

PREVIEWING PAKISTAN'S 2018 ELECTIONS

Colin Cookman¹
June 4, 2018

SUMMARY

- Pakistani voters are set to go the polls later this summer to take part in the eleventh nationwide general elections in the country's history. The elections will only be the second transition from a full-term civilian-elected government to a successor in the country's history. Uncertainty over the outcome remains high; to date, no national government has been elected to a second consecutive term.
- After starting its tenure in 2013 with a ruling majority, the outgoing government led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) left office with its eponymous chief, Nawaz Sharif, embroiled in multiple legal battles and disqualified by the courts from holding elected or party office. His brother, Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif, must now lead the party into elections while countering defections, managing succession strains, and balancing intra-party disputes over how forcefully to confront the judiciary and military establishment in response to Nawaz's disqualification.
- While the PML-N's tenure saw comparatively higher levels of macroeconomic growth, conditions in its final years in office — including decelerating remittances, rising international oil prices, weakening exports and diminishing currency reserves, among other factors — may undercut the party's efforts to portray itself as an effective steward of Pakistan's economic development during the upcoming campaign period.
- The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led by former cricket star Imran Khan, has sought to bounce back from 2013 electoral losses through persistent challenges to the PML-N government, including mass street protests, legal petitions, and allegations of corruption. The PTI has also sought to supplant the former head of government, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), in order to consolidate the opposition vote and oust the PML-N.
- Since former President Pervez Musharraf's departure from office in 2009, the Pakistani military has increasingly shifted to less visible forms of influence and background pressure, but remains a dominant force. Other actors outside the formal electoral system, including the judiciary, media, and both armed and unarmed organizations and social movements, also play major roles in shaping the pre-election environment.
- As Pakistani politics polarized along regional lines in the 2013 elections, the PML-N government has slow-rolled or walked back some decentralization measures initiated by its predecessor. Political dynamics at the provincial level have also experienced major shifts, including the fracturing of the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), previously a dominant force in Pakistan's largest city of Karachi, into at least four different factions; the collapse of a PML-N coalition government in Balochistan and formation of a new breakaway party; and the approval during the outgoing government's final week in office of the merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, scheduled to take place after the elections are concluded.
- A new national census in 2017, the first in nearly twenty years, and the redrawing of constituencies by the Election Commission in early 2018 has also restructured the boundaries of the electoral competition. These and other changes related to the administration and adjudication of the polls may be a significant source of future legal and political disputes, and have the potential to shift election outcomes, especially in a fragmented or narrowly-divided contest.

INTRODUCTION

Later this summer, more than 100 million registered Pakistani voters will have the opportunity to cast ballots to elect new representatives for the National and Provincial Assemblies, the eleventh nationwide parliamentary elections to be held since the country gained independence from British India in 1947. Pakistan is principally viewed by U.S. policymakers through the lens of the security challenges posed by its nuclear arsenal, counterterrorism threats, and conflicts with neighboring India and Afghanistan. While Pakistani electoral outcomes are not necessarily the principal determinant of the country's policies on the security front, understanding Pakistan's internal political processes should remain important for the U.S. and other partners seeking to effectively craft policy on these and other issues. For Pakistani voters and political elites, the 2018 general elections are a significant milestone and a potential point of reconfiguration for the domestic balance of power.

Pakistan's political landscape is fractious and has faced major upheavals in the year running up to the vote, leaving considerable uncertainty about the possible course of the polls. Although unable to fully resolve that uncertainty, this report attempts to provide a comprehensive but accessible primer to the elections, with the goal of informing assessments as and after polling occurs. In doing so, the paper reviews the major political trends of the past five years and of previous Pakistani national election cycles, looks at competing interest groups in both the formal and informal political system, and examines how the electoral competition is structured, administered, and adjudicated. An open source electoral dataset used to inform some of the paper's assessments also accompanies this report online.²

The upcoming elections in July follow the removal from office last year of former Prime Minister Mian Mohammad Nawaz Sharif.³ The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party came into office in 2013 with a ruling majority in the National Assembly, allowing it to retain control of the government even after Nawaz's removal from office.⁴ Despite turmoil on the security, political, and economic fronts, the PML-N government is now set to complete a full five-year term, only the second government elected during a period of civilian rule to do so in Pakistan's history. But like the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) government that preceded it, the PML-N's prime minister was disqualified from holding office by the Supreme Court of Pakistan before finishing out his term, after Nawaz and several members of his family were caught up in corruption scandals linked to the disclosure of overseas business assets and real estate holdings first detailed in the "Panama Papers" leaks of April 2016.⁵ Nawaz was subsequently barred by the Supreme Court of Pakistan from holding any party offices, forcing a transfer of the party presidency to his brother, Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif.⁶

Electoral contests at the national, provincial, or local level are not the only — or even necessarily the primary — route to political power and influence in Pakistan. But elections are a frequent feature in the country's seventy-year history, even during periods of overt military rule. Past military dictators have sought to co-opt allies and legitimate their rule through controlled polls and restrictions on participation, and have consistently found civilian partners with which to do so. National political elites and local interest groups seek elected office in Pakistan as one

means of advancing their interests, but may also draw upon access to the civilian and military bureaucracy, the judicial system, business networks, ties of kinship, foreign sources of support, and in some cases the use of organized violence. Elections are far from the only game in town when it comes to negotiating the balance of political power within Pakistan, but they are a significant field of play.

Pakistan's political and institutional history has been shaped by the legacy of British colonial rule, by the series of military coups that have taken place in the years since independence, by conflicts with neighboring India and Afghanistan, and by the separation of East Pakistan to form independent Bangladesh in 1971, among other significant episodes. While elections have been a recurring feature in the political system, Pakistan is not a liberal democracy. Protections for minorities are weak and deteriorating, and many forms of speech or political action are restricted or criminalized, including "blasphemous" remarks, public criticism of security or judicial institutions, and public gatherings held in violation of ordinances that can be imposed effectively at will.⁷ Civilian and military bureaucratic authorities have broad powers in many areas to enact policies with minimal public input, and formal regulations are enforced irregularly. To the extent that it constitutes a coherent single actor, the Pakistani state's ability or interest in providing broadly accessible public services to its citizenry is limited by a political system primarily structured around the redistribution of patronage goods and privileges to benefit narrow constituencies, and hampered by a weak domestic revenue base.

Pakistan's frequent constitutional upheavals and experience of military coups has meant that the rules of political competition are not firmly settled and are subject to frequent change. In the decade since the end of military rule under former Chief of Army Staff and President Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistani political order has experienced major renegotiations in the balance of power between the federal government and the provinces, the presidency and the parliament, the judiciary and the executive, and the military and civilian.⁸ The previous PPP government's 2008-2013 tenure was characterized by a significant de-concentration in formal central authority in favor of the provincial governments, an activist judiciary that frequently clashed with the government, and a tenuous detente between the PPP's national governing coalition and the PML-N opposition.⁹

Broadly speaking, the most notable trends of the past five years under the PML-N include:

- the re-concentration of authority under the central ruling party, the slowing of federalist devolutions of power begun by its predecessor and the polarization of political representation among the provinces;
- the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party's unwillingness to accommodate itself to a "loyal opposition" role, and efforts to supplant the weakened PPP and consolidate the opposition vote;
- and significant interventions by the military, both in the formal governing and judicial processes, internal security operations, and as an unofficial political actor.

While the PML-N might theoretically enjoy the benefit of incumbency and can claim credit in its campaigning for some significant development achievements, this has been undercut by the

judiciary's disqualification of Nawaz Sharif and the challenge of maintaining party unity in the wake of his loss of office.

Attempting to forecast the result of the elections, currently scheduled to take place on July 25th, 2018, is beyond the ambitions of this paper.¹⁰ Public opinion polling data in Pakistan is limited, constituency-level voting data from past elections are rarely made available beyond aggregate totals, and Pakistan's history of electoral manipulation by both military and civilian governments means decisive interventions can often be carried out beyond the reach of open source reporting or analysis. Pakistan's first national census in nearly twenty years was carried out in 2017, the provisional figures from which were used to re-draw constituency boundaries, which will further reshape the structure of the upcoming contest and prevent easy comparison to the most recent elections before it; as of this writing, multiple legal challenges are still pending against the new constituencies, which may complicate election planning.¹¹ Exogenous events and contingencies on the security, political, and economic front are likely to further confound any predictive attempts — as exemplified when the Panama Papers, whose initial discovery and global publication appears to have had no direct connection to Pakistani political actors, contributed to the ouster of the former prime minister and offered new fuel for opposition parties in the run-up to this year's vote.

The first section of the report focuses on the overall political context: overviewing the PML-N government's tenure in office since 2013, assessing the major opposition party contenders, examining the role of the military and other non-elected political actors, and reviewing economic and demographic factors that may shape voting trends. The second section analyzes relations between the central, federal, and provincial governments, and looks closer at political dynamics province by province.¹² The final section examines the formal rules that structure the electoral competition; with the aforementioned caveats about data availability and reliability in mind, it also highlights some comparative trends from previous election rounds. Although the analysis of individual constituency races is outside the scope of this report, the outcome of the national elections will ultimately be shaped by hundreds of local competitions that will determine the makeup of the next parliament and inform the coalition-formation dynamics that follow the July 25th polls. The dataset accompanying this report online offers an initial attempt to collect and structure available information on such local-level results for more granular future analysis.

POLITICAL CONTEXT: FIVE YEARS IN REVIEW

The PML-N Returns to Power in 2013

Pakistan's last general elections in May 2013 brought a PML-N majority to power in parliament, and returned Nawaz Sharif to the prime minister's office for the third time. The scion of a prominent Punjab industrial family, Nawaz entered politics as finance and then chief minister in Punjab province under the military government of President Zia-ul Haq. He first ascended to the prime minister's office in 1990 and continued in a back-and-forth series of short-lived governments through that decade, trading power with PPP leader Benazir Bhutto. Nawaz's ouster by then-Chief of Army Staff Pervez Musharraf's military coup of 1999 led him to a nearly decade-long period of exile in Saudi Arabia and London. Although barred at the time from contesting in the general elections, he returned to Pakistan in 2007 and led the PML-N opposition during the PPP government's tenure, without holding elected office.¹³

Campaigning primarily on pledges to address the country's energy infrastructure needs and to boost stagnating economic growth, the PML-N racked up substantial wins in the 2013 elections.¹⁴ PML-N candidates performed particularly well in the heartland of Punjab, where Nawaz's brother Shehbaz Sharif had served as chief minister of the provincial government throughout the preceding five years. After the election, the PML-N was able to form a national government without the need to join in coalition with other parties (thanks in part to the induction of several candidates who had contested the polls independently).¹⁵ Soon after taking office, the party easily elected Mamnoon Hussain, a former Sindh governor and party loyalist, to the position of the presidency, now an effectively ceremonial role.¹⁶

The concentration of the PML-N's base in Punjab prevented it from securing a majority in the upper house of parliament, whose members are indirectly elected by provincial representatives in staggered terms.¹⁷ Opposition parties representing the smaller provinces held a narrow majority of seats in the senate throughout the past five years; this divided parliament encouraged single-party lawmaking in the lower house, but constrained the PML-N's ability to push major legislation or constitutional amendments through the whole parliament without concessions to the opposition. Instead, the PML-N government has relied primarily on its administrative and executive powers to push through its spending, policymaking, and appointment priorities.

The initial size of the PML-N coalition reduced the bargaining power of individual legislators on the margins or smaller parties who might have otherwise hoped to leverage their support in exchange for greater concessions or leadership roles; the predecessor PPP government, in contrast, had been consumed by coalition maintenance negotiations throughout its time in office. As prime minister, Nawaz Sharif was not an active participant in most legislative proceedings, and decision-making was primarily centralized in the party's senior leadership. As described later, the PML-N tenure also saw a greater re-concentration of power at the federal level, and slower implementation of federalist devolutions of authority and resources that had been initiated under the PPP.

Summary of Major Parties May 2013 National Assembly General Elections Results

Party Name	# of Candidates Fielded	Pct of Direct Seats Contested	# of Seats Won	Pct of Direct Seats Won	Pct of Contesting Candidates Who Won	# of Runner-Up Candidates	Mean MOV for Winners	Mean Pct of Valid Vote Received by Candidates	Total Votes Received by Party	Party Votes as Pct of All Votes Cast
PML-N	218	81.04%	126	46.84%	57.80%	40	21.65%	37.04%	14889787	32.60%
PPP	226	84.01%	34	12.64%	15.04%	45	24.62%	18.24%	7022762	15.37%
Independents	2377	883.64%	29	10.78%	1.22%	43	9.60%	1.65%	5989481	13.11%
PTI	231	85.87%	28	10.41%	12.12%	76	16.78%	18.87%	7741683	16.95%
MQM	209	77.70%	18	6.69%	8.61%	3	45.91%	6.40%	2457005	5.38%
JUI-F	132	49.07%	12	4.46%	9.09%	15	12.50%	9.13%	1487882	3.26%
PML-F	29	10.78%	5	1.86%	17.24%	11	11.77%	22.94%	1072846	2.35%
PKMAP	30	11.15%	3	1.12%	10.00%	2	12.92%	6.46%	214631	0.47%
Jamaat-e-Islami	167	62.08%	3	1.12%	1.80%	4	7.12%	3.89%	964936	2.11%
National Peoples Party	4	1.49%	2	0.74%	50.00%	1	5.72%	30.44%	197829	0.43%
PML-Q	54	20.07%	2	0.74%	3.70%	14	4.46%	13.99%	1409905	3.09%
National Party	9	3.35%	1	0.37%	11.11%	0	14.82%	6.52%	45832	0.10%
APML	79	29.37%	1	0.37%	1.27%	0	4.47%	0.47%	54231	0.12%
Qaumi Watan Party	26	9.67%	1	0.37%	3.85%	0	2.31%	1.80%	65865	0.14%
Awami Jamhuri Ittehad	2	0.74%	1	0.37%	50.00%	0	12.62%	23.24%	71175	0.16%
Awami Muslim League	16	5.95%	1	0.37%	6.25%	0	7.51%	3.27%	93046	0.20%
PML-Z	3	1.12%	1	0.37%	33.33%	1	11.77%	21.29%	128510	0.28%
ANP	58	21.56%	1	0.37%	1.72%	4	1.82%	5.65%	449946	0.99%

Corruption Charges Ensnare Nawaz

While the PML-N has successfully maintained its government, making it only the second civilian-elected government to complete a full five year term in office in Pakistan's history, defending its ruling majority in the upcoming elections will be a major challenge, especially in the wake of Nawaz Sharif's disqualification from office by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2017. Beginning in April 2016 with the publication of the "Panama Papers" by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), the final years of the PML-N government have been consumed by responses to burgeoning legal challenges and corruption investigations.

Nawaz's three adult children were among those highlighted in the initial ICIJ exposé, which led to mounting pressure from opposition leaders over the course of 2016 for an investigation into the prime minister's own assets.¹⁸ After months of hearings, the Supreme Court in April 2017 ordered a special "Joint Investigation Team" to trace the money trail; that investigation's report found a "significant gap/disparity amongst the known and declared sources of income and the wealth accumulated" by Nawaz and his children and recommended the reopening of corruption charges against them and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar.¹⁹ After reviewing the report, a Supreme Court bench disqualified Nawaz from office in late July 2017, citing Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution. That provision, first introduced during the Zia era, requires candidates for office to be *sadiq* (honest) and *ameen* (righteous), but it does not precisely define either term, leaving considerable leeway for application.²⁰ Although the court also ordered the reopening of corruption cases against Nawaz and family, his disqualification specifically relates to a failure to declare a source of income from a UAE-based company owned by his son Hassan Nawaz in his 2013 candidacy filing.²¹

In February 2018, the Supreme Court overturned legislation that had removed a requirement that political party leaders also be eligible for elected office, barring Nawaz from continuing in the position of party president and voiding his actions in that role since his disqualification; the court subsequently ruled that Nawaz's disqualification from office under Article 62 held for life.²² Nawaz has accepted the court's disqualification order, resigning from office and appointing former petroleum minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi as his successor, and in the months since has continued to participate in court proceedings related to corruption cases against him, which are still ongoing as of this writing. He has vociferously challenged the court ruling in the public sphere, however, leading rallies across the country in the run-up to the next polls and explicitly framing the upcoming elections as a populist referendum to overturn his ouster.²³

Shehbaz Sharif assumed the formal position of PML-N party president following Nawaz's disqualification from holding that position, with his elder brother retaining a role as the party *quaid* (leader).²⁴ In the spring of 2018, Shehbaz's government in Punjab has also come under increasing legal scrutiny by the National Accountability Bureau, with multiple investigations launched targeting members of the provincial civil service and contractors responsible for several signature mass transit infrastructure projects.²⁵ The investigations against Nawaz and his daughter Maryam Nawaz have complicated her potential ascension as successor to her father — a role for which Shehbaz's son Hamza Shehbaz is also a competitor — and have

opened up intra-party strains over how to respond to the disqualification rulings.²⁶ Thus far the party has avoided open fractures amongst its top leadership, but tensions remain evident between the two brothers, and have become more strained as Nawaz has taken an increasingly defiant stance against the judiciary and the military establishment.²⁷ A weak showing in the next elections could exacerbate party divisions and test the ruling family's unity.

Pakistan's Major National Political Parties in Brief

- **Awami National Party (ANP):** A Pashtun nationalist party currently led by Asfandiyar Wali Khan, the grandson of Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Previously the head of the government in Khyber Paktunkhwa province and a partner of the PPP government, the party suffered significant losses in the 2013 elections — and was also targeted for attacks by the Pakistani Taliban — and today holds almost no elected offices outside KPK.
- **Balochistan Awami Party (BAP):** A new party formed by dissident lawmakers who split off from the PML-N government in Balochistan in January 2018, allying with other independents and former PML-Q legislators to form a new government; it has no position outside the province and its members have yet to contest elections under their current banner. The newly-elected senate chairman, Sadiq Sanjrani, is a member of the party with no previous national profile.
- **Jamaat-e-Islami (JI):** A vanguard Islamist party founded in 1941 by Maulana Abdul Ala Maududi. The JI's base is primarily urban and educated upper middle class, and it has had limited success as a mass party in recent decades. In 2017-18, JI reunited with the JUI-F and other parties to re-form the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal coalition, which previously led the government in Khyber Paktunkhwa after the 2002 elections.
- **Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F):** A Islamic clerical party led by Maulana Fazlur-ur-Rehman, most active in Khyber Paktunkhwa and Balochistan. The JUI-F maintained an alliance with the PML-N through its tenure, but clashed with the government over plans for the merger of FATA and Khyber Paktunkhwa.
- **Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM):** A Karachi-based party founded in 1984 as a representative of ethnic Mohajir (migrants from former north India) interest groups. The party consolidated control over much of the city and served as an electoral swing bloc under the Musharraf and most recent PPP governments, but has fragmented into at least four factions (the MQM-Pakistan, MQM-Pakistan Bahadurabad group, Pakistan Sarzameen Party, and a London-based MQM faction led by party founder Altaf Hussain) in the face of a paramilitary crackdown launched in fall 2013.
- **Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N):** The outgoing national incumbent, officially led by Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif following his brother Nawaz Sharif's disqualification from office. The PML-N led national governments after the 1993 and 1997 elections, and secured a rare absolute majority of seats in the 2013 general elections. The party is generally identified as being socially conservative and aligned with the business community, and has its strongest support base in Punjab.
- **Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP):** Historically one of Pakistan's two dominant national parties, the PPP's losses in the 2013 elections and the rise of the PTI as a third party challenger have reduced its influence; its officeholders are now primarily from rural Sindh. Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the grandson of party founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, shares leadership with his father, former president Asif Ali Zardari.
- **Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI):** Once a minor party with few electoral successes outside party chairman Imran Khan himself, the PTI surged as a challenger to the PML-N and PPP in the 2013 elections, and has dominated the opposition throughout the PML-N's tenure through mass protest movements and legal battles.
- **Other Parties:** Some other notable smaller parties include:
 - The *Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT)*, led by Dr. Tahir-ul Qadri. The party has not contested nationwide elections since Qadri's quasi-exile from Pakistan in 2005. Qadri has however led several high-profile protest movements, frequently in partnership with the PTI. A violent clash between PAT activists and Punjab police in Lahore in June 2014 left 14 dead; in late 2017, Qadri led a push for the ouster of Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif over the incident. The movement was unsuccessful and Qadri returned to exile again in January 2018.
 - The *Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q)*, was the ruling party under the Pervez Musharraf regime, principally comprised of defectors from the PML-N and other parties. It suffered significant losses after Musharraf's removal from office and many of its members have since defected again to other parties.
 - The *Paktunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP)*, led by Mahmood Khan Achakzai. The party is a coalition partner of the PML-N in the national and Balochistan assemblies, where it shared leadership over the governing coalition until its collapse in January 2018. It opposed the FATA merger plan.
 - The *National Party (NP)*, led by Mir Hasil Khan Bizenjo. The party is another coalition partner of the PML-N in the Balochistan assembly.
 - The *Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F)*, led by Sibghatullah Shah Rashdi III, the hereditary Pir Pagaro, has sought to position itself as an umbrella opposition leader against the PPP in rural Sindh.

