-N and PTI candidates were traders. Traders have traditionally sided with the military or with parties like the PML-N and the PTI.<sup>112</sup> So much so that PTI's meteoric rise to power in 2018 is believed to have been facilitated by the military and landed political and industrial elites.<sup>113</sup>

**Economic clout of military and middle class grievance:** The military establishment itself has the largest business conglomerate in Pakistan, having stakes in urban real estate and construction of public projects. Whereas the combined estimated value of these companies' assets was PKR 443 billion in 2017 which has grown at over 13% per year. The estimated annual value of construction work by the Frontier Works Organization, a military owned enterprise, is PKR 230 billion.<sup>114</sup>

While the military has directly ruled Pakistan for over three decades, its economic clout has helped it wield undue influence over the civilian leadership.

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110. Ibid

111. Ibid

112. Ibid p 24.

113. Ibid. p 92.

114. Pasha, Hafiz. UNDP. Pakistan National Human Development Report 2020 published in April 2021. P 113. <https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/human-development-reports/PKNHDR-inequality.html> (accessed May 18, 2021)

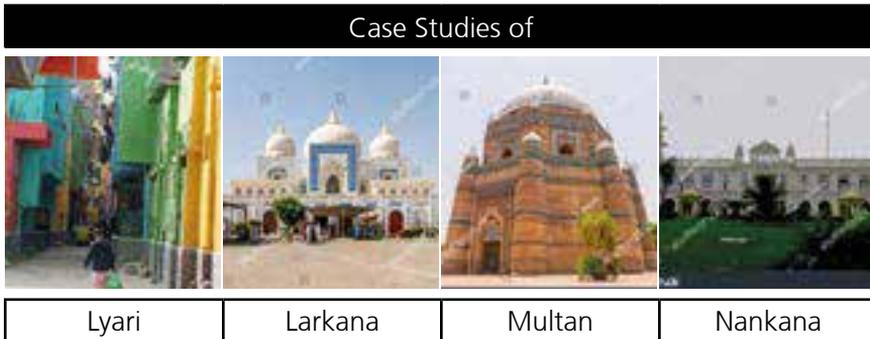
It is accused of manipulating the 2018 elections and instituting a hybrid model of governance partnering with PTI.<sup>115</sup> In September 2020, a combined political opposition alliance of a dozen political parties was formed to mainly challenge and roll back the influence of military in politics. Since then, the slew of allegations from the top opposition leaders has drawn the top military leadership into public controversy in a manner unheard of before.

Making a disciplined and hierarchical military to cede the space in the political, economic and foreign policy domains will be a long haul without a lucrative incentive structure for a critical mass within the upper tier of the institution. Still there is hitherto unheard of barrage of criticism by the burgeoning middle classes through social media for the military's transgressions in political sphere that are beyond its constitutional mandate. Moreover easy and instant access to information through digital means has transformed the way citizens respond to political developments.

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115. Shah, Aqil. Will Pakistan's Military Lose Its Grip on Power? (2020). Foreign Affairs. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/pakistan/2020-12-22/will-pakistans-military-lose-its-grip-power> ( accessed May 20, 2021)

## Power and political dynamics at micro level



To further understand the political dynamics as informed by social and demographic changes field work was undertaken in the four locations in two provinces, i.e. Punjab and Sindh. The choice of these two provinces is also dictated by the fact that these eastern provinces have exhibited markedly different social, demographic and political trends than the Trans-Indus western provinces of Baluchistan and KP.

The field work significantly enriched this study and provided useful data to analyze the complex web of social, demographic and power dynamics operating in the rural/semi-urban context in these locations. The data and analysis also helped delineate any variation from the broad national trends. For the field work, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were held in four key electoral territories in two provinces: NA-246, and PS- 11 in Lyari in Karachi and Larkana in the northern Sindh respectively and NA-118 and NA- 154 in Nankana and Multan in the central and southern Punjab respectively.

This chapter presents our key findings from the afore-mentioned three national and one provincial assembly constituencies. The findings for each of four case studies are organized under five thematic areas, i.e. social and demographic profile; electoral and political trends; power dynamics; determinants of voting behavior; role and response of political parties and future of politics.



## 4. Lyari: From loyalty to logic

A view of Kiran Gali (street) in Lyari



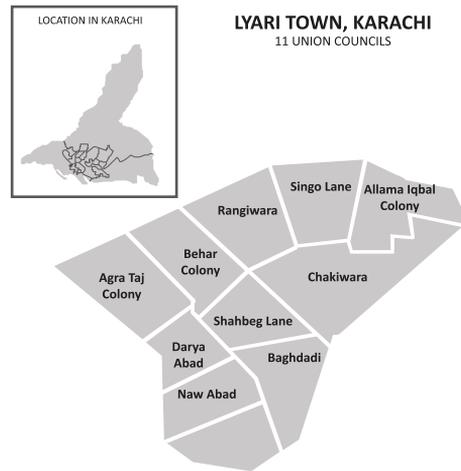
*The Baloch and Kutchi, in Lyari see PPP trading off the Lyari's interests with the 'Sindhi interests' in government jobs, public infrastructure and education quota.*

*Views of Lyari residents*

### **Introduction**

As Karachi is called microcosm of Pakistan, Lyari in the same way is mini-Karachi where people belonging to all ethnic groups are present. To understand the realignment in the political and democratic order of the country as a result of demographic, social and political changes, we sought to study National Assembly constituency (NA-246). The selection of Lyari for this case study has been determined by its historical political significance and the diversity in the area's ethnic and sectarian composition. Lyari is also significant for the recent election results from the area that signal a departure from its traditional voting

pattern favoring PPP and MQM. This case study seeks to explore the linkages (or lack thereof) of representational and electoral politics with the aspirations of the new social classes that are seeking participation and representation in the current national political and economic order. Before embarking upon the findings of the field work conducted in the form of FGDs and KIs, it is important to note a few details about the Lyari area to help understand the dynamics that govern the local population's choices impacting political behavior and trends as noted by this research.



Lyari, stretching over 1,800 acres of Karachi's South district 116, is the oldest locality of Karachi that began life in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century as a small fishing village on the west bank of Lyari River. Historically Karachi sprouted around two seasonal rivers - Lyari and Malir.

**PPP's five-decade sway:** Lyari has been a stronghold of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) since the 1970. The Bhuttos were treated as heroes here. Barring the non-party General Elections of 1985 which the PPP boycotted, the party has won all the elections with huge margins – the runner ups invariably ending up as distinct second. In the General Elections 1997 though, Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N) gave the PPP a scare as the latter won PS 86 by a slim margin of 440 votes. The PPP could only save the other provincial assembly seat from Lyari (PS-85) by mere 294 votes.<sup>117</sup> MQM too has been a consistent winner on a Provincial Assembly seat.

116. Munib, Mobeen, *Footprints: When Lyari voted for change*, (2018). <https://www.dawn.com/news/1423559> (accessed Oct 2, 2020)

117. Bangash, Faizan. *When PPP lost from Lyari*. (2018). <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/337205-when-ppp-lost-from-lyari> (accessed Oct 1, 2020)

Table 4: Breakup of election results in Lyari: 1970- 2018

Election	Winner	Votes	Runner up	Constituency	Total votes polled	Turnout %	Country wide turnout %
1970	PPP 	48,444	15,108	NW 130 Karachi 3	101,793	53.80	59.80
1977	PPP 	58,243	24,437	NA 188 Karachi 6	87,181	55.30	64.1
1985	Independent*	30,500	16,995	NA 189 Karachi South 1	67,431	37.4	53.7
1988	PPP 	62,046	10,731	NA 189 Karachi South 1	91,471	46.1	42.7
1990	PPP 	54,308	12,615	NA 189 Karachi South 1	73,012	36.44	45.2
1993	PPP 	38,849	18,996	NA 189 Karachi South 1	66,223	32.3	37.6
1997	PPP 	23,104	22,792	NA 189 Karachi South 1	56,611	26.8	36.1
2002	PPP 	32,424	14,700	NA 248 Karachi 10	72,594	32.2	41.8
2008	PPP 	84,217	9,651	NA 248 Karachi 10	106,414	30.3	44.4
2013	PPP 	84,530	26,348	NA 248 Karachi 10	136,080	46	53.62
2018	PTI 	53,029	42,377**	NA 246 Karachi South I	207,136	38.49	51.99

Source: ECP/Fafen/CWS National Assembly Election in Pakistan 1970-2008

## 4.1. Social and demographic profile

### Education and digital empowerment

**While schools abound, keeping children in is a struggle:** The Lyari Town has a number of government and private schools, madrasas, colleges and universities, including a medical college, vocational centers and industrial homes.<sup>118</sup> But keeping children in school is a struggle for most lower-income Lyari residents. In terms of male education, dropouts are common because of poor returns on education.<sup>119</sup> People think why should they invest in education when a son has to eventually follow in his father's footsteps, observed a school principal interviewed for this report. The principal shared her struggles to convince the community to send their children and maintain attendance in the school.

**Religious groups, security concerns obstruct girls' education:** Girls in the community are seen as more bent towards obtaining education than boys but girls' access to education is obstructed by two major factors: (i) unsafe street environment and (ii) families' inability to fund alternate arrangement such as transport to facilitate commute to school<sup>120</sup> A young girl interviewed for the FGD, said: *"During the time of the gang war, I used to go to school but I could only finish 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I was lucky enough to have been safe throughout. I'm not studying any further. We face a lot of street harassment when we step out; boys catcall and stalk us. That is why I stopped going to college."*<sup>121</sup> A number of other young girls approached for opinions on education shared similar experiences.

**Lack of quality education, new skills shrink economic opportunities for Lyari people:** It appears that a variety of domestic and environmental factors are slowly taking away Lyari youth's opportunity to find upward mobility and social and economic empowerment in life. If this trend continues it may reinforce the existing conditions of economic marginalization and vulnerability.

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118. Reform Support Unit, School Education & Literacy Department, Government of Sindh at <http://rsu-sindh.gov.pk/downloads/schoolSearch.php> ( accessed Dec 15, 2020)

119. Views expressed by a school principal in FGD held in Karachi ( 20 Oct, 2020)

120. Views expressed by majority of participants in KILs in Karachi ( 9-14 Oct, 2020)

121. Views expressed by an FDG participant in Karachi on 20 Oct, 2020

As it is, the local population is unable to keep up with an evolving and dynamic job market that demands qualified labor that could engage a fast-paced economy. With the erosion of market for traditional skills that the Lyari citizens have been attached with and a future without adequate literacy may continue to result in exclusion from mainstream economic opportunities, leaving Lyari's population perpetually dependent on external actors – either political or state or non-state – for economic choices. In terms of its political manifestation, it appears that unemployment and shrinking economic opportunities are and shall remain a major factor impacting the voting choice of the local population.

**Women have restricted access to digital technologies:** According to most people interviewed there is an increase in access to digital technology across gender boundaries. However, there is a marked difference in the use of mobile phones and the internet among the male and female respondents. While males enjoy significant freedoms in their use of cellular phones and communication opportunities offered on the new media, females are discouraged from using cell phones and also from engaging on social media. Academician Nida Kirmani, in her research, notes a type of “virtual veiling” used by women of Lyari in social media interaction. *“For young women in particular, social media is opening up a platform to explore different sides of their identities and different types of relationships. However, it is still not acceptable for most young women to have facebook accounts in Lyari. The minority who manage to access social media do so in secret, using a pseudonym and never publicly sharing their own photo on the platform. They can use their accounts to initiate conversations with different people, make friendships, hold discussions, and often flirt.”*<sup>122</sup>

**Digital technology benefits conservative elements:** In both KIIs and FGD interviews, participants observed that technology is increasingly being used by the conservative elements to advance their narrative.

The proliferation of digital technology and easy access to internet and social media communication is said to be a major factor behind the success of new political entities such as the TLP that made inroads into the community through new media political messaging.<sup>123</sup>

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122. Kirmani, Nida. Can Fun Be Feminist? Gender, Space and Mobility in Lyari, Karachi. (2020). South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, (accessed Feb 24, 2021)

123. Basit Abdul. Barelvi Political Activism and Religious Mobilization in Pakistan: The Case of Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP), Politics, Religion & Ideology, DOI: 10.1080/21567689.2020.1812395 (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2020.1812395> (accessed Feb 24, 2021)

A head of a local community center for women pointed out the use of WhatsApp by the religious conservatives to propagate their message. The proliferation of digital technology and easy access to internet and social media communication is said to be a major factor behind the success of new political entities such as the TLP.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, common access and diverse use of digital devices – across all gender boundaries, age and interest groups – point to the increasing significance of this medium for the community's ability to engage the system and explore political representation.

## **Gender**

**Increased economic participation and empowerment of women:** Lyari is celebrated in the mainstream media for women's mobility and political voice. However our interactions with the local population suggest a rather complex picture. The increased empowerment of women comes on the back of two trends: (i) increasing inclination among women to seek education; (ii) the need for women to seek income-earning opportunities to help households to meet growing inflation. These trends have contributed to women's empowerment, mobility and also a say in domestic matters, leading to a change in gender relations. While educated women end up marrying less educated or mismatched spouses, they refuse to tolerate excesses by spouse or in-laws and either walk out of marriage or seek parents' support. This is becoming common among non-literate women too. This has played a significant role in reduction of physical violence against women, marking an important change in gender dynamics. *"Physical violence has reduced now because girls speak up. Earlier, girls did not use to complain or resist. Now (in case of a fight with the husband or in-laws) women go to their parents' house straightaway. Parents are also protective of their children now and support them,"* notes a local school principal<sup>125</sup> from the Kutchi community who feels times have changed as families are now much more tolerant towards women's higher education compared to her own times twenty years ago.

**Women's political agency:** In addition to economic mobility, women are increasingly politically mobilizing to demand their rights. They no longer see their role as a mere supporter of popular political candidates. The political manifestation of women's mobility and empowerment can be found in

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124. Ibid

125. Views expressed during an FDG in Karachi held on 20 Oct, 2020

increased assertiveness towards political parties and towards expression of aspirations for greater mobility in public spaces through sports and cycling. As voters, women are increasingly taking a confrontational role having been thrown in the midst of a chaotic and insecure life in which basic day to day facilities are denied. During the security operation against the gangs, women were reported to have taken up arms to defend their households.<sup>126</sup> Women residents – from Bihar Colony - also confronted Bilawal Bhutto’s election rally, holding pots and chanting “*Pani Do, Pani Do* (give us water)”, reminding him of his party’s failure to provide civic amenities to Lyari.<sup>127</sup> Women exercising their right of choice in marriage, their mobility in public space and engagement on social media, suggest an increasing tendency to defy the traditional norms that seek to suppress them socially and politically.

## Religiosity

There is a broad consensus among the experts interviewed for this research that the influence of religiosity has increased in Karachi to a great extent. This can be traced to the increase in the number of religious schools in the city, as well as symbolism such as the adoption of beard and abayas. “In fact, this tendency of religiosity has increased in all the sects including Shias, Barelvis, Deobandis, Tableeghis etc,” observed a senior journalist with expertise in Karachi’s politics.<sup>128</sup>

Both experts as well as local residents in Lyari<sup>129</sup> agree that religious influence is expanding in the area and it has found expression in (i) increase in the number of madrasas teaching radical religious education; (ii) dominant role of religious actors in regulating the day to day life and critical social decisions of the community; (iii) stifling of expression on the pretext of religion; (iv) and restrictions on women’s mobility and freedom of expression.

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126. Asia Report, International Crisis Group, Pakistan: Stoking the Fire in Karachi. 15 February 2017

127. Rehman, Zia ur. After more than 40 years of fierce loyalty, Lyari votes PPP out. (2018). TheNews<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/347105-after-more-than-40-years-of-fierce-loyalty-lyari-votes-ppp-out> (accessed Dec 15, 2020)

128. Views expressed by a Key Informant in Karachi in second week of October 2020

129. Views expressed during FDGs ( 20 and 22 Oct, 2020) and Key Informant interviews held between 9 and 14 of October 2020

**Various sectarian madrasas converge on Lyari:** Data from the past five years suggest the number of madrasas in Sindh to be in the range of 7,000 to 10,000.<sup>130</sup> An undated list of madrasas registered under the Directorate of Industries by the Sindh Government noted the number of registered madrasas to be higher in Lyari compared to any other subdivision of South District.<sup>131</sup> A school principal interviewed<sup>132</sup> for this research shared she is expected to run the details of every school function and activity by the local madrasa and mosque leaders in her street to get their consent before organizing them. *“When parents come to my school to enrol their children, the first question they always ask is about my sect. They ask which sect’s sipara (Holy book) do we teach in the school?”* the principal shared. As another example of the expanding influence of the local imams, it was shared that people are increasingly naming their children at the prayer leader’s advice. *“People consider local moulvis as educated and qualified, worthy of respect and consultation over all important matters,”* a local said.

