MS THESIS

FACTORS AFFECTING VOTING BEHAVIOR IN SWAT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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(2024)

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

I hereby recommend that the dissertation submitted by Kifayat Ullah titled, **"FACTORS AFFECTING VOTING BEHAVIOR IN SWAT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION"** be accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MS in the discipline of Political Science.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABBREVIATIONS

ANP   Awami National Party

JUI   Jamiat Ulema Islam

JI   Jamat Islami

PK-NAP   Pakhtunkhwa National Awami Party

PPP   Pakistan Peopls's Party

PTI   Pakistan Tehreek Insaf

TLP   Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan

ECP   Election Commission of Pakistan

PBS   Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

MPA   Member of Provincial Assembly

NWFP   North Western Frontier Province

MNA   Member of National Assembly

PNAP   Pakistan National Awami Party

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT

The people of Swat have been actively involved in local and national politics since its unification with Pakistan in 1969. Swat region has witnessed complex socio-political dynamics over the years, making it a compelling case for understanding the determinants of voting choices. They are actively participating in general elections. The voting behavior of the electorates in Swat is influenced by a variety of political, social, economic, and religious variables. Modern democracy is a representative democracy that works through elections. The role of the voter is important in a representative democracy, as it ensures that the government remains accountable, responsive, and reflective of the will and values of the people it serves. This research aims to explore key factors such as religion, ethnicity, and manifesto, role of media and past performance of party-influenced voting behavior in Swat during the general election of 2024. This research employed qualitative methodology by conducting interviews among the population of Swat. Purposive and convenient sampling best suited to get in depth understanding of voters motivation in Swat. This study is a valuable addition to understanding factors that shape voting behavior in Swat. Based on these findings, the dominant factors in 2024 general election were charisma, past performance and religion. Ethnicity and manifesto are secondary factors. This study recommends awareness among citizens to actively engage in politics and always get in touch with party manifesto and past performance. Populist politics can also affects the political behavior of the population under studied. By rising awareness about the intricacies of political processes and the importance of informed decision making, citizen can learn to identify and asses populist narratives. This study emphasize the need to foster a culture of tolerance and openness to diverse perspectives. The entrenched patronage system must be dismantled to open ways for a more participatory and effective democracy.

Key Words: Voting Behavior, Past Performance, Manifesto, Religion, Media, Representative Democracy.

CHAPTER 01

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

Voting behaviors describe the patterns and variables affecting how people vote in elections. Political philosophy, party identification, candidate traits, demography, socioeconomic status, and even situational conditions are examples of these variables (Key, 1966). It is a complicated and nuanced subject, and a wide range of circumstances may affect how people vote. An election is a major source of political socialization and participation. It makes a bridge between the elite and the masses (Encyclopedia of Britannica 2008). Voters frequently support political parties and candidates that share their ideals and philosophies. For instance, those with conservative ideas may support candidates who lean to the right, while those with liberal beliefs may vote for candidates who lean to the left. Many voters continue to support politicians from the same political party out of loyalty to that party. Voting behaviors can be strongly predicted by party affiliation. The personal traits of politicians, such as their charisma, experience, and perceived leadership abilities, have an impact on voters. Some voters place a high priority on particular policy matters that are significant to them, and they may choose to support politicians who share their opinions on these matters. For instance, a voter who is really concerned about environmental issues would back candidates who place a high priority on environmental policy. Voting behaviors can be influenced by factors like income, occupation, education, and socioeconomic standings. Voting preferences may be similar among individuals with comparable socioeconomic origins. The factors of age, gender, color, ethnicity, and religion can all have big impacts on how people vote. Voting habits among different demographic groupings may vary from place to place and person to person.

Voting behavior is defined by Marshall (2009) as "the study of voting behavior invariably focuses on the determinants of why people tend to vote in public elections as they do and how they arrive at the decisions they make". The study of Voting Behavior involves an analysis of individual psychological make-up and their relation to political action as well as institutional patterns, such as the communication process and their impact on elections (Wasby, 1966).

Voting behavior is a complex phenomenon that can be understood through careful observations of shifts that may occur through different elections in voters. Many determinant

can play a role in the way voters cast their votes. Without an understanding of voting behaviors, democracy cannot function properly. Democracy as defined by Abraham Lincoln, is "government of the peoples, for the people, and by the people". Democracy needs vigilant citizens who can exercise their votes in the right manner, in this way democracy can be delivered properly. In democratic governments, people are the center of government-making. In a democracy, the votes of individuals matter, it is through their votes that candidates win different electoral constituencies.

Political behavior is a complex conundrum for social scientists. Around the world, political scientists and sociologists have conducted considerable research on voting behaviors. Research on voting behaviors has been conducted in different geographical areas across Pakistan. Most of the studies in Swat so far are mainly focused on terrorism, the post-conflict era, climate change, and reconstruction but studies on voting behavior are neglected.

In any election, the most intriguing questions are not about who won but about why people voted the way they did and what are the outcomes and consequences? These are not easy questions to answer. Only focusing on campaign events and incidents will not be enough. To accomplish a deeper understanding, the specific elements of the election must be combined with a broader understanding of electoral behavior (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research [ICPSR], 2004).

This study aims to understand voting behaviors in the 2024 election in District Swat. The researcher will conduct in depth interviews with voters, ask different questions from the voters to understand the voting behaviors in district swat. Although voting behavior varies from country to country or more often from constituency to constituency. In different places, different variables might be dominant that may religion, developmental works, leadership, health issues, climate, or even the personal agenda of voters. Voters can also cast votes on many variables. Voting behavior is a very complex phenomenon that needs to be carefully understood.

To sum up, voting behaviors determine who should rule. The researcher will explore those factors that shaped voting behavior in the general elections 2024 in district Swat.

1.2   Problem Statement

Representative democracy is a form of government through which people empower their representatives to make decisions for their welfare. The ultimate power in democracy rests with the people. It is important to know the factors that influence voting behavior and the reason voters tend to vote in one way or the other. There is little understanding of the various factors

such as socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, media, religious and past performance influences on voting behaviors in Swat. Therefore, this study explores and analyzes key factors that influenced voting behavior in the general election of 2024 in Swat and provides insights for better governance in the area.

1.3   Significance of the Study

In the current study, an effort will be made to identify key factors that influence voter's electoral choices in district Swat, KP, Pakistan. This study will make those factors conspicuous for a better understanding of political behavior and will provide deep insights into the political dynamics of the area under study. This research will be a useful addition to explore the factors that influence the voter's choice of candidate in an election. The policymakers, political activists, scholars, academicians, and other participants in the Pakistani election process, particularly in district Swat, can greatly benefit from this study.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1   To explore the role of religion in influencing voting behavior in Swat during the general elections of 2024.

2   To examine the role of ethnicity in voting behavior in Swat during the general elections of 2024.

3   To explore the influence of the past performance on the voting behavior in Swat during the general elections of 2024.

4   To understand the role of the party manifesto in influencing voter's choices in the 2024 general election in Swat.

5   To identify the role of media in shaping voting behavior in Swat in 2024 general elections.

1.5 Research Questions

1   What was the role of religion in influencing voting behavior in Swat during the general elections in 2024?

2   How did ethnicity influence voting behavior in Swat during the general elections in 2024?

3   How did the past performance of the party influence the voting behavior of Swat's residents during the general elections in 2024?

4   How did the party manifesto influence voter choices during 2024 general election in Swat?

5   What role did the media played in shaping voting behavior during the 2024 general elections in Swat?

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

This research focuses on those factors that influenced voting behavior in Swat during the 2024 general election. This study was limited to explore key factors such as ethnicity, religion and past performance, media and party manifesto. Female voters were excluded due to cultural restrictions. The research study is confined to district swat and is not representative of any other place.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is important to get an understanding of what has been done and what is missing. Literature review provides context to the researcher that bridges him to missing part of the story. Through literature review, the researcher gets a deep understanding of the methodology, theories, trends, and challenges that must be kept in mind to endeavor the research journey.

Voting behavior is a complex phenomenon, political scientists and sociologists around the world are working to provide a framework for the understanding of voting behavior and lawmaking. Democracy centers around voters, a successful democracy is based on an informed and vigilant populace who can use their right to vote in the best manner. Further research is needed to comprehend the motivation of voters and address policy recommendations. The available literature shows that no work has been done on the district of Swat. The following literature review of different authors and writers in the area will help provide a strong foundation for my research.

1.7.1 Review of Related Literature

Hoene (2011) argues that several socioeconomic factors play a significant role in shaping the voting behaviors of Asians in the United States. These factors led them to engage in politics or not. The factors that play a role are gender, income, and one's length of stay in the United States. The level of education is considered the most determining factor. Education has a positive impact on political involvement in Asian Americans. Those with higher education are more interested in politics. These are all factors that play a role.

Kaul (2013) explains in his study, that when people decide why to vote for the Bharatiya Janata Party, two things matter: their ethnicity and what the government promises to do. If there's a lot of tension between different ethnic groups, people tend to vote based on their ethnicity. But when the economy is doing well, they care more about the government's

plans and policies. So, depending on how things are going in the country, people might focus on their ethnic identity or on what the government is promising when they choose to support the BJP.

Egoubuze (2017) examined the role of religion and ethnicity in the 2015 presidential election of Nigeria in his study. The study shows the unflinching role of religion and ethnicity in Nigeria. The two major factors were religion and ethnicity. However, other factors such as economic condition, past performance, security situation, and corruption coupled with the desire to change also played a role in shaping voting behavior in Nigeria's presidential election. However, ethnicity and religion were dominant factors in the presidential election.

Aden (2015) identifies by establishing that there is a positive impact of leadership characteristics on voting behavior. Leadership influences voting behaviors in North Eastern Kenya. The personality traits of a leader are honesty, leader's decisiveness, sincerity, loyalty, charisma, peace-building, patience, and transparency. Leadership styles such as authoritarian, transactional, and transformational type have a significant influence on voting behavior.

Wilder (1999) carried out an in-depth analysis of voting patterns in Punjab, Pakistan, the country's most populous and politically crucial province. The fundamental thesis of the book revolves around the primary factors of voting behavior in this region, with a special emphasis on voter views. According to the author's research, Punjab voters base their electoral decisions on their opinions of which political party and candidate are more likely to deliver on their campaign promises. Furthermore, comparing the 1993 elections to those of 1970, 1988, and 1990, provides a valuable historical context, offering light on potential alterations and trends in voting patterns and political dynamics through time.

Ahmad (2012) In his article assesses rural Faisalabad and throughout Punjab, Pakistan, "biradari" play a significant role in influencing voting behavior, frequently taking precedence over political party allegiance. According to this theory, a candidate's chances of winning depend on both the backing of a sizable biradari and the endorsement of a major political party. This phenomenon limits individualism in voting and puts genuine democracy at risk. Biradari frequently works as de facto pressure groups, filling leadership gaps left by ideologically weak political parties, despite the relevance of political parties and pressure groups being promoted by political scientists. It highlights worries about how biradari breeds prejudice and polarization and makes the case that biradari influence may be reduced by strong national-level political parties, better education, and increased political awareness.

Said (2021) analyzes the role of religion in voting behavior in District Buner. People consider the role of Ulema important in politics. It is further highlighted that religion and politics are interconnected but did not affect voter choices on the election date and the electorate did not consider the religious matters of the candidate in an election.

Waseem (1994) explains the 1993 election process and voting patterns. Results from the provincial and national assemblies were examined in particular about elements like ethnicity, biradari, the rural-urban divide, party organization, candidate choice, and election campaign. To secure a free and fair election, the need for electoral changes has also been suggested in his book.

Rashid and Amin (2020) explore in their study that in districts of Dir social factors such as race, religion, gender, and other social attachments still play important roles and impact voter choices. In addition to social factors, rational factors such as education, health, and developmental works also influence voter choices. The researchers analyzed voting patterns in the district of Dir in three general elections from 2002,2008 and 2013 based on voting behavior models and concluded that although rational factors do play a role, social factors are dominant in Dir. Because of this, religious parties mostly get an edge over other parties during elections in Dir.