The PTI Seeks a Route to Power

The PML-N government's post-poll honeymoon was short-lived from the start. After sitting out the previous elections in 2008, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, led by former cricket star Imran Khan, received the second-largest share of votes cast in 2013; due to the distribution of its votes, however, the PTI ultimately received fewer seats in the National Assembly than the PPP, and was only able to form a governing coalition in the northwestern Khyber Paktunkhwa province.²⁸ The PTI's 2013 campaign focused primarily on mobilizing young middle- and upper-middle class voters in urban and semi-urban constituencies, and emphasized general calls for change and messages of anti-corruption; at the same time, the party also attracted a number of dissidents and former elected officials who had been shut out from power by rivals in other parties.²⁹ Many PTI voters reported participating in electoral politics for the first time in response to Imran's campaign, but despite receiving a large share of the national vote the party still found itself marginalized from most formal national institutions of power after the elections. It has since chosen to pursue other avenues.

In 2006, prior to their return to Pakistan from years in exile during the Musharraf regime, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif negotiated an agreement known as the "Charter of Democracy". Its most important element was a commitment by the two former rivals to "respect the electoral mandate of representative governments that accepts [sic] the due role of the opposition" and agreement that neither party would "solicit the support of [the] military to come into power or to dislodge a democratic government" through extra-judicial means.³⁰ In short, Pakistan's two dominant political parties agreed to accept popular elections as the established process for adjudicating transfers of power, without seeking partnerships with other unelected actors as they had done in the past. The 18th Amendment to Pakistan's constitution, passed in 2010, formalizes a number of additional power-sharing measures, strengthening the role of the opposition leader in parliament (at the time, a position held by the PML-N) and rebalancing financial resources between the federal government and the provinces.³¹ Bhutto did in fact engage in U.S.-brokered talks with Musharraf over a negotiated return to power in 2007, and the PML-N clashed with the PPP government in a standoff soon after the 2008 elections over the restoration of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, who in turn pursued many high-profile legal investigations against then-President Asif Ali Zardari and other PPP leaders.³² But the two parties have broadly abided by the contours of their agreement through both the PPP and PML-N government tenures.

The PTI has shown no inclination to enter into a similar détente with the PML-N, or other opposition parties. Soon after polls concluded in 2013, the PTI voiced objections to the election results, and accused the PML-N and the election administration authorities (the Election Commission of Pakistan, or ECP) of fraud and vote-rigging.³³ Beginning in August 2014, the PTI mustered a mass sit-in protest in the capital of Islamabad together with the Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT), a smaller party led by cleric Tahir-ul Qadri; the Pakistani military was alleged to have provided quiet backing to the demonstrations, although it refrained from directly endorsing the protestors' demands. The protests continued for four months, consuming the government's attention and disrupting life in the capital, before ultimately being called off as part of a military-brokered agreement under which a judicial commission would lead an investigation into the

PTI's claims. That inquiry, completed in July 2015, found some significant irregularities — the ECP's failure to establish a central repository for polling station-level results made a full vote audit impossible — but ultimately quashed the PTI's complaints and held that it had failed to prove that “on an overall basis, the elections were not a true and fair reflection of the mandate given by the electorate”.³⁴ The PTI sought to repeat its street protest tactic in late October 2016, pressing for Supreme Court investigations into the Panama Papers; those protests were cut short after the court ultimately agreed to take up the Panama case.³⁵ Like his rival Nawaz Sharif, Imran has also largely avoided the legislative forum, skipping most parliamentary sessions and making use of the media as a direct channel to the public.³⁶ Throughout the PML-N's tenure, the PTI has taken a confrontational approach towards its rival, justified on the basis of an anti-corruption message that the party argues invalidates and supersedes the PML-N's electoral margins.

Divided Opposition

Despite occasional offers from the PPP leadership, the PTI has been notably averse to partnering with most other national opposition parties, preferring to coopt competitors where possible and otherwise bring its challenges through the legal system, mass mobilization, and occasionally through open appeals for military intervention. Although the party has accommodated many former rivals, Imran Khan frequently denounces the leadership of other opposition parties, and has expressed his commitment to ousting established political leaders in maximalist terms. A pan-opposition protest movement organized by the PAT and aimed at forcing resignations from the PML-N provincial government in Punjab fell apart in January 2018, in part due to strategic disputes between the PPP and PTI over how far to push for the government's ouster, and in part due to personal tensions between Imran and former President Asif Ali Zardari, the PPP's current leader.³⁷ Most recently, the PTI and PPP did cooperate in backing Sadiq Sajrani as senate chairman after the March 2018 elections, but split over the vote for senate opposition leader.³⁸

Pakistani politics has a long history of alliances of convenience, and it is possible that the PTI and PPP could come together to form a new government, depending on their performance in the next elections. To date, however, neither of the two leading opposition parties have been willing to credibly commit to an extended partnership against the PML-N. Prior to Nawaz Sharif's disqualification and the weakening of the PML-N, this had suggested that the opposition might remain divided enough to ensure an incumbent victory. In the final months of the PML-N government, however, the PTI has been the main beneficiary of a wave of defections by former lawmakers and PML-N leaders, especially those from southern Punjab. These trends may signal that the PTI could achieve greater success in the upcoming elections at consolidating the opposition vote and forcing a two-party competition with the PML-N, at least in Punjab.

Weakening Regional Parties

The PPP has struggled to rebuild the party's base after losing most of its elected representation outside Sindh in the last round of elections, and also faces challenges managing the entry into national politics of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the late prime minister and former president's son and new party chairman. The PPP's leadership has shifted back and forth over the past five years

as to how fiercely to contest the PML-N's rule, although it appears to be taking a more confrontational stance in the months leading up the next elections, and negotiated aggressively for support from other parties during the March 2018 senate elections.³⁹

The PPP has generally benefited from the status quo through its control over the provincial government in Sindh (largely if not entirely unchallenged by the central government), through holding the role of opposition leader in the national assembly, and from its plurality control of the senate for most of the past five years. The PPP has also faced its own legal challenges, with several associates of former president Zardari and Sindh provincial government officials arrested or under scrutiny by paramilitary Rangers and federal anti-corruption investigators; Zardari himself has spent stretches of the past five year in quasi-exile abroad.⁴⁰ With its direct electoral prospects at this point limited to its provincial base of Sindh, the PPP's current strategy appears to center around splitting the opposition vote with the PTI and positioning itself as a kingmaker at the national level.

Other sub-national opposition parties have also fragmented and weakened in recent years, particularly the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), whose control for the past decade and a half of Pakistan's largest city of Karachi had previously allowed it to play an important swing bloc role within the national legislature. As discussed in further detail in this paper's section profiling Sindh provincial politics, the MQM has faltered in the face of a PML-N-backed paramilitary and judicial crackdown on the party, and has suffered from the formation of multiple breakaway factions. Although the MQM was able to hold its seats in Karachi in most special elections held over the past five years, the continued splintering of the party is liable to significantly erode its dominance during the next general elections, potentially allowing for PPP or PTI inroads in Karachi seats previously held by the MQM.

Judicial Activism

The Supreme Court of Pakistan and the judiciary's independence in relation to other government bodies was a major source of dispute throughout the previous Musharraf and PPP government tenures, dramatized through Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry's removal from office and subsequent restoration after combined protests from lawyer activists and the then-opposition PML-N. Chief Justice Chaudhry made aggressive use of *suo motu* (court- rather than petitioner-initiated) inquiries to pursue high-profile popular cases, and sought to establish the court's autonomy by asserting control over the process for appointing and elevating high court judges.⁴¹

Following Chaudhry's departure from the court, several of his successors took a less confrontational approach towards the government, but the Panama Papers case and Nawaz Sharif's disqualification have seen a shift back towards an activist judiciary. The incumbent Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar has also increased his use of populist *suo motu* cases, as well as contempt of court proceedings against PML-N politicians and the imposition of restrictions on public criticism of the judiciary's rulings.⁴² The courts have also actively shaped the pre-electoral environment through rulings on constituency boundaries and candidate registration, discussed further in following sections. Chief Justice Nisar's tenure is scheduled to continue until his

retirement in January 2019; his next two successors by seniority, Judge Asif Saeed Khan Khosa and Judge Gulzar Ahmed, both served on the judicial bench hearing the Panama Papers case and voted for Nawaz Sharif's immediate disqualification from office after the conclusion of those initial hearings, suggesting that tensions between the judiciary and the civilian government are likely to continue should the PML-N be reelected to another term.⁴³

From the beginning, the PML-N has unsuccessfully sought to broaden the scope of any legal investigation into the Panama Papers beyond just the prime minister's family, describing Nawaz as the victim of a targeted "minus-one formula" aimed at decapitating the ruling party's top leadership.⁴⁴ Although it should be noted that the PML-N has historically been as much a beneficiary of this as a victim, Pakistan's heavily backlogged courts attest to a long political tradition through which competing elites have sought to use legal cases to entangle their rivals and coerce out-of-court concessions.⁴⁵ In the Pakistani political system, the rule of law is broadly but unevenly applied, and accountability often enforced selectively and irregularly on the basis of elite political alliances and rivalries. The uncertainty over when and which formal laws may be applied contributes to uncertainty on the part of both voters and political elites over the long-term political stability of any government. This uncertainty reinforces the importance of the informal (and often opaque or contingent) rules of the game under which political actors compete with one another, and encourages strategies of corruption, coercion, or other extralegal paths to power — expressed most frequently in Pakistan's political history by civilian partnerships with extrajudicial military interventions.⁴⁶

The Re-Assertion of Military Influence

Having previously directly led four regimes spanning nearly half of Pakistan's history as an independent state, the Pakistani military has a long-established history of involvement in the country's politics.⁴⁷ Since former President Pervez Musharraf's departure from office in 2009, the military has increasingly shifted to less visible forms of influence and background pressure, both during the tenure of the PML-N and its immediate predecessor. While the participants are not necessarily equal in power, the civil-military relationship should be understood as a two-way one: the fracturing of many of Pakistan's major political parties, and the post-2013 weakening of the consensus between government and opposition parties over the primacy of elections as a means of apportioning political power, has been both a product of and incentive for more assertive interventions by the Pakistani military into politics.

A number of factors contribute to the military's dominance in Pakistan, including its relatively high degree of institutional cohesion, which is undergirded by a generous post-service pension and system of appointments to private business or official civil service posts.⁴⁸ That network of business and land assets makes the military an important player in the country's economy; despite some transparency measures in terms of publishing topline figures, the military also retains effective control over its budget, promotions, and disciplinary actions for its members. The military's public relations arm, headed until September 2017 by a three-star general, has also been active in shaping domestic media and social media coverage; when enforced, Pakistani law can be applied broadly to curtail any public criticism of the armed services.⁴⁹

Pakistan's serious internal and external security challenges — which include multiple terrorist and separatist insurgencies, and tense relations with neighboring India, Afghanistan, and Iran — have also reinforced the military's primacy and authority. The most dramatic inflection point for this was the December 2014 attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorist group, which left more than 140 dead, many of them schoolchildren.⁵⁰ That attack, which followed the launch of military operations in North Waziristan earlier that year after an abortive negotiations process initially pursued by the PML-N government, was widely condemned across the political spectrum. The 21st Amendment to the Pakistani constitution, passed shortly after the Peshawar attack, established a new system of closed-door military courts to try terrorism suspects on a fast-track basis.⁵¹ A new system of civil-military “apex committees” was also established at the provincial and national level to oversee the implementation a “National Action Plan” against terrorism, formalizing the military's role in the policy formulation and oversight process.⁵²

The PML-N government's relationship with the army throughout its tenure was mixed — reflecting in part varying views within the party on how strongly to confront the military over points of disagreement — but frequently strained. Although he appears to have enjoyed little backing from the broader military establishment for his quixotic electoral candidacy in 2013, former President Musharraf's imprisonment and prosecution by the government on treason charges related to his 1999 military coup against Nawaz Sharif and 2007 imposition of emergency rule was a point of significant tension. Ultimately, military intervention allowed Musharraf to return to exile with those cases unresolved.⁵³ While the PML-N and the military cooperated in support of the “Karachi operation” targeting the MQM and organized crime groups in Pakistan's largest city, the PML-N initially resisted the start of similar paramilitary operations in Punjab province in mid-2016.⁵⁴ The military acceded to the PML-N's initial attempts to negotiate with representatives of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan in early 2014, but launched a crackdown against the TTP in North Waziristan after an attack on a Karachi naval base.⁵⁵

The military also blocked efforts by the PML-N to open up trade with India and pushed hard for the ouster of a senior minister in Nawaz Sharif's cabinet after the public disclosure of disagreements between military and civilian leaders over Pakistan's response to demands from the United States, India, and Afghanistan for a greater crackdown on militant proxies targeting Pakistan's neighbors.⁵⁶ Most recently, unusually candid remarks by Nawaz himself in a mid-May 2018 interview questioning continued support for those proxies has drawn further pushback from the military.⁵⁷ In additional comments in late May, Nawaz directly blamed the military for instigating the judicial inquiries and the PTI protests against him, as retaliation for his efforts to bring charges against Musharraf.⁵⁸ Although the PTI has denied receiving military backing, leaders such as Imran Khan have at times explicitly called for its intervention, and PML-N sources report claims of growing pressure from military intelligence officials to defect to the PTI in advance of the campaign period.⁵⁹

As in previous periods in Pakistani history, the military's dominant role has been embraced by some political players who see partnership with the army as a means of edging out their rivals. It has also been pushed by military leaders set on asserting their autonomy and independence

from civilian control, and maintaining unilateral decision-making privileges over the country's internal and external security policies. A narrowly divided election, hung parliament, or otherwise weakened civilian government would offer the military — and other smaller actors at the margins — greater leverage in negotiations with the next civilian government, and easier routes to influence through the manipulation of individual elections or lawmakers. Although the Pakistani military and intelligence services' reputation for far-reaching and far-seeing control can be overstated, ten consecutive years of elected civilian government do not appear to have significantly reduced the military's institutional power and influence within the Pakistani political system. Since former President Musharraf's removal from office in 2009, army leaders have not attempted any full-on military coup actions, but the military remains an important political arbitrator against which other actors must balance both their electoral and governing strategies.

A Tightening Media Landscape

The liberalization of Pakistani media ownership and broadcast regulations under former president Musharraf in 2001 has frequently been cited as a positive sign for Pakistani democratization.⁶⁰ While the number of outlets has undeniably expanded, reshaping the landscape for political competition and public discourse, the broadcast, print, and social media are all still subject to regulatory, financial, and security controls from the government, military, and other actors in the political system, constraining their ability to report freely. Although irregularly enforced, Pakistani law provides broad leeway for restrictions to be imposed on any speech that criticizes government institutions, the military, the judiciary, and the "ideology of Pakistan"; a new "Prevention of Electronic Crimes" law passed in August 2016 has expanded content restrictions to digital and social media.⁶¹

The selective application of these laws to shape the pre-election coverage environment, and the partisan polarization of the Pakistani media landscape, is increasingly evident as the campaign period begins. Most recently in spring 2018, the military intervened to block the broadcast of Pakistan's largest cable news channel, Geo TV, which has been aligned with the PML-N. The channel was reportedly allowed to return to air only after reaching an agreement to refrain from supportive coverage of Nawaz Sharif and the PML-N.⁶² Journalists attempting to work in Pakistan face serious personal as well as professional risks; the Committee to Protect Journalists reports at least 43 journalists have been killed in Pakistan since 2008, with many more threatened or detained for their reporting.⁶³ Militant groups have also targeted journalists over their reporting; newspapers temporarily ceased publication in Balochistan in fall 2017 in response to threats from Baloch separatist groups related to their coverage of the conflict there.⁶⁴

Militancy and Informal Movements

As noted at the outset, many political interest groups in Pakistan (as is the case everywhere) do not opt to participate in the formal electoral system, seeking to advance their aims through licit or illicit business activities, social mobilization or proselytization, organized violence, or other means. While the logic of formal electoral system is the primary focus of this paper, it should not be seen as isolated from these other forms of power.

In 2013 the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) specifically targeted and threatened PPP, MQM, and Awami National Party (ANP) candidates in Karachi and Khyber Paktunkhwa, killing several party leaders and curtailing their ability to campaign freely.⁶⁵ Pakistani military and police counterterrorism operations appear to have reduced the overall rate of militant attacks nationwide from their previous peak in 2009-10, but the TTP (and its splinter groups, such as the TTP Jamaat-ul-Ahrar) have continued to carry out periodic deadly attacks on civilian targets. Additionally, the military's decade-long war with Baloch separatist groups has severely restricted free political assembly and exacerbated political fragmentation in Balochistan.

While the TTP and Baloch separatist groups may reject the basic structure of Pakistan's current political regime, other armed groups have sought legitimization through participation in the formal electoral process. The most notable example of this is the Sunni sectarian group the Awle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, whose leaders have regularly contested elections (under a variety of party names) and partnered with both the PML-N and PPP in Punjab and Sindh, despite an official ban on the ASWJ and its militant wing, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.⁶⁶ More recently, the Jamaat ud Dawa — a military-backed group led by ideologue Hafiz Saeed whose armed branch Lashkar-e-Taiba has carried out many terrorist attacks in Kashmir and, most prominently, in Mumbai in 2008 — joined electoral politics for the first time in 2017 with the formation of a new Milli Muslim League (MML) party.⁶⁷ The Pakistani military backed the MML's formation as part of a "mainstreaming" strategy that was reportedly another source of friction with the Nawaz Sharif government.⁶⁸ The United States has extended sanctions on the organization's other branches to the MML, and the party's formal registration is still pending as Pakistan seeks to demonstrate compliance with international sanctions.⁶⁹

Other non-militant actors may also opt to join electoral politics; the Tehreek-e-Labaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLYRA) was formed in 2017 by members of the Barelvi sect who first mobilized around anti-blasphemy protests following the execution of Mumtaz Qadri in 2016 and changes to oaths of office taken by political candidates.⁷⁰ Like the PTI, the TLYRA appears to have successfully extracted concessions from the government and other state actors through mass protests outside the formal political process, held in the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018. Although the overall TLYRA movement is factionalized, its new political party, the Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan, has fielded candidates in a number of Punjab special elections, several of whom have outperformed the weakened PPP.⁷¹

Separately, beginning in January 2018, activists launched a new national protest movement, the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM), which has demanded action in response to extrajudicial killings and arrests of ethnic Pashtun around the country. Although the group has not organized to compete in elections, its message has been embraced as a rallying cry by some established Pashtun nationalist parties.⁷² Press coverage of the protests were subsequently curtailed and activist leaders have been harassed and detained after PTM organizers made increasingly explicit criticisms of Pakistani security institutions, but as of writing a government negotiating committee is in the process of being formed to consider the movement's complaints.⁷³

To date, none of these groups has achieved substantial nationwide electoral success (although ASWJ-affiliated candidates have won some local contests), and electoral strategies do not necessarily represent their primary priorities. But they have the potential to swing outcomes at the local level, which has the potential for broader effects in a narrow or fragmented national electoral outcome. Just as participation in electoral politics offers a potential means of legitimization and access to other sources of power for armed groups or new social movements, affiliation with armed actors or the use mass movements and demonstrative organizational power also offers formal party organizations a potential edge over their electoral competitors. The experience of the MQM, whose militant and criminal cadres have faced a paramilitary-led crackdown since 2013 after previously dominating other rivals within Karachi with the tacit backing of the military, illustrates the unevenness of action against armed groups by Pakistani security services. It also underscores the potential for enforcement decisions — either in support of or against these actors — to swing the political balance of power, the control over which is hotly contested.

Economic Trends

Pakistan does not have an robust dataset of economic and electoral information from which to determine a predictive relationship between the country's economic performance and its electoral outcomes, as many U.S. electoral analysts have sought to develop in the American context. That said, survey research does suggest that Pakistani voters prioritize economic concerns — including employment, purchasing power, and service provision — as among the most important issues in shaping their voting decisions.⁷⁴ While a full assessment of Pakistan's economy over the past five years is outside the scope of this paper, a brief summary of major features follows.