While there is a consensus regarding the growth and spread of madrasas in Lyari – *“har gali mein do teen madrasay hain”*, noted an interviewee – our interviews suggested alarm on this trend coming only from activists and political workers.<sup>133</sup> However the locals interviewed did not see any issue with the expanding role of the madrasas. In the FGD, a female participant said:<sup>134</sup>

*“We have to send our children to masjid and madrasas so that they can become better people and do not pick any wrong habits. Earlier our children would roam around the streets, but now that trend as lessened. So increase in religious influence is good.”*

Another participant said: *“People are now more aware about religion and follow it. It is important to follow religion too.”*<sup>135</sup>

**Religio-political parties dictate day to day life:** In Lyari, a combination of increasing role of the local mosque, growing number of madrasas and

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130. Rathore, Mujtaba. Registration of madrasas and NAP. Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies. <https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/registration-of-madrasahs.pdf>;

131. Khalil, Umair, The Madrasa Conundrum(2015) published by HIVE Karachi <https://sindh.gov.pk/dpt/industriescommerce/List-of-madarsa-Karachi.pdf> (accessed Dec 15, 2020)

132. Views expressed during an FDG held in Karachi on 20 Oct, 2020

133. Ibid

134. Ibid

135. Views expressed during an FDG held in Karachi on 22 Oct, 2020

affiliate political parties come together to restrict expression, which leaves little room for the community to resist it. A senior researcher interviewed for this report observed that any threat or reprimand by a local mosque leadership becomes much more real and powerful when the masjid is affiliated with a madrasas. One of the organizers of the Lyari Literature Festival informed how they had to change the content of their program in last year's festival over JI's protest against a music session in the program. *"They called it vulgar saying that the youth were dancing and singing. We had no choice but to replace our original program with a qawwali session to stop their protests outside the gate."*<sup>136</sup> In the face of such display of power, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the locals to organize any form of expression that may offend the religious forces. *"TLP is allowed to organize large rallies. They install huge screens and relay messages propagating beheading of people for Namooos-e-Risalat."* shared a senior activist based in Lyari.<sup>137</sup>

**Religious parties seek control over women:** Another way religiosity impacts expression is by asserting control over women's participation in public life. This is done by promoting values that discourage women mobility and their progressive interaction with the environment. Women's enrolment in *dars* and *madrasas* and adoption of rituals has also seen an increase. But while religious trends are dominant, they have also been challenged simultaneously, which is evident in women's mobility in public spaces. The aspirations of these young girls for public visibility also compel conservative and right-wing parties to take this constituency seriously. JI operates a dedicated women's wing in the area. Likewise, religious parties are reported to watch women more closely and seek to influence the environment to control their movement.

A boxing coach running a local club lamented over dropouts by girl students due to family's refusal to support girls on the basis of religious conservatism, even though he manages separate timings and arrangements for his male and female students. The management of a community center for women seconded that:

*"We face immense resistance when girls are cycling. People do complain when it comes to boxing and football too, but not as much as they resisted cycling because it is an activity that involves girls going out on the streets."*

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136. Ibid

137. Ibid

*Any work that brings women in the public eye or something that is not acceptable from the religious point of view is opposed.”<sup>138</sup>*

**Religiosity promotes disengagement from mainstream:** A veteran social worker who has been running community welfare program for decades notes that this trend has led to women becoming more conservative, dropping out of spaces and opportunities that represent mainstream lifestyle. *“Earlier, girls used to come to industrial homes, they would sit there and we would take photographs too. But since [General] Zia’s time there is definitely a move towards conservatism. Now they refuse to be photographed or take part in any recreational activities. Women from lower and middle class backgrounds have gradually moved from stitching centers to madrasas. This includes Baloch and Kutchi women too. Tableeghi events have increased with time and youngsters have come under this influence in large numbers. Then they would convince their families to go along with them as well. Religiosity is increasing in Karachi too. I have another center in Mauripur. Same thing happened there as well. Girls wear burqa.”<sup>139</sup>*

**Religiosity exists side by side liberal lifestyle choices:** There have been mixed reviews on the manifestation and influence of religious symbolism on people’s mindsets and the resultant social and political choices. In our field study, we came across opinions from both sides of the spectrum.

One believing that those adopting religious symbols also exercise greater conservatism, and the other noting people engage religion only for the “sake of it”. However, it has been argued that the other side of the picture should not be missed.

While religious trends are dominant, they have also been challenged simultaneously, which are evident in women’s mobility in public spaces. A veteran documenter of social change who also teaches at public and private universities noted:

*“Female mobility has increased. When I started teaching and arranged field trips, girls were not allowed by their parents to join those trips. And these were not the ones who wore hijab. But it is not the same anymore. Girls go wherever they want to and for several days. Girls are even driving motor-bikes. Self-will marriage is also very common now. Girls marry as per their will.”*

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138. Views expressed during an FDG in Karachi held on 22 Oct, 2020

139. Interview with a Key Informant in Karachi held in second week of October 2020

There is an opinion in Lyari that the youth turning to religion, especially for tableegh (preaching) should not be seen as an inclination towards violence or supporting religion in politics. A local journalist interviewed for the report opined: *“It is one thing to be forced to follow a religious doctrine, it is quite another to follow religion out of lack of choice for an alternative. The thinking that dominates in Lyari is “when there is nothing else, let’s find options in religion!”* Jobless youth just tag along religious congregations. It gives them an opportunity to travel, mingle with people and enjoy themselves. This trend has become common in the last 10-15 years. Some people, then, grow a beard, but they remove it when they want to. After going to one extreme, they do come back and lead a “normal life” again,” noted a journalist from Lyari.<sup>140</sup>

Experts also argue this to be a regular development that doesn’t necessarily have to have negative repercussions. A senior journalist and analyst from Karachi<sup>141</sup> who has extensively worked on the role of religious elements on politics, while pointing to the presence of madrasas of banned outfits in the city, opined that Karachi citizens have mostly displayed religious and political tolerance.

*“You will not see liberal or religious symbols of non-Muslims being threatened, despite the presence of the region’s biggest madrasas around the city.”*

**Religiosity and politics of Lyari:** It is difficult to decipher how religiosity feeds into political choices. The general impression however is that a Lyari voter is independent in their choice and keeps the economy as the fundamental consideration while voting. Nonetheless, this in no way implies that people would not vote for religious parties as a number of powerful local and national political factors come into play.

Disastrous performance of the mainstream political parties as well as favourable environment, created by the military establishment, for religio-political parties turned the area into a fertile playground for conservative forces. The recent rise of TLP in the realm of political representation does suggest that the confluence of faith with politics has important implications for the future of politics in Lyari.

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140. Interview with a Key Informant in Karachi ( 9-14 Oct, 2020)

141. Ibid

## **Gang War**

Lyari is home to Karachi's largest and most powerful criminal gangs; it is also a hub of drug smuggling, weapons trafficking, extortion, and kidnapping.<sup>142</sup> This took a heavy toll on ordinary residents of the locality. Politically motivated violence in the locality in 2013 alone claimed 219 lives,<sup>143</sup> more than half of whom were innocent residents. During such difficult times residents were left to fend for themselves negotiating their space both with the state as well as non-state actors. The notorious gang war has made a profound impact on Lyari community's age-old political values and practices and the systems governing their economic mobility. The gang war that spanned over 6 years shook the local population to their core and made them realign their political choices.

The history of violence in Lyari is characterized by three major waves. The first wave was the rise of smuggling business in the '60s that was especially concentrated in the Baloch community. The powerful individuals and groups emerging out of a combination of smuggling money and the politics of confrontation gave way to a criminal culture that proudly flouted laws. The second wave came on the back of Pakistan's active role in the Afghan war. The proliferation of arms and drugs as a result of Pakistan's support to the war boosted criminal activity and also facilitated access to arms for non-state actors. This was followed by MQM's rise to power in the '80s that adopted a practice of street confrontation and cultivated a militant wing to secure greater power and funds through extortion money to fuel the party's activities. MQM's expansionist agenda for the city of Karachi threatened the Baloch of Lyari, sympathetic to the PPP. The criminal and violent elements from the community were in turn recruited by the PPP for the party's own militant wing.

**Economic, social and political impact of gang war:** Post 2000, the criminal gangs in Lyari fortified their position, using political patronage from the PPP and exploiting Lyari's proximity to the lucrative port and wholesale markets which were at the center of the extortion business by the criminal mafias. As the gangs sought to assume individual power, the PPP withdrew its support and the law enforcement agencies launched a security operation

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142. Yousaf Huma, *Conflict Dynamics in Karachi*, USIP (2012).USIP. <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW82-Conflict%20Dynamics%20in%20Karachi.pdf> (accessed Oct 1, 2020)

143. *Pakistan Today*. It's not just gangsters that are dying in Lyari. (2013) <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/12/28/its-not-just-gangsters-that-are-dying-in-lyari/> (accessed Oct 4, 2020)

against them in 2013. The gang war has tarnished Lyari's image as a peaceful neighborhood. Due to the shrinking economic and living spaces (due to population explosion) there is a growing trend among the Baloch population from extremely low-income areas to move towards further low-income localities by selling their houses. The land is being purchased by the Pashto-speaking community, which further signals towards demographic changes leading to transformation in political representation. Nearly everyone interviewed complained of denial of access to work as employers perceive all Lyariites to be a part of the criminal network. Women also complained of being denied instalment offers from retail shops for household goods – a popular practice in Karachi. Apart from economic exclusion, this may also reinforce a sense of marginalization that can have deep political ramifications if not addressed in time.

*“Everyone has suffered immensely due to the gang war. People have lost property and businesses. We have seen terrible scenes like we see in movies: gunshots, people dying, bomb blasts; nobody's dignity was safe during that time. It destroyed Lyari.”* – a local male shared during the FGD. In the FGDs and in literature too, women expressed harrowing tales of being trapped in a crossfire, and constantly facing the threat of sexual violence. Women-dominated households particularly suffered as young girls faced threats of kidnapping. Moreover, the raids conducted by police and Rangers too brought in acute trauma for their brutal methodologies. *“We had to leave the place where we earlier lived because of the operation. We did not have anything to eat,”* said a local woman. A significant impact of gang war has been the loss of employment and economic opportunity outside Lyari. This is also giving way to a new class formation.

Those – primarily the Baloch - abandoned by political parties and the state, scramble to look for alternate opportunities, while the communities with greater inter-communal harmony and protectionist tendencies – the Kutchi community and the Pakhtun community – are better equipped to deal with the ongoing economic uncertainty.

Local journalists observe Baloch opting for non-conventional trades such as hawkers or low paying menial jobs in the market which were not practiced earlier. It was also pointed out that such conditions may lead to youth jumping into drug business for easy money. This may further pave the way for violence and insecurity in the area that may destabilize the political and social fabric of the Lyari, which is already fragile. *“A number of my students faced a lot of discrimination because of the social stigma*

*against the people of Lyari, as a consequence of the gang war. The Baloch community living here is particularly a subject of this discrimination. Young boys wouldn't get work because of this and they would feel dejected,*"<sup>144</sup> shared the head of a local boxing club interviewed for this report. In the words of the head of a local community organization:

*"From 2012 to 2014, some 70% people migrated from Lyari. Some migrated temporarily, while others left permanently. Some of the union councils were left completely deserted. Only when the law and order situation started improving towards the end of 2013 and 2014 that people started coming back to Lyari."*<sup>145</sup>

**PPP is perceived to be part of the problem:** The role of the Pakistan Peoples Party in fostering the violent elements in Lyari is well documented. There is a consensus among the locals interviewed that following the gang war PPP essentially abandoned its traditional voter base. A party supporter interviewed reiterated:

*"During the time of the gang war, a number of important people among PPP's leadership were killed. Neither Asif Ali Zardari nor Bilawal Bhutto went to comfort their families. Yet Bilawal contested elections from this area. He should have first visited the homes of the PPP workers and seen what happened with them."*<sup>146</sup>

It is widely believed that Pakistan Peoples Party's loss in 2018 elections is the result of its role in the gang war and its disconnect with the local population following the operation by the security forces. At the same time, the state of insecurity created by gang war also shrunk space for political engagement and even public mobility.

Gang violence and security forces' operation has led to a major shift in public opinion on mainstream parties within Lyari, and that manifested in the 2018 elections.

## **4.2. Electoral and political profile**

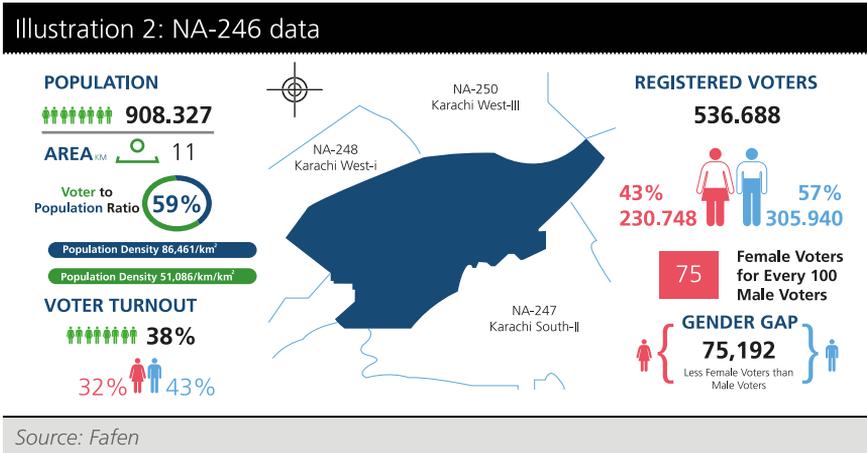
Lyari has a population of 908,327 while the number of registered voters is 536,688. Of which 305,940 are men whereas women are 230,748.

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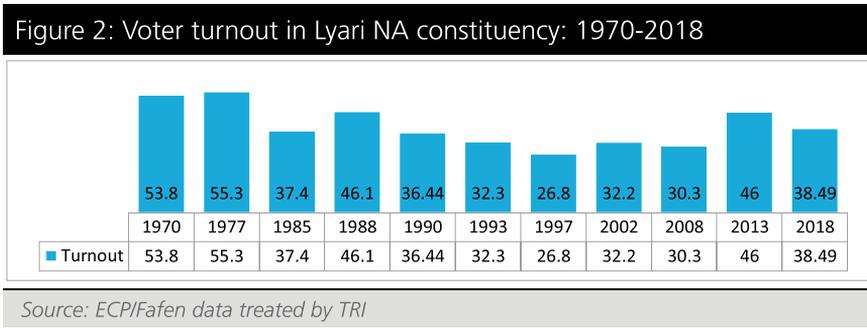
144. Views expressed during an FDG in Karachi held on 22 Oct, 2020

145. Ibid

146. Ibid



The voting turnout in the constituency has seen ups and downs in all the 11 General Elections; in the 1997 elections, it was the lowest (26.8%) whereas in the 1977 elections it recorded an all-time high of 55.3%. While in the 2013 elections, 46 % of the Lyari voters had turned out to exercise their right to vote, in the 2018 elections it sunk to 38.49 %. Karachi as a whole registered a very low voter turnout. As against the 52 % voter turnout in the country, Karachi registered 40 % turnout.<sup>147</sup>



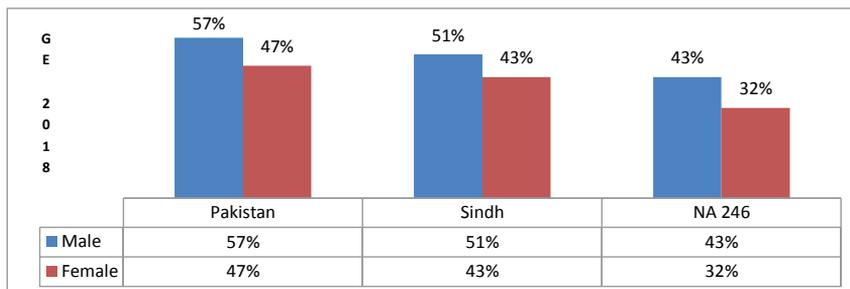
**Gender gap: Denying women agency:** In terms of gender gap there are 75, 192 less woman voters as opposed to men which means there are 75 female voters for every 100 male voters.<sup>148</sup> As for voting turnout in the last elections, female turnout was 11 % lower than male voters in the constituency which was 1 % % higher that the cumulative turnout gap (1 %) at the country level and 3% higher than the province of Sindh (8%).<sup>149</sup>

147. Gallup Pakistan, 2019.

148. Fafen. National Assembly Election Results Analysis Report. ( 2018). <https://fafen.org/election-results-analysis-report/> ( accessed Oct 3, 2020)

149. Gallup Pakistan

Figure 3: Gender gap comparison



Source: ECP

**Reconfiguration of political trends favoring right-wing religious groups:** The 2018 election results represent a substantial reconfiguration of politics in Lyari. It was not only about the first time loss of the PPP.

It was also about the win of the right wing religious parties from Lyari which emerged as the largest voting bloc in the constituency. This also suggests substantial changes in voters’ priorities and perceptions.

Lyari had generally been a predictable constituency for its political representatives. In 2018, there was a complete reconfiguration in Lyari’s representational politics. Breaking from its 50-year-old tradition of voting PPP in, Lyari constituency helped the PTI win which secured 26% of votes as opposed to TLP’s 21%. PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari trailed at number three with 20% of votes. MMA, another religious party alliance, got about 16% of votes. The religious vote put together comes to over 37%. Hence, the religious bloc becomes the largest ideological group in Lyari.

The PPP also lost two provincial assembly seats in Lyari -- PS-107, and PS-108 -- to the TLP and MMA candidates respectively.<sup>150</sup> In the PS 107, the PPP lost to the TLP by about 12, 000 votes.