Kanwal (2016) in her paper found that youth participate in the election and believe that their engagement in the political process would improve the condition of the country. It is also manifested that attachment with biradari is not much. Youths are partisans of their father's party. It also shows that party identification is still intact and voters cast votes to the same party. The majority of the voters did not vote for the same party due to poor performance.

Khalid and Mussarat (2014) explain the majority of the respondents were interested in electoral politics. People of Muzafer Garh were interested in the political process they attended political process and 78 percent of the respondents exercised their right to vote. Of the respondents, 84.7 percent considered political development possible through election, and 87 percent believed election could bring change.

1.7.2 Theoretical Framework

This research study have used sociological theory of voting behavior and rational choice theory as a theoretical framework to understand voting behavior in Swat in 2024 general election. Sociological theory of voting behavior underly the influence of social factors on individual preference in election. In country like Pakistan social factors are dominant

and play greater role in voting process as per the established studies. Religion and ethnicity are social factors that can be best explained through the lens of sociological theory of voting behavior. Rational choice theory explains cost benefit analysis that individual make will casting vote in election. This theory considers individual as rational actors. Rational choice theory can best explain how past performance influence voting behavior.

The sociological theory of voting behavior posits that individuals' political choices are heavily influenced by their social context. Factors such as social class, race, religion, community, and gender play crucial roles in shaping voters' preferences. People often align themselves with candidates or parties that resonate with their economic status, cultural identity, or shared community values. This theory emphasizes that voting decisions are not isolated events but are deeply embedded in societal structures and group affiliations, reflecting the intricate interplay between individuals and their social environments. The sociological model, which is also known as the school of Columbia, the Sociological theory of voting behavior focuses on the individual and the social structure surrounding the individual. Thus, it focuses on the effects of variables such as social class, religion, ethnicity, language, and rural-urban divisions (Scott & Marshall, 2009).

The Rational Choice Theory of voting behavior explain that individuals make voting decisions by weighing the costs and benefits associated with each available option, and they choose the option that maximizes their personal utility or satisfaction. In this context, voters are seen as rational actors who aim to make choices that align with their self-interest. Factors such as candidates' policy positions, past performance, perceived competence, and potential outcomes influence voters in their decision-making process. This theory assumes that voters have sufficient information and the ability to evaluate it rationally to make choices that reflect their preferences and interests. Voters consider concerns raised and policies backed by different political parties and politicians in this regard (Scott & Marshall, 2009

1.8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Research Design

Qualitative research was used in this research. Interviews were conducted from the population.

1.8.2 Population

The population of this research is the voters who were eligible in the 2024 general elections in district Swat.

1.8.3 Sampling

Convenient and purposive sampling were used to target interview population.

1.8.4 Instruments

This is qualitative study and interviews were employed to get understanding of voter's choices.

1.8.5 Data Collection

Primary data were collected through interviews from the population. Data from the Election Commission of Pakistan, government reports, and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics were also considered. Secondary sources such as research articles, books etc were consulted.

1.8.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyze and interpret themes and patterns in interviews.

1.8.7 Ethical Consideration

To achieve desired outcomes professionalism was maintained. Our research have kept data and participants' confidentiality, and secrcy of data, respect local customs, and avoided any sort of polarized subject. The researcher have uphold strict ethical standards to keep his participants safe.

1.8.8 Organization of the Study

Chapter-Wise details

1) Introduction
2) History of Swat till merger with Pakistan.
3) Chapter on electoral history.
4) Voting behavior in 2024 general election in Swat
5) Conclusion and Recommendations

CHAPTER 02

## 2. ELECTORAL HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY OF SWAT

This Chapter investigates into the Electoral History and Geography of Swat and its Historical background. Swat boasts a rich historical and cultural legacy, set amidst breathtaking natural landscapes and a diverse population. This chapter navigates through Swat's district profile, population demographics, economic sources, administrative subdivisions, social lineage, and constituencies-wise division. It also traces Swat's historical journey, from ancient times to significant eras like the Maurya Dynasty, Buddhist influence, Ghaznavid rule, and the eventual merger of Swat State with Pakistan. Explore the intricate tapestry of Swat's past and present political landscape in this enlightening chapter.

2.1 District Profile of Swat

District Swat is situated in the province of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. It is a beautiful region of splendid past and has a significant place in the annals of history. The Swat valley, which is located in the Malakand Division of Pakistan, Malakand Division comprises of several other districts, including Malakand, Buner, Upper Dir, and Lower Dir. The region is under the control of the Provincial Administrative Tribal Area (PATA), Article 246 of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973. The district is situated in the northern part of the country, bordering Buner and Malakand to the south, the Lower and Upper Dir districts to the west, Chitral and Gilgit to the north, and Kohistan and Shangla districts to the east. The total area of the Swat valley district is approximately 5,065 square kilometres, and it has a population of approximately 2.60 million people. Of this population, 86.62 per cent live in rural areas, while 13.38 per cent live in urban areas. The main city of the district is Mingora, which is located about 160 kilometres from Peshawar, the provincial capital, and about 250 kilometres from Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. However, the main headquarters of the government's administrative departments is in Saidu Sharif (Elahi, 2016).

The Swat valley district is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, including Pukhtoon (mainly of the Yousafzai tribe), Mian/Syed (Holy descent), Kohistanis, Gujjars, and a small number of Hindu and Sikhs. The region's ethnic diversity is one of its most striking features, with different communities living together in harmony and mutual respect. The Swat valley is known for its stunning natural beauty, with majestic mountains, lush green forests, and sparkling rivers and lakes. It is a popular tourist destination, attracting visitors from all over the world who come to explore its natural wonders and rich cultural heritage. The region is also

well-known for its hospitality, with locals known for their warm and welcoming nature (Elahi, 2016)
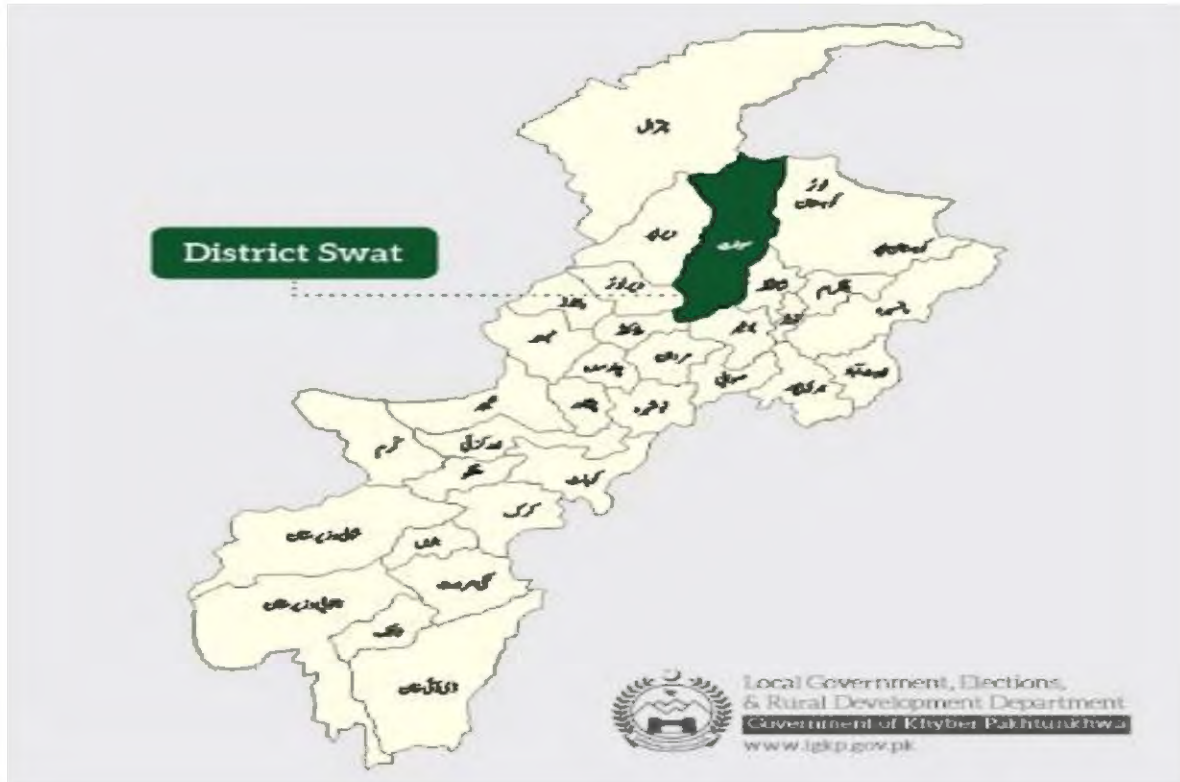
2.1.1 Population

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Swat population as per the 2023 census stood at 2,687,384 with a rate of 2.57 percent annual growth rate. The three main ethnic groups in swat are Pashtuns (mainly Yousafzai), Kohistanis, and Gujjars. Respectively, the Pashtu, Kohistani, and Gujjravi languages are spoken by these ethnic groups (Barth, 1956).

2.1.2 Main Sources of Income

Swat state after its consolidation in 1917 by Mian Gul Abdul Wadood aka bacha seb was transformed towards a peaceful and progressive polity. Although, Swat state was ruled by its rulers autocratically but they established educational institutions and spread infrastructure networks in the state. Agriculture, tourism, and foreign remittances play major roles in the local economy. Swat is more developed than other districts of Malakand Division (Alam et al., 2022). Tourism contribution to the local economy is 37 percent while agriculture, forestry, handicrafts, mining gemstones, livestock, and foreign remittances make up the rest.

2.1.3 Administrative Subdivisions

Saidu Sharif is the district headquarter of Swat. Swat is divided into 7 tehsils and 170 union councils. It consists of seven tahsils, including Kabal. Geographically, Tehsil Kabal is

surrounded by Tehsil Matta on the west, Tehsil Babuzi, Swat, on the north-east, Tehsil Barikot, Swat, on the south. According to Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act 2013, Tehsil Kabal has fourteen Wards comprising of Ningwali, Kabal, Bara Bandai, Kuza Bandai, Kanju, Hazara, Bar Abakhel, Kuz Abakhel, Kala Kalay, Deowalai, Shah Dherai, Dradiyal, Qalagy and Totano Bandai. According to District and Tehsil Level Population Summary, the population of Tehsil Kabal was 420,374 (Census Report, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Local Government: 2017),[i] Kabal was formerly known as Chendakhwara (Sultan-i-Rome: 2008).

2.1.4 Social Lineage

Swat's social fabric reflects a tapestry of ethnic diversity, with Yusufzai Pukhtuns holding a prominent position as the dominant ethnic group. Alongside them, various other ethnic communities contribute to Swat's multicultural identity. These include the *Gujar, Faqiran, Miagan, Sayyidan, Mulan,* and *Hindwan* communities, each bringing unique cultural nuances and traditions to the region. Additionally, there are occupational groups such as the *Nayan* (barbers), *Ingaran* (blacksmiths), *Zargaran* (goldsmiths), *Kulalan* (potters), and *Chamyaran* (cobblers) who have historically played vital roles in Swat's socio-economic landscape. This diverse blend of ethnicities and occupational groups underscores Swat's rich social lineage and cultural heritage, fostering an environment of harmony and mutual respect among its residents.

2.1.5 Constituencies-Wise Division

According to the Election Commission of Pakistan Swat has 3 national assembly seats and 8 provincial assembly seats as per the 2024 general elections. The national assembly seats are NA-2, NA-3 and NA-4. Provincial assembly seats are PK-3, PK-4, PK-5, PK-6, PK-7, PK-8, PK-9 and PK-10. These are the provincial and national assembly seats distributed in district Swat.