Most notably, in 2015 the Pakistani and Chinese governments formalized an agreement for a multi-billion investment framework, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has transformed China into Pakistan's largest source of foreign direct investment and further tightened the two countries' strategic partnership.⁷⁵ CPEC has also been a source of intra-provincial tension within Pakistan, as opposition parties have complained of an inequitable distribution of the benefits from the new Chinese investment, accusing the PML-N of prioritizing projects to benefit its home province.⁷⁶ Although the first phase of CPEC investment has boosted electricity production and helped to narrow the supply and demand gap that plagued Pakistan's power sector throughout the preceding PPP government's tenure, the government has not followed through on plans for the privatization of electricity distribution companies or stricter enforcement regarding the non-payment of tariff dues, contributing to high subsidy costs for the government and leaving the power sector burdened with circular debts between fuel suppliers, power producers, and electricity distributors.⁷⁷

While CPEC investment has provided a welcome boost, many of its projects are structured as commercial loans organized through Chinese state-owned banks, which has added to Pakistan's growing foreign debt burden. The costs of importing Chinese machinery used for CPEC projects has further cut into Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves.⁷⁸ Those reserves were built up through the first half of the PML-N's term over the course of a three-year

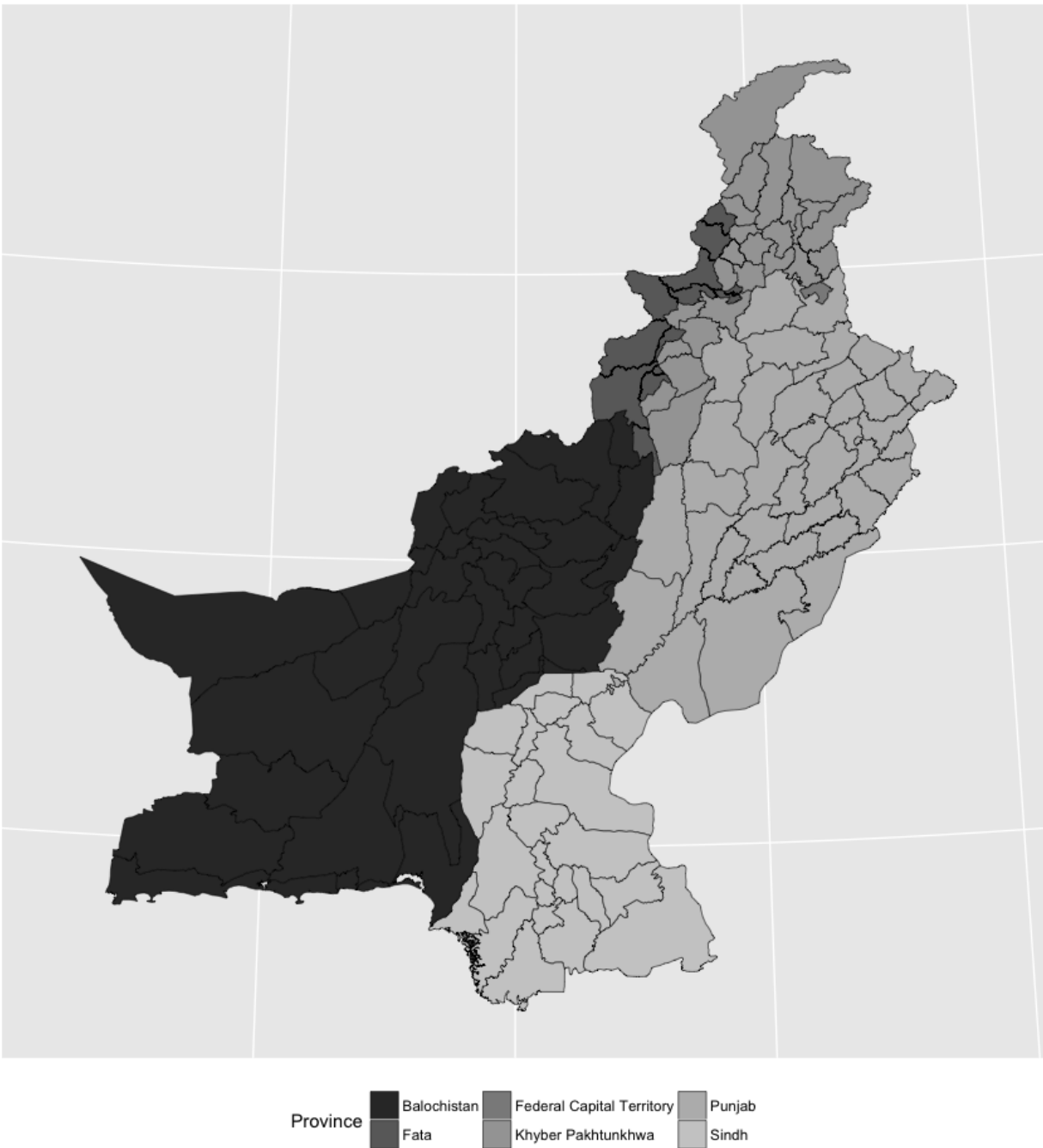
International Monetary Fund agreement, but have deteriorated substantially since; the outgoing government publicly insisted it would not seek a new IMF loan, and instead sought financing from China, private international lenders, and Islamic bond markets.⁷⁹ Until Finance Minister Ishaq Dar's removal from office in late 2017, the finance ministry sought to maintain an overvalued exchange rate for the Pakistani rupee in order to offset the burden of external debt repayments, but this (together with energy sector woes) contributed to the stagnation of Pakistani exports, particularly in the textile sector, in which Pakistan has lost market share to competitors such as Bangladesh and Vietnam.⁸⁰

Pakistan has benefited from a strong flow of external remittances, but these inflows began to decelerate late in the government's term, reflecting a broader global contraction driven principally by new restrictions on foreign labor in Gulf state economies.⁸¹ After steady gains over the course of the first three years of the PML-N's tenure, data from Pakistan's Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment shows total registered emigrant employment fell by 40.9% from 2016-2017, with emigration from Punjab and Khyber Paktunkhwa provinces (the largest source of such labor) showing the biggest drops.⁸² This decline in overseas employment opportunities and the rise of international oil prices over the PML-N's final year in office may undercut the party's efforts to portray itself as an effective steward of Pakistan's economic development during the upcoming campaign period. Consumer price inflation has remained much lower under the PML-N tenure than its PPP predecessor, however, averaging around 4.88% annually from 2013-2017 compared to 13.78% from 2008-2013.⁸³ Overall, Pakistan's official GDP has grown at an average annual rate of 4.88% through the first four years of the PML-N term, compared to 2.48% growth over the course of the PPP's five years in office.⁸⁴

The next government will face significant long-term economic challenges beyond just the immediate question of how to manage the country's debt burden and dwindling foreign reserves. Provisional figures from the 2017 census suggest that Pakistan continues to experience a high rate of population growth, and while detailed demographic figures have not been released as of this writing, as much as 64% of the country's population are estimated to be under the age of 29, with around half of Pakistan's workforce aged 15-29.⁸⁵ According to one analysis, around 4 million young Pakistanis enter the workforce every year, many into unstable and underpaying jobs, and an additional 1.5-2 million new jobs will be needed annually to accommodate this pressure for the immediately foreseeable future.⁸⁶ Additionally, around 47% of school-age children in Pakistan are not enrolled in school, with enrollment rates dropping at the middle and high school level, reducing the potential for higher-skilled employment.⁸⁷

Overall, despite significant challenges and uneven distribution of gains, the PML-N's tenure was generally one of higher growth and greater macroeconomic and political stability than its PPP predecessor. The PML-N's 2013 campaign, and public messaging while in office, has emphasized Nawaz Sharif and the party's role in leading some of Pakistan's major infrastructure development projects, particularly roads and power sector projects, and the party is likely to again make economic performance a central element of its campaign message in the upcoming elections. How Pakistani voters and political elites assess the party's economic management over both the long and near-term remains to be seen.

Provinces and Districts of Pakistan



Source:
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Field Information Services
"Pakistan Administrative Boundary Polygons", Nov 23 2017

BREAKING DOWN THE CONTEST: PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

Federalism and Devolution

The regionalization of politics in Pakistan was apparent in the 2013 election results; of the 125 National Assembly seats directly won by the PML-N, only six were outside Punjab or Islamabad; the PPP won only two seats outside of Sindh. While Pakistan's major national political parties have sought to recruit supporters from around the country, in many respects the parties have become increasingly polarized and rooted in their respective provincial bases of support.

Disputes over the representation of different regional or ethnic groups and the relative powers of central and provincial governments have been an enduring source of internal conflict since Pakistan's founding. Historically, centralizing regimes — often but not exclusively those led by the military — have sought to concentrate power in a national executive and to weaken the role of provincial assembly legislatures. The 18th Amendment to Pakistan's Constitution, passed by the PPP government in 2010 with the support of the PML-N opposition, proposed a substantial de-concentration of formal authority in favor of the provincial governments, transferring responsibility for a broad range of services and government functions and increasing the provincial share of federally-collected revenues under the National Finance Commission (NFC) award formula.⁸⁸

The PML-N government's tenure has seen some of those decentralization measures slow-rolled or walked back, as the ruling party has held power at both the national level and in the most populous province of Punjab, and sought to re-concentrate its authority over the smaller provinces led by rival parties. Most of Pakistan's provinces are dependent on federal fiscal transfers for their operating budgets; the scheduled five-year renegotiation of the NFC has been indefinitely deferred, in part due to disputes over PML-N proposals to cut the provincial share of revenue to pay for more national security expenses.⁸⁹ The central government also retains substantial regulatory powers over areas such as the energy sector, which is nominally meant to be shared with the provincial governments.⁹⁰ Opposition parties have accused the PML-N of neglecting and bypassing the Council on Common Interests, the constitutional forum for mediating center-provincial disputes, and of monopolizing CPEC investment and the benefits of government development projects for Punjab.

Local Elections

Below the provincial level, Pakistan has an uneven history of electing representative local government bodies. Military regimes, most prominently those of generals Ayub Khan and Pervez Musharraf, have previously created local government bodies as a means of coopting local support and bypassing their political rivals, with candidates barred from contesting elections under a party affiliation.⁹¹ While a few smaller parties, such as the MQM in Karachi, have championed local government, most national political parties have viewed it as a competing tier of patronage, and have withdrawn support during periods of civilian rule.⁹² Even when local government bodies have been active, the civil service bureaucracy, either at the national or provincial level, has traditionally remained the dominant decision-maker at the division and district level, rather than local elected officials, who have limited powers of taxation

and are dependent on financial transfers from the national or provincial governments for their operations and projects.⁹³

The constitution of Pakistan, while calling for local elections to be held, offers little guidance on the structure or authority of local government bodies, and after the expiration of Musharraf's Local Governance Ordinance in 2009, the 18th Amendment to Pakistan's constitution left it to each province to draft their own local government laws. All of those have effectively centralized oversight and authority over the local bodies in their respective provincial governments.⁹⁴ After a gap of four years and intervention from the Supreme Court, local level elections were ultimately held in 2015 and 2016 in all four provinces. Transparency over the process was limited, with the ECP only notifying final results, and providing little information in terms of the constituency delimitation process, polling station vote totals, or candidate or vote disqualifications.⁹⁵ Given the centralization of the provinces' local government systems under their respective provincial assembly governments, any changes in party control at the provincial level during the next general elections raises the prospect of increased competition with local councilors of a rival party, whose terms in office will carry through until 2019-2020.⁹⁶

Punjab Province at a Glance

Since the separation of East Pakistan to form Bangladesh in 1971, Punjab has been Pakistan's most populous and most politically dominant province. As the largest source of seats in the National Assembly, electoral victory in Punjab — particularly its major urban centers of Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan, and Faisalabad — has traditionally meant victory at the national level. Punjab's relative weight in the National Assembly was reduced by the 2017 census and delimitation process, which cut seven directly-elected and two women's seats from the province; nonetheless, it remains the national political center and the central battleground for the next elections.⁹⁷

The PML-N has sought to maintain a hold on the province since coming to power in the 2008 elections, coopting or beating out former rivals and sweeping a large majority of the province's seats in both the National and Provincial Assemblies in the 2013 elections. Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif's long tenure as head of the provincial government for the past ten years has allowed the PML-N to consolidate its control over the civil service, local government bodies, and other institutions of government, shaping appointment and spending priorities within the province to benefit its constituents. While this may provide strong incentives for PML-N candidates and voters to remain allied with the party in order to retain access to the government, the party's national troubles are evident, and opposition parties have also sought to entangle Shehbaz and the PML-N in legal cases over alleged corruption or mismanagement.

Clashes between Punjab police and activists led by Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) leader Tahir-ul Qadri in Lahore in June 2014, in which fourteen people were killed, also brought scrutiny to Shehbaz's management of the provincial police services. Although senior PML-N leaders were cleared by an initial judicial inquiry, the court-ordered release of that report in December 2017 prompted renewed protests demanding the resignations of Shehbaz and Law Minister Rana Sanaullah.⁹⁸ That movement coincided with pressure from Tehreek-e-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah protestors in Islamabad and a breakaway PML-N faction led by Pir Hameeduddin Sialvi, who threatened to quit the party over charges that it was accommodating members of the Ahmadi minority community.⁹⁹ However, PAT efforts to broker a combined opposition movement ultimately collapsed at the beginning of this year.

More recently, another breakaway faction of PML-N lawmakers quit the party in April 2018, demanding the formation of a new South Punjab province; that group subsequently merged with the PTI, which has pledged to follow through with the creation of the new province as part of its party manifesto.¹⁰⁰ The March senate elections also signaled potential weaknesses in the PML-N coalition, as some Punjab assembly legislators bucked party discipline to vote for PPP and PTI candidates.¹⁰¹ Most prominently, former interior minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan has signaled growing distance from party leadership as Nawaz Sharif's confrontation with the judicial and military establishment has intensified; although he has not quit the party, he announced his intention to contest multiple constituencies in Punjab in advance of the party's own decisions on candidacies.¹⁰²

The PTI came in as a runner-up in most Punjab constituencies in the 2013 elections, in many cases splitting the vote with the PPP. In most by-elections held since, the province has trended towards a two-party contest between the incumbent PML-N and the opposition PTI. PML-N-affiliated candidates won 38 of the 49 by-elections held for vacant national and provincial seats since the last general elections; PTI candidates placed second in 17 of those races (and won four), and improved their performance and consolidated a greater share of the opposition vote.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, PPP electoral losses in southern Punjab and the defection of former minister and Multan leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi to the PTI have severely weakened the party's position in the province. With a few exceptions, PPP candidates have trailed far behind the other two parties and in some cases have been eclipsed by smaller parties like the new Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan. Pressure on the PML-N and mounting defections may provide an opening for the PTI to better its performance in the next elections, but factionalization within the party has been a limiting factor that could still confound its prospects. In December 2017, the PTI also suffered a setback after the Supreme Court disqualified Jahangir Khan Tareen, a vice president and major financial supporter of the party, under the same Article 62 provisions of the constitution under which Nawaz Sharif was removed from office.¹⁰⁴ Tareen's son, Ali Khan Tareen, failed to succeed his father a special election for his Lodhran constituency seat after being beat out by a rival PML-N candidate who appears to have coopted dissident PTI supporters.¹⁰⁵

Summary of Major Parties
May 2013 Punjab Assembly General Elections Results

Party Name	# of Candidates Fielded	Pct of Direct Seats Contested	# of Seats Won	Pct of Direct Seats Won	Pct of Contesting Candidates Who Won	# of Runner-Up Candidates	Mean MOV for Winners	Mean Pct of Valid Vote Received by Candidates	Total Votes Received by Party	Party Votes as Pct of All Votes Cast
PML-N	288	97.96%	215	73.13%	74.65%	54	19%	41.59%	11382166	40.83%
Independents	3307	1124.83%	40	13.61%	1.21%	76	8%	1.95%	6180258	22.17%
PTI	285	96.94%	20	6.80%	7.02%	93	6%	18.08%	4953914	17.77%
PML-Q	77	26.19%	7	2.38%	9.09%	27	13%	18.58%	1377301	4.94%
PPP	230	78.23%	6	2.04%	2.61%	39	17%	11.59%	2452578	8.80%
MQM (Haqiqi)	8	2.72%	2	0.68%	25.00%	1	4%	14.37%	114985	0.41%
JUI-F	111	37.76%	1	0.34%	0.90%	1	3%	1.85%	182484	0.65%
PML (Jinnah)	16	5.44%	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	NA	3.85%	61136	0.22%
JUI-S	69	23.47%	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	NA	1.91%	134467	0.48%

Summary of Major Parties May 2013 Sindh Assembly General Elections Results

Party Name	# of Candidates Fielded	Pct of Direct Seats Contested	# of Seats Won	Pct of Direct Seats Won	Pct of Contesting Candidates Who Won	# of Runner-Up Candidates	Mean MOV for Winners	Mean Pct of Valid Vote Received by Candidates	Total Votes Received by Party	Party Votes as Pct of All Votes Cast
PPP	122	99.19%	66	53.66%	54.10%	22	21.76%	35.04%	3181383	32.85%
MQM	119	96.75%	36	29.27%	30.25%	3	51.36%	23.08%	2463369	25.44%
PML-F	71	57.72%	7	5.69%	9.86%	25	24.54%	19.69%	1099741	11.36%
Independents	1597	1298.37%	5	4.07%	0.31%	17	10.90%	0.79%	921073	9.51%
PML-N	43	34.96%	3	2.44%	6.98%	16	10.48%	17.37%	575050	5.94%
PTI	82	66.67%	3	2.44%	3.66%	23	21.72%	8.73%	584116	6.03%
National Peoples Party	10	8.13%	2	1.63%	20.00%	3	8.41%	20.70%	147225	1.52%
Qomi Awami Tehreek	7	5.69%	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	NA	0.96%	3980	0.04%
National Awami Party	1	0.81%	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	NA	23.39%	14901	0.15%
JUP (Noorani)	15	12.20%	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	NA	1.75%	20904	0.22%
Peoples Muslim League Pakistan	2	1.63%	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	NA	26.49%	39079	0.40%
Sindh United Party	20	16.26%	0	0.00%	0.00%	2	NA	4.34%	68648	0.71%

Sindh Province at a Glance

The southern province of Sindh is home to Pakistan's most populous and industrialized city, Karachi, and the largest urban-rural divide of any of the country's four provinces. The ruling PPP retained control of the Sindh provincial government and the province's national assembly delegation despite broader national losses in the 2013 elections, and maintains a strong presence in rural Sindh districts controlled by established landholding families who remain allied with the party's leadership. Of the 23 by-elections for vacant national and provincial assembly seats held in the province since the May 2013 elections, the PPP has won all but nine — in most cases by significant majorities — and all races outside Karachi.

Although the PPP has not experienced major splits, it did face the defection of then-Sindh Home Minister Zulfiqar Mirza in early 2015, who has subsequently affiliated with an umbrella group of opposition parties in Sindh led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F).¹⁰⁶ The PPP leadership has also had its own battles with the judiciary, as mentioned earlier, and has recently contested with the federal government and the judiciary over control of appointments in the provincial police service.¹⁰⁷ The PTI has established a small but significant presence in Karachi, but to date has had limited success at supplanting other more established rivals in the province, failing to secure more than 20% of the vote in any recent by-elections.

The most dramatic shift in the Sindh political landscape over the past five years has been the collapse of the MQM, which previously dominated Karachi city politics and regularly contested with the PPP over the relative autonomy of the city in relation to the Provincial Assembly. Founded in 1984 and presenting itself as a representative for the interests of the Mohajir community (Muslim migrants from India after partition), the MQM grew to control city politics through a network of committed party cadres, tightly organized supporters, and threats of force against rivals and the extortion of revenue from city businesses.¹⁰⁸ At the national level, the party has played an important swing bloc role since the 1988 elections, variously allying and splitting with successive governments. Altaf Hussain, the party's founder, has lived in exile in London since 1992 after fleeing in the face of a short-lived military-led crackdown, but has continued to direct party operations remotely in the intervening years, including an alliance with the Musharraf government throughout most of its tenure.

Shortly after the new PML-N government came to power in 2013, a new paramilitary operation, backed by both the PML-N and PPP, has targeted the MQM. Scores of party activists and affiliated gunmen have been arrested, party offices have been closed, and multiple legal charges have been brought against top party leaders (including city mayor Waseem Akhtar, who served the first months of his tenure from jail), all of which have seriously curtailed MQM operations.¹⁰⁹ As legal charges piled up against him and as MQM cadres were jailed, an increasingly erratic Altaf Hussain took a publicly confrontational position against the military and judiciary, leading to a ban on the rebroadcast of his remotely-delivered speeches in the Pakistani media, and ultimately to treason charges being brought against him in 2016.¹¹⁰

The MQM's troubles were compounded with the reentry into politics of former Karachi mayor Mustafa Kamal, who had been a star of the party during his tenure in office; together with other

former MQM leaders, Kamal launched the Pakistan Sarzameen Party (PSP) in March 2016, a rival movement which has now recruited many defectors from the MQM to its ranks, allegedly thanks in part to pressure from the military.¹¹¹ The MQM split again when Farooq Sattar, a senior leader of the party, announced in August 2016 that he was breaking away from Hussain's London-based leadership and reforming the party's legislative delegation as the "MQM-Pakistan" (MQM-P).¹¹² The MQM-P split further in February 2018 over Sattar's choice of candidates for the March senate elections, with a new "Bahadurabad group" led by dissident members of the MQM-P's coordination committee challenging his leadership.¹¹³ In the weeks following their standoff, more than a dozen MQM-P legislators defected to join the PSP, and in mid-May Sattar suggested that he would not contest the upcoming elections.¹¹⁴ With the MQM so divided, Karachi's election outcomes, and those of Sindh more broadly, are more uncertain than at any point in the city's past twenty-five years, opening the possibility for inroads by the PPP, PTI, PML-F, or new parties such as the PSP.

Khyber Paktunkhwa Province and FATA at a Glance

Khyber Paktunkhwa (also abbreviated as KPK or K-P; previously the North West Frontier Province until it was re-named in 2010) was the only one of Pakistan's four provinces where PTI candidates were able to successfully (if narrowly) establish a governing coalition after the 2013 elections. The PTI has touted its tenure in KPK as a model for its slogan of a "Naya (New) Pakistan", but it has also struggled to implement its agenda and consolidate control over the province, with the party's national leadership attention and protest campaigns primarily oriented instead against the PML-N in Punjab. The PTI won only half of the eighteen by-elections held for vacant provincial and national assembly seats since the May 2013 elections, but opposition parties also remain split, with no single group dominant as a challenger. The province will gain additional representation in the national assembly after the 2017 census and delimitation process, with three new directly-elected and one women's seat added.