In the PS-108 the winner, Syed Abdul Rasheed of JI – representing the MMA -- received 16,821 votes. He led with a narrow margin of around 1,200 votes as his runner up, PTI’s Nasir Baloch, received 15,577 votes. The TLP secured 7,958 votes from this constituency.<sup>151</sup>

150. Express Tribune. Lyari Rejects Bilawal. (2018). <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1767233/lyari-rejects-bilawal> ( accessed Oct 1, 2020)

151. Electionpakistan.com. PS 108 Karachi South General Election 2018 Result. <https://www.electionpakistan.com/ge2018/ps/PS-108.htm> ( accessed Oct 1, 2020)

**PPP ditched its own worker while awarding ticket:** The PTI fielded Abdul Shakoor Shad as its candidate for 2018 elections. He was a die-hard PPP worker who fought against the Zia regime and had lived in exile. It was the infighting over party leadership that caused Shakoor to part ways with the PPP. In 2008 he contested elections as an independent candidate, and joined the PTI just months before the 2018 elections.<sup>152</sup>

For Lyariites, he was a credible political worker. He should have been fielded by the PPP, for his rich services as a party worker. PPP's reluctance in supporting him, in addition to the Party's approach of fielding candidates supported by the gang leaders in the recent past also appeared to be a cause of anger among the PPP supporters in the area. Shad's win can be explained as a rejection for the PPP and MQM, and also the swinging of public sentiments nationwide in favor of the PTI.

**PPP's 'link' to gang war:** The party's perceived use of Lyari as a base for its political battles, that paved the way for one of the most violent episodes of gang war, deeply impacted Lyari's population in a negative way. Our findings suggest the gang war to be a major factor compelling Lyari's population to rethink their relations with their favored political party.

**TLP's success in winning over the Barelvi vote:** A majority of Lyariites come from the 'Barelvi' school of faith.<sup>153</sup> The TLP is an aggressive proponent of Barelvi sectarian politics and has a robust party structure in the constituency that explains one provincial assembly seat and the runner up status in the national assembly contest.

Although the TLP managed to win only two provincial assembly seats in the Sindh province yet it has stirred the religious pot, indicating a shift in the religious vote towards the more radical and hardline parties.

**Jl's welfare work:** The general explanation with regard to the Jl candidate's win is the welfare work by the Jl in the area. It is largely seen as an 'NGO' party that has consistently ran a range of welfare programs such as establishment of schools, adult literacy centers, industrial homes, water filtration plants, medical centers, and monthly support for widows and orphans through the Al Khidmat Trust. At the constituency level, there is a consensus that Jl's

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152. Express Tribune. Meet Abdul Shakoor Shad-a jiyala turned PPP slayer. (2018).<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1771365/1-meet-abdul-shakoor-shad-jiyala-turned-ppp-slayer> (accessed Oct 2, 2020)

153. Paracha Nadeem F. The Good, The Bad and the Ugly & the Lyari. (2012)...Daily Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/706128/the-good-the-bad-the-lyari> (accessed Oct 1, 2020)

welfare work has raised its perception as a political force that can serve the public interest more usefully.

**Why MQM lost in Lyari:** In Lyari, the MQM had been consistently winning the PA-107 seat since the 2002 elections. The party lost its position in Lyari due to the pre-election developments that first started with the state's official policy to curtail the party's political space by 'muting' the party leader Altaf Hussain, dismantling of its mohalla [neighborhood] network and closing down the party offices across the city in addition to a crackdown on MQM's activists. Moreover, the MQM also broke into several factions as it struggled for the alternatives. As a result, the party lost favor with its traditional vote bank that no longer saw it as a unified force capable of representing the interests of its constituents. The MQM won only 4 NA seats in Karachi compared to as many as 17 in each of the past two elections.

### **4.3. Power dynamics in Lyari**

On the outside Lyari conveys the impression of a monolithic entity. But it is ethnically diverse. About 60 % of its inhabitants are the mid-19th century working class settlers from Balochistan.<sup>154</sup> Besides people from Iranian Seestan, and Kutch were among the first settlers in Lyari. A group of people identified as Sheedis (also called Makranis) are believed to have migrated here from East Africa between 1200 and 1900 AD. After the Partition, Pushtuns, Sindhis, Mohajirs, and Memons moved to this area. Its minority population comprises Hindus, largely Meshwaris, and Christians.<sup>155</sup> All the political parties engaging Lyari have sought to manage the aspirations of the diverse inhabitants of Lyari by promoting patronage-based politics.

In last 50 years, Lyari has transformed from a buzzing center of political activism, rooted in progressive politics and communal harmony to a poverty-riddled, congested, and crime infested neighborhood that feels let down by its political patrons. Local realities including access to amenities, expectation for patronage, security, and aspiration for economic mobility have compelled Lyari in the 2018 elections to deviate from its predictable political posture.

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154. Hasan Arif, Pakistan Mapping Study, Prepared for a Research Project of the Max Lock Centre, Westminster University, London, UK, (2003) <http://arifhasan.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/pakistanmappingstudy-AH-095.pdf> ( accessed Oct 1, 2020, 2010)

155. Baloch Latif, Lyari: Karachi's oldest settlement, (2005). Daily Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/150437/karachi-lyari-karachi-s-oldest-settlement> ( accessed Oct 2, 2020)

Even before the elections, it was obvious that the PPP had earned the ire of its traditional voters. This impression was confirmed during our interviews with the residents of Lyari. Here are some of the reasons behind the success of new political parties in the constituency.<sup>156</sup>

After Benazir Bhutto's assassination, the PPP stopped doling out public jobs to the Lyariites, a practice it had actively pursued in the past. Two, the party did not invest in improving the civic infrastructure. The Lyari residents expressed their resentment over poor infrastructure as the PPP chairperson visited the area before the 2018 elections.

When questioned about the causes of the PPP's defeat in Lyari, a woman supporter of the party said: *"Bilawal has broken people's trust. He only visited the area for votes. That's why people were angry at him."*<sup>157</sup>

**Out-migration of the Baloch:** Rising poverty and shrinking of land space is also forcing the Baloch and other low income communities to move to more affordable areas on the outskirts of the city. This outmigration is being balanced by the in-migration of the Pakhtun and other communities with new money. The resultant demographic changes may further intensify competition for resources and reinforce a sense of marginalization in the local population.

**Sharpening of identity politics:** Contrary to the popular perception that the Baloch and Kutchi population are part of the wider Sindhi identity, we found during the fieldwork that there is an element of estrangement among the residents with the PPP. They increasingly perceive the PPP as a party serving the interests of Sindhis. Locals, particularly the Baloch and the Kutchi, now see PPP trading off the Lyari's interests with the Sindhi interests in the government jobs, public infrastructure and education quota. During the interviews, a number of male respondents felt that the PPP is prioritizing its Sindhi voter base in public jobs. *"We are neither in CM House, nor in Bilawal House any longer."*<sup>158</sup>

In case of Lyari economic opportunities, or lack thereof, has also impacted power dynamics by weakening certain ethnic groups in comparison to others. On the economic front, Lyari's population is faced with slipping of

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156. Baloch Shafi, Bilawal's convoy pelted with stones in Karachi's Lyari, 2 hurt, (2018). Daily Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1417254> (accessed Oct 2, 2020)

157. Views expressed during FDG in Karachi on 20 Oct, 2020

158. Ibid, 22 Oct, 2020

economic opportunities. The emerging modern and service-driven market of Karachi has limited place for traditional trades that Lyari's population has been associated with. Other than port related work, Lyari citizens have been traditionally associated with small industries, cinemas, and donkey and camel carts, as industrial workers and as domestic workers. While the Kutchi and Pashtun communities are able to mobilize internal support due to their strong communal base, the Baloch are losing ground on the economic front.

*"Once we did an informal assessment on the representation of the Lyari population in major professions in Karachi. We found out that except for the government jobs, we were in no other profession,"* shared a local researcher frustrated with lack of economic opportunities for the local youth.<sup>159</sup>

He added that due to acute poverty, locals do not even qualify for microfinance programs of the government that require a minimum amount of capital base and enterprise experience.

If this trend continues it may reinforce the existing conditions of economic marginalization and vulnerability. It also seems that in future, economic backwardness will continue to be a political challenge and a consideration shaping voters' choices.

**Interplay of religious identities and ethnicity:** The MMA's victory can also be attributed to the geographical outline of the constituency. The PS-108 comprises Behar Colony, Chakiwara, Tannery Road, Hazara Colony, Umar Lane, and Singho Lane among others.<sup>160</sup> Behar Colony houses Urdu-speaking population, while other areas have a mix of Kutchi, Pakhtuns and Baloch settlements. The locals say that apart from JI's welfare work, the MMA's win may also have been steered by the constituency's sizeable Deobandi and Pakhtun vote, which the MMA seems to have cashed in on.<sup>161</sup>

#### **4.4. Determinants of voting behavior**

**Lyari votes independent of family:** It appears that the voting choice in Lyari is independent of the family or community's collective political ideology or preference.

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159. Interview with a Key Informant in Karachi in second week of October, 2020

160. "GIS Polling Scheme for PS 108 - Karachi South-II" July 19, 2018 <https://ecp.gov.pk/frmPSGE.aspx?ProvCode=12&ConstCode=108&ElectionType=PA> ( accessed Dec 15, 2020)

161. Views expressed during FDGs held in Karachi on 20 and 22 October, 2020

*"Families are not united over voting, and they vote for whoever they prefer,"*

said a veteran social activist who has been working with the local community for decades.<sup>162</sup> This was seconded by some respondents interviewed, and participants of the FGDs adding that while they do follow the family's choice for voting for the local government polls, in the general elections they follow their own choice.<sup>163</sup>

**Economics determines the voting choice for the locals in Lyari.** The PPP's consistent victory in the past elections is attributed to the party's commitment to creating employment for the locals in the public sector. *"People here have been voting for the PPP, because it used to provide them with jobs. If one person in a family is getting a job, then the whole family would be on board for voting in support of the party -- that has helped them,"* said a journalist interviewed for the study.<sup>164</sup>

**Younger voters prefer performance over ideology:** An expert studying the young people's voting patterns suggests youth are less likely to be politically loyal on ideological or historical grounds; they do a lot of sifting and switching. Many of the young people interviewed by the media advocated going beyond the usual considerations of biradari and ethnicity and voting for the best candidate.<sup>165</sup> In Lyari too, the assertion of an independent choice for voting seems to follow the same pattern. The politics of ideology is essentially dead in Lyari. Moreover, people vote on the basis of the popularity of the candidate too.

**People want civic amenities:** Apart from the economy, Lyari also seems to be deeply influenced by the issue of the provision of civic amenities. *"In the last 40-45 years, voters have developed the tendency to link personal benefits with elections. People want jobs and civic facilities,"* one FDG participant said.<sup>166</sup> In fact, it has been argued that in the past, religious parties have only won when they have taken the cause of civic issues. Citing the case of Sipah-e-Sahaba's Aurangzaib Farooqui who contested from Landhi, Karachi in the 2013 elections and nearly won on the basis of his strong political activism against the then District Government for their inability to repair civic facilities

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162. Interview with a Key Informant in Karachi held in second week of October, 2020

163. Views expressed during interviews with Key Informants in Karachi ( 9-14 Oct, 2020) and FDG held in Karachi on 22 Oct, 2020

164. Interviews with Key Informants in Karachi during 9-14 Oct, 2020

165. The Research Initiative. Lyari: From Loyalty to Logic. (2020)

166. Views expressed during an FDG held in Karachi on 22 Oct, 2020

in the area, a journalist interviewed for the study felt that people vote more on the basis of performance than religious affiliation.

#### **4.5. Role and response of political parties**

Lyari has long stood out as a center of street political mobilization with public representatives deeply rooted in the local community. Before the PPP's hold over the area, there was a thriving culture of cause-based politics. Post PPP, the culture of political debate, dialogue, study circles, and night schools teaching political education continued, in an environment of tolerance and co-existence. This culture ended due to the gang war that created much physical insecurity for the locals as well as for political workers who were always on the hit-list of the rival political groups and gangs. Locals no longer deem it safe to navigate the area and their confidence in their community and neighborhood has been shaken. In addition, post Benazir Bhutto, there has been a major shift in the PPP's engagement with the locals. People noted with disappointment how once, after 2008, Asif Ali Zardari, as President of Pakistan, rather than visiting the area, inaugurated a community center in Lyari from the Bilawal House. The party leaders who were earlier seen enjoying tea at local tea stalls and interacting with the community now visit the area in their SUVs and Vigos.

**Political parties' interface with citizens:** While the offices of major political parties, particularly the PPP and JI are present and functioning in Lyari, these offices may not necessarily serve as a central point for political engagement. Locals observe that these party offices remain symbolic with a limited role and capacity to serve the community. *"Political parties do set up offices if they have political representation. Workers go to their party to get their work done. They know who to contact for their issues and complaints. If their local party leaders do not pay heed, then workers turn to more influential party members to get their issues resolved. However, the link between political parties and the public has weakened over time. Workers can still go to their leaders and party offices, but the public cannot,"* said a senior social worker from Lyari who also works with political parties for welfare activities.<sup>167</sup>

The gang war and the resultant shift in public sphere and worker-party relations have certainly impacted the institution of political parties in Lyari, reducing their presence in the area. This has further disillusioned the people – who have for generations seen Lyari as a battleground of local and national politics.

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167. Views expressed during an FDG in Karachi held 22 Oct, 2020

On the contrary religio-political parties – even when they do not have a formal office – are present in the form of local madrasa and welfare centers that facilitates locals’ access to their leadership. During the time of the gangs rule, major gang leaders positioned themselves as representatives of public interest, issuing guidelines over community’s issues and delivering justice. With the absence of mainstream political and local leadership, there is certainly a vacuum in Lyari.

#### **4.6. Future of politics in Lyari**

There is a high sense of dejection as Lyari reels from the harrowing episodes of gang violence and the process of being abandoned. Moreover, the institution of political party is also declining following the gang war and targeting of local political leaders. Party offices have now become symbolic centers with limited role and capacity to serve the local constituency. As a result, the voter turnout in the constituency in the 2018 elections was lower than the previous elections and also markedly lower than the national average. The area remains a fertile ground for politics of all kinds. It really depends on the interest and the capacity of the existing political forces to adopt this constituency and deliver on the aspirations of the locals.

**It is not over for PPP yet:** Analysts believe that Lyari still maintains a soft corner for PPP - which it has voted for 50 years – and there is every reason for the PPP to make a comeback if it makes a genuine effort to resolve the issues of the locals.<sup>168</sup>

**All is not lost for mainstream political parties:** There is much temptation in declaring Lyari as a lost ground for mainstream political parties and an emerging center of faith-based political parties. There is much ground in the argument that parties with powerful mobilization capacity such as the TLP and those that are seen as rooted in community, such as the JI, have a bright future in Lyari. However, this is contested by three trends:

- 1) Voters in Lyari – no matter the age group, gender and background– are politically aware, knowledgeable and exercise independence in their voting choice;
- 2) They have displayed the tendency of voting on economic grounds, supporting the parties that provide jobs, serve the economy and address their civic issues. This is also the trend in the rest of Karachi, and

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168. Views expressed by Key Informants in Karachi ( interviews held during 9-14 Oct, 2020)

explains support for the MQM which is considered as a public-service based party;

- 3) Despite the formidable presence of religious parties including the JI, TLP, JUI-F, Sipah-e-Sahaba and Sunni Tehreek, the voters in Pakistan have displayed a general tendency for voting for mainstream political parties.

The vote for religious parties in the 2002 elections or even now for TLP is attributed to a variety of factors including poor performance of their predecessors. They are voted out when they fail to perform as was the MMA.

**Is religious vote a one-off phenomenon?** Apparently, the 2018 election results appear to reject the traditional mainstream parties in Lyari in favor of religious political parties. Whereas the religious vote was the result of a vacuum created by the mainstream parties in Lyari. Experts argue that there is much scope for the return of the mainstream parties if they resolve to serve their constituency and make a sincere effort to address their issues.<sup>169</sup> The recent vote for the religious parties or any party will only last so long as they serve the economic and social interests of the Lyari residents. In Karachi including Lyari (in the past) people have shown strong inclination towards PML-N famous for its development work in the Punjab. In future, it seems voters can vote out anybody who is unable to perform, no matter the ideological or religious affiliation. The Barelvis, Mianwalis, Hazara and Pashtun communities, in the past have shown the tendency to vote for religio-political parties as well as a non-Karachi entity like PML-N that won the 1997 provincial assembly seat from Lyari.

It is difficult to be certain about the future of religio-political parties in Lyari. However, findings suggest that these forces have largely succeeded in establishing themselves as a local stakeholders.<sup>170</sup> The emergence of religious right as a third political force, while the flame of the mainstream political parties and indigenous activism in the constituency dims, does suggest the need for serious contemplation on the part of those who want to shape the moderate trends in politics.

**What is the future of PTI:** If performance is the criteria that has influenced the ouster of PPP and the entry of PTI, the future of the winning parties from Lyari remains a question mark. During interviews, PTI's MNA was constantly

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169. Interviews with Key Informants in Karachi held during 9-14 Oct, 2020

170. Views expressed during FDG in Karachi held in Oct, 2020

criticized for his inability to resolve the local civic problems in the area: *“A manhole has been erupting in front of [JMNA’s house ever since he became an MNA. A person who cannot get that fixed, how is he going to fix our area’s issues?”* said a participant in FGD.<sup>171</sup>

There is also realization that the existing resource distribution mechanism under the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment that strengthens provinces against the federal and the local government will never allow anybody who is not supported by the province to perform.