2.2   Historical Background of Swat

Swat has a long and fascinating history, with evidence of human habitation dating back to ancient times as documented in texts like the Rig-Veda. The region's historical journey includes notable events such as Alexander the Great's conquests and subsequent rule by different groups, ranging from Buddhist leaders to Islamic rulers like the Ghaznavids. Local figures like Sayed Abdul Jabbar Shah and Mian Gul Abdul Wadud also played pivotal roles in shaping Swat's governance. The eventual integration of Swat into Pakistan in 1969 further

underscores its historical narrative, showcasing a blend of diverse cultures and influences that have contributed to the region's unique identity over the centuries.

2.2.1   Alexander the Great Era

Throughout history, Swat, nestled within the Pukhtoon belt, has been a coveted region, witnessing the ebb and flow of various conquerors and rulers. Dating back to 1500 BCE, the Aryans from Central Asia established their dominance over Swat, as evidenced by mentions in their religious text, the Rig-Veda. However, their rule was challenged with the arrival of Alexander the Great, whose conquests swept through the region. Alexander's journey to the east led him through Swat, encountering fierce resistance from local tribes and kingdoms, notably the Assakenoi, whose capital Massaga fell after a bloody battle. Despite purported mercy shown by Alexander, a gruesome massacre of Assakenoi mercenaries tarnished his reputation, even condemned by Greek writers. Swat's earliest recorded mention in historical texts dates back to Arian, a Greek historian, highlighting its strategic importance (Sumathi Ramaswamy: 2001).

In 327 BC, Alexander the Great launched a challenging military campaign aimed at capturing Massaga, the largest city in the region of Swat. To reach Massaga, Alexander led his army across the River Panjkora into the rugged terrain of Swat. This journey was difficult due to the natural obstacles posed by the terrain, including mountains and rivers, which made it a grueling expedition for Alexander's troops. Upon entering Swat, Alexander faced determined resistance from local tribal chiefs and kings who were fiercely protective of their land and sovereignty. These leaders rallied their forces to defend against Alexander's advance, engaging his army in intense battles that highlighted the region's strong commitment to its independence and self-rule. Despite the challenging terrain and fierce opposition, Alexander's well-trained and disciplined forces eventually overcame the defenses of the tribal chiefs and kings. The conquest of Massaga was a significant victory for Alexander, symbolizing his successful subjugation of Swat and solidifying his control over the region. Swat's importance in Alexander's campaign extended beyond its immediate conquest. The region served as a crucial strategic waypoint in Alexander's broader ambition to conquer the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. By gaining control of Swat, Alexander secured a vital logistical and military position that facilitated his subsequent movements and conquests in the surrounding areas of ancient India. This strategic significance further underscored Swat's historical importance during Alexander's expansive military campaigns (Sultan-i-Rome: 2008).

The conquest of Swat by Alexander the Great was not without controversy, as historical accounts highlight a brutal massacre of Assakenoi mercenaries by Alexander and his soldiers,

a deed condemned even by Greek writers of that time. This event underscores the harsh realities of ancient warfare and the complexities of conquest. The earliest documented mention of Swat in historical texts appears in the memoirs of Arian, a Greek historian, shedding light on Swat's strategic importance and the challenges faced by invaders like Alexander (Sultan-i-Rome: 2013). His meticulous journey across the River Panjkora to Swat in 327 BC, navigating through Kunar and eventually reaching the Swat Valley, reflects the arduous yet determined nature of his military campaigns. Alexander's victories along the River Swat solidified his control over the region, leaving a lasting impact on Swat's historical trajectory and its interactions with the wider ancient world (Sultan-i-Rome: 2008).

2.2.2 Maurya Dynasty

The Maurya dynasty, emerging around 322 BC, experienced a remarkable expansion across much of the Indian subcontinent, soon after Alexander the Great's incursion into North-Western India. Chandragupta Maurya's establishment of the dynasty laid the foundation for a period of significant growth and consolidation of power. However, it was during the reign of Ashoka, Chandragupta's grandson, that the Maurya Empire reached its zenith from 268 to 231 BC. Ashoka's early years as ruler were marked by impressive military conquests, expanding the empire's borders and influence across vast territories. His reign is particularly renowned for its cultural and administrative achievements, as well as his later embrace of Buddhism and advocacy for peace, reflecting a pivotal era in ancient Indian history under Mauryan rule (Ayesha Jalal and Sugata Bose: 2017).

2.2.3 Aryans Era before Alexander the Great

Environmental changes, the cessation of trade with the Gulf, and the erosion of governmental authority in the cities are now thought to have contributed to the decline of the Indus towns at the beginning of the second millennium BC. As there is some persistence of Harappan elements in post-Harappan cultures and an overlap at some sites in Punjab and Haryana, the demise of the cities does not, however, signal the abrupt end of the Indus civilisation. It is reasonable to infer that Iranian and Central Asian cultural elements may have made small-scale inroads into India, and that people and cultures have interacted for a very long time. Since there was no great migration that would have displaced the pre-existing cultures, the focus is placed on both smallness and long longevity. Additionally, it is much more plausible that this was the process that led to the establishment of the Indo-Aryan language in northwest India.

2.2.4 Buddhist Era

After Alexander the Great, the area was captured by another mighty nation of the world, the Mauriya dynasty. The founder of this dynasty was Chandragupta. He extended his rule to Swat as well Ashoka, the grandson of Chandragupta, converted to Buddhism and Buddhist religion was established throughout his empire, and importantly the Buddhist era started in Swat valley. It is widely believed that Swat is the home to Vajrayana Buddhism-A branch of Tantric Buddhism that emerged in India and its neighboring areas particularly Tibet.[ii] Numerous archaeological sites and Buddhist artifacts bear witness to the region's extensive Buddhist history. According to mythology, Swat formerly had more than 1400 exquisite and useful stupas and cloisters housing more than 6,000 gold statues of the Buddhist pantheon. He wasn't only a devout disciple; he anticipated that Buddhism will overtake all other religions. Buddhism developed in this area, and it remains may still be seen today. The earliest Chinese traveller to the area, Fa-Hein, said that the law of Buddha thrived there in 519 AC about 403 AC. Sung Yun claims that Swat was a thriving center for Buddhism. A separate Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsiang, found Buddhism in Swat in the year 630. Kadphises I, leader of the Kushans, a nomadic race from Central Asia, seized vast territories extending to the south of Kabul River and established his rule. During the reign of the Kushana dynasty it is uncertain whether Swat became an integral part of the Kushana Empire. At the beginning of the fifth century, another Sythian tribe called White Huns (also called Ephthalites), and Hayatilah in Muslim accounts, invaded the Pukhtun land and established their rule. With the passage of time, those White Huns who had settled in the Pukhtun areas became a part of the Pukhtun population. Some scholars are of the opinion that the Ghalji (Ghalzi, Khalji) tribes of the Pukhtuns are the descendants of the White Huns, while others contend that they are Turks by origin.

2.2.5 The Ghaznavid Era

Abu Mansoor Sabuktigin, father of the famous Muslim General Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi laid the foundation of the Ghaznavid Empire in Afghanistan in the 10th century. Sultan Sabuktagin was a former Turkish slave and later on he was married with the daughter of Sultan Alptigin who seized Ghazna the present Ghazni Province in Afghanistan. After Subuktagin, the Alaptign did not had male issue therefore after his death Subuktagin became the ruler of Ghazna. After the death of Subuktagin, there was a civil war between his two sons in which his eldest son Mahmud came out victorious and gains the throne of Ghazni. Mahmud swiftly rose to become one of Asia's most powerful kings and was renowned around the world for his wealth, bravery, and justice. The position of the subsequent wave of Ghaznavid

conquests into the subcontinent, starting in 997, was the wealth in India and the relative fall in West Asia. Mahmud of Ghazni launched a series of invasions (997–1030) into northwest India with the goal of looting the amassed wealth hidden in the temples and palaces of northern India. He led seventeen expeditions into India and was never defeated in any of his expedition, his vizier Khwaja Ayaz went to the North Bank of the Swat River and conquered the regions of Adenzai, Shamozai, and Nekpikhel, while Mahmud Ghaznavi travelled on the Left Bank of the stream and reached to Odiogram, Odigram was the capital of the ruler of Swat, Raja Gira, and his palace was built on the top of a hill (Olivieri et al., 2006).

Peer Khushal, a commander under Mahmud, was given the mission of seizing the fortress of the reigning Raja (Raja Gira). Peer Khushal avoided the direct attack because of the fortress's challenging placement. He besieged the fortress and was only able to take it by severing the citadel's supply of covert water. Mahmoud then moved and occupied the entire Swat. According to the local people of Matta, there is the grave of his son, Mahmud of Ghazna, in the graveyard of Masoom Shaheed of Matta; a subdivisional head quarter, near the government AKL Post Graduate College Matta Swat, who was martyred in one of the encounter with the local non-muslim population. The Pushtoons groups like the Dilazak and Swati, who accompanied Mahmud settled in the Swat valley. They were thereafter referred to as Swati Pashtoons. For a very long period, they maintained their standards. They maintained their independence and were not subject to the Muslim rulers who governed neighboring Afghanistan and India throughout the era (Hopkins & Marsden, 2013).

2.2.6   Yusufzi Pukhtun Era

The Yusufzi came to Swat form Ghwara marghai in Afghanistan, near Gharah, and Nushki (now part of Iran and Afghanistan) at the end of 13th and 14th Century. Ulugh Beg began a conspiracy in the 15th century, forcing the Yusufzi to flee their villages and go to Peshawar valley. The Swati Pukhtuns, whose ultimate leader was Sultan Uwais, formerly governed Swat. Despite establishing a marriage relationship with Sultan Uwais by giving him Malak Ahmad's sister, the Yusufzi kept covetous eyes on the valley. They ultimately succeeded in capturing and occupying the region in the sixteenth century. The Yousafzai did not create a government or state in the Swat; instead, they lived in a genuine tribal way (Lindholm, 1979).

Between 1879 and 1881, the Dir Nawab, Muhammad Sharif Khan, attacked and seized possession of the right bank of Swat River, but he soon lost it. Under the strict direction of Wali Ahmed, commonly known as Sandaki Baba, people on the right bank of the Swat mobilized

against the Dir ruler. The Swati Yusufzi fought several Battles against the Nawab of Dir and eventually the Dir Nawab was drove out of Swat in 1915 and the loca Pukhtoons occupied the area. The local population held a Jirga in which the foundations of Swat states were laid and Syed Jabbar Shah was appointed as first ruler (Zafar, 2011).

2.2.7 Hazrat Abdul Ghafoor (Saidu Baba): The Emergence of Sharia Government
Swat was a loosely connected tribal culture with no established authority. Every tribe had a khan, or chieftain. As a result of small misunderstandings, multiple conflicts erupted, and some clashes lasted for years. At the time, kidnappings and murders were common. People's lives and possessions were in jeopardy. However, as reformers Hazrat Abdul Ghafoor made serious efforts to change the situation. Because it was through him that Wali Swat family obtained all of its power, and indirectly, the foundations of Swat state were established, despite the fact that he himself had no desire to run a state and had cautioned his own son against doing so (Barth, 1985).

At the end of the eighteenth century, Abdul Ghafoor was born (1795 or 1796) in the home of Abdul Wahid. His father, Abdul Wahid, was a member of the tiny Safi tribe from Mohmand region (or Bajaur), and he settled in Upper Swat, in village Jabrai of district Shamozai. Abdul Ghafoor grew up tending sheep and animals, however, local politics eventually caused him to migrate, and he moved around for several years, until he returned to Swat and settled down in the village of Saidu in the year 1845. He moved to Gujar Garhi (Mardan), where he began studying with Maulana Abdul Hakim, a well-known scholar at the period. He stayed at Ziarat Kaka Sahib (Nowshera) and Chamkani (Peshawar) for a while. He also spent a few years with Maulana Mohammad Shuaib in Tordher. He became a religious recluse in the village of Baikai on the banks of the Indus River in 1876 A.D. and stayed there for twelve years. He studied and pursued information from many academics, or *alims*. He was a man of great character and intellect, and he memorized the Holy Qur'an. People flocked to him, believing him to be a saint, and he became known as the Akhund of Swat and Saidu baba. People began to seek his guidance, and he would also feed them (Sultan-i-Rome, 1992).