The PTI fell short of an absolute majority of seats in the Provincial Assembly in the last elections, and was initially dependent on partnerships with smaller parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Awami Jamhur Ittehad Pakistan, until the latter's merger with the PTI in late 2015. The PTI has recently partnered with Maulana Sami-ul Haq, the head of the Dar-ul Uloom Haqqani seminary in Akora Khattak, a JUI-F rival, and a vocal proponent of the Afghan Taliban.¹¹⁵ The PTI was initially allied with the Qaumi Watan Party (led by former chief minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao), but split with it in July 2017 after disputes over the PTI's activism seeking investigations in the Panama Papers case.¹¹⁶ Following the senate elections in March 2018, the Jamaat-e-Islami also quit the ruling coalition, leaving a tenuous PTI minority government in place for the last few months of the assembly term.¹¹⁷ In May 2018, the PTI leadership expelled eight legislators found to have violated party discipline in the senate elections, further reducing the party's seats and preventing it from passing a budget in its last weeks in office as it sought to avoid a no-confidence motion brought by the PPP.¹¹⁸

The previous leader of the provincial government, the ANP, has been reduced to a minority position in both the provincial and national assembly, although it saw some success in local elections in 2015. Opposition in the provincial assembly is led by a combination of the JUI-F and the PML-N, whose bases of support are primarily concentrated in the southern and northeastern parts of the province, respectively. The JI and JUI-F have recently partnered in the revival of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a coalition of religious parties that had governed the province following the 2002 elections; previous attempts to reunite the coalition had faltered over disputes between the two leading parties, however, and it remains to be seen how effectively they will coordinate during the upcoming election campaign.¹¹⁹

In the years leading up to the general elections, there have been renewed proposals and debates at the national level on a package of political reforms in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), located adjacent to central KPK and the Afghan border. Historically an autonomous region directly administered by the national executive, universal adult franchise in FATA has only been available since 1996, and candidates were only allowed to campaign with a political party affiliation beginning in 2011; elections in FATA have traditionally been low-turnout, highly fragmented affairs. Colonial-era regulations grant extensive powers to appointed government

political agents and tribal representatives, and impose collective punishment and customary justice in the place of Pakistan's regular court system.

Beginning in fall 2015, some legislators and activists from FATA began to pressure the government to integrate the territory into Khyber Paktunkhwa province, or establish it as a separate province. In March 2017, the national government agreed to a merger and development plan over a five-year timeline; at the time, FATA constituencies were proposed to be integrated as part of Khyber Paktunkhwa in time for the 2018 elections.¹²⁰ The Pakistani military, which has conducted extensive operations in the area over the course of the past five years, has also backed the merger plan. Implementation of the agreement stalled, however, as the PML-N's coalition partners the JUI-F and Paktunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) opposed integration, arguing for the creation of a separate FATA province instead. The PTI and JI campaigned in support of the merger, which would strengthen Khyber Paktunkhwa's overall representation in parliament and potentially shift the balance of power within the provincial assembly.

In its final major act during its last week in office, the outgoing government pushed through the 31st Amendment to Pakistan's constitution, over the protests of the JUI-F.¹²¹ According to current plans, FATA parliamentarians and senators elected in the 2018 cycle will serve out their full terms, after which the FATA's National Assembly seats will be reduced and shifted to become part of the Khyber Paktunkhwa delegation. Elections for KPK Provincial Assembly seats for the FATA have been provisionally scheduled for April 2019, with local elections to follow in October 2019; the FATA delegation would form around 14% of the newly enlarged KP assembly.¹²² In his final days in office, however, outgoing Chief Minister Pervaiz Khattak called for the ECP to hold elections for the provincial assembly seats for the FATA districts at the same time as the rest of the province, a proposal which if followed could potentially throw off current election timelines.¹²³ As of writing, the resolution of FATA seats remains uncertain.

Summary of Major Parties
May 2013 Khyber Paktunkhwa Assembly General Elections Results

Party Name	# of Candidates Fielded	Pct of Direct Seats Contested	# of Seats Won	Pct of Direct Seats Won	Pct of Contesting Candidates Who Won	# of Runner-Up Candidates	Mean MOV for Winners	Mean Pct of Valid Vote Received by Candidates	Total Votes Received by Party	Party Votes as Pct of All Votes Cast
PTI	96	98.97%	35	36.08%	36.46%	5	11.01%	18.75%	1028594	19.54%
JUI-F	85	87.63%	13	13.40%	15.29%	14	11.72%	16.20%	710884	13.50%
Independents	552	569.07%	12	12.37%	2.17%	10	14.47%	2.66%	835693	15.87%
PML-N	89	91.75%	12	12.37%	13.48%	19	9.88%	16.47%	854042	16.22%
Jamaat-e-Islami	85	87.63%	7	7.22%	8.24%	5	17.03%	9.70%	396166	7.52%
ANP	77	79.38%	4	4.12%	5.19%	23	4.83%	14.00%	544083	10.33%
PPP	81	83.51%	3	3.09%	3.70%	18	3.63%	10.84%	464176	8.82%
APML	24	24.74%	1	1.03%	4.17%	1	0.13%	1.49%	21892	0.42%
PML (Jinnah)	7	7.22%	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	NA	1.97%	7575	0.14%
JUI-S	33	34.02%	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	NA	2.45%	45933	0.87%

Balochistan Province at a Glance

Pakistan's poorest, least populated province, Balochistan's politics have been shaped by a higher degree of direct military intervention than any other area of the country save the FATA. Although the province has a long history of conflict with the central government, the current insurgency dates back to 2005-2006, particularly after a military assault that killed Nawab Akbar Bugti, a former governor and minister of state for the interior.¹²⁴ Although they have not had the same nationwide impact as other terrorist groups like the TTP, multiple Baloch separatist groups continue to carry out attacks on Pakistani security services and state infrastructure within the province. Pakistan's security services have also accused neighboring Indian and Afghan intelligence services of supporting Baloch separatist groups and targeting CPEC projects in an effort to destabilize the province — particularly since the detention in March 2016 of accused Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav — and have cracked down on potential Baloch dissidents both in the province and other parts of the country.¹²⁵

According to provisional census figures, the northern districts of Balochistan and the provincial capital of Quetta have experienced some of the highest rate of population increases in the country over the past two decades, which has further reshaped the province's political dynamics.¹²⁶ Under the new delimitation plan the province will gain two additional directly-elected seats in the National Assembly and one women's seat. Migrant laborers from other parts of Pakistan and members of the Hazara minority living in Quetta have been the subject of repeated attacks by ethnic or sectarian rivals, and the influx of investment associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project and the expansion of the Gwadar port complex has further heightened tensions over the distribution of the province's resources and revenues.

After the 2013 elections, the PML-N forged a provincial coalition government agreement with the National Party (NP), a Baloch party led by Mir Hasil Khan Bizenjo, and the PKMAP, a Pashtun party led by Mahmood Khan Achakzai.¹²⁷ The NP's Abdul Malik Baloch served as chief minister of the province for the first two years, and ceded the position to the PML-N's Sanaullah Zehri in December 2015 as part of their power-sharing agreement.¹²⁸ This tripartite government was broad, with all but 11 Provincial Assembly legislators (out of 65 in the assembly) officially part of the coalition.¹²⁹ In January 2018, however, the government collapsed after a group of dissident legislators defected from the PML-N and withdrew support from Zehri, forcing his resignation and replacement by former deputy assembly speaker Abdul Quddus Bizenjo.¹³⁰ That loss — which Prime Minister Abbasi attributed to direct intervention by the military intelligence services — presaged a failure by the PML-N to hold on to senate seats elected from the Balochistan assembly in the March elections, the majority of which were taken by independents affiliated with the new breakaway faction.¹³¹ New senate chairman Sadiq Sanjrani was elected from among this group, with the support of the PTI and PPP; in late March, the breakaway faction formally launched itself as a new party, the Balochistan Awami Party.¹³² Overall, low turnout at the polls, a weak party presence, and significant military interventions has meant that Balochistan's national and provincial assembly contests have consistently been among the most fragmented of Pakistan's four provinces, short of those in the FATA.

Summary of Major Parties
May 2013 Balochistan Assembly General Elections Results

Party Name	# of Candidates Fielded	Pct of Direct Seats Contested	# of Seats Won	Pct of Direct Seats Won	Pct of Contesting Candidates Who Won	# of Runner-Up Candidates	Mean MOV for Winners	Mean Pct of Valid Vote Received by Candidates	Total Votes Received by Party	Party Votes as Pct of All Votes Cast
PKMAP	24	50.00%	10	20.83%	41.67%	3	8.42%	21.49%	167900	13.36%
PML-N	39	81.25%	8	16.67%	20.51%	2	10.16%	13.15%	121604	9.68%
National Party	27	56.25%	7	14.58%	25.93%	3	27.95%	18.71%	72079	5.74%
Independents	447	931.25%	7	14.58%	1.57%	9	27.66%	2.39%	328310	26.13%
JUI-F	45	93.75%	6	12.50%	13.33%	11	12.56%	15.74%	202738	16.14%
PML-Q	18	37.50%	5	10.42%	27.78%	2	18.70%	16.43%	53297	4.24%
Balochistan National Party	32	66.67%	2	4.17%	6.25%	4	31.06%	10.21%	76620	6.10%
BNP-Awami	19	39.58%	0	0.00%	0.00%	3	NA	6.26%	10620	0.85%
Hazara Democratic Party	3	6.25%	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	NA	10.57%	12354	0.98%
PTI	23	47.92%	0	0.00%	0.00%	1	NA	3.94%	23714	1.89%
PPP	31	64.58%	0	0.00%	0.00%	4	NA	5.36%	51866	4.13%
JUI- Nazryati	27	56.25%	0	0.00%	0.00%	5	NA	7.48%	63584	5.06%

Pakistan's Electoral System in Brief

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is the national body tasked with administering national, provincial, and local elections throughout Pakistan, as well as regulating party, candidate, and voter registration.

Pakistan follows a bicameral parliamentary electoral system. 272 members of the lower house of parliament, the National Assembly, are directly elected for five-year terms to represent geographic constituencies in a single member plurality (or “first-past-the-post”) contest. The outgoing assembly’s term expired on June 1, 2018, and a caretaker government chosen by representatives of the outgoing government and opposition is responsible for managing the country in the interim period between that date and the elections.

Although parliamentarians may only serve from a single constituency, the electoral rules do not impose residency requirements, and allow for candidates to contest multiple constituencies simultaneously. Prominent party leaders often contest multiple seats to ensure their election, with special by-elections held in the months after the general election to fill any seats that a multiple winner opts not to hold. Another sixty seats in the assembly are reserved for women and ten for non-Muslims, which are apportioned on the basis of party seat shares to slates chosen by the parties; this has the effect of increasing the disproportionality between votes cast and seats held in the assembly, and benefits bare winners over their rivals.

The prime minister heads the government and is indirectly elected by the members of the National Assembly; the outgoing government headed by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi featured a cabinet of more than fifty ministers and advisors, more than double the size of Nawaz Sharif’s previous cabinet. The president of Pakistan is the head of state and is indirectly elected in a vote by the members of the upper and lower house of parliament, as well as members of the Provincial Assemblies.

Members of Pakistan’s 104-member upper house of parliament, the senate, are chosen by an electoral college comprising members of the Provincial Assemblies, who choose candidates through a single transferrable vote process. 66 “general” seats are elected; another 38 seats are reserved for women, “technocrats”, or Islamic scholars; and four seats for non-Muslim minority members. Senators hold six-year terms and elections for half of the house are staggered every three years; the most recent elections were held on March 3, 2018.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM: STRUCTURING THE COMPETITION

Administration and Adjudication

Following the conclusion of the current parliament's term on May 31, 2018, a new caretaker government is now responsible for administering the country in the period prior to the completion of polling and the seating of the next parliament. Caretaker periods have been a point of controversy, with past administrations accused of intervening in support of particular favored parties; the 18th Amendment to the Constitution mandated that caretakers be chosen by consensus negotiations between the government and leader of the opposition, or failing that, by a joint parliamentary committee.¹³³ Under Pakistan's recently revised electoral law, during its term the caretaker government is charged with overseeing "day-to-day matters" and to "restrict itself to activities that are of routine [and] non-controversial", and is directed not to "take major policy decisions except on urgent matters", although there is no definition of what exactly constitutes such matters.¹³⁴ Caretakers and their immediate family members are themselves barred from contesting elections. On May 28, Prime Minister Abbasi and National Assembly opposition leader Khurshid Shah of the PPP announced an agreement on former Chief Justice Nasir-ul Mulk as caretaker prime minister, a choice that the PTI also endorsed.¹³⁵ Similar caretaker arrangements must also be negotiated in each of the four provinces; only the Sindh assembly was able to reach an agreement by the completion of its term, with the PTI proposing and subsequently withdrawing nominees in both Punjab and Khyber Paktunkhwa.¹³⁶ In the event that no agreement can be reached between the government and opposition parties, responsibility falls to the Election Commission to choose a caretaker.

The ECP's leadership — a Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and four provincial election commissioners — are also appointed through consensus negotiations between the prime minister and the head of opposition. After an extended series of vacancies that were filled in acting capacity by the chief justices of the Supreme Court, the incumbent CEC, retired judge Sardar Muhammad Raza Khan, was appointed in December 2014; his five year-term is due to continue through the end of 2019. The four provincial members of the commission were approved by a joint parliamentary committee in July 2016, and are also scheduled to remain in their position through the next general elections.¹³⁷ The PTI has previously objected to the ECP's membership, arguing that the incumbents should be replaced and new appointees named based on the consensus of all opposition parties, not just the opposition leader. As noted earlier, following its losses in the May 2013 general elections, the PTI accused ECP officials and administrators of collaborating with the PML-N to rig the results of the polls, and has disputed its neutrality.

The ECP has only a small full-time staff, with most poll administration duties carried out by other civil service personnel assigned on temporary duty during the elections period; the PTI and other complainants have accused these civil servants of favoring incumbent governments and the PML-N in particular in Punjab.¹³⁸ Parties are allowed to deploy observer agents at polling stations to conduct parallel vote tabulations, and independent civil society and media organizations have also played an active observer role in recent election cycles. But the absence of any central ECP results management system or repository of polling station-level

results from previous elections makes it difficult to independently assess complaints or identify specific polling locations that might be sites for fraud or mismanagement of the results. The Elections Act of 2017, a comprehensive package of electoral law reforms passed in October 2017, requires the ECP to establish such a results management system and provide gender-disaggregated vote results at the polling station level.¹³⁹ Pilot projects have been conducted with the support of the United Nations Development Program in Pakistan, but as of writing the ECP has yet to unveil a full rollout, and it remains to be seen whether the next polls will improve on previously poor records transparency.

Although the 2015 judicial commission investigation did not find evidence of widespread or systemic disenfranchisement during the last elections, elections observers in 2013 did note the irregular application of ECP regulations by some polling station officers, particularly in the scrutiny of candidate nomination and the application of vaguely defined character criteria under Articles 62 and 63 of the Pakistani constitution.¹⁴⁰ Historically, those and other criteria, such as candidate education requirements, have been used to eliminate challengers against military regimes, and have seen their highest-profile expression through the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif.

Poll officers' decisions on ballot disqualifications are also largely opaque, and have the potential to be determinative; in the most recent general elections, the number of disqualified ballots exceeded the winner's margin of victory in 36 national assembly constituencies (equivalent to 13% of all contested races).¹⁴¹ Although this is not necessarily evidence of bias in favor or against any one candidate, the lack of disaggregated data or detailed reporting on the ballot disqualification processes prevents analysis of the factors that might explain these decisions, and underscores the potential for adjudication decisions to shape the outcome of the polls.

Pakistani election law provides for the creation by the ECP of election tribunals to hear disputes and appeals against election results, although none of these concluded their proceedings within the mandated 120-day period after the conclusion of the 2013 polls, and almost all rulings were subsequently appealed up to higher courts.¹⁴² During the 2013 elections, lower court judiciary members were appointed to serve as polling officers, a role which they will serve again in 2018; some observers have expressed concerns that this could compromise their neutrality when hearing eventual appeals against their rulings.¹⁴³

New Constituency Boundaries Reshape the Contest

Constituency boundaries and magnitudes define and structure electoral contests, and the process of establishing those boundaries fundamentally shapes electoral outcomes. Pakistan follows the UK model of electing a single winner (in a "first-past-the-post" vote from a field of multiple candidates) to represent a territorially-bounded area. The Pakistani Constitution caps the number of directly-elected National assembly Aembers (at 272) and apportions the number of seats between the provinces and federal units; at the same time, it also holds that constituencies should be allocated "on the basis of population in accordance with the last preceding census officially published".¹⁴⁴

The ECP holds the authority for drawing constituency boundaries (a process referred to as “delimitation”). The last major re-drawing of National Assembly constituency boundaries took place in 2002, following Pakistan’s 1998 census. As no national census had been completed since that time, the 2008 and 2013 general elections were held under the same boundaries, with the exception of a court-ordered “re-description” of a set of Karachi constituencies in March 2013. This stasis in constituency boundaries for the past decade-plus — even as Pakistan’s population has continued to grow and move — contributed to a growing variation between the sizes of electoral constituencies, and accompanying distortion in the relative voting power of constituents living in different parts of the country. At the extremes, election observers in 2013 noted a more than 500% difference between the size of the registered voter populations of the NA-41 (South Waziristan) and NA-19 (Haripur) constituencies.¹⁴⁵ Although the national election results and the PML-N’s majority in parliament ultimately minimized the influence of a single legislator, the 2013 contest in South Waziristan was decided by a margin of less than 400 votes, highlighting the unevenness of representation in the system.

After years of delays, and a Supreme Court order forcing the issue, Pakistan’s first national population census in nearly two decades was carried out to completion in the spring of 2017.¹⁴⁶ The Pakistani army provided security for the enumeration exercise, which was marred by at least two major incidents of violence, and army personnel also conducted parallel tabulation exercises.¹⁴⁷ Pakistani expatriates and Afghan refugees living in official refugee camps were not included in the count, and six months’ residency was required to be counted as a resident of a given area.¹⁴⁸ Provisional results of the census were released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics in August 2017.¹⁴⁹ Several opposition parties, including the PPP, MQM, and lawmakers from other parts of Sindh and the FATA, challenged those numbers; in December 2017, however, the government negotiated an agreement for an amendment to the constitution that allows for the delimitation of constituencies on the basis of the provisional census figures.¹⁵⁰ Plans for a “re-verification” of disputed census blocks agreed to as part of that deal were ultimately dropped as the end of the government’s term approached, but opposition from other parties prevented the government from giving final approval to the census figures before its term expired.¹⁵¹

The ECP released a new set of constituency boundaries in early March, which were generated on the basis of the provisional census figures.¹⁵² Observer groups noted continued discrepancies in the relative size of the constituencies; although Pakistan’s electoral law mandates that constituencies should not vary more than 10% in population size, roughly a third of all National Assembly constituencies under the preliminary delimitation remain outside this threshold. These discrepancies appear to have been primarily driven by preference for following geographic continuity and administrative district boundaries; the twelve seats for the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies in particular are all considerably smaller in population than the legal threshold, overrepresenting the agencies relative to other constituencies.¹⁵³ A parliamentary committee was formed by the PML-N to hear complaints about the new boundaries, but ECP officials rejected the committee’s authority on the issue, and opposition parties abandoned the committee soon after its formation.¹⁵⁴

Finalized constituency boundaries, taking into account more than a thousand petitions and complaints filed with the ECP, were announced in early May, but the ECP has not released final maps for the new delimitations.¹⁵⁵ However, in the final week of the outgoing government's term, the Islamabad and Balochistan High Courts issued rulings overturning ECP delimitation plans in several districts, and ordering it to draw new boundaries there. As of writing, the ultimate resolution of these and other outstanding complaints is unclear, but any decision has the potential to upset preparations for the vote and — depending on the new composition of the constituencies — alter the outcomes in some races.¹⁵⁶ Because polling station-level data and detailed geographic coordinates for polling stations was not released for previous election cycles, analyzing any potential “gerrymandering” effects from each of these changes in constituency boundaries is not currently possible. But new polling station plans released by the ECP in advance of the 2018 elections, which do correlate polling stations and census blocks, suggest that more data may be available on the distribution of votes after the next polls.

Voters and Registration

In a study of the 1993 elections, Andrew Wilder pointed to patronage politics as a major factor in determining Pakistani voter choices, as local interest groups seek to maintain access to government resources by aligning their support with a perceived winning candidate. He also found that voters generally prioritize party affiliation and prospective party performance (as a means of gauging a candidate's likely ability to deliver on patronage pledges through participation in the next government), rather than individual candidate identities, when deciding their vote.¹⁵⁷ Exit poll surveys conducted during the 2013 elections also underscored the importance voters attribute to patronage and the ability to deliver constituent services as a key criteria in vote decisions.¹⁵⁸ This behavior may provide a further incentive for lawmakers to switch affiliations in anticipation of a change in ruling party, discussed further below.