A lot will also depend on how MQM reacts to the changed reality and whether it shall be able to reclaim its lost space as well as reconnect with disillusioned voter who chose not to vote in 2018 elections. PTI which has razor-thin margins of victory over half of the constituencies it won in the city will need to fulfil its promises to the citizens of Karachi if it were to hold on to its success.

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171. Views expressed during an FDG held in Karachi in Oct, 2020



## 5. Nankana: A swinging state

Birth place of founder of Sikh religion Baba Guru Nanak in Nankana district



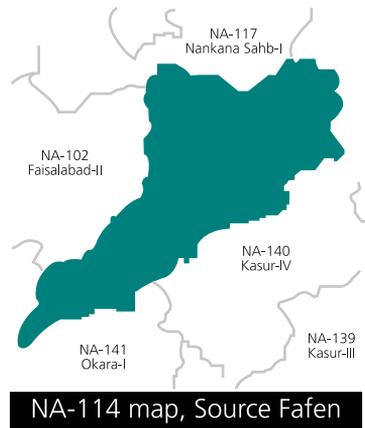
*With relative economic independence of voters in Nankana, now candidates have to visit the educated and aware voters multiple times during canvassing to seek their votes*

### Introduction

Nankana is a district in central Punjab. It is a heterogeneous land housing a significant Sikh population. It has a special significance among the Sikh community as the birth-place of the founder of Sikh religion Baba Guru Nanak. Nankana Tehsil forms a major part of the NA -118 constituency which is chosen as the case study to analyze the power dynamics and political trends in Central Punjab. Nankana Tehsil has a total population of 883,876 of which 773,598 are rural residents whereas 110,278 are urban.<sup>172</sup> Total votes are 371,715; of which 43% are female and 57% male. There are 75 women voters for every 100 male registered voters.<sup>173</sup>

173. Fafen. 2018 General Election: National Assembly Election Results Analysis Report. <https://fafen.org/2018-general-election-results-analysis-report/> ( accessed Mar 5, 2021)

TLP got a whopping 80% of 1 million votes polled by the religious parties in central Punjab.<sup>174</sup> TLP secured its highest number of votes (50, 000) in this constituency. This study focusing on the constituency tried to i) look at the social and demographic changes ii) analyze contours of power dynamics iii) examine the sudden surge in support for the hardline political party, TLP,<sup>175</sup> and, iv) assess whether PPP was permanently irrelevant in the politics of Punjab . Our key findings and conclusions based on Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews are analyzed below.



## 5.1. Social and demographic profile

### Literacy and digital empowerment

#### **Education is a priority but access to quality education is a concern:**

In Nankana district, there are eight degree colleges, over 750 schools and one vocational institute.<sup>176</sup> Private institutes are in addition to these besides construction of Baba Guru Nanak University is underway. Education is expensive especially at the post matriculation stage. While there are separate schools for boys and girls in every village they lack basic facilities such as safe drinking water and sanitation. Improved road network has encouraged students to move to big cities such as Faisalabad and Lahore for higher education.<sup>177</sup>

**Political parties make optimum use of digital media:** The use of digital devices and technologies has increased among both boys and girls across the district however the quality of internet services remains patchy.<sup>178</sup> Describing

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174. ECP data

175. Rana, Yudhvir. *Facing threat to life, Pakistani Sikh politician flees country with kin*. Times of India. (2020) Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/amritsar/facing-threat-to-life-pakistani-sikh-politician-flees-country-with-kin/articleshow/73545237.cms> (accessed Dec 15, 2020)

176. Official District Profile of Nankana Sahib [https://nankana.punjab.gov.pk/district\\_profile](https://nankana.punjab.gov.pk/district_profile) (accessed Dec 15, 2020)

177. A participant of FGD held by TRI in Nankana on 29 Oct, 2020

178. Ibid

the differing use of digital technologies, a participant of the FGD in Nankana said that males use cellular devices more openly to stay in touch with others, and access and share information on different topics whereas the girls in Nankana use it more for educational purposes.<sup>179</sup> This falls in line with results of a survey by the Punjab Commission on Status of Women (PCSW) which points out that 62% of young women in Punjab are using cell phones (71% urban) while 34% have computer literacy. It adds that 21% young women have access to the internet and out of these 82% participate in social media forums. Participants of the FGD in Nankana shared that the use of social media, text messages, Whatsapp etc have become major tools of communication and people do not feel the need to meet others in person.<sup>180</sup>

The Internet and social media have emerged as highly potent tools for mobilization of masses on political issues, and exposing weaknesses of political opponents.

The contestants in NA-118 resorted to this practice in the run-up to 2018 elections. A key informant said this had saved political parties the hassle of reaching out to workers and voters physically.

*“They do meet but obviously the frequency of such meetings has come down.”*<sup>181</sup> The most used medium to listen to political leaders, opinion leaders and religious scholars is social media. The TLP particularly made adroit use of social media in Nankana. The party not only relayed its message but successfully vilified PML-N for their alleged attempt at amending the blasphemy law. A journalist hailing from Nankana pointed out that religious scholars and orators have huge following on social media and people get influenced by them regardless of the fact they are practicing Muslims or not. A Key Informant shared people who would earlier not seek religious knowledge now listen to religious scholars/orators on social media, get influenced by them and share their speeches with others too. Most of the Key Informants in Nankana agreed that the vilification of the PML-N on social media helped the TLP attract the former’s voters.<sup>182</sup> The TLP finance secretary Muhammad Haseeb said that their members and workers have strategically used social media for propagation of their ideology and reached a larger

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179. Ibid

180. A participant of FGD held by TRI in Nankana on 29 Oct, 2020

181. A participant of FGD held by TRI in Nankana on 29 Oct, 2020

182. Interview with a Key Informant in Nankana on 27 Oct, 2020

audience within a small time, using minimal financial resources.<sup>183</sup> He said their young members are quite adept in this field and even spend out of their own pockets to boost campaigns on different online platforms. Higher literacy and digital empowerment have made people in the constituency politically more aware which manifests itself in increased electoral participation and the trend of demanding development work from their elected representatives.<sup>184</sup>

## **Class dynamics and employment trends**

**Massive intergenerational mobility across classes:** The area witnessed an intergenerational social mobility as the landed class opted for advanced agriculture and invested their surplus into agriculture-related businesses.

In the Nankana district, rice and wheat growers have set up mills which have increased their incomes. Expansion in the road network has increased the value of land besides there is an increasing trend of building housing societies and commercial buildings on agricultural land falling alongside roads or near the city centers.

Those with smaller landholdings pursued education and secured jobs in the government and the private sectors. A Key Informant shared that in the district a person earning Rs 50,000 per month is considered as well-off financially as someone owning a 25-acre land.<sup>185</sup>

**Agriculture is the mainstay in the canal-irrigated fertile land:** Farming is still the mainstay of people in the district where landholding is still reasonably big and land is fertile with developed irrigation channels. Wheat, rice and sugarcane are major crops. A variety of Basmati rice (Super Basmati) from the area is exported to the USA and the Gulf states.<sup>186</sup> The district has a good share in Punjab's agricultural output which contributes about 57% to the value of national agricultural production and produces more than 80% of the country's wheat and cotton, almost two-thirds of its sugarcane, and about half of its maize; and its horticultural output represents 67% of the national production.<sup>187</sup> However, unlike the Central Punjab, Nankana does not have big industrial units such as agro-based textiles, sugar and

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183. Ibid

184. Ibid

185. Interview with a Key Informant in Nankana on 27 Oct, 2020

186. Official District Profile of Nankana Sahib [https://nankana.punjab.gov.pk/district\\_profile](https://nankana.punjab.gov.pk/district_profile) (accessed Jan 15, 2021)

187. Punjab Agriculture Department

edible oil manufacturing plants. While other parts of central Punjab offer employment to locals in engineering, steel and re-rolling, home appliances, sports goods, construction, transportation etc, the residents of Nankana are finding employment in mostly textile mills, set up in and on the periphery of the district. Within Nankana, most jobs are in the government sectors of education and health.<sup>188</sup>

**Increased economic empowerment of women:** Increasing economic pressure has changed the old modes of thinking where girls' education was least of a priority.

There is a healthy enrolment trend among girls both in the traditional education as well as in the vocational institutes to learn employable skills. A woman participant of the FGD in Nankana said that after matriculation she preferred to join a vocational institute over further education. The FGD participants informed that families also look for working women as matches for their sons of marriageable age. As for the employment avenues, the agriculture sector remains the major employer for uneducated women in the district while educated women are moving to other cities for employment as their mobility has improved because of better road network and inter as well as intra-city transport services.<sup>189</sup> This is in conformity with the overall trend in Punjab.

To facilitate the increasing number of women moving out of their home towns for education and jobs, the Punjab Government has established Punjab Women Hostels Authority which monitors and regulates affairs of government and private hostels meant for women in the whole province.<sup>190</sup> This is a development that will help women accept jobs outside their cities.

**Women do not exercise independent decision making:** Although women are better informed and politically more aware now, they have to largely go with the decisions of the male elders of their families. Some educated and employed women did vote for the PTI and the TLP in 2018 against the will of their families but earned their displeasure.<sup>191</sup> This is a trend that is in line with the rest of rural central Punjab where while girls are increasingly

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188. Views expressed by FGD participants held on 29 Oct, 2020 in Nankana

189. Views expressed by FGD Participants in Nankana held on 29 Oct, 2020

190. Daily Nation. *Punjab sets up first-ever women hostel authority*. (2019). <https://nation.com.pk/08-Mar-2019/punjab-sets-up-first-ever-women-hostel-authority> ( accessed Dec 15, 2020)

191. Views expressed by an FGD participant in Nankana held on 29 Oct, 2020

getting an education and entering employment outside of agriculture yet the political decision making still remains with the male head of the family. In the district, there was evidence of women's increased participation in the political activities as they were seen actively canvassing in the run up to the 2018 elections and taking women voters to polling stations on the elections day.

**Religiosity on the rise but not ritualism:** During our discussions with people in the constituency, it was observed that religiosity is on the rise in the district.

While it does not translate into any increase in the number of individuals performing religious rituals such as offering prayers, fasting etc, the district reported incidents of extremism and violence.<sup>192</sup> More people are reported to participate in religious gatherings and are extremely sensitive about the concept of "Khatam-e-Nabuwwat" (finality of prophethood). It was observed that people are more conscious of their religious identity and religious symbolism than before and indulged in religious debates and sharing of religious messages on social media.<sup>193</sup> This extreme behavior displayed by the youth is incongruous with higher literacy and increased exposure due to physical and social mobility.

**Religious minorities a target of extremists:** Nankana is the birthplace of the founder of Sikh religion, Baba Guru Nanak, and in the spotlight for this reason. Minorities especially Hindus and Christians have been living here for ages and the government authorities are always alert to avoid any untoward incidents involving minorities. However, on January 3, 2020, a charged mob including *Tahreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan* (TLP) workers gathered outside Gurdwara Nankana Sahib chanting anti-Sikh slogans, vowing to oust the minority Sikh community and renaming the town as Ghulaman-e-Mustafa. In another incident, on November 21, 2020 an Ahmadi doctor was killed and his three family members injured by a teenage boy over religious differences. As grim as the situation is, a Key Informant in Nankana thinks these incidents are not reflective of the overall harmonious environment that exists there.<sup>194</sup>

**Is increased religiosity a temporary phenomenon?** A religious streak has always been there and the ever-increasing middle class is mostly religious but

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192. Sheikh Bilal. *Protesters surround Gurdwara Nankana Sahib, disperse after negotiations.* (2020). Daily Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1526068> (accessed Mar 5, 2021)

193. Views expressed by an FGD participant in Nankana held on 29 Oct, 2020

194. Interviews held with Key Informants in Lahore on 27 Oct, 2020

things are tilted more towards moderation, believes a key informant.<sup>195</sup> He says we have seen major shifts in this context during the times of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, generals Zia and Musharraf and it is likely that things will eventually settle for moderation. Sometimes, people have to observe religiosity on societal pressure like in the case of working women who wear hijab while commuting to office and discard it the moment they reach there.

## 5.2. Electoral and political profile

**The constituency tends to play erratic with candidates gaining and losing significant support between the polls.** In the last four elections, four different parties (and three different candidates)<sup>196</sup> have returned successful. In the 2018 elections, PTI's Brig (R) Ejaz Shah got 29% (63,818) of the votes. PMLN's Shizra Mansab bagged 28% (61,413) votes. TLP's Syed Afzal Hussain Shah secured 22.6% (49,345) votes. PPP stood 4th by securing 8.5% (18, 726) whereas about 7% (15,000) of votes went to the remaining 6 of the 10 contestants.<sup>197</sup> The margin of victory was 2, 405 whereas the number of rejected votes was 4.4% (9,399).

In 2013, (then NA-137) out of 14 candidates, PML-N won by securing nearly 35% votes(61,329) with Ejaz Shah, as an independent following with 32% (56,050) of the polled votes. Another independent candidate stood third with 13.1% votes, followed by the PPP and PTI with 6.8% and 5.1% respectively. Other parties and candidates managed to get a combined share of 4.4%, while another 3.8% votes were declared invalid.<sup>198</sup>

An independent, Saeed Ahmed Zafar, won the 2008 polls, securing 42% (54,432) of the polled votes as opposed to PML-N's Rai Mansab Ali's 34.3% (44,745). The PPP had secured about 19% (24, 829) votes.

In 2002, PML- Q candidate Rai Mansab Ali Khan won the seat with a share of 47.8% (61,506) in polled votes whereas PPP was the runner up with 41.5% (53, 783) votes.<sup>199</sup>

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195. Ibid

196. Rai Mansab was part of PML-Q in 2002 and PML-N in 2013

197. ECP data

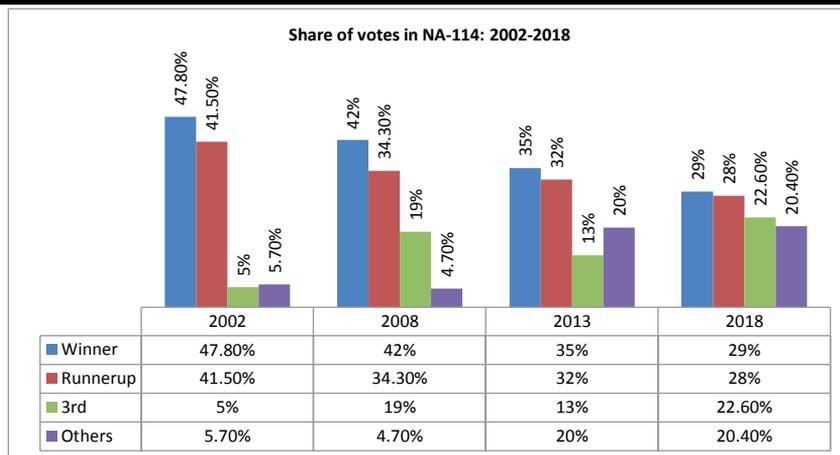
198. Ibid

199. Ibid

**Nankana vote is increasingly fragmenting:** The winner and runner-up’s individual and combined shares have been consistently decreasing, indicating that the vote is being split among various candidates. In 2002, the winner secured the seat with a 47.8% share in polled votes, which fell to 42% in 2008 and 34.9% in 2013 and 29% in 2018.<sup>200</sup>

The runner-up has always been close behind – receiving 41.8% votes in 2002, 34.3% in 2008 and 31.9% in 2013 and 28% in 2018. The top two candidates received 89.6% of the votes in 2002. By 2013, this share had fallen to 66.8% and 2018 to 57.3%, suggesting that the vote bank has fragmented in favor of more than top three candidates.<sup>201</sup>

Figure 4: Share of votes in NA-114 : 2002-2018



Source: ECP data/ Fafen

**Consistent higher voter turnout than national average:** The electoral participation has increased in Nankana and the turnout in NA 118 has been considerably higher than the national average over the course of many elections. It rose from 46.1% in 2002 to 55.7% in 2008 to 61.1% in 2013 until it dipped slightly to 59% in 2018.<sup>202</sup>

Women’s representation has been lower than men when it comes to voting in elections. In NA-118 the turnout of male voters was 63% as compared to female voters’ turnout of 53% in 2018 elections.