The people bestowed the title of Akhund upon him because of his religiosity. When returned to Saidu Sharif after forty years, in 1845, he began his reformatory efforts. He was not only famed throughout the Subcontinent for his wisdom and great piety but was also respected in Afghanistan and Iraq. Hence, those with property contributed to his kitchen, and over time, he grew very wealthy as each tribe donated him land to fund his charity. Around ten million people still believe in him today, from Swat and Dir all the way to South Waziristan and

portions of Afghanistan, as well as in the Frontier Province's Bannu district and parts of the Punjab (Sultan-i-Rome, 1992).

However, Akhund of Swat or Saidu Baba fought several battles. Being a strong man with a strong willpower and perseverance, the spirit of Jihad overtook him. He battled the Sikhs in 1835 at the behest of Dost Mohammad Khan, the Amir-i-Kabul. He also fought in the 1863 Ambela conflict. However, there is some debate as to whether the British secretly allied with the Buner Chiefs, Aseem Khan Ashazai, Ahmad Khan Suzai, Ajab Khan, and Zaidullah Khan, against the Mujahideen in this conflict. The Akhund of Swat fell victim to the plot, retreating to the Buner valley with his followers and abandoning Ambela. Some opponents claim the Akhund abandoned up active opposition to the British as a result of this decision (Jahanzeb & Barth, 1985)

He was a ruler of spiritual realm. He was unconcerned with riches and power since, as a religious divine, they were irrelevant to him. Instead, he advocated for the Yusufzais living conditions to be better. He believed that the tribes needed a well-organized government to deal with any future challenges. For instance, when people showed a considerable wish for peace and justice. He Said that:

> "You will not become our ruler, because we cannot follow your strict religious standards. But we can beg you please to find us a ruler! He answered: It is very difficult here, because if I chose a ruler from one tribe, another tribe will be angry. And if he is from one faction (*dala*), the other faction will not accept it. But there is a Sayyid, a descendant of Pir Baba, his name is Sayyid Akbar Shah if you agree, we will bring him (Jahanzeb & Barth, 1985)."

He sensed the necessity for an *Amir* (ruler), partly to counter the British threat and, more importantly, to construct a modern state that would get better the people's situation. So, in 1849 A.D., he called a Jirga of Swat, Buner, Dir, and Bajur delegates to Saidu Sharif. He advised Jirga attendees to pick their own Amir. His plan was accepted by all Jirga members, and he was invited to take command, but he declined. Syed Akbar Shah, a descendant of Pir Baba, was recommended instead. For him, there was two reasons to select Syed Akbar Shah as ruler, firstly, he was personally extremely holy and a very decent man, and secondly, as an outsider, he was neither linked with a specific tribe nor a particular area. As a result, Sayyid Akbar Shah became the king of Swat. Hence, the Swatis felt constant external pressure to establish a centralized government to coordinate their resistance, first from the Sikhs and then from the British (Azim, Mehmood, & Hussain, 2018).

Saidu Baba, his preaching and general reformation resulted in the foundation of Swat's first government. The introduction and establishment of administration among the rebellious Swat tribes was a watershed moment that would be remembered for a long time. To analyze the British influence in Swat State (1849-1947), this chapter helps to seek and re-examine the elements of the outsiders and their influence in the Swat State that has been not analyzed together before, such as how legal and political system of state of Swat was reformed from Yusufzai state of swat to the setup of princely state in alliance with British Indian Empire and what role Wali-e-Swat played in it? How the conflicts between Syed Akbar Shah and Akhund did shape the history of Swat and how did it effect post-Akhund Swat till 1929 and what was the role of Britons in exploiting these conflicts? What were the treaties among Wali of Swat and outsiders? How alliance and treaties with British Indian Empire influenced domestic politics and violence in Swat? All these questions will be answered in the coming chapters (Lindholm, 1986).

2.2.8   Sayed Abdul Jabbar Shah Era (1886-1956 AC)

Syed Abdul Jabbar's entry into Swat in 1914 marked a pivotal moment, driven by strategic alliances and aspirations for structured governance. His establishment as Swat's ruler through a jirga was not just a political maneuver but a response to potential threats from neighboring powers, particularly the Nawab of Dir, and a quest for internal organization and sovereignty. Setting up a functional government and basic organizational frameworks reflected his vision for Swat's future, emphasizing stability and effective administration. His backing from various groups, including the Bunair populace, Hindustani Mujahidin, and Sartor Faqir, showcased a complex web of alliances that influenced regional dynamics. The calculated move to drive the Nawab of Dir out of Swat reflected Jabbar Shah's determination to secure Swati lands and assert his authority. Diplomatic maneuvers, including agreements between factions and delineation of borders, were part of the broader strategy to consolidate power and ensure territorial integrity. The coordinated efforts between Swat, Bajawar, and other stakeholders underscored a shared vision of governance and regional stability, albeit amidst shifting alliances and rivalries (Jahanzeb & Barth, 1985).

Abdul Jabbar Shah's political astuteness extended beyond military and diplomatic tactics to include propaganda strategies aimed at undermining rivals such as Miangul Abdul Wadud. These efforts were not just about securing his rule but also about shaping perceptions and garnering support within Swat and among neighboring communities. The political

landscape within Swat during this period was dynamic, marked by competing interests, power struggles, and strategic alliances that shaped events and outcomes (Sultan-i-Rome, 2008).

The evolving dynamics within Swat and external influences impacted Abdul Jabbar Shah's rule and interactions with neighboring powers. The complexities of governance, including managing diverse ethnic and tribal groups, balancing internal cohesion with external threats, and navigating shifting allegiances, presented ongoing challenges and opportunities. Abdul Jabbar Shah's ability to navigate these complexities while establishing rudimentary governance structures reflects his pragmatism and leadership acumen (Sultan-i-Rome, 2008).

However, the political landscape was not static, and rivalries and discontent simmered beneath the surface. Abdul Wadud's maneuvers to undermine Jabbar Shah's rule and the internal dynamics within Swat added layers of complexity to the region's governance. These internal struggles and external pressures highlighted the delicate balance of power and the multifaceted strategies employed by leaders to maintain control and influence.

In hindsight, Abdul Jabbar Shah's rule and the events surrounding his ascension to power represent a microcosm of larger geopolitical and socio-cultural shifts in the region. The interplay of tribal affiliations, colonial influences, strategic interests, and individual ambitions shaped Swat's trajectory during this period. Studying this historical phase offers insights into state formation, power dynamics, and the complexities of governance in princely states during a time of significant regional and global change (Sultan-i-Rome: 2008).

2.2.9 Miangul Abdul Wadud (Bacha Sahib) Era

Abdul Wadud's rise to power in Swat marked a significant shift in the region's political landscape. Supported by influential figures like the Sandakai Baba and key political figures, Abdul Wadud positioned himself as a formidable contender for leadership. The covert approval of his plans by the Frontier Province's top commissioner added legitimacy to his ambitions. In September 1917, with backing from influential groups and a decisive jirga, Abdul Wadud succeeded in ousting Abdul Jabbar Shah, culminating in his coronation as the new Badshah (king) of Swat State. Abdul Jabbar Shah's tenure, while marked by attempts at governance and state-building, ultimately fell short in consolidating and expanding Swat's influence. Abdul Wadud's ascension was not merely a power grab but a response to internal and external pressures, fueled by ambition and strategic imperatives. The political climate, alliances, and promises of support propelled Abdul Wadud's efforts to expand his dominion and solidify his

authority, aligning with the interests of key stakeholders and regional dynamics (Sultan-i-Rome: 2008).

However, the legacy of power struggles within the Saidu Baba's lineage continued to shape events. Intrigues among grandsons vying for authority led to fatal rivalries, notably resulting in the deaths of Abdul Hanan's sons at the hands of their cousin, Gulshahzada (Miangul Abdul Wadud). Abdul Wadud's strategies to outmaneuver rivals within his family, such as Miangul Shirin Jan, demonstrated his determination to secure his position. Abdul Wadud's efforts extended beyond family politics, as evidenced by his proactive approach in cultivating favorable relations with the British authorities. This diplomatic finesse and provision of essential services further solidified his influence not only within his family but across the region. The power dynamics within Swat were complex, leading to strategic alliances, betrayals, and shifts in loyalty, ultimately reshaping the political landscape under Abdul Wadud's rule. Despite internal family tensions and power struggles, external challenges forced competing factions to align temporarily. The emergence of a common rival compelled Gulshahzada and Shirin to collaborate until circumstances favored their individual ambitions once again. Abdul Wadud's calculated maneuvers and strategic alliances were pivotal in consolidating his power and establishing his dominance not only within his family but also within Swat and its neighboring regions, marking a transformative period in the history of Swat State (Sultan-i-Rome, 2008).

Abdul Wadood's diplomatic strategies extended beyond military prowess, showcasing his ability to navigate complex political landscapes and maintain stability within Swat. His alignment with the British was not merely opportunistic but strategic, offering them a reliable partner in governing the region and securing his own position of authority. This collaboration also allowed for the modernization of Swat's infrastructure, including the construction of roads and the management of weapons, bolstering both internal control and external defenses.

As a ruler, Abdul Wadood exhibited a nuanced approach to governance, acting as a judge and arbitrator in conflicts and siding with the weaker parties to maintain a balance of power. By confiscating domains from rebellious Khans and dispersing their supporters, he effectively curtailed dissent and solidified his rule. His expulsion of mendicant Sufis further consolidated control by eliminating potential sources of opposition within his dominion (Islam, 2014)

The consolidation of power under Abdul Wadood marked a shift in Swat's political landscape, moving away from traditional clan-based authority towards a centralized state structure. His rule disrupted entrenched power dynamics, emphasizing strategic alliances, and administrative efficiency over traditional feudal structures. The establishment of Swat as a recognized state under British patronage reinforced Abdul Wadood's authority and provided a framework for governance that endured beyond his reign (Islam, 2014).

Abdul Wadood's legacy lies not only in his successful consolidation of power but also in the transformation of Swat into a modernized state capable of navigating regional dynamics and external pressures. His astute diplomacy, military prowess, and administrative reforms laid the foundation for stability and development in Swat, shaping its trajectory well into the 20th century. His ability to adapt to changing political landscapes while maintaining internal cohesion underscores his enduring impact on Swat's history and governance (Sultan-i-Rome,2008).

2.2.10 Miangul Abdul Haq Jahanzeb (Wali sahib)

Miangul Abdul Haq Jahanzeb famous as Miangul Jahanzeb, *Wali Sahib* was the son of Miangul Abdul Wadud, Bacha Sahib. Miangul Jahanzeb was renowned for his respect for the western way of life. The Bacha Sahib resigned in the favor of his son, Miangul Jahanzeb, because he stated in the *darbar* (A Court/Reception) on 21 May 1923, in his heir apparent ceremony 'that all you people wished that I should appoint my elder son as my heir apparent (Ali et al., 2013).

In the beginning the government of Wali Sahib was under the influence of the British Indian government and then later Pakistan, however the administration under the Wali Sahib was   developed to a great extent. His Civil Administration, Military Administration and Financial Administration, was very strong. Despite his westernized ways, Wali sahib maintained Pashtu as the nation's official language. He promoted the growth of Pashtu. "Mushairas" used to be held at the court during festive occasions. The Mushairas were attended by poets from all around Swat as well as from neighbouring regions. The existence of numerous literary groups is also correlated with the flourishing of a strong tradition of poetry in Swat. Swat *Adabi Sanga*, *Nangyal Pashtu Adabi Toolana*, *Naway Tegh Adabi Toolana*, *Pashtu Adabi Lakhkar*, and *Markazi Islami, Adabi Toolana* are some of the associations anticipating active employment for the advancement of the Pashtu language and writing. The Urdu, Pashtu, and English-language Elum journal was also published, during Wali's government. Through the

Elum journal, presently Elum is published by Jahanzeb College, young and potential poets were promoted and could receive excellent education. Miangul Abdul Haq Jahanzeb provided important advancements in the fields of education, health, construction, and roads (Avis, 2016).