Pakistani citizens over the age of 18 are eligible to register to vote on a rolling basis up until a date for general elections has been announced, at which point voter rolls are frozen until after polls conclude. A single voter list is used for all national, provincial, and local elections, with the exception of members of the Ahmadi minority community, who must register separately from other religious or ethnic minorities.¹⁵⁹ Since 2002, voter registration has been tied to the national Computerized National ID Card (CNIC) issued by Pakistan's National Database and Registration Authority, which is managed by the Pakistani interior ministry. After the passage of the Elections Act of 2017, applicants for a new CNIC are to be automatically registered to vote by NADRA, at either a permanent or temporary residence.¹⁶⁰ Voters may also register by text message with the ECP.

As of October 2017, the ECP reported roughly 97 million registered voters, of which approximately 54.5 million were men and 42.4 million women; in FATA and Balochistan, the disparity between male and female registration was the greatest.¹⁶¹ In December 2017, the ECP launched a campaign to increase female voter registration and bring it on par with male registration, targeting 79 districts around the country.¹⁶² As of the close of the registration period in late May 2018, the ECP reported 105.95 million registered voters (just over fifty percent of the total census population), of whom 59.2 million were male and 46.7 million were female.¹⁶³ The

ECP has not released a detailed demographic breakdown of these figures as of this writing, but press reports indicate that around 43% of all registered Pakistani voters as of May 2018 were under the age of 35, and around 16% under the age of 25. Although a significant share of the voting population, this actually represents a slight decline in the share of under-35 voters as compared to the 2013 elections, when that cohort was estimated to represent around 48% of all registered voters.¹⁶⁴

Election observers have generally praised the NADRA and ECP administration of the voter registration process in recent election cycles, but the PTI raised disputes over the accuracy of the rolls after the 2013 vote, and challenged the effectiveness of anti-fraud measures such as magnetic ink to prevent voters from casting multiple ballots. Questions have also been raised over the integrity of the CNIC database after an interior ministry re-verification process — initiated after reports that the late Afghan Taliban commander Mullah Akhtar Mansour had held a Pakistani ID prior to his death — blocked hundreds of thousands of cards, some of which were subsequently unblocked after protests from lawmakers in Khyber Paktunkhwa and Balochistan.¹⁶⁵

During debates over electoral reforms after the conclusion of the Supreme Court's 2015 investigations into election rigging complaints, the PTI has pushed for stronger registration criteria and biometric checks of voter identities at the polling station; the ECP has resisted those demands, citing the costs and complexities of implementation.¹⁶⁶ In a pilot project during the September 2017 by-elections to fill Nawaz Sharif's NA-120 constituency in Lahore, NADRA was unable to provide biometric data for nearly 30,000 registered voters; the PTI again sought to challenge the inclusion of those votes, which exceeded the PML-N candidate's margin of victory.¹⁶⁷ While disputes over the accuracy of voter registration data and access to the ballot may recur in the upcoming elections, individual repeat voting represents a fairly inefficient fraud strategy for political actors who might be seeking to control the voting outcome. Instead, decisions regarding the structuring, administration, tallying, and adjudication of the polls hold a greater potential to systematically alter electoral results, and could form the basis of more serious complaints.

Parties, Candidates, and Campaigning

Although individual voter preferences may shift ballot decisions at the margins, the overall task of generating a winning plurality in an election requires work by political parties or party coalitions to mobilize collective action and turn out their supporters at the polls (or otherwise seek alternative means of controlling the outcome). Most party organizations in Pakistan possess limited financial resources of their own, relying on candidates to self-finance voter mobilization efforts, and parties are generally dormant as institutions except during the campaign period and in the assembly delegations.¹⁶⁸

Despite this decentralization of resources and influence — which increases the potential leverage of individual “electable” legislators or swing interest groups — national political parties in Pakistan have primarily been organized centrally and hierarchically around leading political families or individual founders. With a few exceptions, most formal decision-making powers and

control over the allocation of party tickets to candidates centralized at the top, and nominal requirements for intra-party competition for leadership positions are loosely and irregularly enforced by the ECP and other authorities. While some parties like the PPP are now entering their third generation of family leadership, the barriers to intra-party advancement and the lack of transparent and predictable mechanisms for dispute resolution can result in fracture when individual leaders' control weakens, as is now facing the MQM and potentially the PML-N.

Although politicians have been in election mode for some time now, the official campaigning period is, as of this writing, set to run from June 30 to July 24, under the administration of the ECP and the caretaker government. Shortly after the conclusion of parliament's term, the Lahore High Court (LHC) issued a ruling ordering the ECP to revise its candidate registration forms, which the Elections Act of 2017 had simplified, eliminating previously-required details related to candidate assets. In response to an ECP appeal that the late-issued order would require changes to the overall election schedule, the Supreme Court of Pakistan overturned the LHC ruling, clearing the ECP to continue with its already-prepared registration forms. Candidacy filings are now due by June 8 and ballot lists are due to be finalized by June 29.¹⁶⁹

The ECP imposes broad code of conduct restrictions during the campaign period, aimed at limiting election expenditures, restricting the use of public resources for election campaigns, and barring campaigning by sitting members of parliament (during special election periods). Enforcement of these rules has again been irregular in practice, and the rules appear to serve at best a minimal deterrent for top party leaders. The Election Act of 2017 also increases candidate filing costs and raises the threshold under which losing candidates must forfeit their security deposits (PKR 30,000, or the equivalent of around US\$260), now set at anything under 25% of the vote (which would apply to more than 90% of all candidates who contested national assembly races in the 2013 general elections).¹⁷⁰ If this proves to be a deterrent or if registration restrictions are imposed more strictly, fewer candidates contesting races could potentially result in a more consolidated vote around the winner and runner-up — or lower overall turnout if the excluded candidates' supporters opt not to participate at all.

How the Electoral System Shapes Outcomes

Electoral systems theorists have posited that single-member, first-past-the-post electoral systems such as Pakistan's should generally force aspirants to office towards a two-party system, at least at the local constituency level.¹⁷¹ Voters who care about the outcome of a given race in which there can only be a single winner are expected to abandon trailing candidates — even if they might more closely align the voter's first-choice policy preferences — and coalesce around an eventual winner and runner-up; failure to do so can result in a divided opposition and the election of a smaller plurality winner. Prospective office-seekers are likewise assumed to bandwagon to join the top two party coalitions seen as likely winners.

In practice, although the PML-N and PPP have been the largest national parties and coalition leaders for the past thirty years (with the PTI now vying to supplant one or the other), Pakistan has been a multi-party system for much of its history.¹⁷² Pakistan is not necessarily an outlier in

this regard.¹⁷³ In his argument for the single-member district's tendency to produce two-party contests, Gary Cox also notes the factors in which such coordination is less likely to occur — including cases where:

- voters have intense first-choice preferences (perhaps due to ideology, ethnic affiliation, or other identity markers) and do not care about ranking the alternatives;
- voters are participating for other purposes, such as group solidarity (or financial compensation for their votes), and do not care about the actual election outcome;
- voters have strong certainty in the outcome that precludes any need to abandon one's first preference candidate (because the outcome is assumed to already be fixed);
- or conversely cases where voters lack clear information about other voters' likely preferences that might allow for coordination around a likely runner-up option.¹⁷⁴

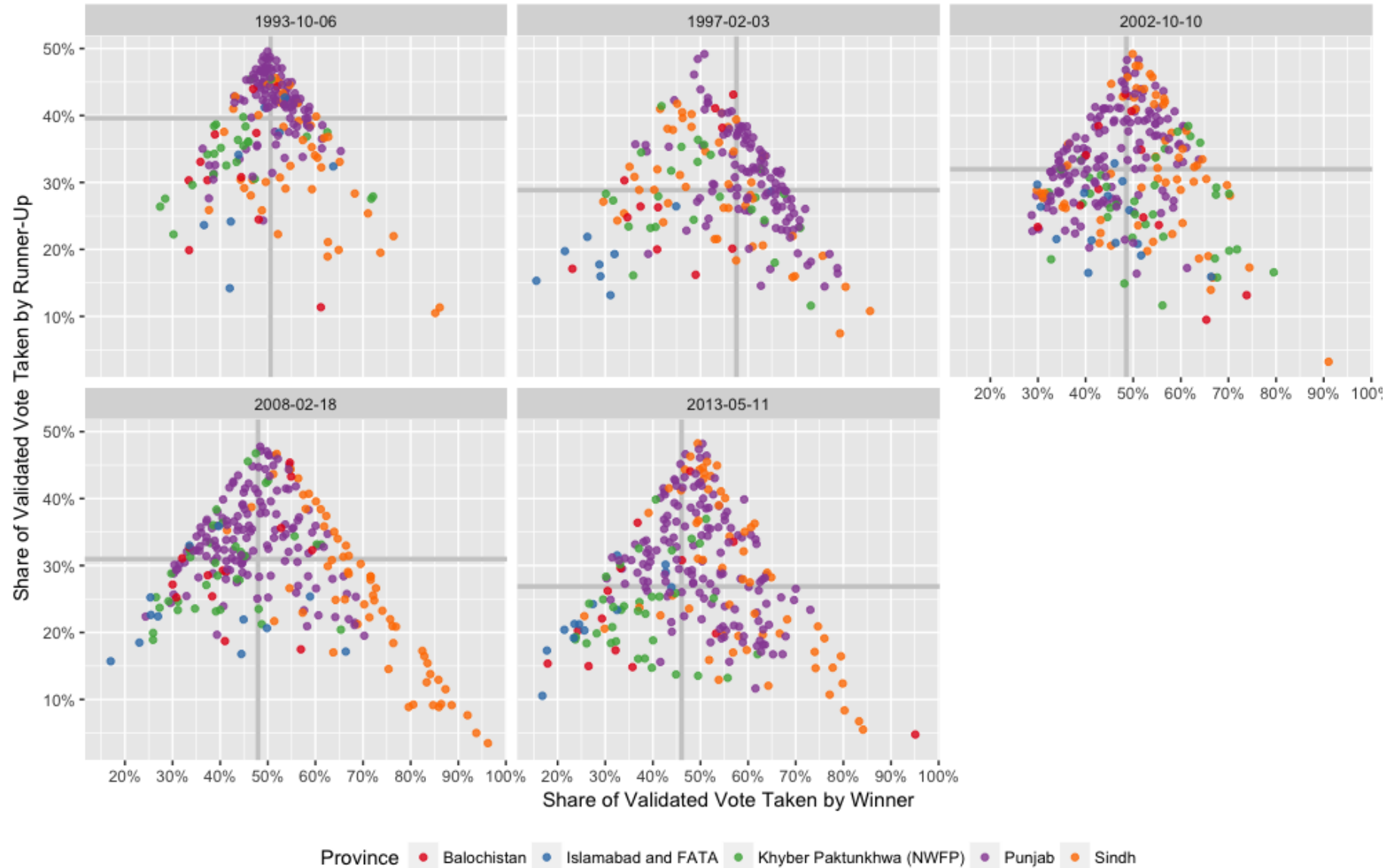
All of these conditions might certainly apply in Pakistan, particularly the low information and high uncertainty facing voters, given the country's limited experience with regularly scheduled polls and conflicting signals regarding legal enforcement decisions.

The following diagrams, adapted from Diwakar and Nagayama, offer a means of comparing the degree of multi-partisanship in the Pakistani electoral system, by visualizing the relationship between the validated vote shares of winning and runner-up candidates in National Assembly races in the last five general elections.¹⁷⁵ Shifting from left to right along the x-axis represents a shift from multi-partisan environments towards ones of effectively single-party dominance, while shifting from top to bottom along the y-axis follows the degree to which votes for losing candidates are concentrated behind a single runner-up or fragmented across multiple trailing parties.

Thus, points to the lefthand side of the triangle's midpoint — which include most of the races in Khyber Paktunkhwa and Balochistan during the 2013 elections — represent coordination failures on the part of opposition voters; had they reached an agreement in support of a single candidate, such voters could have potentially altered the outcome of the race against the ultimate winner. Datapoints further towards the top are cases where the runner-up candidate came closest to consolidating the opposition vote. Points at the peak (as observed in Punjab in the 1993 elections) of the triangle represent narrowly contested two-party races, with the top two candidates accounting for nearly if not all votes cast, and only a narrow difference between winners and losers. Constituencies towards the bottom right corner of the triangle — as observed in Sindh in the 2008 and 2013 general elections — represent areas where a single party dominates over one or two weak challengers, while the bottom left corner suggests highly fragmented constituencies — such as FATA — where a votes were split broadly across winners and losers, and only a small margin separates candidate rankings.

Nagayama Diagrams for Pakistani National Assembly Elections 1993-2013

Excludes uncontested races and by-elections. Adapted from Diwakar (2007)



Author: Colin Cookman (Twitter: @colincookman)

For code and data used to generate this chart see: https://github.com/colincookman/pakistan_elections

Caveat: No guarantees are made as to underlying accuracy of this data.

As can be observed from these charts, the degree of vote fragmentation and multi-partisanship varies considerably between constituencies, provinces, and election cycles in Pakistan, but coordination failures on the part of opposition candidates are a recurrent feature in many cases. In addition to the possible explanations offered by Cox for these outcomes at the voter and constituency level, at the national level Pakistan's multi-partisanship appears to be in part the result of regionally-rooted party organizations who, as discussed in the previous section, lack cross-provincial bases of support. But the relationship may be a two-way one. The prevalence of locally fragmented constituencies complicates party efforts to organize on a national basis, as parties cannot reliably consolidate votes across the entirety of the country, except in areas where they are locally dominant and likeliest to be able to engage in a two-party competition. This means parties are often only able come together to form (dynamic and often unstable) ruling coalitions at the national level after polls are held, encouraging (along with the other factors previously mentioned) interest groups and candidates to shift their alliances before and after the fact, and withhold from the adoption of strong national party brands. A key aspect of assessing the outcome of the next elections will be the degree to which it resembles a two-party national contest between the incumbent PML-N and opposition PTI, or a more divided race at both the local and national level.

The Most Competitive Races in Pakistan's National Assembly Elections 1993-2013

Excludes by-elections. Points are constituencies. Intercepts are median values for their respective election period.



Author: Colin Cookman (Twitter: @colincookman)

For code and data used to generate this chart see: https://github.com/colincookman/pakistan_elections

Caveat: No guarantees are made as to underlying accuracy of this data.

Turnout and Competitiveness

In highly competitive constituencies operating under Pakistan's single-member plurality rules, bare margins of victory between winners and runner-up candidates increase the potential spoiler impacts of third and fourth-place finishers in an electoral contest. Although its predictive value is uncertain, some opinion polling conducted prior to the 2018 elections has suggested lower intentions to vote among respondents than during the 2013 cycle and a higher degree of concerns among respondents that the elections will not be free and fair. There appears to be significant variation by region and party affiliation in those responses, however.¹⁷⁶ In the event that overall voter turnout drops in 2018, the relative importance of smaller vote blocs or minor parties in determining poll outcomes can be expected to increase. Varying degrees of turnout, vote fragmentation, and candidate or party strength produce varying levels of competitiveness between constituencies, provinces, and election cycles, which can be observed in the following chart.

As can be seen from these figures, overall turnout (measured as a percentage of total votes cast to registered voters) has risen for the past two successive election cycles in Pakistan, with the 2013 elections one of the most highly contested in the country's history. The overall median winning candidate's margin of victory has been generally consistent across this period, although there are notable outliers and variations between the province.

Punjab province has consistently reported the highest turnout rates among the four provinces. A shift in Punjab between the 2008 and 2013 election cycles towards more high-margin winning candidates is evident, which as suggested in earlier figures appears to be the result of vote-splitting amongst opposition voters (in 2013, the biggest blocs of which were represented by the PTI and PPP) unable to consolidate around a single candidate. Again for the last two election cycles, constituencies in Sindh are comparatively notable for both the winning candidates' large margins of victories, and high measures of turnout — potentially indicative of candidates with highly motivated voter bases willing to turn out in force even for a candidate that dominates other rivals (but also potentially explained by ballot stuffing to favor a single winner). Given the strains facing the MQM in Karachi in particular and the overall national decline of the PPP brand, it remains to be seen whether this trend will hold through 2018. Khyber Paktunkhwa, Balochistan, and FATA have traditionally seen lower turnout rates and narrower margins of victory when compared to the other two provinces, reflecting their more fragmented and multi-partisan political landscapes.

Party Incumbency Trends

Should the PML-N manage to win reelection in large numbers in the upcoming polls, it will be bucking historical vote patterns; no national government in Pakistan has won reelection to a second term. Incumbent legislators have a number of tools at their disposal to boost their reelection prospects, including the ability to redirect funding to home constituencies, access to state resources, and influence over civil and police service appointments and transfers (despite various nominal legal prohibitions on all of the above). But successful reelection on a party basis remains comparatively rare. A study by Madiha Afzal on national elections between 1988-1997 (a period of four back-to-back changes in government between the PPP and PML-N, and a high degree of intervention by the military and the presidency in the government formation and dissolution process) found that incumbency was generally a disadvantage for candidates, and particularly for those members of a national governing party.¹⁷⁷ Although the PML-N weathered Nawaz Sharif's initial disqualification from office in April 2017 without major withdrawals, during the final months of the outgoing government defections of current and former lawmakers to the PTI appear to have accelerated, particularly in Punjab, which could presage a broader collapse of support.

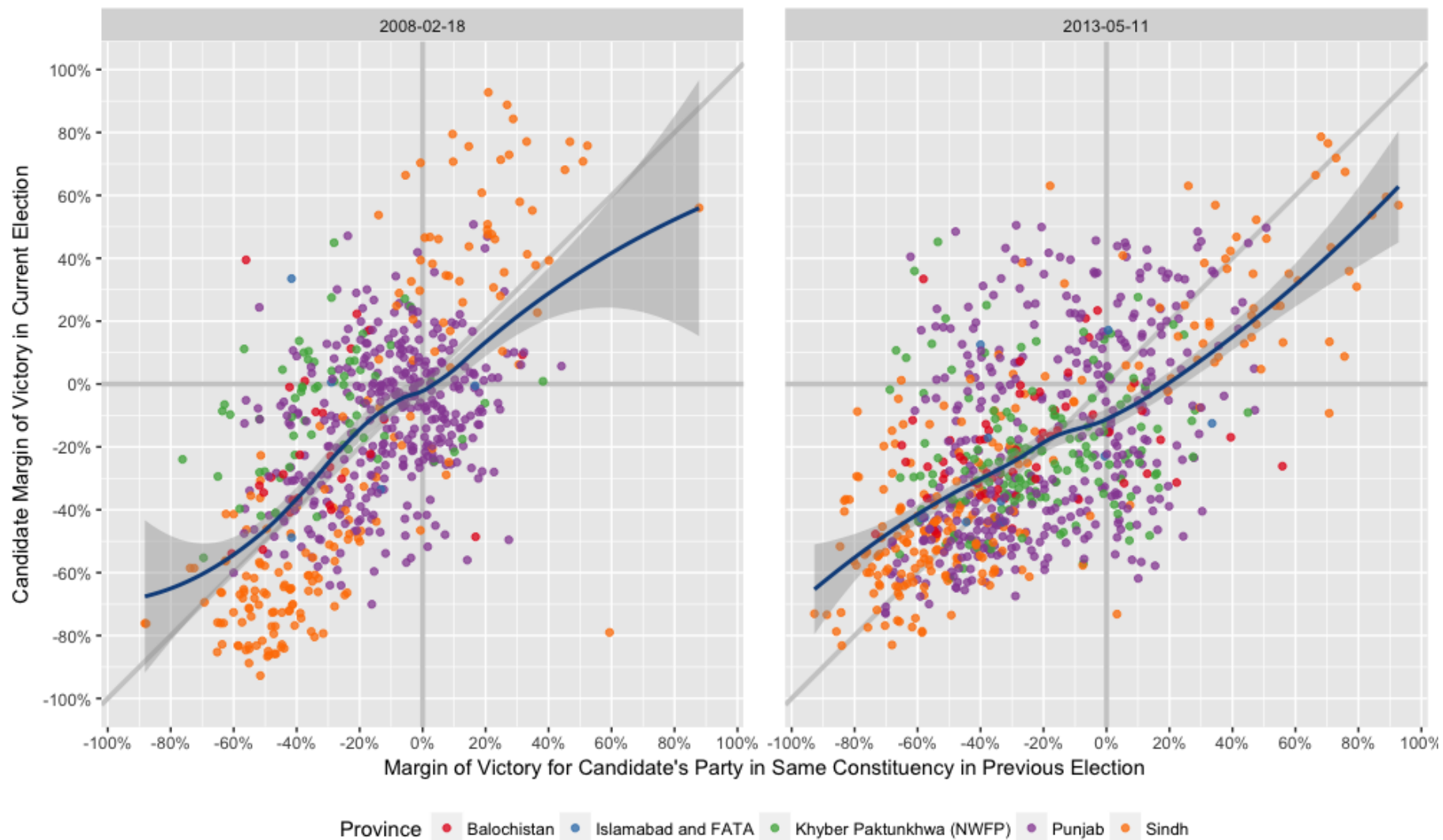
As-yet unfinished data coding has prevented this paper from attempting rigorous analysis of the effects of incumbency at the candidate level in more recent election cycles, but party-based incumbency analysis on National Assembly general election contests from 2002-2013 appears to confirm these earlier findings that incumbent party status is more of a burden than a blessing. This party-based data excludes independent candidates who did not contest under a party label, who accounted for between 11-12% of all seat winners in the past three election cycles, so it is necessarily incomplete. The aforementioned re-drawing of constituency boundaries ahead of the 2018 polls also precludes extending this analysis to future elections, as future changes in party re-election rates could be explained in part by changes in the composition of the constituency itself. With these caveats in mind, some preliminary analysis may be possible.