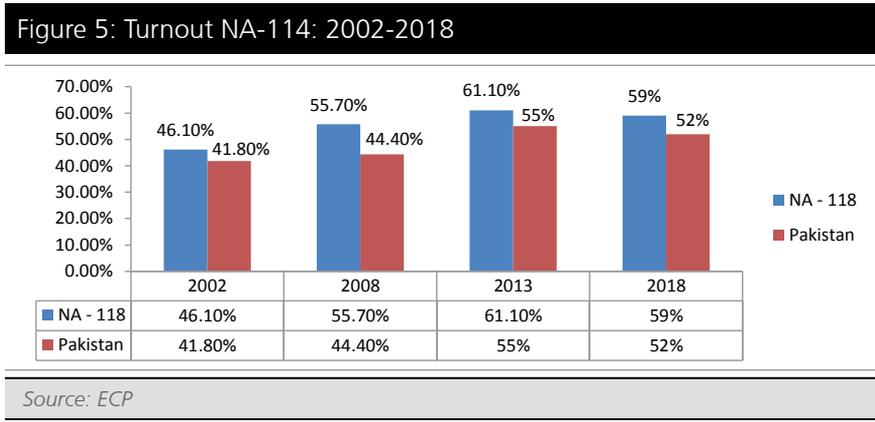
200. Fafen data

201. Fafen data

202. ECP data

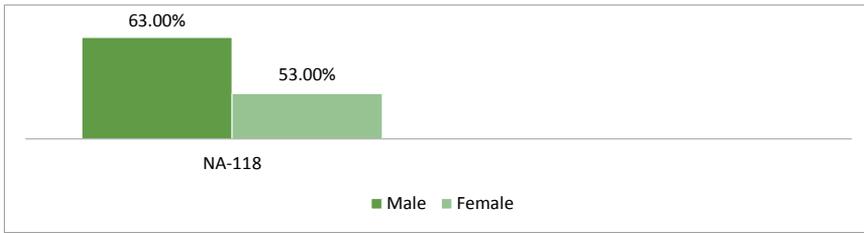
Besides, there is a considerable difference in the number of registered male voters and registered women voters with the latter lagging behind. One major reason for this disparity is that a large number of women do not have CNICs—a prerequisite to register as voters. A survey conducted by Punjab Commission on Status of Women after 2018 elections revealed that in rural areas of Punjab only 56% of young women have Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) whereas 64 % women living in the urban areas have this essential identity document. Fewer CNICs were issued to women in Punjab (41%) as compared to men (59 %), the survey discovered.<sup>203</sup>

**Rejected votes greater than margin of victory:** The number of rejected votes in the constituency has consistently increased. While the winning margin in 2002 and 2008 elections was considerably higher than the rejected votes, in 2013 and 2018 elections the number of rejected votes was greater than the margin of victory. It is surprising to note that a constituency that has one of the highest turnouts in the country for at least two decades has simultaneously been churning out an abnormally high percentage of rejected votes.



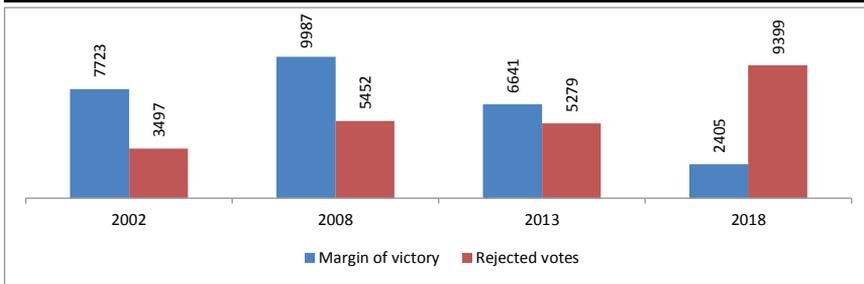
203. The News. *56pc of women have CNICs in rural areas of Punjab: survey.* (2019). <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/461162-56pc-of-women-have-cnics-in-rural-areas-of-punjab-survey> ( accessed Dec 15, 2020)

Figure 6: Gender gap in turnout in 2018 elections



Source: ECP

Figure 7: Comparison between margin of victory and rejected votes: 2002-2018



Source: ECP

### 5.3. Power dynamics in Nankana

Biradri is probably the most important determinant power dynamics in Punjab followed by religious sect. In case Nankana as well Biradri has had a very decisive role in NA-118. The Rajput-Rais - Rai Mansab Ali Dogar and his daughter Shizra Mansab Ali - have won five elections from this constituency. They are believed to have support of some 45,000 to 50,000 Dogar-Rajput votes in the constituency. The Sikh community in Nankana which comprises mostly the Rajputs also supports this family.<sup>204</sup>

Historically, political parties have nominated candidates from strong biradarries. When a biradari head takes a decision, a collective dua-e-khair (a form of prayer) is arranged in the presence of other notables, which implies

204. Interviews with Key Informants in Nankana held on 27 Oct, 2020

the whole biradari has accepted to vote for the approved candidate. Those going against the biradari's decision have to face the consequences.<sup>205</sup>

Dhara (faction) is another strong determinant of political choice especially in the rural parts of the constituency. In Nankana factions played a decisive role. There are mostly two opposing factions in the constituency and when one of them opts for one candidate, the other has no choice but to go over to the opposite side. The PML-N and PPP have traditionally accommodated rival factions in NA-118 as well as in central Punjab but now they are no more natural rivals as the PTI has become a choice of the faction that would opt for the PPP in the past. This is one major reason for PPP's downfall in central Punjab.<sup>206</sup>

The Bareilvi vote that was traditionally polled by the PML-N went to TLP candidate in NA-118 in the 2018 elections. The TLP is said to have made effective use of social media in the constituency. Moreover the TLP candidate was a local influential and a custodian of a shrine.

**Changing power dynamics have begun to impact the voting behavior:**

In Nankana, the change in class and employment patterns has visibly affected the voting behavior of people. In the 2018 elections, an influential Rai clan voted for the PTI. Earlier, they would vote for one of their clan members: Rai Mansab Ali Dogar. Still the evidence is that most of the clan voted as a unified bloc presumably for patronage related reasons rather than any clan affiliation. Unlike their parents, most of the educated descendants of tenants with means of income independent of agriculture voted independently for PTI and TLP.<sup>207</sup> Nonetheless biradari still has its influence and the educated/employed class still has to accede to the elders' priorities in politics to a large extent.<sup>208</sup> With relative economic independence of voters, now candidates have to visit the educated and aware voters multiple times during canvassing to seek their votes. In the past, they would only contact the bloc or biradari leader.<sup>209</sup> In sum, while social configuration is gradually changing and its impacts are already visible in the political domain, patronage based politics has not ended.<sup>210</sup>

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205. Views expressed during FGD held on 29 Oct 2020

206. Interview with a Key Informant in Lahore held in October 2020

207. Interview with a Key Informant in Lahore held in October 2020

208. Interview with a Key Informant in Lahore in October 2020

209. Ibid

210. Ibid

## **5.4. Determinants of voting behavior**

**Infrastructural development pays dividends:** In addition to biradri and caste affiliations, factors such as development work also play a role in determining the voting preference. One reason frequently cited by respondents behind the success of the PTI candidate was his contribution to Nankana's development.<sup>211</sup> He is called the founder of Nankana Sahib and is said to have a role in having Nankana declared a separate district in 2005 by the then PML-Q government in Punjab. A Key Informant shared that Brig Shah also got an approval for the construction of a trauma center in Nankana. Shah also claims credit for getting an interchange connected with Nankana on Lahore-Multan-Karachi Motorway.<sup>212</sup> Similarly Rai Mansab Ali Dogar, winning candidate for PML-N in 2013 elections, has some development works to his credit.

TLP candidate was a local influential: In the 2018 elections, the TLP polled about 50,000 votes in the constituency, highest for the party in any constituency. The party had a local pir, a custodian of a shrine, with considerable influence among the people as its candidate. The party's message, its vigorous campaigning and a strong candidate checked all the boxes for an impressive run. The party using the ruse of 'blasphemy' against the then ruling party PML-N emerged as the second largest political party among the religious outfits in the country, trailing only (by a margin of 0.3 million votes) the five-party alliance of old-time JUI-F and JI among others. Religious parties overall have secured 5 million votes which is 10% of the total votes. Of which 1 million votes, which is 9% of the total votes, were cast in central Punjab. Out of this one million TLP took a lion's share of 80%. TLP alone has secured 2.2 million votes in the country: 7% from Central Punjab (0.8M) – which is one-third of its total vote share. Gallup Pakistan's Exit Poll reveals that 48% of TLP voters were previously PML-N voters, 18% were new voters whereas 8% previously voted for PTI, 7% PPP, 2%, PML-Q and 3% JI. Of the total 19 seats that PML-N lost with a margin less than the votes received by TLP, there are 10 seats in central Punjab (between NA 68 and 140).<sup>213</sup>

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211. Interviews with Key Informants in Nankana held on 27 Oct 2020

212. Ibid

213. Fafen/ECP data

Table 5: TLP vote share in 2018 elections

All Pakistan	4%	2.2Million
Punjab	5%	1.7M
Central Punjab	7%	0.8M

Source: ECP/Gallup data

## 5.5. Role and response of political parties

**Political parties' contact with workers, voters happens virtually:** While exploring the presence of political parties in the constituency it was found out that political parties these days focus more on their representation in traditional and digital media and consider it enough to keep their workers and voters on their side. A Key Informant shared that party offices exist in Nankana and political party backed student unions also have presence in the area.<sup>214</sup> However the organizational structure of the parties on the ground is getting weaker by the day and they are active only close to the elections. The party workers and prospective voters expect support from their respective parties mostly when they have to deal with the police station, public utilities, and municipal offices.

**Individuals are stronger than parties:** The Key Informants in Nankana said that political parties do not feel the need of establishing fully functional offices in the constituency as the patronage networks of the candidates are more entrenched, effective and elaborate. For example both the candidates, Brig Shah and Rai, have support in the form of factions and *biradris* that have historically voted for them.<sup>215</sup> Even the TLP candidate Pir Syed Afzal Hussain is a custodian of a shrine and has a large number of disciples and followers. A Key Informant in Nankana was of the opinion that the TLP would have obtained a fraction of the votes it got in the 2018 elections if there had been a different candidate.<sup>216</sup> All that the political parties need to do is to keep the electables on their side and use their influence at the time of elections.

214. Interviews with Key Informants in Nankana held on 27 Oct, 2020

215. Ibid

216. Ibid

## **5.6. Future of politics in Nankana**

**Nankana could swing either way:** For their elaborate patronage network across the constituency, both Brig Shah and Mansab Rai are likely to remain the favored pick for their respective political parties. Given the razor thin margin of victory for the PTI over PMLN, a lot will depend on how PTI or its 'electable' Brig Shah performs during the remainder of the five-year term. The future electoral contest in the constituency shall be between the PTI and PML-N. While the PPP is surely irrelevant, the TLP shall need to find a fresh issue that heavily resonates with its voters, if it were to maintain or improve its electoral performance in the constituency.

**Curtains for PPP:** The PPP once known for its robust organizational structure and strong linkages with the party workers seems to have lost the momentum as far as the Punjab province is concerned. The party in Nankana, once called a mini Larkana (second home for Bhuttos), has gone downhill since the 2002 elections when it had 42% of votes. In the 2008 elections, it had 19%, in 2013 a mere 7%, and in the last elections 8.5 %, ending fourth for the last two consecutive elections.<sup>217</sup> According to Parveen Akhtar, PPP Nankana Vice President, things for the party changed altogether after the martyrdom of Benazir Bhutto when her husband Asif Ali Zardari took over the control of the party.<sup>218</sup> To her, the party's 2018 showing in Nankana is better than most other constituencies in Punjab except for south Punjab.

**TLP may well be a one-time wonder:** As for the future of the TLP, the death of TLP founder Khadim Hussain Rizvi is likely to have an adverse impact on the party's popularity especially when his son Saad Rizvi's appointment as the party leader has become controversial. It is believed that the TLP is less likely to have a grand showing at the scale of 2018 in the next elections unless it has an equally compelling issue to rally its voters.<sup>219</sup>

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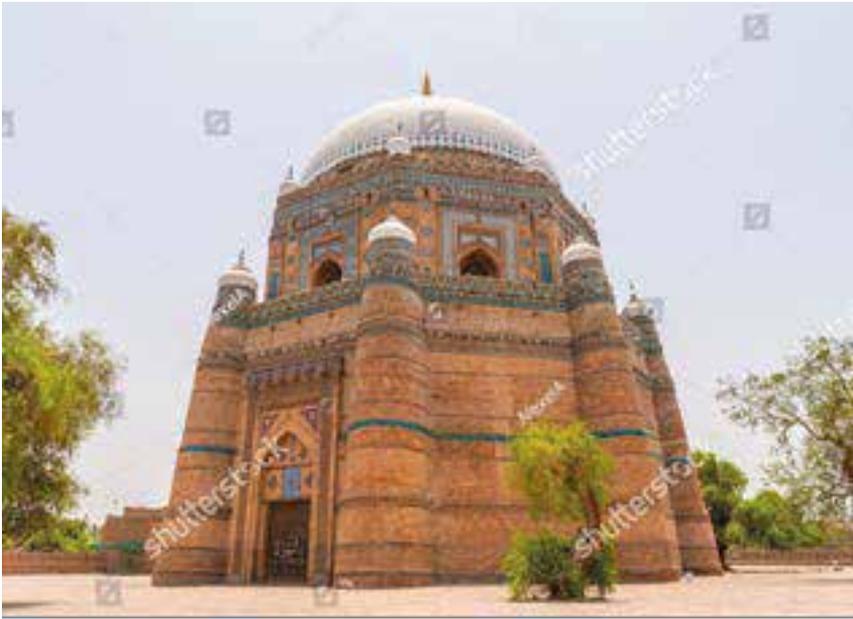
217. ECP data

218. Interviews with Key Informants in Nankana held on 27 October 2020

219. Views expressed during interviews with Key Informants in Nankana on 27 Oct, 2020

## 6. Multan: Embracing more of the same

Shrine of a Sufi saint Bahauddin Zakariya in Multan



*“When we go to the voters, people ask for development schemes such as water filtration plants, electricity and roads”*

*A politician (Key Informant) in Multan*

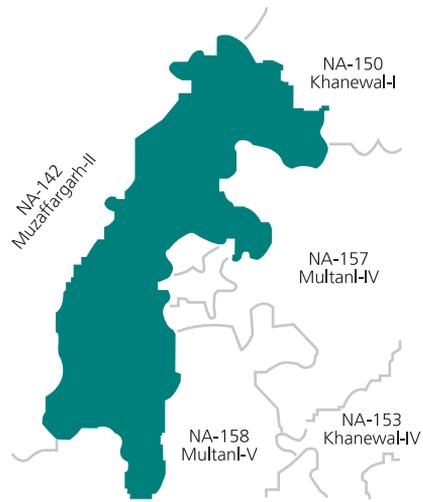
### **Introduction**

NA-154 Multan-1 is predominantly a rural constituency. It consists of Multan Cantonment, Multan Cantonment Qanungo Halqa of Multan City Tehsil, and the following Qanungo Halqas of Multan Sadder Tehsil: Bosan, Nurpur,

Muzaffarabad and Sher Shah of Multan District.<sup>220</sup>

Registered voters are 385,233; of which 54% are men and 46% women.<sup>221</sup> Here party affiliation as well as provision of patronage plays a crucial role in electoral politics. The constituency in the past usually has witnessed a close 2-party race between candidates belonging to a feudal and a pir.<sup>222</sup>

Multan district is among the rare pockets in the south Punjab where PPP has maintained its healthy vote share. In three of the six constituencies in the district it fielded its candidates and stood runner up securing more votes than PMLN and putting up a decent competition against PTI. PPP secured 15% of the total polled votes in Multan district after PMLN's 31% and PTI's 43%.



The study focused on NA-154 constituency explores whether PPP has any remaining hope in the south Punjab where the party also has won 4 NA seats in the neighboring districts of RY Khan and Muzaffargarh.

## 6.1. Social and demographic profile

**NA-154 is the prototype of a typical constituency in south Punjab. It is mostly poor with greater levels of inequality.** According to one Key Informant while there are huge housing schemes for the upper middle class, there are two sprawling slums - Jamilabad and Muzaffarabad - located within the constituency where families with an average household size of 10 live in hut like homes.<sup>223</sup> On the other hand, due to the construction of road networks and a major bypass, people have heavily invested in building

220. ECP Form 7, final list of constituencies <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/Documents/delimitation2018/31-5-2018%20final/4.%20Form-7%20National%20Assembly%20Punjab.pdf> ( accessed Jan 14, 2021)

221. ECP

222. Fafen 2013 General Election: National Assembly Election Results Analysis Report

223. Interviews with Key Informants in Multan held on 9 Dec, 2020

housing societies as a result of which the price of land in the surrounding areas has shot up, making people rich overnight. One Key Informant said that the PTI Member National Assembly from NA-154, a major builder in Multan, has intentionally diverted most of development work towards his lands and since has immensely benefited from it.<sup>224</sup> The PPP leader Ali Hyder Gilani also concurs with the assessment of wealth creation in the constituency but rather attributes this escalation in real estate business to the development work carried out by his father during the latter's tenure as prime minister of the country.<sup>225</sup>

**Most in Multan study till secondary level; madrasa education is popular among lower income groups:** There are schools in decent numbers and with easy access to all - both girls and boys - but the quality of education is deemed poor by those we spoke to the TRI research team. This has given rise to private sector schools which only the rich can afford, excluding the lower income group. Madrasa is a popular medium of education in the constituency among the lower-income groups as they provide free education as well as boarding. Most of these madrasas are maintained by the Bareilvi sect. The Key Informants were unanimous in their view that there is an increase in enrolment in the government schools but most students from lower income groups could not study beyond the secondary level.<sup>226</sup> *“Whereas due to a larger family size among the poor, people mostly either send their children to work or a madrasa for free education,”* one Key Informant said.<sup>227</sup>

*“In south Punjab families employed by a landlord or an industrialist are paid per head so the obvious preference for a poor person is to send his children to work rather than school,”* another participant concurred. In conformity with the national trends, girls' enrolment in higher secondary education is on the rise which is partly facilitated by intra and intercity mobility. The PPP representative conceded that an independent influential candidate had got built a girls college in Multan which has further facilitated the girls' education. All interviewed were unanimous in their view that increase in basic education has not brought about any change in the voting behavior as a vast majority of the constituents remain poor and hence dependent on landlords or employers.<sup>228</sup>

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224. Ibid

225. Ibid

226. Interviews with Key Informants in Multan held on 9 Dec, 2020

227. Ibid

228. Interviews with Key Informants in Multan held on 9 Dec, 2020

**Political parties engage with people through social media:** Our discussion with people associated with political parties in the constituency revealed that the internet is commonly available, and cell phones are used by everybody in the area.<sup>229</sup> Political awareness has also increased among the people due to social media. Youth are using technology for online job applications, for marketing of products and getting information on the rates of the agriculture products. Major political parties have WhatsApp groups for communication with their supporters. A PMLN NA candidate claimed to have set up one WhatsApp group for each of the 30 union councils in the constituency.<sup>230</sup> He claims each group has about 100 members. PTI's Tiger Force, an organization comprising youth, is also working actively in the constituency and connected through technology. Son of an influential political leader affiliated with PPP claimed to be among the first to employ digital media for communication with the electorate in Multan district.