2.2.11 The Merger of Swat State with Pakistan

Since Pakistan's rise, its leaders have not always handled with the utmost prudence when dealing with the powerful governments. In order to advance the states, the authorities of Pakistan requested merger of these states. Like Liaqat Ali Khan proclaimed his wish for these states to be merged. The source (Swat State 1915-1969) lead to the conclusion that the Swat state was largely perfect despite the appearance of arrogance that its rulers projected and the fact that it didn't share a border with Afghanistan. Instead, the Afghan and Pukhtunistan factor successfully acted in the neighboring Dir, bringing the border states closer together. Some Pakistani specialists were hesitant to approve the union. In 1962, the political administrator made the obvious prediction that "the extension of laws [by the Pakistani government] is most likely going to make the connection [in the state] that it is a forerunner to an all-out takeover of the association [of the state] by the organization of Pakistan."[iii] We must maintain a favorable impression after this initial one. Because The Wali Sahib had many friends and a good reputation in Pakistani professional circles, they encouraged him to keep things as they were for the time being. The prominence of the Wali family was enhanced by the marriage of two of their offspring to two of Ayub Khan's young ladies. The Wali sahib claims that President Ayub Khan once told me: "Today, I shall annex Dir. However, it will have an impact on you, so I won't. Although the magnificent state association, not the Pakistani government, was in charge of passing laws, the Pakistani legislative body had the authority to ease laws for the great state. When it was decided to extend the laws of Pakistan's legislative assembly to the states, it produced great tension between Pakistan and the states. In order to reduce tension, it was decided that the state should be encouraged to create basic provisions for development and that it should be up to them to put the laws into action. The interim constitutional order clause in Article 3 was utilized to maintain the extraordinary status of the tribal state after Ayub Khan's surrender and the imposition of martial law in Pakistan on March 25, 1969 (Yousafzai et al., 2013)

Swat State Wali Maingul Abdul Haq Jahanzeb made the decision to join the Pakistani government on Monday, July 28, 1969. Miangul Abdul Haq Jahanzeb, the ruler of Swat, made the decision to merge Swat with Pakistan on July 28, 1969. And on August 15, 1969, General

Yahya Khan of the Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) and the then-president of Pakistan took control of the state (Hopkins & Marsden, 2013).

CHAPTER 03

3.   ELECTORAL HISTORY OF SWAT: FROM MERGER TO THE PRESENT GENERAL ELECTIONS

The chapter on the electoral history of Swat district offers a meticulous exploration of the region's political evolution, drawing insights from data sourced from official records while acknowledging inherent limitations. Beginning with the landmark 1970 general elections, which marked a pivotal moment in the district's political landscape with the participation of major political parties, the chapter aims to construct a coherent narrative despite gaps in the historical record. It scrutinizes available data, connecting dots to piece together the missing segments of Swat's electoral past, highlighting the reliance on official sources as a foundation for its analysis. The electoral history of Swat, as documented in the chapter, initiates with the 1970 general elections, a watershed event that set the stage for subsequent political developments in the district. This election was significant not only for its historical context but also for the participation of prominent political entities that shaped Swat's electoral dynamics in the decades to follow. The chapter endeavors to trace this trajectory using the data accessible through official channels, emphasizing the foundational role of these sources in reconstructing the electoral narrative of Swat. Central to the chapter's methodology is the scrutiny of official data available from various governmental repositories and electoral bodies.

This approach underscores the chapter's commitment to accuracy and reliability in portraying Swat's electoral history, despite encountering limitations such as incomplete records regarding voter turnout and specific election outcomes. By leveraging the data at its disposal, the chapter navigates these challenges to offer a nuanced understanding of how electoral processes unfolded in Swat over time. An acknowledged constraint within the chapter is the absence of comprehensive data on crucial aspects such as the exact number of votes cast for each candidate or party in certain elections. This limitation complicates efforts to provide a fully detailed account of electoral outcomes and voter behavior throughout Swat's electoral history. Nevertheless, the chapter harnesses the available data to delineate significant trends, milestones, and shifts in political alignments within the district, thereby illuminating broader patterns despite the gaps. Moreover, the reliance on official data ensures a methodological rigor in the chapter's analysis, grounding its findings in verifiable sources that lend credibility to its interpretations of Swat's electoral past. By adhering to this approach, the chapter aims to uphold scholarly standards while offering insights into the complexities of electoral processes in a region marked by both continuity and change. Beyond its reliance on official records, the chapter engages in a critical examination of the interplay between

political parties, candidates, and electoral outcomes in Swat. It identifies key players and their roles in shaping electoral contests, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the district's political landscape over successive election cycles. This analysis underscores the chapter's commitment to providing a comprehensive portrayal of Swat's electoral history, enriched by contextual insights derived from the available data sources.

Furthermore, the chapter acknowledges the inherent challenges posed by gaps in the electoral record, particularly concerning the granularity of data related to voter behavior and electoral participation. These limitations necessitate a cautious interpretation of findings and a recognition of the chapter's reliance on the breadth and depth of available official data. Despite these challenges, the chapter strives to offer a coherent narrative that captures the essence of Swat's electoral journey from its inception to contemporary times. The chapter on the electoral history of Swat district represents a scholarly endeavor to unravel the complexities of political evolution through a meticulous examination of official data. Beginning with the seminal 1970 general elections, the chapter traces the contours of Swat's electoral landscape, navigating through gaps in the historical record to offer insights into the district's electoral processes. While acknowledging limitations in data availability, particularly concerning voter turnout and specific electoral outcomes, the chapter underscores its reliance on official sources to construct a nuanced narrative of Swat's electoral history. By connecting dots and drawing upon verifiable data, the chapter provides a valuable contribution to understanding the dynamics of political change and continuity within Swat, thereby enriching scholarly discourse on electoral studies in the region.

3.1   The 1970s Onwards: The Rule of Personalities

In the context of the 1970 elections in Swat Valley, the political landscape was deeply influenced by a unique social structure centered around groups known as "*Dulla*s." These *Dulla*s were not merely political factions but represented longstanding social divisions with historical rivalries. Each individual in Swat Valley belonged to a *Dulla* that was traditionally opposed to the *Dulla* of their tarbur (patrilineal kinship group). This intricate social division permeated throughout the valley, shaping identities and political allegiances among its nearly one million inhabitants. The concept of *Dulla*s was more than just a political affiliation; it was deeply ingrained in the social fabric of Swat Valley. These groups were seen as perpetually at odds with each other, with the primary objective being to assert dominance and supremacy over their rival *Dulla*s. This social structure fostered a sense of rivalry and competition that extended into various aspects of life, including politics.

During the 1970 elections, Swat Valley was predominantly influenced by two main *Dulla*s: one led by the former rulers of Swat and another by their traditional rivals, the Mehmat Khel. These *Dulla*s represented not only political factions but also historical lineages and social identities. The former rulers' *Dulla* sought to maintain or regain political influence, leveraging their historical authority and connections, while the Mehmat Khel *Dulla* aimed to challenge their dominance and establish their own foothold in the political arena. The rivalry between these two main *Dulla*s added a layer of complexity to the electoral dynamics of Swat Valley during the 1970 elections. Candidates and political parties aligned themselves with one *Dulla* or the other, seeking support and leveraging historical grievances and alliances to sway voters. This social and political structure influenced voter behavior and electoral outcomes, as individuals identified strongly with their respective *Dulla*s and aligned their voting patterns accordingly. The significance of *Dulla*s in Swat Valley during the 1970 elections cannot be overstated. They served as conduits for political mobilization, channeling historical grievances and social identities into electoral competition. The election campaign was characterized by intense rivalries and strategic alliances aimed at consolidating power within each *Dulla* and gaining an advantage over their opponents (Lindholm, 1979).

The power structure in Swat Valley during the 1970 elections was shaped by the intricate web of *Dulla*s, each representing a historical lineage and social group with deep-seated rivalries. These *Dulla*s played a crucial role in defining political allegiances, shaping electoral strategies, and influencing voter behavior. The electoral landscape was thus not only about competing political ideologies but also about navigating complex social divisions and historical legacies that continue to resonate in the region's political dynamics today (Lindholm, 1979).

In 1970, the parties aligned along dulla lines, with ideology playing a minor role. The major parties gave the candidates the impression that they could be able to win over the whole NWFP since they were both ethnocentric and regionalist. The party of the National Awami Party (NAP) was the Mahmat khel dulla, with the Muslim League (ML) receiving backing from the Wali. The competitions were decided by a split vote and were quite close. In the battle for the Provincial Assembly, Muhammad Afzal Khan, a Mahmat khel candidate, prevailed by a slight margin, while Aurangzeb, the son of the Wali, won the National Assembly contest. A few lesser contenders also put themselves up, but they received little support. One was Dost Mohammad Khan, Nisar Khan's younger brother, who was a Pakistan People's Party candidate. Dost Muhammad declined to back the elderly Mahmat Khal as well adversaries of his family, the Wali, who had forced Nisar Khan

into exile by failing to provide him with sufficient assistance. Dost Mohammad Khan was mistreated by the other Khans of Swat for his rank and was invited to join a dulla; however, he proudly declined and lost the elections terribly. with the major parties' victory. The viewpoint of Dost Muhammad Khan appeared especially implausible. Following the election, it seemed that the Mahmat khel had picked their party with exceptional luck. The NWFP was ruled by the NAP, and Afzal Khan climbed quickly to become the NAP's president over the whole region. Out of the small-time politics of Shamizai/Sebujni, the Mahmat khel found themselves fighting for control over the whole North West Frontier Province (Lindholm, 1979).

In the 1977 general elections in Pakistan, the constituency NA-22 Swat was a notable battleground with several prominent candidates vying for victory. This election was marked by intense political activity and competition among candidates from major political parties and independent candidates. The data from this election provides a clear snapshot of the political landscape and voter preferences in that region during that time. The constituency NA-22 Swat, located in the Swat District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, saw a diverse group of candidates competing for a seat in the National Assembly. The available data highlights that four main candidates from different political backgrounds contested the election. This variety reflected the vibrant political environment of the period, where multiple parties and independent candidates were actively engaging with voters to secure their support. Among the candidates, representatives from the major political parties of the time were notably prominent. The Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), a coalition of opposition parties, fielded a candidate who eventually emerged victorious. The PNA was an alliance of several parties that had united to challenge the ruling party, which was the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The PNA's candidate in NA-22 Swat capitalized on the coalition's broad political appeal and managed to garner significant voter support. the Pakistan People's Party, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was the ruling party at the time and also had a candidate in the race. The PPP was known for its strong presence and influence in Pakistani politics, particularly in the early years after the 1970 elections. Despite the PPP's formidable political machinery, their candidate in NA-22 Swat could not match the vote count of the PNA's candidate. the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PML-Q) also had a candidate in the fray. The PML-Q, often associated with the legacy of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, represented another significant faction in Pakistani politics. Although their candidate did not win the election, their participation highlighted the competitive nature of the electoral process in that constituency. An independent candidate also contested in NA-22 Swat. Independent candidates often bring a unique appeal to elections, leveraging personal reputation, local

connections, and a non-partisan approach to attract voters. This candidate, while not affiliated with any major party, contributed to the diversity of choices available to the electorate.