Party Incumbency Trends in Pakistan's National Assembly Elections (2002 - 2013)

Points are candidates. Excludes independent candidates.

Preceding elections data may in some instances be by-elections held immediately after the last general election cycle.

Caution is advised against extending this analysis to previous or future election cycles. Please see accompanying paper for further discussion.



Author: Colin Cookman (Twitter: @colincookman)

For code and data used to generate this chart see: https://github.com/colincookman/pakistan_elections

Caveat: No guarantees are made as to underlying accuracy of this data.

In a scenario where the performance of a candidate's party in the last election cycle was perfectly predictive of that candidate's result in the current election, the candidate's margin of victory should track the diagonal line passing through these charts. Points to the left of that line represent candidates who over-performed their party's result from the last election, while those to the right of the diagonal represent candidates whose position weakened relative to previous party performance. Candidate points above the horizontal line won in the current election, and the candidate's party won last time in points to the right of the vertical line. Thus, candidates in the upper right quadrant held seats for their party, while those in the lower right lost a previously-held seat. Those candidates in the upper left quadrant managed a seat pick-up for their party, while the lower left repeated previous losses. As the regression line suggests, in cases where the preceding candidate's margin of victory was quite strong, incumbent-party candidates are more liable to hold the seats. But overall, winners have tended to under-perform their predecessors over the past three election cycles (and moreso between 2008-2013 than in 2002-2008).

The current lack of fully coded candidate-level incumbency data constrains this analysis given that, as noted previously, elections in Pakistan feature a relatively high degree of party-switching on the part of candidates (despite a number of legal controls potentially available to enforce party discipline) and an evident disinclination on the part of both voters and parties to enforce consistency on candidates' choice of party labels from election to election.¹⁷⁸ A substantial portion of candidates also choose to campaign independent of party labels and subsequently join the winning coalition. Thus, apparent shifts in party support within a constituency between election cycles may also be the result of a strategic decision on the part of a candidate and his supporters to switch to join a new party coalition, rather than necessarily changes in voter attitudes towards their representative or assessments of an outgoing incumbent. While the aforementioned caveats should caution against projection, one major question to watch in the 2018 polls will be whether trends against party re-election generally hold, or whether PML-N incumbents are able to maintain their support in the face of legal battles against their top leaders and defections from key areas such as south Punjab.

CONCLUSION: QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE ANALYSIS

As stated at the outset of this paper, multiple factors should caution against attempts to forecast the outcome of the upcoming July 2018 elections at this stage. Many key elements are still unknown as of this writing, including the final shape of constituencies, distribution of party candidates, negotiation of pre-electoral alliances, and the resolution of many pending legal cases that could impact both structural aspects of the elections and the fate of individual political leaders. That said, key questions to watch during the upcoming campaign period and in assessing the outcome of the elections will include:

- The degree to which the PML-N coalition holds together, particularly in Punjab, despite the party's legal battles, leadership transitions, and efforts by the PTI to chip away through the recruitment of defectors, and whether the party's economic development record is sufficient to maintain support and reverse previous anti-incumbency trends;
- Whether the PTI is successful at fully supplanting the PPP as the leading national opposition party and forcing the PML-N into a two-party contest in most constituencies, or whether third and fourth-place candidates also split the vote in many races, and if so whether the opposition or incumbent primarily benefits from that splintering;
- Whether previous trends towards the regional polarization of political parties continue, necessitating a multi-party government coalition drawing from across provinces, or whether the contest between the PML-N and PTI and the weakening of smaller sub-national parties nationalizes most races and reshapes provincial alignments;
- In the case of a highly fragmented outcome either locally or nationally, which smaller parties emerge as swing blocs, and how they choose to leverage their position in negotiations over the formation of new provincial or national governing coalitions;
- Whether structural changes — including the new constituency boundaries drawn after the last census, the reallocation of assembly seats, new voter registration, and the eventual merger of the FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province — produce substantially different results than in previous election cycles as a result of changes in the composition of the electorate;
- The degree to which the administration and adjudication of the elections by the ECP, the caretaker government, and the increasingly activist judiciary is accepted by the main competing parties, and whether decisions on constituency delimitation, candidate registration, and vote tabulation or disqualification are conducted transparently;
- Whether the eventual losing parties retain their organizational coherence in the face of substantial electoral losses, and whether they ultimately accept the results of the election, or instead seek extra-legal means through which to challenge the outcome and seek alternate routes to power;

- How the next government engages with the non-elected power centers within the country — including the military, judiciary, and militant and non-militant organizations and movements — and how the composition of the next ruling coalition affects its positions, policies, and priorities on the key issues facing the country, especially the management of the economy, of security relations with neighboring countries and the United States, and of questions regarding the evolving rules and institutions governing Pakistan's political system.

The coming weeks and months will hopefully present more information and insights with which to more fully answer these questions, and to expand upon the initial survey of the pre-election period and review of past electoral trends offered by this report. The polls will be a vast undertaking, and understanding their outcome will be crucial to understanding the future trajectory of Pakistan. But once completed the elections will only set the initial stage for future negotiations and renegotiations of power, as a new government takes office later this summer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although primarily a desk-based study — with all the limitations that may imply — this paper was informed in part by background interviews conducted in Lahore and Islamabad in May-July 2013 and April 2017 with the support of the U.S. Institute of Peace. The earlier research was also supported by the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and the Center for American Progress, where I published a paper in March 2013 previewing the 2013 general elections, from which I have borrowed the structure for this latest assessment. I am especially grateful to the Forman Christian College in Lahore and the Lahore University of Management Sciences for hosting me during previous visits to Pakistan, and to the Pakistani analysts, politicians, party activists, and journalists who generously shared their insights during these visits. I regret that I was unable to conduct more extensive field research to gain a deeper perspective as part of the drafting process.

I thank Shirley Keating and Lauren McNally for their research assistance in support of this project. Thomas Scherer, now at UC San Diego, provided key initial insights into the R programming language used to clean, organize, and analyze electoral data for this project, without which my attempts at constructing a dataset would have doubtlessly stalled out. John Ray of UCLA was extremely helpful in tutoring me on how to further gather, expand, and refine this data. I also relied heavily on guidebooks by Kieran Healy and Garret Grolemond and Hadley Wickham, as well as the Stackoverflow community, to build my (still developing) understanding of R for data analysis.¹⁷⁹

I thank the following reviewers and colleagues for sharing their advice and critiques — at very short notice and on a very short timeline — on an early draft of this paper to help sharpen and improve its contents: Emily Ashbridge, Ahsan Butt, Shamila Chaudhry, Dan Feldman, Umair Javed, Brian Katulis, Jahandad Khan, Dan Markey, Damian Murphy, Niloufer Siddiqui, Brian Vogt, Marvin Weinbaum, Joshua White, and Uzair Younus. I apologize for not being able to fully resolve your suggestions but look forward to continued conversations on these issues. Particular thanks goes to Moeed Yusuf and Andrew Wilder for their mentoring and support here at USIP. All errors of fact or judgement in this paper remain my responsibility alone.

This paper is dedicated to Julia, who understandably did not particularly care about any of this, but did care about me.

ELECTORAL DATA ANNEX

As part of research for this study, the author compiled a dataset of electoral results for Pakistan's major national elections over the past 25 years. The principal sources used were the website of the Election Commission of Pakistan (for the results of the 2008 and 2013 national and provincial assembly elections); ECP official gazette notifications on election results and other associated ECP publications; and a 2010 publication by Church World Service and the Free and Fair Elections Network (FAFEN), which collects and summarizes data for earlier national elections dating back to 1970. In March 2018, FAFEN released a new election web portal, which was used in some instances to cross-check the new dataset.¹⁸⁰

Significant cleaning and reorganization was required to restructure this data for analytical purposes, and important caveats about its reliability and accuracy remain. The ECP did not release — or apparently systematically collect and maintain, as subsequent court investigations found — comprehensive polling station-level results for the 2013 elections, offering only aggregate constituency-wide figures and forestalling more granular analysis of vote patterns below the constituency level (the composition of which, after the 2017-18 delimitation process, have now changed). Several data errors were found during the cleaning process, including transposed figures, missing candidate data, and inaccurate vote totals; these were corrected where evident as part of the construction of the new dataset.¹⁸¹ In many cases the source of apparent ECP tabulation errors could not be independently resolved, and other data errors may be less evident and have eluded the cleaning process. Significant gaps in the dataset currently remain, including by-election results prior to 2013, provincial assembly results for elections held prior to 2008, and the coding of unique candidate identifiers that would allow for more rigorous tracking of candidate performance across elections or parties.

Beyond obvious omissions or errors, there is no way to reliably assess the accuracy of the reported figures, their correlation to actual votes cast, or the conditions in which they were recorded — a particular concern given recurrent complaints about ballot rigging, voter fraud, or intimidation at the polls. Thus, while some general analytical findings may be possible from this dataset, caution should be given to attributing reported vote figures as a measure of direct popular support, as opposed to an imperfect proxy for candidate strength under Pakistan's current system of competition.

With these caveats in mind, the full dataset and code used to generate charts and tables for this report is available online in open source accompanying this report, or directly at https://github.com/colincookman/pakistan_elections. This resource will eventually be updated to include the July 2018 parliamentary outcomes, once concluded, and will ultimately be expanded to fully report election results at the national and provincial level dating back to 1970, as well as accompanying polling station, census, and geographic data where available. Any corrections to the dataset can be directed to the author via email or Twitter and are greatly appreciated.

ENDNOTE REFERENCES

¹ Colin Cookman is a program officer with the United States Institute of Peace's Asia Center, where he coordinates and supports research, publications, and outreach across the program's region of focus. Views and analysis expressed here are his own and do not represent those of USIP, which does not take policy positions. He can be contacted at ccookman@gmail.com, or on Twitter @colincookman.

² See electoral data appendix, online at https://github.com/colincookman/pakistan_elections

³ Salman Masood, "Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Is Toppled by Corruption Case", *New York Times*, July 28 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/28/world/asia/pakistan-prime-minister-nawaz-sharif-removed.html>

⁴ Ashad Shahzad and Drazen Jorgic, "Pakistani Lawmakers Elect Ousted PM Nawaz Sharif's Ally as Replacement", *Reuters*, August 1 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-politics/pakistani-lawmakers-elect-ousted-pm-nawaz-sharifs-ally-as-replacement-idUSKBN1AH3B4>

⁵ "Sharif Family Owned, Mortgaged UK Property Through Offshore Companies, Leaked Docs Reveal," *Dawn*, April 3 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1249771/sharif-family-owned-mortgaged-uk-property-through-offshore-companies-leaked-docs-reveal>; for more on PPP prime minister Yousaf Raza Gilani's disqualification from office in 2012, see Declan Walsh, "Political Instability Rises as Pakistani Court Ousts Premier", *New York Times*, June 19 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/20/world/asia/political-instability-rises-as-pakistani-court-dismisses-prime-minister.html>

⁶ Arif Malik and Adnan Sheikh, "PML-N Elects Nawaz as 'Quaid for Life', Shahbaz as Interim Party President," *Dawn*, February 27 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1392062/pml-n-elects-nawaz-as-quaid-for-life-shahbaz-as-interim-party-president>

⁷ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016: Pakistan", U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265546>

⁸ Arif Rafiq, "The Judge, the General, and Pakistan's Evolving Balance of Power," *The Diplomat*, November 9 2012, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/11/the-judge-the-general-and-pakistans-evolving-balance-of-power/>

⁹ For previous author analysis of the PPP tenure, see Colin Cookman, "Previewing Pakistan's 2013 Elections", Center for American Progress, March 20 2013, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2013/03/20/57006/previewing-pakistans-2013-elections/>

¹⁰ For the Election Commission's initial schedule for the polls, see: Election Commission of Pakistan, "General Election 2018 – Election Programme Notification", May 31 2018, <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/PrintDocument.aspx?PressId=55202&type=Image>; as of this writing, however, there is some uncertainty about the polling schedule due to pending legal challenges, a resolution in the Balochistan Assembly calling for the delay of the elections by a month, and a request from the Khyber Paktunkhwa chief minister for Khyber Paktunkhwa Provincial Assembly elections to be held in the former districts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas at the same time as the rest of the province rather than in 2019. Election officials and the caretaker Prime Minister, Nasir-ul-Mulk have publicly stated they intend to continue with the July 25, 2018 date as planned.

¹¹ Amir Wasim, "CCI Breaks Deadlock on Delimitation," *Dawn*, November 14 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1370333>

¹² This paper does not attempt coverage of the territories of Gilgit-Baltistan (formerly the Northern Areas), and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the Pakistani-administered portion of the disputed territory of Kashmir, both of which do not have full provincial status in Pakistan and elect their own councils or legislatures separate from the rest of the country.

¹³ Simon Gardner, "Sharif Returns to Pakistan From Exile", *Reuters*, November 24 2007, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan/sharif-returns-to-pakistan-from-exile-idUSL0630141120071125>; Mira Sethi, "Watch the Throne", *The Caravan*, April 1 2013, <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/reportage/watch-throne>

¹⁴ The party also benefited from the first-past-the-post nature of the contest, getting a disproportionate 46% of all directly-elected seats after receiving 32.5% of all national ballots cast, per author calculations from annex dataset. For more on the party's campaign message, see the "Pakistan Muslim League (N) National Agenda for Real Change Manifesto 2013", available at <http://pmo.gov.pk/documents/manifesto.pdf>

¹⁵ The PML-N did opt to ally with smaller parties like the JUI-F at the national level, took on board a number of independent candidates immediately after the election results made their majority clear, and formed a governing coalition at the provincial level with the National Party and Paktunkhwa Milli Awami Party in Balochistan.

¹⁶ Reforms introduced by the 18th Amendment to Pakistan's constitution weakened the authority of the president — in past governments, sometimes seen as part of a “troika” of key leadership positions on par with the prime minister and army chief — to a more ceremonial role, although a president who did not share parties with the prime minister might have leeway to take a more activist approach to his formal powers and disregard the “consultations” currently mandated with the prime minister. President Hussain's current term in office expires on September 9, 2018, and a vote for his successor is expected after the formation of a new parliament; he is eligible for reelection to a second term. “Mamnoon Hussain Elected as Pakistan's 12th President”, *Express Tribune*, July 30 2013, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/583886/polling-to-elect-12th-president-begins/>

¹⁷ Additionally, members of the National Assembly vote for senators from the federal capital territory of Islamabad. For more details on the transferrable vote formula, see Ebad Pasha, “Untangling the Mystery: All You Need to Know About Senate Elections”, *Dawn*, March 3 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1392528/untangling-the-mystery-all-you-need-to-know-about-senate-elections>

¹⁸ Hasham Cheema, “How Pakistan's Panama Papers Probe Unfolded”, *Dawn*, July 29 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1316531>

¹⁹ Haseeb Bhatti, “JIT Report Finds ‘Glaring Discrepancies’ in Sharif Family's Financial History”, *Dawn*, July 10 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1344435/jit-report-finds-glaring-discrepancies-in-sharif-familys-financial-history>; for the investigation's findings, see “JIT Report”, Supreme Court of Pakistan, <http://www.supremecourt.gov.pk/web/page.asp?id=2506>

²⁰ The Supreme Court debated these terms during hearings against Nawaz and against Imran Khan, who faced a disqualification petition brought by the PML-N that was ultimately rejected by the court, but did not provide a definition in either ruling. In its February 2018 ruling barring Nawaz from holding party office after having been earlier disqualified from elected office, the court cited “Islamic moral standards” as the source of the restrictions, concluding that the court had an obligation to “purify [the government] at the top”. “Judgement: Constitutional Petitions No. 37-45, 47-51, and 54 of 2017 and CM Appeal No. 244 of 2017 in Const. Petition No. Nil of 2017,” Supreme Court of Pakistan, February 21 2018, pages 22 -25. http://www.supremecourt.gov.pk/web/user_files/File/Const.P.37of2017_dt_2-3-2018.pdf

²¹ Zain Siddiqui, “The Technicality that Led to Nawaz Sharif's Disqualification,” *Dawn*, July 28 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1348211>; “Judgement: Constitutional Petitions No. 29-30 of 2016 and 3 of 2017,” Supreme Court of Pakistan, July 28 2017, http://www.supremecourt.gov.pk/web/user_files/File/Const.P. 29 2016 28072016.pdf

²² Haseeb Bhatti, “Nawaz Sharif Removed as PML-N Head After SC Rules Disqualified Person Cannot Lead a Party”, *Dawn*, February 21 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1390816/nawaz-does-not-qualify-to-serve-as-pml-n-chief-sc-gives-verdict-in-elections-act-2017-case>; “Short Order on Constitutional Petitions No. 37-45, 47-51, and 54 of 2017 and Civil Miscellaneous Appeal No. 244 of 2017,” Supreme Court of Pakistan, February 21 2018, http://www.supremecourt.gov.pk/web/user_files/File/Const.P. 37 2017 dt 21 2 2018.pdf; Haseeb Bhatti, “Disqualification Under Article 62 (1)(f) Is For Life, SC Rules in Historic Verdict”, *Dawn*, April 13 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1401362>; “Judgement: Civil Appeal No. 233 of 2015”, Supreme Court of Pakistan, April 13 2018, http://www.supremecourt.gov.pk/web/user_files/File/C.A. 233 2015.pdf

²³ Rameez Khan, “Sharif Urges Supporters to Brace Up for ‘Revolution’”, *Express Tribune*, August 12 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1479822/defiant-nawaz-rally-leaves-gujranwala-lahore/>; Muhammad Sadaqat, “Sharif Says Next Elections Will Be Referendum on SC Judgement Against Him,” *Dawn*, January 21 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1384289/sharif-says-next-elections-will-be-referendum-on-sc-judgement-against-him>;

²⁴ Javed Hussain, “Cannot Even Think of Replacing Nawaz’: Shahbaz Sharif Appointed PML-N President”, *Dawn*, March 13 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1394992>

²⁵ Amraiz Khan and Javed Iqbal, “More Arrests Likely as NAB-Govt Gulf Widens”, *The Nation*, February 25 2018, <https://nation.com.pk/25-Feb-2018/more-arrests-likely-as-nab-govt-gulf-widens>; “Rangers Guard

- NAB as One More Held in Ashiyana Scam”, *Express Tribune*, February 25 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1644121/1-rangers-guard-nab-one-held-ashiyana-scam/>;
- ²⁶ Zulqernain Tahir, “Maryam Meets Shahbaz, Hamza Amid Rumors of Differences”, *Dawn*, October 18 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1364505>; Rameez Khan, “Hamza Shahbaz Calls for Ending Politics of Confrontation”, *Express Tribune*, October 17 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1533737/confrontation-institutions-not-national-interest-cm-shehbaz/>;
- ²⁷ Sardar Sikander, “Nawaz Sharif ‘Advised Not to Escalate Confrontation with Establishment’”, *Dawn*, May 16 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1711670/1-sharif-advised-not-escalate-confrontation-establishment/>;
- ²⁸ The PTI received 16.9% of all total votes in 2013 but only 10.4% of all directly-elected national assembly seats, compared to the PPP’s 15.4% of votes and 12.6% of seats. Author calculations based on dataset annex.
- ²⁹ Arsala Jawaid, “Game Changer,” *World Policy Journal* 2012 29, pages 106-115, <http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/winter2012/game-changer>
- ³⁰ “Text of the Charter of Democracy”, as reprinted in *Dawn*, May 15 2006, <https://www.dawn.com/news/192460>
- ³¹ Colin Cookman, “The 18th Amendment and Pakistan’s Political Transitions,” Center for American Progress, April 19 2010, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2010/04/19/7587/the-18th-amendment-and-pakistans-political-transitions/>
- ³² Robin Wright and Glenn Kessler, “U.S. Brokered Bhutto’s Return to Pakistan,” *Washington Post*, December 28 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/27/AR2007122701481.html>; Jane Perlez, “Pakistan Leader Backs Down and Reinstates Top Judge,” *New York Times*, March 15 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/16/world/asia/16pstan.html?pagewanted=all>
- ³³ Anwer Hussain Sumra, “Protest Mode: The Honeymoon is Over, Imran Tells Government,” *Express Tribune*, December 15 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/645638/protest-mode-the-honeymoon-is-over-imran-tells-govt/>
- ³⁴ Qasim Nauman, “Pakistan Commission Finds No Manipulation in 2013 Election”, *Wall Street Journal*, July 23 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pakistan-commission-finds-no-manipulation-in-2013-election-1437671083>; “Final Report of the General Elections-2013 Inquiry Commission 2015,” Ministry of Law of Pakistan, July 22 2015, accessed at <https://web.archive.org/web/20150826052006/http://www.molaw.gov.pk/gop/index.php?q=aHR0cDovLzE5Mi4xNjguNzAuMTM2L21vbGF3L3VzZXJmaWxlczEvZmlsZS9S9SZXBvcnQIMjBGaV5hbC5wZGY%3D>
- ³⁵ Jon Boone, “Imran Khan Abandons Islamabad Protest After Inquiry Into PM Granted,” *The Guardian*, November 1 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/01/pakistan-imran-khan-abandons-islamabad-protest-corruption-inquiry-granted-prime-minister>
- ³⁶ For attendance tracking, see Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), “Report on Attendance and Quorum in National Assembly of Pakistan, June 2013 – March 2018”, <http://fafen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/FAFEN-National-Assembly-Attendance-Report-2018-14th-National-Assembly-Open-Parliament-Pakistan.pdf?x53217>
- ³⁷ Amir Khan, “Senate Elections: Parties Make Closed-Door Alliances to Gain Upper Hand,” *Express Tribune*, January 30 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1621761/1-senate-elections-parties-make-closed-door-alliances-gain-upper-hand/>; in September 2017, the PTI also sought to negotiate an agreement with the MQM to remove the PPP’s Khurshid Shah as opposition leader in the national assembly. That effort ultimately proved unsuccessful, in part due to intra-PTI divisions, and in part due to a reluctance on the part of the MQM to solidify the partnership. Amir Wasim, “PTI Changes Tack Over Opposition Leader Move,” *Dawn*, September 28 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1360504>
- ³⁸ Danish Hussain, “Senate Opposition Leader: ‘PPP Leader’s Text Message to Support PTI Available’”, *Express Tribune*, March 18 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1663105/1-senates-opposition-leader-ppp-leaders-text-message-support-pti-available/>
- ³⁹ Habib Khan Ghori, “Zardari Meets Bizenjo, 19-Strong Cabinet”, *Dawn*, January 26 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1385332/zardari-meets-bizenjo-19-strong-cabinet>
- ⁴⁰ Sardar Baloch et al, “Touchdown: Zardari Lands in Pakistan After 18 Months in Self-Imposed ‘Exile’”, *Dawn*, December 23 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1304052/touchdown-zardari-lands-in-pakistan->