**Agriculture, industry provide low paid work:** As for employment, most rural workforce is engaged in the agriculture sector. There is chemical, textile, and automobile industry in the area but most of the local people are employed as laborers, agreed all of the study participants.<sup>231</sup> A majority of the people are not highly educated and hence do not have the necessary skills to be employed in technical and well-paid jobs.

Educated women, according to them, were now increasingly seeking jobs in the private sector such as banks, shopping malls, restaurants, NGOs etc.

**Religiosity — Multan keeps religion and politics separate:** Multan is a city of saints that has failed to escape the strains of religiosity like the rest of the province. The participation in religious festivals has increased in the younger generation.<sup>232</sup> While one participant was of the view that hardly 5 % people observe fast, another concurring with this view explained that the perceived rise in prayer attendance is because of increase in the population. A majority of people are of the Barelvi sect in the constituency but Shias are also present in significant numbers. In recent years Multan District Bar Association adopted a resolution according to which, no non-Muslim, particularly Ahmadis shall not be eligible to take part in the bar elections. All

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229. Ibid

230. Ibid

231. Ibid

232. Interviews with Key Informants in Multan held on 9 Dec, 2020

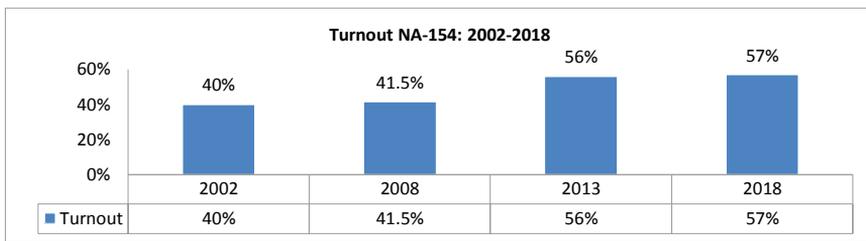
contesting candidates shall be obliged to file an affidavit declaring their faith. This is the same Bar where an advocate Rashid Rehman was assassinated for defending Junaid Hafeez, under trial over blasphemy charges.

In the 2018 elections, the Barelvi sub-sect political party - TLP - received 2% of the polled votes. The Barelvi vote historically was polled by Gilanis affiliated with the PPP and their representative was confident of claiming back that vote in the next elections.<sup>233</sup> According to him, TLP may not have a strong rallying issue in the next elections. Other participants also agreed that people in the constituency usually do not vote for religious reasons and that support for TLP was a one-off phenomenon. Increase in extremism, according to one participant was due to ignorance, lack of education and increase in the number of madrasas in the district.<sup>234</sup>

## 6.2. Electoral and political profile

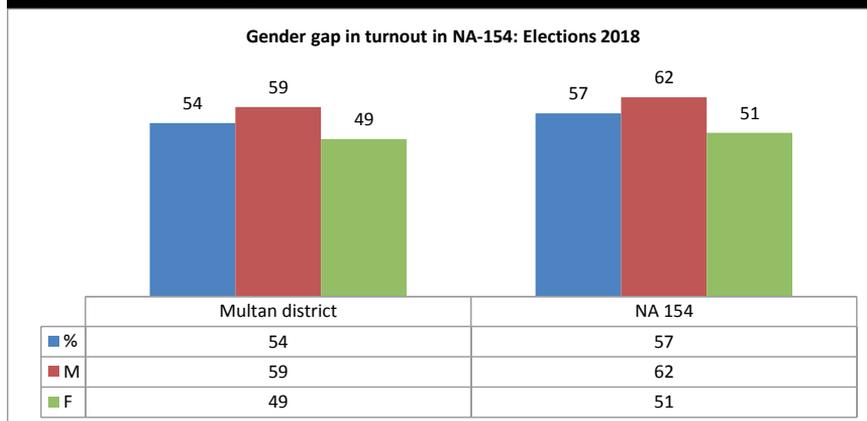
**Voter Turnout:** While the turnout increased only marginally from 40% in the 2002 elections to 41.5% in the 2008 elections, there was a sharp upturn in the 2013 elections that sustained in 2018. In terms of gender gap in voting turnout, NA-154 recorded a difference of 11% whereas in Multan district it was 10%.

Figure 8: Turnout NA -154 : 2002-2018



Source: ECP

Figure 9: Gender gap in turnout in NA 154 - GE 2018



Source: ECP

### Electoral trends in Multan District since 1970 (See Table 6)

**PPP's dwindling electoral support:** In the last 5 of the 10 elections, the PPP has returned as the most successful political party from the Multan district. Its share of votes has gradually dropped though as since 1988 IJI/PML-N established its vote bank here. In the decade of 2,000, due to the split in the PML-N vote between N and Q factions, the PPP benefitted from the situation and retained 50% of the seats in Multan. It was in 2013 when the party lost political ground to the PML-N and PTI. In the 2018 elections, while the PPP lost three seats to the PTI with a margin of under 5%, it did not field any candidates in the remaining of the 3 constituencies. The PTI which was reeling at under 1% of votes in the district before the 2013 elections has emerged as the most successful political party in 2018.

**PPP's political ascendency began to weaken after 1988 elections:** From the first elections based on adult franchise in 1970 to 1988, the PPP maintained hold over the district. Religious vote too was significant in two of the three elections. In the 1970 elections, for as many as 9 seats in the Multan District, there was a turnout of 73.4% against the national average of 60%. Of 1.25 million votes polled, 44.6% went to the PPP. JUI got 11.5%, MJUP 4.8% of votes. PML-Qayyum bagged 11% of the votes whereas the PML-Council got 7%. The PPP got seven seats, the PML Council got one whereas one independent was elected.<sup>235</sup>

235. ECP/Fafen data collated by TRI

In the 1988 elections, the General Zia administration carved a few districts out of Multan and hence the number of seats went down from 10 to 7. With a turnout of 41%, Multan district polled 0.7 million votes. The PPP got 47% of the votes whereas the IJI got 39%. The PPP nevertheless was able to retain 6 NA seats whereas IJI got 1.<sup>236</sup>

**Role reversal for political parties in the 1990s:** The 1990 elections saw the IJI gradually displacing the PPP. With 47% turnout, 0.8 million votes were cast in the district. The IJI led with 45% of vote share claiming 5 seats.

JUP was a new contender which at the back of 10% of the total polled votes got one seat whereas the PPP, under the banner PDA, had to be content with just 1 seat.<sup>237</sup>

In the 1993 elections, Multan had 5 NA seats. With 46% turnout, 0.6 million votes were polled. While PPP secured 49% votes, it had 2 seats as opposed to 3 for the PML-N with 46% of the votes in the district.<sup>238</sup> The PML-N further consolidated its position in the district, in the 1997 elections, by claiming all 5 NA seats. Of over half a million votes, it secured 58% of votes polled; the PPP had 36% whereas PTI with just over 6, 000 votes claimed less than 1% of the total tally.<sup>239</sup>

**PPP resurges in 2,000s:** Two major events in the decade - split in PML-N ranks after General Musharraf's coup in 1999 and Benazir Bhutto's assassination in 2007 - politically benefitted the PPP. In the 2002 elections, one more seat was given to the district. This election saw a resurgence for the PPP as it got 35% of the total polled votes (0.66 million); the PML-N had 29%, PML-Quaid 26%, MMA 5% of votes whereas PTI went even lower by gaining only 2,000 votes. In terms of seats, PPP had 3, PML-N 2 while PML-Q claimed one seat.<sup>240</sup> In the 2008 elections, some 38% of registered voters voted in the Multan district. PPP, claiming 2% more votes than the previous election, got 37% and had 3 of the 6 seats. PML-N and Q got 22% and 27% votes respectively. The former retained 2 seats whereas PML-Q had 1 seat.<sup>241</sup>

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236. Ibid

237. ECP/Fafen data collated by TRI

238. Ibid

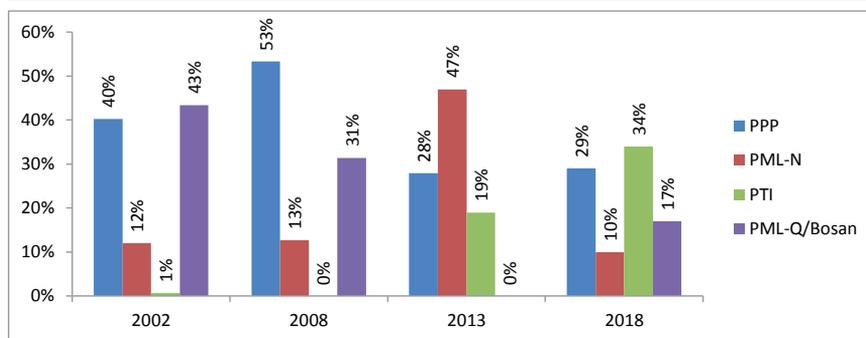
239. Ibid

240. Ibid

241. Ibid

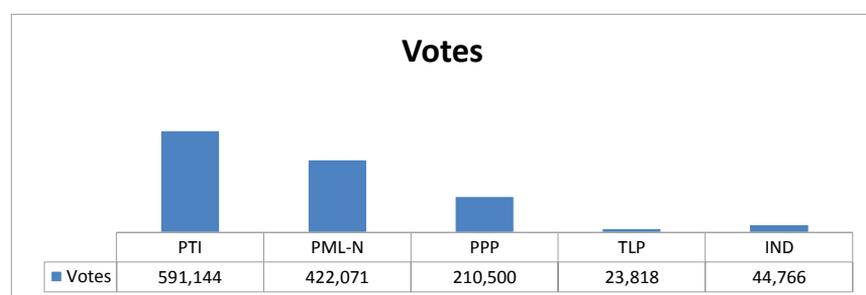
**PTI displaces PPP:** With much healthier turnout of 57%, the PML-N in 2013 elections, led with 42% of the polled votes; PTI trailed with 31% whereas PPP ended up 3<sup>rd</sup> by securing 21% votes. PML-N had four seats whereas PTI got 2 for the first time.<sup>242</sup> In the 2018 elections, PTI turned the table on everyone else. Of just under 1.4 million votes with a turnout of 54%, 43% went to PTI, 31% to PML-N, 15% to PPP, 3% to Independents and 2% to TLP. All of the six seats went to PTI.

Figure 10: NA 154: Political party vote share - 2002-2018



Source: ECP

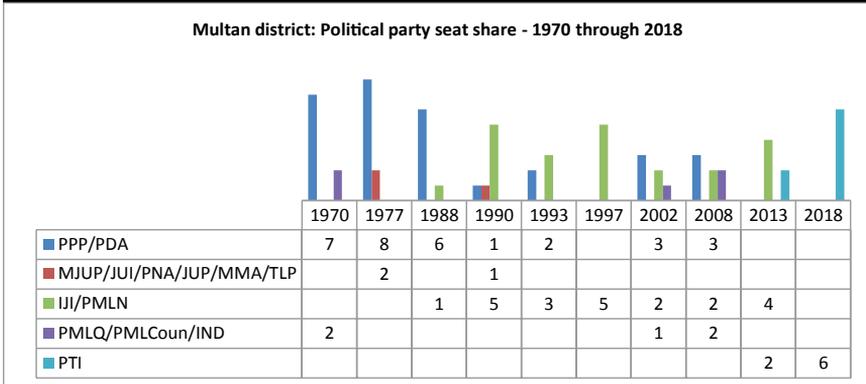
Figure 11: GE 18: Political party vote share in Multan district



Source: ECP

242. Ibid

Figure 12: Multan District: Political party seat share - 1970-2018



Source: ECPI National Assembly Elections in Pakistan 1970-2008, Church World Service-Pakistan Afghanistan and Free and Fair Elections Network

### 6.3. Power dynamics in Multan

Feudal power and religious pirs (custodians of shrines) largely define local power structure in Multan, whereas biradari and religious sect are also relevant determinants of local power dynamics. NA-154 has traditionally witnessed two-way contest between Gilanis who are custodians of a shrine in Multan and Siknadar Bosan, a feudal. While the former banked on their development work, personal connection as well as Bareilvi and Shia votes, the latter had a healthy chunk of his biradari vote as well as support from local feudals having influence at the union council level.

Some of the major castes in this constituency are Maliks, Baloch, Sewra, Bosan, Mahay, Siddiqui, and Shajra.<sup>243</sup> Vote bloc phenomenon is prevalent in the rural areas whereas in the urban slums such as Jamilabad and Muzfarabad, people vote independent of biradari; they rather consider the provision of services and support in matters of court and thana (police station) while voting. Factionalism (biradari) per say is losing its relevance where people would vote for one candidate merely for the reason that their rival faction was voting for the other candidate, explained one of the Key Informants while others agreed with this explanation.

243. Daily Pakistan Today. *NA 154 emerges as a tough constituency*. (2018). <https://archive.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/07/18/na-154-emerges-as-a-tough-constituency/>. ( accessed Mar 8, 2021)

**Table 6: Multan District: Party wise vote share - 1970-2018**

Multan Since 1970: Party share in votes and seats

Election	Turnout	Polled votes	Political parties/alliances											
			PPP/PDA	J UI/MJ UP/PNA/ JUP/PIF/MMATLP/ IND/PML-Q	Seats	%of votes	Seats	%of votes	PMLQ/Counc	Seats	%of votes	IJI/ PML-N	Seats	%of votes
1970	%73.4	125	%44.6	7	%16.3		%14.7	1+1(PML Council						
		Million						+IND)						
1977	%67.5	1M	%55.4	8	%43.50	2								
1988	%41	0.7M	%47.0	6										
1990	%47	0.8M	%42.0	1	%11	1J UP								
1993	%46	0.6M	%49.0	2	%0.5									
1997	%38	0.52M	%36.0											
2002	%38	0.66M	%35.0	3	%5		%26	1	%29	2	%0.3			
2008	%38	0.85M	%37.0	3			%27	1	%22	2				
2013	%57		%21.0						%42	4	%31	2		
2018	%54	138M	%15.0		%2				%31		%43	6		

Source: ECPI National/Assembly Elections in Pakistan 1970-2008, Church World Service-Pakistan Afghanistan and Free and Fair Elections Network

Table 7: Multan District: Detailed results of 2018 elections

**Elections 2018 Multan: Result of**

NA	Total Votes	Votes Polled	Turnout %	M %	F %	PTI %	PMLN %	PPP %	TLP %	IND %	Winner
NA154-	385,233	219,583	57	62	51	74283 %34	20983 %10	64262 %29		37156 %17	PTI
NA155-	485,810	238,047	49	57	41	135872 %57	81016 %34		5590 %2		PTI
NA156-	444,724	222,362	50	57	41	116383 %52	84969 %38		6304 %3		PTI
NA157-	390,725	222,713	57	61	53	77373 %35	62082 %28	70778 %32	5890 %3		PTI
NA158-	436391	248,743	57	59	54	84479 %34	73544 %30	75460 %30			PTI
NA159-	413257	231,424	56	58	55	102754 %44	99477 %43		6034 %3	7610 %3	PTI
	<b>2,556,140</b>	<b>1,82,872</b>	<b>%54</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>591144 %43</b>	<b>422071 %31</b>	<b>210500 %15</b>	<b>23818 %2</b>	<b>44766 %3</b>	

Source: ECP/Fafen/CWS data collated by TRI

Hence for the political party candidates in the constituency approaching a biradari chief is no longer a preferred choice. Rather local government representatives elected at the union council level have emerged as key players and candidates seem keener on seeking their support. In the discussions with the political leaders and workers in the constituency, it was noted that candidates use a UC as a unit to focus their mobilization and canvassing efforts. The Whatsapp groups of various political parties are organized at the UC level.<sup>244</sup>

The Gilanis and Bosan maintain close liaison with these LG representatives who act as a conduit between the constituency candidates and the electorate for the provision of municipal services as well as favors at police stations and courts.