The election results from NA-22 Swat indicate a decisive victory for the PNA candidate. With 30,140 votes, the PNA candidate secured a clear lead over competitors. This substantial vote count underscores the effectiveness of the PNA's campaign strategies and the resonance of their platform with the voters in Swat. The PNA's victory in this constituency was a significant achievement, reflecting the broader political sentiment and the effectiveness of their coalition in mobilizing support. The second-place candidate, who was affiliated with another major party or an independent run, received 16,103 votes. While this total was considerably less than the winning candidate's, it still represented a significant portion of the electorate's preference. The disparity in vote counts between the first and second-place candidates highlights the competitive nature of the election and the varied political landscape in NA-22 Swat. The 1977 elections in NA-22 Swat were marked by a multi-faceted contest among candidates from different political backgrounds and an independent entrant. The victory of the PNA candidate illustrated the influence of the opposition coalition in certain constituencies and their ability to mobilize a substantial voter base. This election was a part of the larger political dynamics in Pakistan at the time, reflecting the shifting alliances and political strategies that characterized the period. The results also shed light on the electoral preferences of the Swat constituency, providing valuable insights into the political climate of the late 1970s in Pakistan. In the 1977 general elections of Pakistan, the political landscape in Swat was particularly notable due to the participation of candidates from the People's Party of Pakistan (PPP), led by then-Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This election was significant not only for its political outcomes but also for its reflection of the local dynamics in Swat, a region with a unique historical and political background (Pakistani Election 1977 Complete NA Result Votes Details National Assembly, n.d.).

Mian Gul Amirzeb, representing the PPP, contested from NA-21 Swat-II. This constituency was known for its intricate political affiliations due to its historical association with the "Dulla" faction. The "Dulla" refers to a traditional and influential group associated with the former Wali (ruler) of Swat, who had considerable sway in the region's political and social affairs. The Wali of Swat was a princely figure whose rule had been significant in the region before the integration of Swat into Pakistan. His followers and associated factions, like the "Dulla," maintained a notable presence in local politics. Mian Gul Amirzeb won the seat from NA-21 Swat-II by a narrow margin. His victory was indicative of the PPP's ability to secure seats in areas with deep-rooted traditional loyalties and historical influences. Winning such a closely contested seat demonstrated the PPP's

appeal and its strategic positioning in the Swat region despite the complex local affiliations and traditional political structures (NA-21 Swat Election 1977 Full Result Vote Candidate, n.d.).

In NA-23 Swat-III, another candidate from the PPP, Fateh Muhammad Khan, also achieved a significant electoral victory. Fateh Muhammad Khan secured 27,458 votes, a substantial number that helped him win the seat. His victory in this constituency further highlighted the PPP's growing influence in Swat. This particular constituency, while also influenced by local traditional dynamics, reflected the broader appeal of the PPP's policies and leadership at that time.

The 1977 elections were marked by intense political rivalry and widespread allegations of electoral fraud. The PPP, under Bhutto, faced strong opposition from the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), which contested the election results vigorously. This contentious atmosphere set the stage for a series of political upheavals, including accusations of vote rigging and protests that eventually led to significant political changes in Pakistan. the 1977 elections in Swat highlighted a period of intense political activity and shifting allegiances. Mian Gul Amirzeb's narrow victory in NA-21 Swat-II and Fateh Muhammad Khan's substantial win in NA-23 Swat-III illustrated the PPP's strategic maneuvering and the impact of local political affiliations on electoral outcomes. Despite the broader national controversies, these results in Swat showcased the party's ability to navigate and influence local political landscapes effectively (NA-23 Swat Election 1977 Full Result Vote Candidate, 2000).

The 1985 general election in Pakistan was distinctive due to its non-party nature, meaning that candidates ran as independents rather than under the banner of political parties. This election marked a departure from previous party-based contests and was part of a broader strategy by then-President Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq to stabilize the political environment following a period of political turmoil and martial law. In this non-party context, the electoral dynamics in Swat District showcased the enduring influence of previous political affiliations and the individuals who had been prominent in earlier elections. In NA-21 District Swat, Mian Gul Aurangzaib emerged as the elected Member of the National Assembly (MNA). Aurangzaib, who had previously served as an MNA from the People's Party of Pakistan (PPP), demonstrated his continued popularity and political influence despite the non-party nature of the 1985 election. He secured 32,434 votes, reflecting a solid support base and his ability to connect with the electorate even in the absence of party support (NA-21 Swat Election 1985 Result, n.d.).

Similarly, in NA-22 District Swat, Fazal-e-Raziq, who had previously been associated with the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), won the MNA seat. Raziq's victory in this non-party election

underscored his established political credentials and local influence. His previous experience with the PNA and his reputation in Swat contributed to his successful campaign, highlighting how individual political history could play a significant role even when party affiliations were not formally recognized during the election (NA-22 Swat Election 1985 Full Result 1985 Vote Candidate, n.d.*).* Fateh Muhammad Khan, another former MNA from the PPP, was elected from NA-23 District Swat in the 1985 general election. His victory demonstrated the continuing appeal of individuals who had been aligned with the PPP in the past. Despite the shift to an independent candidate framework, his previous political experience and local standing helped him secure the MNA seat once again. Khan's election was a testament to the strong personal connections and trust he had built within his constituency (NA-23 Swat Election 1985 Full Result 1985 Vote Candidate, n.d.). The 1985 general election in Pakistan revealed how personal political legacies and individual candidate profiles could influence electoral outcomes, even in the absence of formal party affiliations. Mian Gul Aurangzaib, Fazal-e-Raziq, and Fateh Muhammad Khan each leveraged their prior political experience and local relationships to secure victories in their respective constituencies. This election was a unique moment in Pakistan's political history, illustrating how electoral success can be driven by personal reputation and past achievements, particularly when traditional party structures are not at play.

The 1988 general elections in Pakistan marked a significant shift in the political landscape, as the country transitioned back to civilian rule after years of military dictatorship under General Zia-ul-Haq. The elections were held under a multi-party system, and the results highlighted the evolving political alliances and the influence of different political entities at the time.

In NA-21 Swat-I, Shahzada Amani Room of the People's Party of Pakistan (PPP) was elected as the Member of the National Assembly (MNA). Amani Room's victory reflected the PPP's continued influence in Swat, a region where the party had maintained a strong presence even during non-party and military regimes. His election was a testament to the PPP's ability to retain voter support and leverage its established political network in the region. The PPP, led by Benazir Bhutto, had emerged as a major political force following the end of Zia-ul-Haq's rule, and their candidates, like Amani Room, were seen as key representatives of the party's renewed push for governance and democratic values (NA-21 Swat Detail Election Result 1988, n.d.). In NA-22 Swat-II, Hafiz Fazali Razik won the MNA seat representing the Islami Jamhoori Itihad (IJI), a newly formed political alliance that was a coalition of various right-wing and conservative parties, including the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) and others opposed to the PPP. The IJI was led by prominent figures such as Nawaz Sharif and had a significant impact on Pakistani politics during this period.

Razik's victory indicated the IJI's emerging strength and its ability to consolidate votes from various factions of the conservative and religious segments of the electorate. His win in NA-22 demonstrated the competitive nature of the election and the IJI's ability to appeal to voters in Swat (NA-22 Swat II Detail Election Result 1988, n.d.).

In NA-23 Swat-III, Mehboob ur Rahman, also from the PPP, was elected as MNA. Rahman's success in this constituency further underscored the PPP's dominance in certain areas and its ability to field strong candidates who could secure seats despite the competitive political environment. His election was part of a broader trend where the PPP managed to secure several key positions, contributing to its overall success in the 1988 elections (NA-23 Swat 3 Detail Election Result 1988, n.d.). The 1988 elections were pivotal as they marked the return to democratic governance with Benazir Bhutto becoming the country's first female Prime Minister. The results in Swat reflected both the enduring support for the PPP and the rise of new political alliances like the IJI. This election was instrumental in shaping the future political trajectory of Pakistan, setting the stage for the subsequent political developments and realignments in the country's political arena. The diverse outcomes in Swat's constituencies highlighted the region's complex political landscape and the influence of various national parties and alliances on local politics.

The 1990 general elections in Pakistan were significant for their reflection of shifting political alliances and emerging trends in local politics, particularly in the Swat District. These elections highlighted the dynamics of new and old political forces in the region, demonstrating the changing landscape of Pakistani politics.

In NA-21 Swat-I, Khaliq Dad Khan of the Islami Jamhoori Itihad (IJI) was elected as the Member of the National Assembly (MNA). The IJI, a coalition of right-wing parties formed in the late 1980s, was a major competitor to the ruling People's Party of Pakistan (PPP). Khaliq Dad Khan's victory in this constituency was indicative of the IJI's growing influence and its ability to consolidate support against the PPP's dominance. His election represented the IJI's broader success in securing seats in key areas, reflecting a shift in voter sentiment towards conservative and right-wing political platforms during this period (NA-21 Swat I Detail Election Result 1990, n.d.). In NA-22 Swat-II, Abdul Matin Khan achieved a notable victory as an independent candidate. His election marked a historic moment for the district, as it was the first time an independent candidate won a seat in Swat's electoral history. This victory demonstrated a significant shift in the political landscape of the region, where voters were increasingly willing to support candidates outside the traditional party structure. Abdul Matin Khan's success could be attributed to his local connections, personal reputation, and

possibly disillusionment with established political parties, highlighting a growing trend of support for independent candidates in local elections (NA-22 Swat II Detail Election Result 1990, n.d.).

In NA-23 Swat-III, Muhammad Afzal Khan was elected MNA, representing the rival "Dulla" faction associated with the former Wali of Swat. The "Dulla" faction, with its historical ties to the ruling Wali and traditional influence in the region, continued to play a significant role in Swat's politics. Afzal Khan's victory in this constituency was a testament to the enduring influence of traditional and local power structures. His election highlighted the competitive nature of Swat's political arena, where traditional loyalties and historical affiliations still had a strong impact on electoral outcomes (NA-23 Swat 3 Detail Election Result 1990, n.d.).

The 1990 elections in Swat illustrated the complexity and dynamism of the region's political landscape. The success of Khaliq Dad Khan of the IJI reflected the rise of right-wing politics and the IJI's ability to appeal to conservative voters. Abdul Matin Khan's historic win as an independent candidate signaled a shift towards individual candidacies and a potential change in voter preferences away from established parties. Meanwhile, Muhammad Afzal Khan's victory underscored the continued relevance of traditional local factions and their influence over the electorate. These elections marked a period of transition and realignment in Swat, with emerging political trends and shifting loyalties reshaping the region's political dynamics. The results demonstrated the growing diversity in electoral preferences and the evolving nature of political representation in Pakistan.

The 1993 general elections in Pakistan were marked by significant political shifts and realignments, which were clearly reflected in the outcomes from Swat and its adjacent district of Buner. The elections were pivotal in shaping the political landscape as the country navigated through a period of democratic consolidation and party realignments. In NA-21 Swat-I, Mian Gul Aurangzeb was elected as Member of the National Assembly (MNA) while representing the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). By 1993, Aurangzeb, who had previously been affiliated with the PPP, had transitioned to the PML-N, which was led by Nawaz Sharif. The PML-N, under Sharif's leadership, had become a dominant force in Pakistani politics, promoting policies geared towards economic development and political stability. Aurangzeb's election to NA-21 Swat-I as a PML-N candidate demonstrated the party's growing influence and its ability to attract seasoned politicians from other parties. His victory also underscored the shifting allegiances within the political spectrum and the PML-N's expanding reach into regions previously dominated by other political factions (NA-21 Swat I Detail Election Result 1993, n.d.).