[after-18-months-in-self-imposed-exile](#); Habib Khan Ghori and Mohammad Hussain Khan, "PPP Threatens Protest if 'Missing' Zardari Aides Not Produced in Court", April 10 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1325988>; "Dr Asim Released from Prison After 19 Months", *Dawn*, March 31 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1323980>

⁴¹ Following his eventual retirement in December 2013, former Chief Justice Chaudhry attempted to join elected politics through the formation of his own political party, which has seen limited success. For analyses of the Chaudhry court's restoration and tenure, see "The Pakistani Lawyers Movement and the Popular Currency of Judicial Power," *Harvard Law Review*, Volume 123, No. 7, 2010; and a more critical retrospective assessment by the International Commission of Jurists, "Authority Without Accountability: The Search for Justice in Pakistani, 2013", <http://www.icj.org/pakistan-retiring-chief-justice-chaudhry-leaves-legacy-of-robust-yet-inconsistent-action-on-human-rights/>

⁴² Asif Shahzad, "Pakistan's Emboldened Judiciary Poses Headache for Ruling Party Ahead of Polls", *Reuters*, May 29 2018, <https://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKCN1IU0ST>

⁴³ Terence Sigamony, "Panama Papers Case: Disqualification Decision of Dissenting Judges", *The Nation*, April 21 2017, <https://nation.com.pk/21-Apr-2017/disqualification-decision-of-dissenting-judges>

⁴⁴ Obaid Abbasi and Qamar Zaman, "Panama Leaks Scandal: PM Nawaz Fobs Off Opposition's Barrage", *Express Tribune*, May 17 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1104651/panama-leaks-scandal-pm-nawaz-fobs-off-oppositions-barrage/>; Sardar Sikander, "No PML Without 'N', Say Leaders", *Express Tribune*, October 30 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1545314/1-pml-n-london-huddle-pm-snubs-rumours-shehbaz-replacing-nawaz-party-chief/>

⁴⁵ Such practices have a long history, including the pre-independence British colonial period. See Matthew Nelson, *In the Shadow of Shariah: Islam, Islamic Law, and Democracy in Pakistan*, (Hurst: London, 2011).

⁴⁶ Pakistan is not unique in this regard. See Alena Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices that Shaped Post-Soviet Politics* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2006), pages 12-13, for a concise summary of the interaction between informal and formal rules systems and how they may impact political behavior.

⁴⁷ The military — whose army branch is dominant over other service rivals — is currently led by Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, whose three-year tenure will continue through November 2019. His predecessor, General Raheel Sharif (no relation to the former prime minister), was also a dominant figure through the first three years of the PML-N's tenure. The first chief of army staff to retire after a single three-year term since the 1990s, Raheel now officially serves as the commander of a Saudi-sponsored "Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition" based in Riyadh.

⁴⁸ Paul Staniland, Adnan Naseemullah, and Ahsan Butt, "Pakistan's Military Elite", Draft Working Paper, December 2017,

<https://paulstanilanddotcom.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/pakistanmilitaryelitedecember20171.pdf>

⁴⁹ Rod Nordland, "Pakistan Military Expands Its Power, and Is Thanked for Doing So," *New York Times*, November 15 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/18/world/asia/pakistan-military-expands-its-power-and-is-thanked-for-doing-so.html>

⁵⁰ Declan Walsh, "Taliban Besiege Pakistan School, Leaving 145 Dead," *New York Times*, December 16 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/world/asia/taliban-attack-pakistani-school.html>

⁵¹ Doing so meant bypassing the previously-established fast-track court system for trying terrorist suspects, created by the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, whose special courts are now widely used to adjudicate a range of disputes. The military courts were extended for a two-year period in March 2017. For critical analysis of the military courts see International Commission of Jurists, "Military Injustice in Pakistan", December 2016, <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Pakistan-military-courts-QA-Advocacy-2016-ENG.pdf>

⁵² National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), "National Action Plan 2014", <https://nacta.gov.pk/nap-2014/>; "Apex Committees Formed in All Provinces to Implement NAP", *Express Tribune*, January 3, 2015 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/816591/army-chief-attends-meeting-on-formation-of-nap-committees/>

⁵³ Jon Boone, "Pervez Musharraf Leaves Pakistan After Three-Year Travel Ban Lifted", *The Guardian*, March 18 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/18/pervez-musharraf-leaves-pakistan-for-treatment-after-travel-ban-lifted>

- ⁵⁴ Colin Cookman, "Pakistan After the Lahore Bombing: Shaping the Security Response", United States Institute of Peace, April 8 2016, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/04/pakistan-after-lahore-bombing-shaping-security-response>;
- ⁵⁵ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "PM Presented Options for Responding to Taliban Attacks", *Dawn*, June 11 2014, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1111965/pm-presented-options-for-responding-to-taliban-attacks>
- ⁵⁶ Salman Masood, "Facing Military Pressure, Pakistan's Prime Minister Ousts Two Top Aides", *New York Times*, April 29 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/29/world/asia/pakistan-prime-minister-nawaz-sharif-top-aides.html>
- ⁵⁷ Cyril Almeida, "For Nawaz, It's Not Over Till It's Over," *Dawn*, May 12 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1407192/for-nawaz-its-not-over-till-its-over>; Kamran Yousaf, "NSC Slams Nawaz's Mumbai Attack Statement, Calls It 'Incorrect and Misleading'", *Express Tribune*, May 14 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1709645/1-nsc-concludes-discussing-nawazs-mumbai-attacks-statement/>
- ⁵⁸ "Not Easy to Bring a Former Dictator to Court", *Dawn*, May 23 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1409499/not-easy-to-bring-a-former-dictator-to-court-says-nawaz>
- ⁵⁹ Ashif Shahzad and Drazen Jorgic, "Election to Test Pakistan Democracy Amid Allegations of Military Meddling", *Reuters*, June 1 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-election/election-to-test-pakistan-democracy-amid-allegations-of-military-meddling-idUSKCN1IX51E>
- ⁶⁰ See, for example, Zafarullah Khan and Brian Joseph, "The Media Take Center Stage," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol 19, Number 4, October 2008.
- ⁶¹ Bina Shah, "The Vagaries of Pakistan's Cybercrime Law", *Al Jazeera*, November 24 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/11/vagaries-pakistan-cybercrime-law-161124082838234.html>; for more in-depth analysis see also Bolo Bhi, "Archive: Prevention of Electronic Crimes Bill 2015-16", <http://bolobhi.org/archive-prevention-electronic-crimes-bill-2015/>
- ⁶² Salman Masood, "Top Pakistani News Channel is Forced Off Air, and Eyes are On the Military", *New York Times*, April 6 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/06/world/asia/pakistan-geo-military-censorship.html>; Saad Sayeed et al, "Pakistan TV Channel Returning to Air After Negotiations With Military", *Reuters*, April 18 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-media-exclusive/exclusive-pakistan-tv-channel-returning-to-air-after-negotiations-with-military-sources-idUSKBN1HP2WV>
- ⁶³ Committee to Protect Journalists, Pakistan, <https://cpj.org/asia/pakistan/>
- ⁶⁴ International Federation of Journalists, "Security Situation for Media Deteriorates in Balochistan", November 13 2017, <http://www.ifj.org/nc/news-single-view/backpid/50/article/security-situation-for-media-deteriorates-in-balochistan/>
- ⁶⁵ Reza Jan, "Taliban Violence Mars Pakistan's Elections", *Critical Threats*, May 17 2013, <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/taliban-violence-mars-pakistans-elections>; Tahir Khan, "Deadly Mandate: Liberal Parties Targeted for Their Ideology, Says TTP," *Express Tribune*, April 29 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/541944/deadly-mandate-liberal-parties-targeted-for-their-ideology-says-ttp/>; in total, nearly 300 people were killed and 885 wounded in nearly 150 terrorist attacks across Pakistan during the period from January 1 through May 15, with the ANP facing the greatest number of attacks. Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, *Elections 2013: Violence Against Political Parties, Candidates and Voters*, May 2013, <http://san-pips.com/download.php?f=222.pdf>
- ⁶⁶ For more on the relationship between the ASWJ and the PML-N in Punjab, and on the relationship between militant actors and electoral politics more generally, see Niloufer Siddiqui, "Under the Gun: Political Parties and Violence in Pakistan", Yale University and ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2017. <https://search.proquest.com/openview/82b74da1e3ea677b66c64f44ee0c9559/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- ⁶⁷ Mehreen Zehra-Malik, "He's On Wanted Posters in U.S., and Campaign Posters in Pakistan", *New York Times*, September 16 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/16/world/asia/pakistan-hafiz-muhammad-saeed-milli-muslim-league.html>
- ⁶⁸ Asif Shahzad, "Pakistan Army Pushed Politice Role for Militant-Linked Groups", *Reuters*, September 15 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-politics-militants/pakistan-army-pushed-political-role-for-militant-linked-groups-idUSKCN1BR02F>; Asif Shahzad, "Pakistan Army Says State Exploring How to Integrate Militant-Linked Groups", *Reuters*, October 5 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-politics-militants/pakistan-army-says-state-exploring-how-to-integrate-militant-linked-groups-idUSKBN1CA2CP>

- ⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Treasury, "Treasury Targets Terrorist Group Lashkar-e-Tayyiba's Political Party", April 2 2018, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm0335>; Imran Mukhtar, "MML to Field Candidates Even if ECP Turns Down Registration", *The Nation*, May 27 2018, <https://nation.com.pk/27-May-2018/mml-to-field-candidates-even-if-ecp-turns-down-registration?show=2>
- ⁷⁰ Asif Shahzad, "Inspired by 'Blasphemy Killer', New Pakistani Party Eyes 2018 Vote", *Reuters*, September 20 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-politics-islamists/inspired-by-blasphemy-killer-new-pakistani-party-eyes-2018-vote-idUSKCN1BV29V>; for more on the political mobilization of the Barelvi community, see Joshua T. White, "Beyond Moderation: Dynamics of Political Islam in Pakistan", *Contemporary South Asia*, Volume 20 Number 2, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09584935.2012.670200?journalCode=ccsa20>
- ⁷¹ Amjad Mahmood, "Factionalism Hits Tehreek-i-Labbaik at the Outset", *Dawn*, December 1 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1373982>
- ⁷² Although some ANP leaders have endorsed the PTM movement, there are also apparent tensions between the party and the new organization. Mohsin Dawar, a founder of the PTM, previously served as a leader in the ANP's youth auxiliary wing, but was removed from that position as he took on more of an active role with the PTM. "ANP Dissolves NYO's Organizing Committee," *The News International*, March 21 2018, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/295040-anp-dissolves-nyo-s-organising-committee>
- ⁷³ Meher Ahmad, "Seeking Justice in Pakistan, Pashtuns Stage Defiant Rally in Karachi", *New York Times*, May 13 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/13/world/asia/pakistan-karachi-pashtun.html>; Ibrahim Shinwari, "Next Round of PTM-Jirga Talks on June 7", *Dawn*, June 1 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1411260>
- ⁷⁴ Ali Cheema and Asad Liaqat, "Political Attitudes in Lahore and the 2018 Elections", Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives, April 2017, <http://ideaspak.org/images/Publications/Governance-Institutions/PoliticalAttitudesLahore2018Election-PolicyBrief-April2017.pdf>
- ⁷⁵ Daniel Markey and James West, "Behind China's Gambit in Pakistan", Council on Foreign Relations, May 12 2016, <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/behind-chinas-gambit-pakistan>
- ⁷⁶ Arif Rafiq, "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Barriers and Impact", United States Institute of Peace, October 25 2017, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/10/china-pakistan-economic-corridor>
- ⁷⁷ Khaleeq Kiani, "Energy Sector Debt Touches Record Rs 922 Bn", *Dawn*, March 2 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1392681/energy-sector-circular-debt-touches-record-rs922bn>
- ⁷⁸ IMF, "First Post-Program Monitoring Discussions", February 16 2018, pages 4-6, <http://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Publications/CR/2018/cr1878.ashx>
- ⁷⁹ Shahbaz Rana, "Pakistan Receives \$9.2B in Foreign Loans, But Reserves Still Plunge", *Express Tribune*, May 19 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1713635/2-pakistan-receives-9-2b-foreign-loans-reserves-still-plunge/>
- ⁸⁰ Nasir Jamal, "Pakistan Losing Yarn Market to Vietnam", *Dawn*, February 8 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1238147>; Faseeh Mangi, "A Denim Factory Could Hold the Key to Reviving Pakistan's Exports", *Bloomberg*, February 14 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-14/zara-next-denim-supplier-bucks-pakistan-s-textile-malaise>
- ⁸¹ World Bank, "Remittances to Developing Countries Decline for Second Consecutive Year", April 21 2017, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/04/21/remittances-to-developing-countries-decline-for-second-consecutive-year>; Uzair Younus, "Declining Remittances", *Dawn*, October 25 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1292043>
- ⁸² Pakistan Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, "Province Wise Emigrations", for the period 1981-April 2018, <https://beoe.gov.pk/files/statistics/2018/province.xls>
- ⁸³ "Pakistan: Inflation Rate, End of Period Consumer Prices", IMF DataMapper, October 2017, <http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PCPIEPCH@WEQ/PAK>
- ⁸⁴ Data via World Bank World Development Indicators, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>
- ⁸⁵ Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017, UNDP Pakistan, <http://www.pk.undp.org/content/dam/pakistan/docs/HDR/PK-NHDR.pdf>
- ⁸⁶ Zeb Nasir, "Youth, Demography, and Pakistan's Future", Jinnah Institute, <http://jinnah-institute.org/youth-demography-pakistans-future/>

- ⁸⁷ Alif Ailaan, "The State of Education in Pakistan", https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/alifailaan/pages/496/attachments/original/1473162927/The_State_of_Education_in_Pakistan.pdf?1473162927
- ⁸⁸ Colin Cookman, "The 18th Amendment and Pakistan's Political Transitions", Center for American Progress, April 19 2010, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2010/04/19/7587/the-18th-amendment-and-pakistans-political-transitions/>
- ⁸⁹ Imran Ali Kundi, "Provinces Blame Centre for Failing to Form New NFC Award", *The Nation*, March 30 2018, <https://nation.com.pk/30-Mar-2018/provinces-blame-centre-for-failing-to-form-new-nfc-award>
- ⁹⁰ Khaleeq Kiani, "Pakistani Provinces Vying for Control of Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources", *Dawn*, September 18 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1358389>; Zafar Bhutta, "Devolution of Power: Provinces Turn to Centre for Power Projects", *Express Tribune*, April 7 2015, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/865670/devolution-of-power-provinces-turn-to-centre-for-power-projects/>
- ⁹¹ Ali Cheema, Asim Ijaz Khwaja, and Adnan Qadir, "Decentralization in Pakistan: Context, Content and Causes," World Bank, 2003, [www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/Feb2004Course/Background materials/Cheema.pdf](http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/Feb2004Course/Background%20materials/Cheema.pdf)
- ⁹² Rosita Armytage and Umair Javed, "Local Government Critical in Pakistan's 2013 Political Landscape," Asia Foundation, July 11 2012, <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2012/07/11/local-government-critical-in-pakistans-2013-political-landscape/>
- ⁹³ Syed Mohammad Ali, "Devolution of Power in Pakistan", United States Institute of Peace, March 28 2018, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2018/03/devolution-power-pakistan>
- ⁹⁴ Ibid.
- ⁹⁵ Democracy Reporting International, "Fix It Before It Breaks: What the Local Elections Tell Us for Improving the 2018 General Election", January 2016, <https://democracy-reporting.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/DRI-PK-LGEs-summary-advocacy-paper-v-6.3-2016-09-28.pdf>
- ⁹⁶ There is no standard tenure for local government bodies across the country; terms in Punjab are due to expire after five years, Sindh and Balochistan four years, and Khyber Paktunkhwa after three years. See also Syed Mohammad Ali, "Devolution of Power in Pakistan".
- ⁹⁷ Qadeer Tanoli, "Punjab Cedes Nine Seats to Keep NA 272-Strong", *Express Tribune*, October 31 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1546076/1-parliamentary-leaders-huddle-decides-increasing-na-seats-census/>
- ⁹⁸ Amir Khan, "Tahirul Qadri to Go All-Out Against PML-N with 'Joint Opposition Alliance'", *Express Tribune*, December 10 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1580759/1-tahirul-qadri-go-pml-n-joint-opposition-alliance/>; Khalil-ur-Rehman Khan, "Report of One-Man Committee for Review of Report of Tribunal of Inquiry Into Minhaj-ul-Quran Complex, Model Town, Lahore Incident," https://drive.google.com/file/d/1illwQoXe0jAlveQ1TaOuZuG4U_b_t3S/view
- ⁹⁹ Sialvi ultimately dropped his demands, and later suffered a stroke. Arif Malik, "5 PML-N Lawmakers Formally Submit Resignations Over Inaction Against Sanaullah," *Dawn*, December 12 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1376164/5-pml-n-lawmakers-formally-submit-resignations-over-inaction-against-sanaullah>; Ali Ousat, "Pir Sialvi Agrees to Call Off Protest After Meeting Shehbaz," *Express Tribune*, January 25 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1617872/1-pir-sialvi-agrees-call-off-protest-meeting-shehbaz/>; "Pir Sialvi Suffers Brain Haemorrhage", *Dawn*, February 19 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1390363/pir-sialvi-suffers-brain-haemorrhage>
- ¹⁰⁰ "Seraiki Iceberg: Eight Lawmakers Jump PML-N Ship", *Express Tribune*, April 9 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1681335/1-pml-n-dealt-another-blow-eight-lawmakers-part-ways/>; Arif Malik, "Following Successful Negotiations, Janoobi Punjab Suba Mahaz Set to Merge with PTI", *Dawn*, May 8 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1406390/following-successful-negotiations-janoobi-punjab-suba-mahaz-set-to-merge-with-pti>; Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf "Imran Khan's First 100 Days Agenda", May 20 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/document/379700339/100-Days-Agenda-of-PTI-Govt>
- ¹⁰¹ Zulqernain Tahir, "Senate Poll in Punjab: PML-N Identifies 28 MPAs Who 'Cheated' Party," *Dawn*, March 16 2018 <https://www.dawn.com/news/1395547/senate-poll-in-punjab-pml-n-identifies-28-mpas-who-cheated-party>
- ¹⁰² "Could Have Taken 40 to 45 MNAs and Left, But I Am No Conspirator: Chaudhry Nisar", *Dawn*, May 5 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1405812/could-have-taken-40-to-45-mnas-and-left-but-i-am-no-conspirator-chaudhry-nisar>; Qadeer Tanoli, "Chaudhry Nisar to Contest General Elections from NA-59,

PP-10, PP-14", *Express Tribune*, April 30 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1699190/1-chaudhry-nisar-contest-general-elections-na-59-pp-10-pp-14/>

¹⁰³ PTI-affiliated second place candidates in Punjab secured an average 27.85% share of the vote in May 2013 general election races, as compared to an average 36.74% share of the vote for PTI runners-up in by-elections held in Punjab since that point. Author calculations based on dataset annex.