These networks do not necessarily fall along the biradari lines and may include voters from more than one castes. The PTI's winning candidate Dehar is also no stranger to this brand of politics as he previously was an MPA on the PPP ticket. Dehar has been successful in turning the historically two-way contest in NA-154 into a three-way competition in the 2018 elections. In a Key Informant's view the PTI feudal-cum businessman who has invested his surplus capital in real estate has challenged the established order of the traditional feudal and pir in the constituency.<sup>245</sup>

In NA-154 there are 25 to 30, 000 ideological votes for both the PML-N and PTI where PPP's ideological vote is almost negligible. These ideological vote play a key role in the electoral contest and one major reason for the PPP's defeat in Multan in the recent elections.

**Future contest is among the pirs, feudals and traders:** Bosan, a landed political leader who as an independent candidate secured about 37, 000 votes (17%).<sup>246</sup> He previously won twice on a PML-Q ticket in the 2002 elections by securing 43% votes.<sup>247</sup> In the 2008 elections while he lost he had 31% of the votes. In the 2013 elections, under the PML-N banner he bagged 47% of the polled votes.<sup>248</sup> His vote base is mostly patronage based which he has been able to hold on to over the last two decades. Hence he remains an important political player in the constituency. The Gilanis too are

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244. Interviews with Key Informants in Multan held on 9 Dec, 2020

245. Interviews with Key Informants in Multan held on 9 Dec, 2020

246. ECP data

247. Ibid

248. Ibid

actively involved with the politics of the district as well as this constituency that they proudly consider to have a hold on since the early 1950s. The PTI at the moment rides the high wave by having control over all the six NA seats in the district that were won by a difference of 12% of votes.<sup>249</sup> Nonetheless PTI's performance on the governance front in the remaining part of its tenure will have greater bearing on the possible outcome of the next elections.

The PTI NA member represents the business class in the district. The business class or traders mostly sided with the PTI in the 2018 elections, breaking the two- family control over the constituency. The only prediction about the future of politics in the district is that it shall be a narrowly contested three-way fight.

#### 6.4. Determinants of voting behavior

**Politics is ultimately local:** There was massive development work carried out by Gilanis and Bosan particularly in transport, sewerage and roads and as a result they both have been real contenders in the constituency. PTI's winning candidate in the recent elections was an MPA of the PPP in 2008 elections. He was known as 'deputy prime minister' in the area and led all development work. *"When we go to the voters, people ask for development schemes such as water filtration plants, electricity and roads and we wonder how is this possible before an election. This is because of corrupt practices of the electable as they offer it as a bribe"* said one participant belonging to the JI.<sup>250</sup>

**Party ticket plus electable make a winning formula:** When asked whether ideology was a factor determining the voting behavior, the Participants in the discussion held in Multan were divided on the extent of the influence of ideology.<sup>251</sup> Their estimates varied between 5 to 20% of voters who would vote ideologically. They, rather, were of the view that all the three major parties – the PTI, PML-N and PPP – have substantial votes which when clubbed with the votes that a strong electable brings brightens up a party's chance at winning. In that sense, an individual candidate's standing in terms of wealth, influence with the district administration as well as his character matters a lot. A classic example, quoted by the KIs was of Gilanis who have won in this constituency multiple times and now even when their party is almost routed

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249. ECP data collated by TRI

250. Interviews with Key Informants in Multan held on 9 Dec, 2020

251. Ibid

out of the whole province, they still manage to win a substantial amount of votes.<sup>252</sup> In the 2018 elections, Gilanis ran on three of the six constituencies in the Multan district and were runner ups in all three of them.

A party's vote bank stays intact as long as it is able to maintain a perception of winnability and has something to show in terms of development work in the constituency which in political parlance is called 'performance.'

The PPP while visibly performed and has candidates of good moral character and influence, it has suffered on the perception count. It no longer is considered to be a winning party.

**People follow the 'winning trend':** People vote in the constituency based on a 'trend' as to who was likely to win. This explains PTI's landslide win and the PPP's loss in the district as the media projected the former as a potential winner and the latter as a loser in the run up to the 2018 elections.

**Women and their voting patterns:** While there is no reliable data available on the subject, the Key Informants with a keen eye on political developments in the area were of the view that still some 85% of the women vote based on the decision by the head of household whereas 15% may vote independently.<sup>253</sup> In the recent elections, more women voted independently due to the slogan of 'change' and the influence of the media. Nevertheless the women's participation in political activities such as attending political gatherings and political campaigning has not increased.

## **6.5. Role and response of political parties**

**Constituency leaders maintain contact with the electorate through digital media:** Political party leaders are said to be generally accessible to the citizens. Bosan and Gilanis are more accessible as they have their permanent residences in the area. Except for the JI, no political party has any designated office in the constituency. Mostly the political party leaders' respective residences double as their offices. All political parties conduct meetings with the electorate on an as-and-when-needed basis. According to the Key Informants, none of the leading political parties have any institutional mechanism to engage the constituents and listen to their developmental

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252. Ibid

253. Interviews with Key Informants in Multan held on 9 Dec, 2020

needs.<sup>254</sup> All of them said that the constituency leaders have established Whatsapp groups at the union council levels to stay in touch with the electorate. The mechanism while enough for information sharing purposes is no substitute for programmatic engagement for seeking formal input of the constituents in the policy making and fiscal allocations.

## 6.6. Future of politics in Multan

**PPP has lost out on the perception index:** There was a consensus among the Key Informants that people by and large follow the ‘winning trend’ and do not want to support a candidate that has no chance of winning at the polls.<sup>255</sup> The PPP in the Punjab province is no longer a ‘winning’ party. Moreover, the PTI has replaced the PPP as the ‘contender’ along with the PML-N in Multan. The three seats that PPP contested in the district were all fought by the Gilanis who based on traditional vote associated with their shrine, and backed by their patronage maintain strong presence but their long absence from the corridors of power and people’s wont to vote for the winning candidate may erode their strength. Besides while the party has strong candidates in the Gilanis, the party itself has lost the ‘ideological’ vote in the region. And there are only a few candidates who stand a chance of winning in Punjab unless they are on a mainstream party ticket, which in this case are PTI and PML-N, which invariably hands them a cache of around 20,000 to 30,000 votes.

PPP has only five NA seats from the province of Punjab, four of which are from south Punjab, two each from Rahim Yar Khan and Muzaffargarh districts. Almost all of these seats were won by the traditional feudal electables belonging to the party. So essentially in south Punjab, the PPP is only as strong as the allegiance of its electables with it. Besides looking to improve its grassroots linkages with the electorate, the party shall need to ensure to keep their winning candidates on its side.

In general, the PPP’s performance in the Punjab province in the last two elections suggests that it is virtually on the verge of extinction in the province as in most constituencies in the central and northern region, the PPP candidates ended up as distant third or fourth with a few thousand votes.<sup>256</sup>

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254. Interviews with Key Informants in Multan held on 9 Dec, 2020

255. Interviews with Key Informants in Multan held on 9 Dec, 2020

256. Shah, Kriti M et al. *Pakistan General Election 2018: Analysis of Results and Implications*. (2018). Observer Research Foundation. [https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/ORF\\_Special\\_Report\\_78\\_Pakistan.pdf](https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/ORF_Special_Report_78_Pakistan.pdf) ( accessed Jan 15, 2021)

**Religious groups have no future in Multan:** The religious political parties had some early success in Multan as JUI got 11% of the total votes in 1970 elections in the district whereas in 1977 elections PNA had secured about 44% votes and 2 of the four seats. Later in 1993, JUP, a Barelvi sect supported party, won one seat. And later still in 2002 elections the MMA had 5% of votes. In the 2018 elections, the TLP got only 2% of votes. Religious groups, mainly Barelvi TLP, while present may not be able to create a dent in the overall political picture of the district. PPP representatives in the constituency were confident of winning back the traditional Barelvi support in the next elections.

## 7. Larkana: Lacking a viable alternative

Mausoleum of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto in Garhi Khuda Bux, Larkana



*“Irrespective of the decision of the head of household, generally women in rural Sindh vote for the PPP because of their love and devotion towards Benazir Bhutto.”*

*A Key Informant in Larkana*

### **Introduction**

Larkana district is located in north Sindh. It has four tehsils: Larkana, Rato Dero, Dokri and Bakrani. Total population of the district is 1.52 million, 54 % of which is rural. Larkana Tehsil has a total population of 0.74 million of which 67% are urban.<sup>257</sup> Literacy rate is 58%; 66% for urban and 51% for rural areas.<sup>258</sup> Islam is the religion of majority in this district followed by a minority of Hindu community.<sup>259</sup> The district is represented in the parliament by two national assembly and four provincial assembly seats. PS-11 falls in the Larkana-II National Assembly constituency and includes

Municipal Corporation and Larkana Tapedar Circle of Larkana Tehsil.<sup>260</sup> The constituency has a total of 152, 614 votes; of which 55% are male whereas 45% are female.<sup>261</sup>

## **7.1. Social and demographic profile**

**Quality of education has deteriorated over time:** According to Alif Ailaan Pakistan's district education rankings 2016, Larkana with 52<sup>nd</sup> rank was the highest ranked district in Sindh.<sup>262</sup> Nevertheless from the interviews with the participants of this study in Larkana, it was revealed that enrollment in the government schools is decreasing mainly due to deteriorating educational standards and the parents' increasing preference for private schools. Previously, the government schools such as Municipal School and Shah Mahmood School were known for quality education; children of notable families used to study there. Currently, these government schools only cater to children from lower income groups<sup>263</sup>. Outdated syllabi coupled with inability of teachers to cope with the modern teaching techniques have contributed to the failure of government schools in providing quality education. One of the Key Informants said that appointments of teachers on political grounds between 1980 and 1995 are to equally blame for the falling standards of education in the PS-11.<sup>264</sup>

**Digital empowerment: Aware electorate holds politicians accountable:** In line with the national trends, some 70% of the population is believed to have smart phones in the constituency. The increased use of technology and smartphones has led to greater information sharing among the population particularly around the political issues. One Key Informant said that digital media played a significant role in the victory of GDA candidate Moazzam Ali Abassi. "Videos related to PPP leadership, wherein they were cross-questioned by the communities were shared through social media which reflected voters' lack of confidence in the PPP, This is one reason for GDA's

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260. ECP Delimitation 2018 <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/Documents/delimitation2018/31-5-2018%20final/5.%20Form-7%20National%20Assembly%20Sindh.pdf> (accessed Jan 5, 2021)

261. ECP

262. Alif Ailaan; Sustainable Development Policy Institute. *Pakistan District Education Ranking 2016*. [https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/alifailaan/pages/537/attachments/original/1474368820/Pakistan\\_District\\_Education\\_Rankings\\_2016\\_Full\\_Report\\_pdf?1474368820](https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/alifailaan/pages/537/attachments/original/1474368820/Pakistan_District_Education_Rankings_2016_Full_Report_pdf?1474368820) (accessed Jan 24, 2021)

263. Interviews held with Key Informants in Larkana on 29 Oct, 2020

264. Ibid

win,” asserted one participant in the discussion.<sup>265</sup>

A media person interviewed for this study noted that there is now an increasing trend of video-documenting a complaint and posting it directly on digital media rather than approaching the traditional media as was the practice in the past.

Most of the Key Informants attributed changing political dynamics in the constituency to the increased use of social media.

**Unemployment, inflation increase the wealth gap:** Agriculture is the main source of employment for the rural population of the district.<sup>266</sup> Whereas in the urban areas people are engaged in various economic activities like trade, services, business, and government and private jobs. The district has a well-established canal irrigation system. Two major canals i.e., Rice Canal and Dadu Canal irrigate the land in the district. The Rice Canal is non-perennial while the Dadu Canal is perennial. The katcha area of Larkana, Rato Dero and Dokri tehsils is brought under cultivation during the Rabi season, which is termed as flood-based farming. Larkana falls in the Agro Climatic Zone which is good for rice production followed by wheat and sugarcane. The district is known for its quality production of guava and berry. Larkana also has sugar, flour and rice mills, chilly and spice processing units, ice factories and oil mills.<sup>267</sup>

In recent year’s people of Larkana witnessed huge investment in real estate through the construction of various housing societies. As a result the price of agricultural land has increased manifold. The interviewees confirmed the impression that inequality in the area has increased. According to one of the Key Informants, constituency leaders of all the political parties had witnessed manifold increase in their wealth. While the economic health of the common people in PS-11 has not improved as they get increasingly lesser share in the government jobs than before. Inflation is another reason that has kept the people poor.

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265. Ibid

266. Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support Programme. Larkana District Profile. (2016). <https://success.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Larkana-District-profile.pdf> ( accessed Jan 15, 2021)

267. Ibid

All the participants were of the view that road connectivity has increased people's mobility and the chance to avail jobs in the private sector in the urban centers.

The participants said that the employment patterns have slightly changed among the youth as they have started working for various franchises, have opened mobile phone shops, moved to Karachi and Hyderabad for jobs in the private sector. Others have started farming such as cultivation of rice and guava orchards. One opinion was the Sindh Government was not encouraging industrial growth which has the potential to offer more jobs to the youth.

All the participants noted that female literacy has increased in the area. Due to economic pressure some of the taboos about women have also broken and now they are seen to be working as salespersons, and in banks.

**Increased religiosity disrupts harmony, impacts economic activity:**

There was a general agreement among the Key Informants that religiosity is growing among the people in the district. Historically as well north Sindh was religiously inclined but it was by and large tolerant of religious and sectarian differences. One view was that since people lack any recreational facilities, they find no better use of their time than to indulge in religious festivals, a trend that has recently picked up in the area, or in subversive activities. On March 16, 2014, a mob set a worship place (dharamshala) of Hindu community on fire and damaged some statues of Hindu deities in an adjacent temple in Jinnah Bagh area of Larkana.<sup>268</sup> While on the one hand the incident is reflective of growing intolerance in the society, on the other hand a majority of the people including workers of religious groups and political parties supported the aggrieved Hindu community particularly in the aftermath of the afore-mentioned incident. Political parties, at some level, are also seen to be part of the problem as they try and capitalize on these social and sectarian cleavages.<sup>269</sup> Incidents such as the attack on dharamshala, forced conversions and subsequent marriages of Hindu girls reflect that Sindh is falling in the hands of extremism. This trend is not without its social and economic costs. Hindus who constitute about 10 % of Larkana's total population own around 40% of businesses in Larkana.

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268. Hasan, Syed Raza. *Hindu temple set on fire in Pakistan over blasphemy* (2014). Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-hindu-idUSBREA2F0GT20140316> ( accessed Jan 25, 2021)

269. Views expressed by a Key Informant in Larkana

While historically Hindus and Muslims have remained in peace in the district, since the dharamshala incident, the Hindu community is feeling insecure. Resultantly, the economic activity in Larkana is not as robust as it was in the past.<sup>270</sup>

**JUI-F gains a toehold in PS-11:** Religious political party JUI-F is ranked as the third largest party after PPP and PPP (Workers) in the constituency. Apart from JUI-F, JI and Tablighi Jamaat are also active in the area. Hence the trend of daily prayers, fasting, purdah (veil) among women is growing.

Celebration of annual national days such as Independence Day, Defense Day and other religious days by different religious sects/ political parties is seen to be a recent phenomenon introduced by religious groups. An interviewee affiliated with JUI-F said that his party has four to five thousands votes in two of the 15 union councils. "JUI started gaining roots among the people of this constituency when Arbab Raheem, the then chief minister of Sindh would visit and stay in a madrasa run by a JUI-F leader," claimed one of the study participants. All the Key Informants were unanimous in their view that the vote bank of religious political parties will only increase in the future.

## 7.2. Electoral and political profile

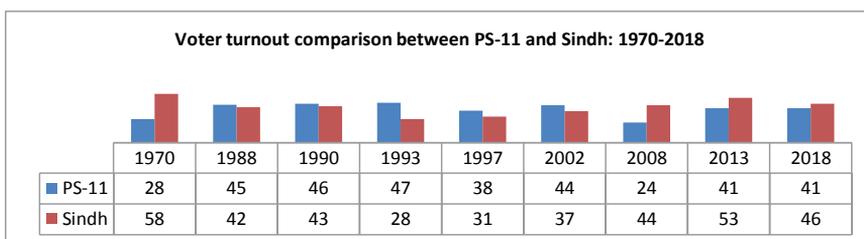
**Voter Turnout among the lowest in Sindh province:** For the five consecutive elections since 1988, PS-11 has posted higher than the average turnout for the province of Sindh. However since the 2008 elections, the turnout in the constituency is consistently lower than the province average. As for the gender gap, 34.7% women voted in the 2018 elections as opposed to 46% of men. Women in this constituency on average voted 7% less than the average female turnout in Sindh province (42.5%).<sup>271</sup>

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270. Ibid

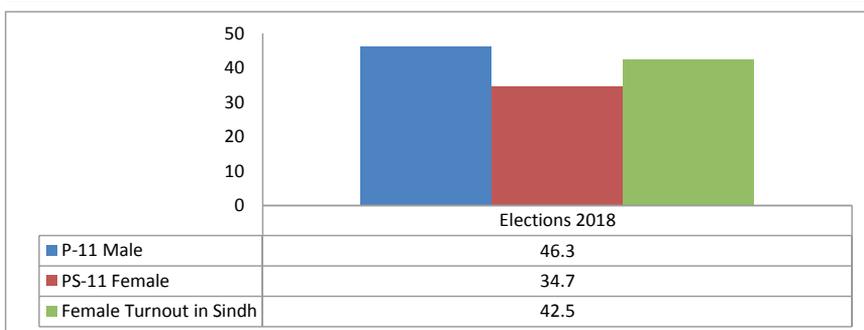
271. Fafen's Election Observation report, Voter Turnout in GE 2018

Figure 13: Voter turnout comparison between PS-11 and Sindh province: 1970-2018



Source: Election Commission of Pakistan

Figure 14: Gender gap in turnout in 2018 elections



Source: Fafen's Election Observation report, Voter Turnout in GE 2018

**Larkana, traditional stronghold of PPP:** NA-200, Larkana-I, being the home constituency of the PPP founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has remained the party's stronghold since the 1970 elections and which it never lost. In the 2018 elections PPP won the other NA constituency (NA-201, Larkana-II) by a margin of 28, 000 votes beating the GDA candidate. Three of the four provincial assembly seats too went to the PPP by a collective margin of some 45, 000 votes.