In NA-22 Swat-II, Muhammad Afzal Khan, a former MNA, secured his position once again. Khan's re-election reflected his enduring popularity and the strong local support he commanded. His return to office was indicative of the persistent influence of experienced politicians who had established a solid reputation and loyal voter base in their constituencies. Afzal Khan's success can be seen as a testament to his political resilience and his ability to maintain a significant presence in the Swat political arena despite the shifting party allegiances and emerging new political forces (NA-22 Swat II Detail Election Result 1993, n.d.). In NA-23 Buner Swat, Abdul Matin Khan was elected as MNA representing the Awami National Party (ANP). The ANP, a party with a strong base in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and its surrounding areas, had a focus on addressing the concerns of the Pashtun community and advocating for regional autonomy. Matin Khan's election in Buner Swat, an area with significant Pashtun population, highlighted the ANP's growing influence in the region. His victory marked a shift in political representation from the traditionally dominant parties to a regional party that emphasized local issues and regional identity (NA-23 Swat 3 Detail Election Result 1993, n.d.). The 1993 elections thus reflected a period of transition in Pakistani politics, with established parties like the PPP and the PML-N vying for dominance, while regional parties like the ANP gained traction. Mian Gul Aurangzeb's switch to the PML-N symbolized the party's increasing strength, Muhammad Afzal Khan's continued success underscored the value of political experience and local connections, and Abdul Matin Khan's win represented the rise of regional parties and their role in shaping local political narratives.

The 1997 general elections in Pakistan were marked by a consolidation of political power by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), led by Nawaz Sharif, who had returned as Prime Minister after the elections. The results from Swat and the surrounding regions highlighted the PML-N's significant influence and the evolving administrative changes in the area.

In the 1997 elections, Mian Gul Aurang Zeb Khan won the seat for NA-21 District Swat, again, as a candidate of the PML-N. Khan's election underscored the party's strong foothold in the region. His victory was part of the broader success of the PML-N across Pakistan, which capitalized on its promises of economic development and political stability. The PML-N's ability to secure multiple seats in Swat demonstrated the effectiveness of its campaign strategies and the party's growing appeal to the electorate. Khan's win also reflected the consolidation of PML-N's political influence in traditionally contested areas (NA-21 Swat Detail Election Result 1997, n.d.).

Shujat Ali Khan, also of the PML-N, was elected MNA from NA-22. His election was part of the PML-N's broader success in the 1997 elections, highlighting the party's strong organizational

capabilities and voter support. Shujat Ali Khan's win in NA-22 reinforced the PML-N's dominance in the region and signaled the party's ability to present a unified and attractive political platform to the voters. His success contributed to the PML-N's overall control in Parliament and the regional political landscape (NA-22 Swat Detail Election Result 1997, n.d.).

However, by the 1997 elections, the administrative boundaries in the region had undergone changes. NA-23 had been reconstituted as a separate district. This restructuring was part of broader administrative reforms aimed at improving governance and local administration. As a result of this change, NA-23 was no longer part of the same electoral constituency as NA-21 and NA-22. The creation of a separate district for NA-23 reflected the evolving administrative needs and the government's efforts to better manage local affairs. The separation of NA-23 into a distinct district likely influenced the political dynamics and electoral strategies in the region. The creation of new administrative units often leads to shifts in voter alignments and can impact the distribution of political influence. For the PML-N, the reorganization meant adapting to a new electoral landscape while maintaining its overall political strategy. The party's success in NA-21 and NA-22 demonstrated its ability to navigate these changes effectively and secure a strong presence in the newly configured districts.

3.2 Twenty First Century Voting Behavior in Swat: A Change of No Return

In the elections leading up to 2002, two prominent political alliances emerged, shaping the political landscape of Pakistan in significant ways. The first was the Grand National Alliance (GNA), a coalition that represented a broad spectrum of pro-government forces. Central to this alliance was the Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q), often referred to as the "king's party" due to its close ties with the military government led by General Pervez Musharraf. The PML-Q played a pivotal role within the GNA, with its president, Mian Mohammad Azhar, a former Punjab Governor, leading the charge. The alliance also included the National Alliance, which was spearheaded by the Millat Party, led by former President Farooq Leghari. The GNA's strength lay in its unified support from various factions loyal to Musharraf's regime, with key figures such as Pervaz Elahi—an influential member of the Chaudhry family from Gujarat—bolstering its position in Punjab. This coalition sought to consolidate power and support for Musharraf's continued presidency, reflecting the broader agenda of maintaining military-backed governance.

In contrast, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) presented a formidable challenge to the pro-government forces. The MMA was a coalition that sought to bridge significant ideological and sectarian divides within Pakistan. Headed by Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani, the alliance united

various Islamist factions, including the Jamaat-i-Islami and the Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam. This coalition was notable for its attempt to reconcile the Sunni-Shia divide and integrate doctrinally diverse Islamist groups. Despite their internal ideological differences, the MMA was able to present a unified front largely due to a shared stance against U.S. military involvement in the region. The alliance strongly criticized the presence of American bases in Pakistan, which were part of the broader war on terrorism, and condemned the bombing of innocent Pushtuns in Afghanistan during the conflict with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The MMA's position resonated with a significant segment of the Pakistani population, particularly in regions where traditional nationalist parties, such as the Awami National Party (ANP), had shown ambiguous stances on these issues.

The MMA's ability to tap into discontent with U.S. foreign policy and military actions allowed it to garner substantial support, especially in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan. The traditional nationalist parties in these regions had not effectively addressed the growing dissatisfaction with the government's policies, thereby enabling the MMA to capitalize on this discontent. The MMA's success in these areas was a testament to its effective mobilization of anti-American sentiment and its strategic positioning as a defender of local and religious interests against perceived external aggression. In summary, the 2002 elections were marked by a significant contest between the pro-government GNA and the opposition MMA, with each alliance leveraging distinct political strategies to appeal to their respective bases and influence the outcome of the elections (Talbot, 2003).

In the 2002 general elections in Pakistan, the NA-30 Swat constituency proved to be a crucial battleground, reflecting the broader political dynamics of the time. The results were significant for the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), which made a notable impact in this region. In NA-30 Swat, several candidates contested the seat, representing various political parties and independent groups. The primary candidates included Fazal-e-Subhan, Shujaat Ali Khan, Saleem Rahman, Shaukat Ali, Muhammad Mukhtar, and Dr. Sahibzada Liaqat Ali Khan. Each candidate drew support from different segments of the electorate, showcasing the diverse political landscape of Swat.

The vote tally for NA-30 Swat showed a competitive race among these candidates. The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), which had consolidated significant local support, saw a substantial performance in this constituency. The winning candidate from NA-30 was from the MMA, reflecting the alliance's ability to mobilize votes effectively. This victory underscored the MMA's growing influence in the region, driven by its strong stance on issues such as anti-American sentiment and local grievances. On the other hand, the Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q),

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and various independent candidates also contested vigorously but did not secure the seat. The MMA's success in NA-30 Swat was a clear indicator of its strong position in the region during the 2002 elections. It is important to note that while NA-30 Swat was pivotal for the MMA, NA-29 was won by Qari Abdul Baees Saddiqui of the MMA, further consolidating the alliance's foothold in the region. This overall performance highlighted the MMA's significant role and the shifting political alignments in Pakistan at that time (NA 30 Swat II Detail Election 2002 Result All Candidate Votes, 2005).

In the 2008 general elections in Pakistan, a significant shift in voting behavior was observed in the Swat region, reflecting broader political and social dynamics. This shift was particularly evident in the election of representatives to the National Assembly from two distinct constituencies within Swat. Syed Allauddin of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was elected as a Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from N.A-30 Swat II, while Muzafer ul Mulk of the Awami National Party (ANP) was elected as an MNA from N.A-29 Swat I.

To understand this shift, it's essential to consider the political landscape of Swat at the time. The region, situated in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, had historically experienced a complex interplay of tribal loyalties, local governance issues, and the influence of national political parties. The general election of 2008 came at a time of significant political change and instability in Pakistan, following the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the subsequent turmoil in the country. The PPP, led by Asif Ali Zardari following Bhutto's death, was seeking to consolidate its influence in various parts of Pakistan, including Swat. The party's platform, which included promises of democratic reform and economic development, resonated with many voters who were disillusioned with the status quo. Syed Allauddin's victory in N.A-30 Swat II was indicative of this shift. His election represented a departure from previous local political affiliations and an embrace of the PPP's broader national agenda. Allauddin's win highlighted a changing sentiment among the electorate, who were increasingly looking towards national parties that promised stability and development. In contrast, Muzafer ul Mulk's victory in N.A-29 Swat I for the ANP reflected a different aspect of the shifting political landscape. The ANP, traditionally a party with strong roots in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, had been gaining traction due to its advocacy for the rights and interests of the Pashtun people and its focus on local governance and autonomy. Mulk's election signaled continued support for the ANP's regional platform, which emphasized local issues and development. This success illustrated that while there was a growing inclination towards national parties like the PPP in some areas, there remained significant local support for parties like the ANP that were seen as more attuned to the specific needs and aspirations of the people in Swat.

The simultaneous election of representatives from two different parties highlighted the diverse political sentiments within Swat. It underscored the complexity of voter behavior in the region, where national and local dynamics intersected. On one hand, the PPP's victory in N.A-30 Swat II represented a desire for broader national change and alignment with a party that promised reform and progress on a national scale. On the other hand, the ANP's success in N.A-29 Swat I showcased the persistence of regional loyalties and the importance of addressing local issues and aspirations (Goodson, 2008).

In the 2013 general elections in Pakistan, there was a notable shift in voting patterns in the Swat region, reflecting broader political changes across the country. This shift was marked by a decisive move towards supporting the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, led by Imran Khan, which emerged as a dominant force in the region. Murad Saeed, representing PTI, was elected as a Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from N.A-29 District Swat, while Salim Rehman, also from PTI, won the MNA seat from N.A-30 District Swat. The election results in 2013 signified a dramatic departure from the political status quo. The PTI's success in Swat was part of a broader national trend where the party, which had previously been a relatively minor player, saw a surge in support (NA 30 Swat II Detail Election 2002 Result All Candidate Votes, 2015). This was largely due to its campaign promises of anti-corruption, governance reform, and development initiatives. Imran Khan's charismatic leadership and his focus on addressing local and national issues resonated with a significant portion of the electorate, leading to a substantial shift in political allegiance. The election victories of Murad Saeed and Salim Rehman underscored this shift, as they were elected in constituencies that had previously been strongholds of other parties. Their success demonstrated the electorate's desire for change and alignment with PTI's vision of reform. This shift was further reinforced when PTI was given control of the provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which includes Swat. Since then, PTI has governed the province, implementing its agenda and policies. The 2013 elections thus marked a significant moment of transformation in Swat's political landscape, reflecting a broader national realignment towards PTI.

In the 2018 general elections in Pakistan, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party continued its strong electoral performance in the Swat region, building on its previous success in 2013. This continued support was reflected in the election of Haidar Ali Khan and Saleem Rehman as Members of the National Assembly (MNA) from two constituencies in District Swat. Haidar Ali Khan was elected from N.A-2 District Swat, and Saleem Rehman won from N.A-3 District Swat.

The re-election of PTI representatives in these constituencies demonstrated a consistent and enduring support for the party within Swat. This election result was significant as it indicated that the party's appeal was not just a temporary phenomenon but had established a lasting foothold in the region. The continuity of support for PTI was largely attributed to the party's sustained efforts to address local and national issues and its ability to maintain its campaign promises of governance reform and development. Saleem Rehman's re-election was particularly noteworthy as it showed that his previous term had earned him considerable trust and recognition among the voters, reinforcing PTI's strong presence in the area. Similarly, Haidar Ali Khan's victory further underscored the party's solidified position in Swat. Overall, the 2018 elections highlighted that PTI's influence in Swat was not a fleeting trend but a persistent political reality. The party's ability to retain electoral support in these constituencies was a testament to its effective political strategies and the electorate's continued confidence in its leadership and promises. This persistence of PTI's vote reflected broader regional support and contributed to the party's ongoing political dominance in the area (NA 2 Swat Elections 2018 Full Information, nd).

In the 2024 general elections in Pakistan, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party achieved notable success in Swat by securing two National Assembly seats. Saleem ur Rehman won the NA-01 seat, while Dr. Amjad Ali, who had previously been affiliated with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), was elected from the NA-02 seat.