¹⁰⁴ Danish Hussain, "Tareen Resigns as PTI General Secretary Following Disqualification Verdict", *Express Tribune*, December 16 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1585775/1-jahangir-tareen-resigns-pti-general-secretary-following-sc-verdict/>

¹⁰⁵ Shakeel Ahmed, "PML-N Wins Lodhran Seat in By-Poll Upset", *Dawn*, February 13 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1389050/pml-n-wins-lodhran-seat-in-by-poll-upset>

¹⁰⁶ "Armed Supporters of Mirza, Zardari in Badin Face-Off", *Dawn*, February 13 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1163293/armed-supporters-of-mirza-zardari-in-badin-face-off>; Hafeez Tunio, "Sindh Grand Alliance Prepares to Take PPP Head-On in Upcoming Elections", *Express Tribune*, May 20 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1414364/sindh-grand-alliance-prepares-take-ppp-head-upcoming-elections/>; Hanif Samoon, "The Mirzas of Badin Finally Part Ways with PPP", *Dawn*, June 3 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1411780/the-mirzas-of-badin-finally-part-ways-with-ppp>

¹⁰⁷ Haseeb Bhatti, "A.D. Khawaja to Continue Working as Sindh Police Chief, Directs SC", *Dawn*, January 18 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1383723>

¹⁰⁸ For a history and analysis of the party's rise to dominance over the city, see Laurent Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

¹⁰⁹ Zia ur-Rehman and Salman Masood, "New Karachi Mayor Gets Daytrip from Prison to Be Sworn In", *New York Times*, September 6 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/07/world/asia/pakistan-karachi-mayor-waseem-akhtar-prison.html>

¹¹⁰ Imran Gabol, "Broadcast of Altaf Hussain's Images, Speeches Banned by LHC", *Dawn*, September 7 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1205458>; "Sedition Charges: Altaf, Other MQM Leaders Booked in Treason, Terror Cases", *Express Tribune*, August 24 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1168843/sedition-charges-alfat-mqm-leaders-booked-treason-terror-cases/>

¹¹¹ In contravention to Pakistani election laws that require the removal of lawmakers who switch parties and the holding of fresh elections, several MQM legislators who defected to the PSP prior to the senate vote were not formally accepted, allowing them to vote independently of the MQM's direction. Habib Khan Ghori, "Seven MQM, PTI Defectors Return to PA as PSP Members", *Dawn*, February 24 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1391254>

¹¹² Sattar's move came as he faced new legal cases as a result of his continued affiliation with Hussain; he was briefly detained by paramilitary Rangers during a raid on party offices in August 2016. "Rangers Take MQM Leaders Into Custody, Seal Party Headquarters Nine Zero," *Dawn*, August 22 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1279250>

¹¹³ Muhammad Wajeeh, "Rift in MQM-P Over Senate Election Tickets," *Express Tribune*, February 6 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1627317/1-rift-mqm-senate-election-tickets/>

¹¹⁴ "Sattar Quits as MQM-P Convener", *Dawn*, May 15 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1407661/sattar-quits-as-mqm-p-convener>; "Dr Sattar Urges Institutions to Clarify Policy on Urban Sindh's Mandate", *Dawn*, April 17 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1402035>

¹¹⁵ Sohail Khattak, "JUI-S to Form Poll Alliance with PTI", *Express Tribune*, December 7 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1577991/1-jui-s-form-poll-alliance-pti/>

¹¹⁶ Asad Zia, "PTI Expels QWP from Coalition in K-P", *Express Tribune*, July 30 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1469598/pti-expels-qwp-coalition-k-p/>

¹¹⁷ Sohail Khattak, "JI Formally Parts Ways With Its Coalition Partner PTI in K-P", *Express Tribune*, May 3 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1701715/1-ji-formally-parts-ways-coalition-partner-pti-k-p/>

¹¹⁸ Asad Zia, "Vote-Selling Charges: Eight PTI Lawmakers Shown the Door," *Express Tribune*, May 9 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1706303/1-vote-selling-charge-eight-pti-lawmakers-shown-door/>; Sohail Khattak, "K-P Coy on Budget After Delaying Session Again", *Express Tribune*, May 12 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1708123/1-k-p-coy-budget-delaying-session/>

¹¹⁹ Habib Khan Ghori, "Maulana Fazl to Head Recently Revived MMA", *Dawn*, March 21 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1396614>

¹²⁰ Imtiaz Ali, "Mainstreaming Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas", United States Institute of Peace, March 20 2018, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2018/03/mainstreaming-pakistans-federally-administered-tribal-areas>

¹²¹ Arif Hayat, "KP Assembly Approves Landmark Bill Merging FATA with Province", *Dawn*, May 27 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1410351/kp-assembly-approves-landmark-bill-merging-fata-with-province>; for amendment text, see National Assembly of Pakistan, "Constitution (Thirty-first Amendment) Act, 2018", http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1527169356_307.pdf

¹²² Fawad Yousafzai, "FATA Reforms Bill Envisages LB Polls in October", *The Nation*, May 21 2018, <https://nation.com.pk/21-May-2018/fata-reforms-bill-envisages-lb-polls-in-october>; Amir Wasim, "Senate Approves KP-FATA Merger Bill by 71-5 Majority", *Dawn*, May 25 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1409936/senate-approves-kp-fata-merger-bill-by-71-5-majority>

¹²³ "PTI, Jamaat Demand FATA, General Polls Together", *Dawn*, June 1 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1411262>

¹²⁴ For a partial background, see Frederic Grare, "Balochistan: The State Versus the Nation", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2013, <https://carnegieendowment.org/files/balochistan.pdf>

¹²⁵ Ahsan Butt, "What the Kulbhushan Jadhav Saga Reveals About India and Pakistan's Balochistan Problems", *The Diplomat*, January 11 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/what-the-kulbhushan-jadhav-saga-reveals-about-india-and-pakistans-balochistan-problems/>

¹²⁶ Shahbaz Rana, "Quetta Division's Population Increases by 143%", *Express Tribune*, August 29 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1493601/quetta-divisions-population-increases-143/>

¹²⁷ Mohammad Zafar, "Balochistan Politics: PML-N, PkMAP, National Party to Form Coalition Govt", *Express Tribune*, May 18 2013, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/551018/balochistan-politics-pml-n-pkmap-national-party-to-form-coalition-govt/>

¹²⁸ "Sanaullah Zehri Nominated as Next Balochistan Chief Minister", *Express Tribune*, December 10 2015, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1007548/sanaullah-zehri-to-replace-abdul-malik-baloch-as-balochistan-chief-minister/>

¹²⁹ The official opposition was led by the JUI-F, which has maintained an alliance with the PML-N at the national level, and cooperated with the PML-N in senate elections held in 2015. The JUI-F did support the no confidence motion against Zehri in 2018 but remains in the opposition after the change in government. Saleem Shahid, "Balochistan Opposition Parties to Back 'Consensus' CM", *Dawn*, January 11 2018; <https://www.dawn.com/news/1382208>; "Balochistan-Wide: PML-N, JUI-F Join Hands for Senate Elections", *Express Tribune*, February 28 2015, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/845448/balochistan-wide-pml-n-jui-f-join-hands-for-senate-elections/>

¹³⁰ Bizenjo has the distinction of having been elected to the assembly in 2013 with the least number of votes of any provincial legislator; in total, only 672 valid votes were cast out of more than 57,000 registered voters in his Awaran constituency.

¹³¹ Abubakar Siddique, "Pakistan PM Hints at Intelligence Role in Balochistan Upheaval", *Gandhara*, January 11 2018, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/pakistan-balochistan-intelligence-shahid-khagan-abassi/28969658.html>

¹³² Syed Ali Shah, "PML-N Dissidents, Independents Launch 'Balochistan Awami Party'", *Dawn*, March 29 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1398266>; the PML-N did not take formal disciplinary action against its members, who were allowed to complete their terms in office still officially affiliated with the party.

¹³³ Constitution of Pakistan, Part VIII, Chapter 2, Section 224 (1A), <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part8.ch2.html>

¹³⁴ See Election Act 2017, Chapter 14. http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1506961151_781.pdf

¹³⁵ "Former CJP Nasirul Mulk Named as Caretaker PM", *Dawn*, May 28 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1410523>; "Notables React to Caretaker PM Announcement", *Express Tribune*, May 28 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1720931/1-notables-react-announcement-caretaker-pm/>

¹³⁶ Danish Hussain, "PTI in Conflict Over Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister", *Express Tribune*, June 1 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1724940/1-pti-pitches-orya-maqbool-jan-two-others-punjab-caretaker-cm-slot/>; Arif Malik, "Nasir Khosa Recuses Himself from Punjab Caretaker CM Post; PTI Tables New Names", *Dawn*, May 31 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1411149>; "PTI Drops Name of Manzoor Afridi for Caretaker CM After 'Objections by Opposition', *Express Tribune*, May 29 2018,

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1721297/1-pti-drops-name-manzoor-afri-di-caretaker-cm-objections-opposition/>

¹³⁷ Iftikhar Khan, "Parliamentary Body Confirms Names of Four ECP Members," *Dawn*, July 26 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1273248>

¹³⁸ Khawar Ghumman, "Imran Comes Up With Details of Alleged Poll Rigging", *Dawn*, August 12 2014, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1124799>

¹³⁹ Election Act 2017, Chapter 2, Section 13.

http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1506961151_781.pdf

¹⁴⁰ National Democratic Institute and the Asian Network for Free Elections, "The 2013 National and Provincial Assembly Elections in Pakistan: Final Report", August 28 2013, pages 95-96, <https://www.ndi.org/node/23675>; European Union Election Observation Mission, "Final Report Pakistan 2013", July 2013, pages 21-24.

¹⁴¹ Author calculations based on accompanying data annex.

¹⁴² European External Action Service, "Election Follow-Up Mission Pakistan 2016", February 10 2016, pages 4-5, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/19595/election-follow-mission-pakistan-2016_en

¹⁴³ Peer Muhammad, "In 'National Interest,' Judiciary Agrees to Lend Staff to ECP," *Express Tribune*, November 12 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/467380/in-supreme-national-interest-judiciary-agrees-to-conduct-next-polls/>; Iftikhar Khan, "ECP Decides to Appoint Judicial Officers as ROs for Elections," *Dawn*, March 31 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1398646/ecp-decides-to-appoint-judicial-officers-as-ros-for-elections>

¹⁴⁴ Constitution of Pakistan, Article 51 (5), <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part3.ch2.html>

¹⁴⁵ Democracy Reporting International, "Electoral Delimitation in Pakistan: 'Formula for Inequality'", February 2015, http://democracy-reporting.org/newdri/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/dri-pk_ip3_briefing_paper_on_delimitation_en.pdf, pages 8-9.

¹⁴⁶ Hasnaat Malik, "Move Up Census Timeframe, SC Tells Government", *Express Tribune*, December 2 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1250976/move-census-timeframe-sc-tells-government/>

¹⁴⁷ The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacked an army census security team in Lahore on April 5, 2017, and Pakistani and Afghan border forces clashed during a count of disputed villages near the Chaman border crossing on May 5, 2017. Muhammad Shehzad, "Suicide Bomber Targets Census Team in Punjab's Capital", *Express Tribune*, April 5 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1374649/loud-explosion-heard-lahore/>; Syed Ali Shah et al, "9 Killed, Over 40 Injured After Afghan Forces Open Fire on Border Villages in Chaman," *Dawn* <https://www.dawn.com/news/1331245/9-killed-over-40-injured-after-afghan-forces-open-fire-on-border-villages-in-chaman>; Hafeez Tunio, "Consistent Data: Army Enumerator to Accompany Census Team", *Express Tribune*, January 27 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1308294/consistent-data-army-enumerator-accompany-census-team/>

¹⁴⁸ Mubarak Zeb Khan, "Expats Away for Over Six Months Won't Be Counted in Census", *Dawn*, February 2 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1312223/expats-away-for-over-six-months-wont-be-counted-in-census>

¹⁴⁹ Census-block level was subsequently released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics in January 2018. For code used to generate a tidied and consolidated .csv file of this data, see https://github.com/colincookman/pakistan_census

¹⁵⁰ Syed Sammar Abbas, "Delimitation Bill Becomes Law with President's Approval, Paving Way for Timely Elections", *Dawn*, December 27 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1379145/delimitation-bill-becomes-law-with-presidents-approval-paving-way-for-timely-elections>

¹⁵¹ Khaleeq Kiani, "Government Gives Up On 5pc Post-Census Third-Party Validation", *Dawn*, May 21 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1409004/government-gives-up-on-5pc-post-census-third-party-validation>; Riazul Haq, "CCI Defers Finalisation of Census Results", *Express Tribune*, May 27 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1720442/1-provinces-scuttle-centres-move-announce-census-results/>

¹⁵² Election Commission of Pakistan, "Notification F.8(3)/2018-Elec-I", March 5 2018, <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/Documents/delimitation2018/reports/01.Notification.pdf>

¹⁵³ For analysis of the ECP's initial delimitation plan, see Hassan Nasir Mirbahar and Ray Serrato, "Pakistan's 2018 Delimitation of Electoral Districts: Analysis of Preliminary Results", Democracy Reporting International, March 15 2018, <http://democracy-reporting.org/pakistans-2018-delimitation-of->

-
- [electoral-districts-analysis-of-preliminary-results/](#); Free and Fair Election Network, "Delimitation Proposals: FAFEN Identifies Discrepancies in Size of Electoral Constituencies", <http://fafen.org/delimitation-proposals-fafen-identifies-discrepancies-size-electoral-constituencies/>; Free and Fair Election Network, "Equality of Vote Compromised in 92 PA Constituencies", <http://fafen.org/equality-of-vote-compromised-in-92-pa-constituencies/>
- ¹⁵⁴ Ikram Junaidi, "ECP Refuses to Follow Committee's Guidelines on Delimitation", *Dawn*, March 15 2018; "NA Panel-ECP Tug of War Over Delimitation Continues", *Dawn*, March 17 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1395840>
- ¹⁵⁵ The ECP has released a draft polling station plan, author analysis of which is still in process as of this writing. See <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/frmGenericPage.aspx?PageID=3134>
- ¹⁵⁶ Mohammad Imran, "IHC Sets Aside Delimitation of Constituencies in Four Districts", *Dawn*, May 29 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1410743>; Malik Asad and Syed Ali Shah, "Balochistan High Court Declares 8 Provincial Constituencies in Quetta Null and Void", *Dawn*, June 1 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1411358>;
- ¹⁵⁷ Andrew Wilder, *The Pakistani Voter: Electoral Politics and Voting Behavior in the Punjab*, Oxford University Press, 1999.
- ¹⁵⁸ Gallup Pakistan, "Who Voted For Whom and What Does It Mean for Pakistan's Future", <http://gallup.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Report31.pdf>, pages 21-23
- ¹⁵⁹ "Pakistan Fact Sheet: Electoral Rolls", International Foundation for Electoral Systems, March 25 2013, https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/the_electoral_rolls.pdf
- ¹⁶⁰ "NADRA Starts Auto-Registration of Voters", November 11 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1555311/1-nadra-starts-auto-registration-voters/>
- ¹⁶¹ "Final Electoral Rolls Voter Stats", Election Commission of Pakistan, as of October 12 2017, <https://ecp.gov.pk/frmGenericPage.aspx?PageID=3047>
- ¹⁶² Iftikhar Khan, "ECP Launches Campaign to Register 12M Female Voters", *Dawn*, December 5 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1374614>
- ¹⁶³ Election Commission of Pakistan, "Statistics of Final Electoral Rolls-2018", <https://ecp.gov.pk/frmGenericPage.aspx?PageID=3047>
- ¹⁶⁴ Fahad Chaudhry, "Number of Registered Voters in 2018 Up 23pc From Last General Elections", *Dawn*, May 23 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1409521>; NDI and ANFREL Final Report, page 53.
- ¹⁶⁵ Shakeel Qarar, "Nadra Temporarily Unblocks 150,000 CNICs," *Dawn*, May 2 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1330600/nadra-temporarily-unblocks-150000-cnics>; "Over 450,000 Fake CNICs Blocked in Three Years, Says Interior Minister", *Associated Press of Pakistan*, December 30 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1305386/over-450000-fake-cnics-blocked-in-three-years-says-interior-minister>; Iftikhar Khan, "NADRA Told to Unblock CNICs of Genuine Citizens", *Dawn*, November 12 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1295909/nadra-told-to-unblock-cnics-of-genuine-citizens>
- ¹⁶⁶ "ECP May Not Use Electronic, Biometric Machines in 2018 Polls," *Dawn*, September 23 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1359524>
- ¹⁶⁷ "PTI Again Moves ECP Against 'Unverified' Votes in NA-120," *Dawn*, September 19 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1358650>
- ¹⁶⁸ See Waseem and Mariam Mufti, *Political Parties in Pakistan: Organization and Power Structure*, Lahore University of Management Sciences, November 2012, pages 22-24. The new ECP code of conduct has placed new restrictions on payments by candidates to parties as part of the ticket nomination process, although it remains to be seen if this will be enforced; overall, the transparency, monitoring, and oversight of election expenditures in Pakistan is extremely limited. "ECP Proposes Ban on Collection of 'Party Funds' from Candidates", *Dawn*, May 27 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1410255/ecp-proposes-ban-on-collection-of-party-funds-from-candidates>
- ¹⁶⁹ Rana Bilal, "SC Suspends LHC Orders Regarding Revision of Electoral Nomination Forms", *Dawn*, June 3 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1411769>; Election Commission of Pakistan, "New Date of Filing of Nomination Papers with the Returning Officers by the Candidates", June 3 2018, <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/PrintDocument.aspx?PressId=55212&type=Image>
- ¹⁷⁰ Elections Act, 2017, Article 61. http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1506961151_781.pdf
- ¹⁷¹ This theory was first propounded by Maurice Duverger, and is expanded upon in Gary Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*, Cambridge University Press, 1997

¹⁷² The (much more widely-studied) Indian political system shares many similar characteristics with Pakistan and has also consistently produced multi-party coalitions in national and state elections following the end of single-party Congress Party domination in the 1970s.

¹⁷³ Formulas derived by Matthew Shugart and Rein Taagepera, based on large-n comparative datasets that can set a benchmark for the expected number of major parties in an electoral system, would predict around 2.94 “effective parties”, based on the size of the national assembly (272 directly elected seats) and the size of the district (in Pakistan’s case, single-member). Based on author calculations from the accompanying dataset, the mean number of effective parties in the 2002 general elections for the national assembly was 2.82; in 2008, 2.72; and in 2013, 3.11, suggesting a rough correlation with this model. Matthew Shugart and Rein Taagepera, *Votes from Seats: Logical Models of Electoral Systems*, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

¹⁷⁴ See Cox, *Making Votes Count*, pages 76-79.

¹⁷⁵ See Rekha Diwakar, “Duverger’s Law and the Size of the Indian Party System,” *Party Politics* Vol. 13 No. 5 pp 553-557.

¹⁷⁶ Gallup Pakistan, “Public Pulse on Election 2018: Expectations and Fears About Election 2018”, February 2018, <http://gallup.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Public-Pulse-on-Election-2018-Report-1-1.pdf>

¹⁷⁷ Madiha Afzal, “Do Pakistan Legislators Face an Incumbency Disadvantage? Yes.”, Working Paper, <https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxtYWVpaGFhZnphbHxn> [eDo3ODhjYjViYmQzM1ZmY](https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxtYWVpaGFhZnphbHxn); the Indian political system shows similar anti-incumbency trends, see for example Alexander Lee, “Anti-Incumbency, Parties, and Legislatures: Theory and Evidence from India”, University of Rochester, February 28 2016, http://www.rochester.edu/college/faculty/alexander_lee/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/incumbency4.pdf

¹⁷⁸ A 2014 study looking at data from 1990-2008 estimated an average of 500-800 party switches per election cycle, or around 19% of all candidates, with around 60% of all defectors managing to place in the top three during the subsequent polls. Rida Qadri, “Jumping Ship: The Story of Party Switching in Pakistan”, Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives, May 15 2014, <http://ideaspak.org/stay-informed/debating-ideas/item/153-jumping-ship-the-story-of-party-switching-in-pakistan>; for legal rules regarding floor-crossing and party defections, see Article 63A of the Pakistan constitution, <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part3.ch2.html>

¹⁷⁹ Kieran Healy, “Data Visualization: A Practical Introduction”, <http://socviz.co/>; Garret Grolemund and Hadley Wickham, “R for Data Science”, <http://r4ds.had.co.nz/>

¹⁸⁰ For these sources see Church World Service / Free and Fair Elections Network, “National Assembly Elections in Pakistan 1970-2008: A Compendium of Elections Related Facts and Statistics”, August 2010, <http://fafen.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Compendium-National-Assembly-Elections-1970-2008-Pakistan.pdf>; Election Pakistan website, <https://electionpakistan.com/>; Election Commission of Pakistan results data, <https://ecp.gov.pk/AllResults.aspx>

¹⁸¹ As of writing in early 2018, the ECP website lists the results from by-elections held after the 2008 general election under the original election headings, obscuring polling-day results in a number of constituencies. Also as of writing, all 2013 results data for all candidates affiliated with the Tehreek-e-Tahaffuze party, led by Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan, no longer appear on the ECP website, although ECP reports published contemporaneously to the elections retain this information. Other vote records associated with the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan’s participation in 2017 and 2018 by-elections also appear to be missing, as are some records for the Sunni Tehreek and PPP-Sherpao, among other parties.