Table 8: NA-200 Larkana-I winners - 1970-2018

Year	Constituency	Candidate
1970-1977	Formerly NA-163	Zulfikar Ali Bhutto
1988- 1997	Formerly NA-164	Begum Nusrat Bhutto
2002-2013	Formerly NA-204	PPP's candidates <sup>&lt;?&gt;</sup>
2018	NA-200	Bilawal Bhutto Zardari

*Source: Election Commission of Pakistan; Fafen/ Church World Service- Afghanistan/Pakistan National Assembly Elections in Pakistan, 1970- 2008*

**The surprise defeat in PS-11:** PS-11 proved an exception in the 2018 elections. The GDA's Moazzam Ali Abbasi beat Jamil Ahmed Soomro of PPP by 5,500 votes in the by-elections of October, 2019. Earlier, in the 2018 general elections, the GDA candidate had defeated the PPP's Nida Khuhro by 10, 000 votes. The by-elections in the constituency came after the de-seating of the winning candidate by the Supreme Court in August, 2019 for concealment of assets. After the elections, the PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari insinuating foul play had remarked: "Despite all this political engineering PPP has reduced the GDA/JUIF/PTI lead by 5,000 votes in less than a year."<sup>272</sup> However, the defeat was considered a major political upset.

### 7.3. Power dynamics in Larkana

Biradari and caste are significant determinants of power dynamics in the northern Sindh. The Key Informants in Larkana were of the opinion that 30 to 40% of the people in the constituency still vote based on biradari/caste. They however thought that social media will dent this practice in the near future.<sup>273</sup>

Bhutto, Rind, Bhugio, Sheikh, Unnar, Chandio, Magsi, Soomro, Memon and Kalhoro are the major clans in the district.<sup>274</sup> The Key Informants also reported large-scale in-migration in Larkana from the rural areas which has changed the demographics in PS-11. In their view, the migrants from the rural areas were still voting under the influence of the feudals.

272. Daily TheNews. PS-11 by-polls: GDA's Moazzam Ali retains seat by defeating PPP in its stronghold. (2019). <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/542467-ps-11-by-polls-gdas-moazzam-ali-abbasi-defeats-ppp-in-its-stronghold> ( accessed Jan 10, 2021)

273. Interviews held with Key Informants in Larkana on 29 Oct, 2020

274. Relief Web International. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/PESA-DP-Larkana-Sindh.pdf> ( accessed Dec 25, 2020)

Historically the chiefs of Larkana tribes decided on a collective offering of electoral support on behalf their communities. The PPP has had support among a majority of these tribes/castes which is manifested in landslide victories for the PPP since the 1970 elections. This trend started to show a slight change in the 2018 elections when the PPP for the first time lost a provincial assembly seat in the district. The party lost a by-election in the same constituency in 2019 to the GDA candidate.

Although the vote bloc phenomenon is generally associated with the rural voters, urban vote bloc arrangement was observed in PS-11. Larkana Awami Ittehad brought all the anti-PPP forces -- GDA, JUI, PTI -- together at one platform against the PPP. Sindh Brohi Ittehad and Meerani Ittehad comprising two major castes were part of this alliance and voted against the PPP. During the interviews, it was found out that the Sheikh community was not happy with the choice of the PPP candidates both in the 2018 elections and later the by-elections. The influential Shaikh community of Larkana associated with business, which has traditionally been supporting the PPP, wanted one of its own as a candidate and had opposed the PPP's nominee, Nida Khuhro, for her 'poor performance' as local government representative in the past.

The PPP's by-election candidate also was considered a weak contestant.<sup>275</sup> On both these occasions, the party did not take into account the opinion of constituency workers as well as their supporters which caused them this defeat.<sup>276</sup>

#### **7.4. Determinants of voting behavior**

The political dynamics in the constituency seems to have changed over the last one decade which manifests itself in consistent lower turnout and a subtle yet gradual increase in the share of votes for the anti-PPP political parties. Since this is the first ever loss for the PPP in its home constituency, it merits attention. Our discussions with the Key Informants in the constituency reveal the following as the possible causes for this unforeseen loss to the PPP.<sup>277</sup>

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275. Tunio Hafeez. *In a first, PPP goes asking for votes in 'safe' Larkana*. (2018). Express Tribune. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1765010/first-ppp-goes-asking-votes-safe-larkana> ( accessed Dec 15, 2020)

276. Interviews held with Key Informants in Larkana on 29 Oct, 2020

277. Interviews held with Key Informants in Larkana on 29 Oct, 2020

**Politics of exclusion:** The discussants in Larkana were of the view that politics largely now is the domain of the rich class. *"You need PKR 4-5 crores (40-50 million) to contest an election which is possible only for less than 1% of the population. The system excludes 99% of the people from the competition,"* said one of the interviewees.<sup>278</sup> The ideological worker of the PPP as a result is disgruntled with the politics as they feel excluded.

**Lack of health services angered voters:** Larkana was in the news for the outbreak of HIV epidemic in the adjoining tehsil of Ratodero in 2018 affecting over one thousand children and adults with no drugs available for their treatment. People died of rabies and snake bites with hospitals being short of the vaccines. Similar state of poor health facilities in the PS-11 had angered mainly the urban voter. All the discussants agreed that road connectivity from rural to urban centers had improved, however, they differed on the conditions of hospitals and schools.<sup>279</sup> While one Key Informant was of the view that they are in better condition as compared to the past, others complained about their deteriorated state.<sup>280</sup>

**How do women vote in Sindh Assembly constituency PS-11?** While most of the Key Informants<sup>281</sup> thought that women do not exercise any agency while voting as that decision is taken at the household level by the male head of the family, there was one view that *"irrespective of the decision of the head of household, generally women in rural Sindh vote for the PPP because of their love and devotion towards Benazir Bhutto."* He argued that due to this reason political parties' agents keep a keen eye on women polling stations during the election.

## 7.5. Role and response of political parties

**Political parties have active presence in the constituency:** The PPP, PPP (Workers), JUI -F and PTI – have their active presence in the PS-11. Constituency leadership of all these political parties is accessible to the citizens. Political parties engage with citizens on an as-and-when needed basis. The JUI-F and GDA are relatively more active in raising voice for public needs such as infrastructure, hospitals and other public issues. The Key

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278. Ibid

279. Ibid

280. Interviews held with Key Informants in Larkana on 29 Oct, 2020

281. Interviews with Key Informants in Larkana held on 29 Oct, 2020

Informants<sup>282</sup> feel that the political parties lack a programmatic approach to development and do not formally engage with their voters to seek their input while formulating policy response to core issues such as education, health, and employment.

An interviewee affiliated with the PPP informed that they have formed a Whatsapp group at each UC level for information sharing and raising concerns within the party as well as with the party's top leadership.<sup>283</sup> Nonetheless it was observed that such online forums mostly remain restricted to sharing of messages and video clips that show their political rivals in a bad light. To systematically address the concerns of the citizens and have their input in policy programming, political parties will need to adopt a more coherent and institutionalized approach.

## **7.6. Future of politics in Larkana**

**PS-11 lacks a viable alternative:** Low voter turnout in the constituency for three consecutive elections (from 2008 to 2018) may well be due to the PPP's traditional voter's disillusionment with the party. While the Sindh province in general has registered lower than the national turnout, the PS-11 constituency goes even lower than that - something that the party in power since 2008 should think about. Voices from within the constituency opine that If the PPP in the short term pays attention to the civic services, and listens to voters while deciding on a candidate for the constituency and in the long term, creates an environment where the youth have more opportunities for gainful employment, it could reclaim the lost space.

This particular constituency is not just arithmetic but has great symbolic significance for the party and for the morale of its workers across the province as well as the country. At a time when nationally its political fortunes are in doldrums nothing could resurrect its image more than a better showing on its home turf. And it is not unachievable given that the party already has firm control over five of the six constituencies in Larkana with a cumulative unassailable lead of about 100, 000 votes.

Another factor that favors the PPP is that the incumbent GDA MPA does not have access to the provincial development funds. Neither is the federal government of PTI likely to offer him any support in this regard. And if

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282. Interviews held with Key Informants in Larkana on 29 Oct, 2020

283. Ibid

lack of development and civic services was the reason for the electorate to move away from the PPP, the alternative is not of any help either. Under the circumstances for the near future, PPP shall be a safer bet for the PS-11 people as there is no alternative to the PPP on the horizon.



## 8. Conclusions

The political behavior of a Pakistani voter has undergone substantial changes. Given complexity and diversity of demographic patterns, the political trends appear non-linear and nuanced. Four constituencies observed under this study analyzed with the results of recently held elections and public opinion surveys give us some pointers to paint a picture of political dynamics in Pakistan.

At macro level, the government's performance (developmental work such as roads and transport infrastructure, power projects, investment in health and education; employment opportunities, supply of daily commodities at affordable price; maintenance of law and order and provision of justice) has emerged as a key determinant of political choice during elections. Other important determinants include a party's ability to provide targeted patronage, charisma of party's leadership, party's ideology, influence of the constituency level candidates and a party's stance on specific policy issues. Moreover, a voter's choice is also determined by a curious interplay of certain social factors such as religion/sect, region, and ethnicity and level of education and economic status.

'Performance' (or 'delivery' as per the political parlance) by the incumbent party has remained a major consideration for a voter before making a decision in any elections. The factors – inflation, state of economy and employment – as the key proxy indicators of a government's performance mostly negatively impact the incumbent political party. Historically, due to perpetual financial constraints, no civilian government has ever been able to fulfill aspirations of its constituents and hence no single political party returned to Islamabad for two consecutive terms in its entire electoral history. Curiously enough, this is different for the provincial governments as PPP has returned for the third consecutive term in Sindh while PTI for the second time in KP despite the fact that post-18th Amendment, provincial governments have a major role in public sector development. This dichotomy in electoral behavior of rejecting one incumbent at the national level while accepting the other at the provincial level needs probing.

According to most analysis, as well as the pattern emerging out of the by-polls held between 2018 elections and now as well as the cantonment board elections, not voting a party in for a consecutive second term at the national level is what is likely to stay in course during the next elections.

Patronage has been another important factor in Pakistani polls. Rural populations with their lives intertwined with courts and police stations can never negotiate the labyrinth of justice without the political backing, and hence they offer electoral support to whoever has the means to watch their backs vis-à-vis these two state institutions. Sometimes an occasional employment and a small grant for paving of a street or laying of a sewer line in a neighborhood also ensure electoral favors for the patron politician.

In the absence of a programmatic approach to providing civic services to the citizens, seeking patronage remains the most viable option for citizens to negotiate their space with vis-a-vis the state institutions. This works well for the political class as well. This trade off of state and private patronage with electoral support makes the vast number of rural constituencies an electables' haven who specialize in brokering patronage.

Rampant poverty, exacerbated by the institutionalized inequality encourages retail vote buying through material inducements among the lower income groups both in rural and urban areas. This is an unfortunate reality that exists across the country and favors anyone with deep pockets. This practice shall continue unless the poor segments of society have the means at their disposal to rise above meeting their basic needs.

Party loyalty although ranks lower on a voter's priority list, it rakes in a healthy chunk of votes for the party's candidate which when combined with the candidate's own vote bank (earned through provision of patronage) makes for a healthy recipe for victory. Party loyalty is hugely relevant for the major political parties such as PPP in the context of Sindh, and PTI and PML-N in their respective strongholds which overlap in case of Punjab.

Also, relative strengthening of political party's brands and their ideologies have nudged out the Independent candidates as major players from political contests. In the future, only fewer Independents are likely to emerge successful from certain pockets of southern Punjab and rural Sindh.

Religiosity is increasing among all segments of the society. This increase is more pronounced among the upwardly mobile lower/middle classes. Responding to the rightist leanings of the electorate, the mainstream political parties

make an elaborate effort at public display of piety and employing religious jargon and aligning party's manifesto to religion. Hence, in all matters religion, major political parties take a cautious route in their messaging and deal in such optics that align with the worldview of the majority Sunni population comprising both Barelvis and Deobandis.

Correspondingly, the religiously inclined voter has also historically acted as a rational voter and chose to vote for one of the mainstream political parties instead of religio-political parties who seldom had an opportunity to form a government and hence have little access to the patronage resources.

There are always one-issue voters who in most cases are undecided about their choice and upon listening to political discourse choose to vote over a hot issue close to the elections. The issue of blasphemy espoused by PTI and TLP before and close to the 2018 elections is one example of taking away a significant chunk of PML-N votes, potentially depriving the party another chance at ruling. This goes to show that in a climate of intense political polarization and disinformation, rigorous campaigning can sway the 'floating voters' towards a party that is the loudest of all. While both TLP and PTI successfully used an explosive issue of blasphemy against the PML-N in 2018 polls, whereas PML-N also exploited the issue of chronic power outages in the 2013 elections and "ending darkness" was one major plank of its election campaign which objective analysts thought was one major reason behind its success.

So one-issue voter is a constant in every election. However it is a tricky bargain for a political party to bank its entire campaign on one-issue. A classic example of failure of one-issue campaign of 'change' by PTI came in 2013 polls when, contrary to all the hype, it ended up winning only 30-odd seats in the National Assembly.

A major creeping change, both at the local and the national levels, is gradual decrease of the influence of caste and biradari as a major determinant of political choice. Over the course of a dozen elections to the National Assembly, the voter has evolved into a rational thinker. S/he thinks 'local' but not in terms of traditional horizontal structures such as caste and biradari but municipal services and patronage. The voter now overwhelmingly makes individual choices bypassing the group bonds based on caste and biradari. Even when in constituencies such as Nankana and Larkana where biradaris and castes are seen to make significant contribution, this denominator alone does not earn a candidate support from a certain biradari unless he is able to

combine it with an elaborate patronage networks or has some development projects in health, education and infrastructure to his name.

Due to relative economic empowerment that came on the back of improved literacy, women have begun to vote independently. In case of Nankana, Lyari and Larkana many women were reported to vote independently of their families. These findings point to a discernable changing trend in the voting behavior of women. A more nuanced study of other rural constituencies may portray a similar picture as regards women's voting behavior as was witnessed in the above mentioned three constituencies.

As for the role of province and ethnicity, ethnicization of politics has taken firm roots in Pakistan since 2013 elections, restricting leading parties particularly PPP and PML-N to specific provinces or regions. All the by-polls since the 2018 elections and recently held cantonment board elections have further cemented the three leading political parties' position in their traditional strongholds. There is less likelihood of the mainstream political parties (PTI, PPP and PML-N) making a major breakthrough outside of their existing power centers anytime soon.

A look into the social profiles of voters brings out interesting patterns. The profile of voters for the PTI and PML-N is almost similar, more so in Punjab. Considering that in the 2018 elections, PTI had a wafer-thin lead over its opponent (PML-N), the fate of the next elections in Punjab could be anybody's guess. At national level, only marginally, an urban educated younger male voter is more likely to vote for the PTI than PML-N. Conversely, a middle-aged, moderately educated rural as well as urban female voter is more likely to prefer PML-N over PTI.

A PPP voter has a slightly different profile; a rural poor with fewer years of education in Sindh is more likely to vote for the PPP. Still voters with similar profile in other provinces have voted for parties other than PPP.

Finally as regards the outreach of the political parties to the citizens, the parties, while active around the elections time, do not engage with their support base in the intervening period between two elections, and gather and respond to citizens' service delivery needs. Across the spectrum, the political parties have chosen to take a short route to winning electoral favors: to co-opt the electables to deliver targeted patronage. This lack of organic grassroots linkage at the constituency level between the voters and the political parties is a bane of Pakistani political system that has deprived the electorate of true dividends of democracy.

Nevertheless there are unmistakable signs that this behavior pattern of political parties will change soon as the expansion of the middle class, exponential increase in teledensity and introduction of high-speed internet have already put the political parties under pressure to explore new ways to provide meaningful political representation to citizens.



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Pakistan Office  
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Blue Area, P.O Box 1289, Islamabad, Pakistan

Responsible:

**Dr. Jochen Hippler** | Country Director  
**Abdullah Dayo** | Programme Coordinator

Phone: +92 51 2803391-4  
Fax: +92 51 2803395  
Website: <http://pakistan.fes.de>  
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