Saleem ur Rehman's victory in NA-01 continued his political tenure and underscored his ongoing influence and popularity within the region. His consistent performance in elections and his role as a PTI representative reflected the party's sustained appeal and effectiveness in addressing local concerns and needs. His re-election demonstrated that PTI's electoral base in Swat remained robust and supportive of its governance and policies. Dr. Amjad Ali's success in NA-02 was particularly noteworthy as he transitioned from his earlier affiliation with the PPP to join PTI. His victory highlighted a significant shift in his political alignment and indicated PTI's growing appeal among voters who were previously aligned with other parties. Dr. Ali's win suggested that PTI was able to attract and integrate experienced politicians from rival parties, which may have contributed to its electoral success. His previous experience and recognition from his time with the PPP likely helped him build a strong campaign within the PTI framework. The results of the 2024 elections in Swat thus reaffirmed PTI's dominance in the region. By winning both seats, PTI solidified its political foothold and demonstrated its continued relevance and appeal to the electorate. This success was a testament to the party's strategic efforts and its ability to maintain and expand its influence in Swat's political landscape.

3.3 Conclusion

The political and electoral landscape of Swat underwent a significant transformation from the 20th to the 21st century, reflecting broader changes in political dynamics both regionally and nationally. This shift, particularly evident from the 2002 elections onward, marked a departure from traditional voting patterns that had been dominant in the 20th century. In the 20th century, Swat's political scene was characterized by a strong emphasis on personal connections and individual influence. During this period, elections were heavily influenced by the personal charisma and status of candidates rather than their party affiliations or broader political platforms. Prominent and influential figures—often those with established social or familial connections, wealth, or local power—held substantial sway over the electorate. Voters tended to cast their ballots based on personal relationships, familiarity, and the perceived integrity or capability of individual candidates rather than the political parties they represented.

This personalistic approach to voting was a reflection of the social and political culture of the time. In many ways, politics was more about personal loyalty and less about ideological alignment or party platforms. Candidates who were well-known and respected within their communities had an advantage, as their personal reputation and connections were crucial in securing votes. This system often led to a political landscape where the focus was on individual candidates' promises and personal attributes rather than the broader policy agendas of their parties. However, this dynamic began to shift dramatically in the early 21st century, particularly around the 2002 elections. The change in voting behavior marked a clear departure from the previous era's emphasis on personal connections. The new century brought with it a broader shift towards party-based politics, reflecting changes in the national and global political environment. By 2002, and increasingly in subsequent elections, the electorate began to prioritize political parties over individual candidates.

This shift was influenced by several factors. National political parties began to gain stronger footholds and increased visibility across the country, changing the way voters perceived their choices. Parties like the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and Awami National Party (ANP) started to play a more prominent role, offering clear political platforms and policies. The growing importance of these parties in national politics influenced voters in Swat to consider party affiliation as a critical factor in their decision-making process. Moreover, the increased availability of information through media and communication technologies played a crucial role in this transformation. Voters became more aware of party platforms, national issues, and the broader implications of their votes. This broader awareness and the changing political

discourse led to a situation where voters began to align themselves more with political parties and their agendas rather than focusing solely on individual candidates. As a result, the personalistic approach that had previously dominated Swat's elections gave way to a more party-centric voting behavior.

The 2002 elections thus marked the beginning of a new era in which voters increasingly supported political parties based on their ideologies, policies, and national significance rather than personal connections with candidates. This shift reflected a broader trend of increasing party loyalty and a growing emphasis on party platforms in the electoral process. By the 21st century, voting behavior in Swat had evolved to reflect a more structured and party-oriented approach, in line with the broader changes occurring in Pakistan's political landscape. the transition from a personalistic to a party-centric electoral system in Swat highlights a significant shift in the political and electoral dynamics of the region. Before 2002, elections were dominated by personal influence and local prominence, with voters choosing candidates based on personal connections. However, from 2002 onwards, there was a marked shift towards voting for political parties, reflecting broader changes in political engagement and information dissemination. This evolution in voting behavior demonstrates a significant change in how political power and influence are perceived and exercised in Swat, aligning more closely with national trends and modern political practices.

CHAPTER 04

4.   VOTING BEHAVIOR IN SWAT

This chapter delves into the intricate voting behavior of the people in Swat, a region known for its rich cultural and historical context. It relies predominantly on data gathered through interviews, offering a nuanced understanding of how various factors influence electoral decisions in this area. The chapter underscores that voting patterns in Swat are not driven by a singular factor but are the result of a complex interplay of multiple elements. One of the key focuses is the role of personalities in politics. The chapter highlights how individual politicians' charisma, personal reputation, and public image can significantly impact voters' choices. In Swat, as in many regions, the personal attributes of candidates often overshadow broader party platforms or policies, leading voters to make decisions based on their perceptions of candidates' character and trustworthiness. Religion also plays a critical role in shaping voting behavior. In Swat, where religious affiliations and beliefs are deeply ingrained in daily life, voters often consider a candidate's religious alignment or their stance on religious issues when casting their votes. The chapter details how religious leaders and institutions can influence voter preferences, further illustrating the intertwining of faith and politics in this region. the chapter examines the influence of political manifestos and past experiences. While manifestos provide a roadmap of political promises and policies, their impact varies. Voters in Swat might weigh past performance and historical interactions with political figures more heavily, reflecting a cautious approach influenced by previous experiences. The chapter also touches on how local issues, community needs, and historical grievances contribute to shaping electoral behavior. this chapter provides a comprehensive look at how voting behavior in Swat is molded by a myriad of factors, from personal charisma and religious considerations to historical context and manifestos. It offers valuable insights into the dynamics of electoral decision-making in a region with its unique set of influences and priorities.

4.1 Voting preferences of the respondents

The data presented reveals a diverse array of political preferences among the respondents in Swat, reflecting a complex political landscape. Among the participants, 10 individuals voted for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), showcasing a notable level of support for Imran Khan's party. PTI's appeal in Swat could be attributed to its promises of reform and anti-corruption, which resonate with voters seeking change from traditional political practices. The party's emphasis on governance transparency and development projects may have played a significant role in garnering this support. In contrast, only 3 respondents expressed their

preference for the Awami National Party (ANP). The ANP, known for its focus on Pashtun rights and regional autonomy, seems to have a more limited appeal in this particular survey. The relatively lower number of votes for ANP could reflect various factors, such as shifting political sentiments, regional dynamics, or the effectiveness of the party's campaign strategies in Swat. The ANP's traditional focus on ethnic and linguistic issues may not have fully aligned with the current priorities of Swat's electorate.

The data also shows that 6 respondents voted for Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI). This indicates a significant level of support for a party that advocates for a conservative Islamic agenda and plays a considerable role in the religious-political landscape of Pakistan. JUI's emphasis on Islamic values and its strong network of religious institutions could explain its appeal in Swat, where religion significantly influences political preferences. The party's established presence and its ability to connect with voters on religious and social issues likely contributed to its share of the vote. Additionally, 2 respondents supported Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). Jamaat-e-Islami's focus on Islamic principles, social justice, and anti-corruption measures might attract a niche segment of voters who prioritize these values. Despite the party's broader national presence, its impact in Swat appears relatively modest, potentially due to competition from other parties with stronger local roots or more prominent political figures. Lastly, the Pakhtunkhwa National Awami Party (Pk-NAP) received 2 votes. This party, which emphasizes Pashtun nationalism and regional autonomy, seems to have a smaller yet notable presence among the respondents. The low number of votes could be indicative of the party's limited reach or the dominance of other political forces in Swat. PNA's specific focus on Pashtun rights and regional issues might not have fully resonated with the electorate in this instance, or it could reflect the party's nascent status in the region's political sphere.

4.2 Cause of the electoral preference

Iftikhar, a supporter of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), articulated his reasons for voting for the party, highlighting several key factors that influenced his decision. One of his main points was the PPP's adherence to a manifesto-based performance approach. He appreciated that the party's actions and policies were aligned with the promises made in their electoral manifesto, which suggested a commitment to transparency and accountability. This alignment between the party's stated goals and their actual performance was a significant factor in Iftikhar's voting choice. Additionally, Iftikhar valued the PPP's liberal ideas, which he believed were crucial for fostering progressive and inclusive policies. The party's liberal stance

on social issues and its advocacy for individual freedoms resonated with him. He saw these ideas as essential for promoting social justice and advancing modern values, which he felt were important for the country's development. Past achievements of the PPP also played a role in Iftikhar's decision. He cited the party's historical contributions to Pakistan's political and social landscape as evidence of its capability and reliability. The PPP's previous successes in governance and its impact on the country's development reinforced his belief in the party's ability to deliver on its promises and address current challenges effectively. Finally, Iftikhar mentioned the PPP's ability to maintain good relationships with the modern world as another reason for his support. He appreciated the party's efforts to engage with international communities and align with global standards, which he believed was vital for Pakistan's growth and international standing. This global perspective and diplomatic approach were seen as advantageous for the country's progress and its integration into the broader global framework.

Sayed Niza Hashmi expressed his support for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) primarily due to the party's anti-establishment narrative. For Hashmi, PTI's stance against the traditional political establishment resonated deeply. He was drawn to the party's commitment to challenging entrenched systems and advocating for reform. This anti-establishment rhetoric promised a departure from the status quo, which Hashmi believed was essential for addressing the systemic issues within the political landscape. The appeal of PTI's promise to disrupt the old guard and bring about significant change was a key factor in Hashmi's decision to vote for the party. In contrast, Sayed Akbar Khan's support for PTI was based on a different but equally compelling reason. Khan's endorsement of PTI was strongly influenced by his perception of the party's leader as genuinely honest and trustworthy. According to Khan, the leader's consistent alignment between words and actions demonstrated a level of integrity that was rare in politics. This personal conviction in the leader's honesty and his ability to deliver on promises inspired Khan's unwavering support. Khan stated that this trust in the leader's credibility and commitment would ensure his loyalty and support for the party "till death." These two perspectives highlight different aspects of PTI's appeal. While Hashmi was motivated by the party's broader anti-establishment message, which promised structural changes, Khan's support was rooted in personal trust and the leader's demonstrated honesty. Together, these views illustrate the multifaceted reasons behind PTI's support base, reflecting both ideological alignment and personal faith in the party's leadership.

Mikhail Khan's party preference in the election, a respondent highlighted that his support for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was primarily driven by Imran Khan's promise to create a corruption-free Pakistan. Imran Khan, the party leader, campaigned on a platform of anti-corruption and transparency, pledging to eradicate the entrenched corruption that had long plagued Pakistani politics. For many voters, Khan's commitment to tackling corruption represented a hopeful departure from the perceived mismanagement and dishonesty of previous administrations. This promise resonated deeply with the respondent, who saw it as a crucial step towards improving governance and restoring public trust in political institutions. The idea of a clean, transparent government was appealing, especially in a context where corruption had been a major obstacle to development and effective governance. By prioritizing this issue, Imran Khan and PTI offered a vision of reform and integrity that attracted voters who were disillusioned with the status quo. Thus, the respondent's support for PTI was rooted in a belief that the party's anti-corruption agenda aligned with his desire for meaningful change in Pakistan's political landscape.

Sami Ullah, a member of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), explained that his vote was motivated by his belief in Imran Khan's leadership qualities. Ullah described Khan as a "true leader," suggesting that he viewed Khan's vision and integrity as pivotal reasons for his support. For Ullah, Khan's leadership was a key factor that distinguished PTI from other political parties, reflecting his confidence in Khan's ability to lead effectively and uphold values he deemed important. In contrast, Fawad Ali's vote for PTI was driven by a different rationale. He stated that he cast his vote for PTI because he perceived that other major parties were heavily supported by the military establishment in the 2024 general elections. Despite his personal dislike for PTI, Ali felt compelled to vote for the party as a form of protest against the perceived undue influence of the military on the political process. His decision was influenced more by strategic considerations and opposition to the establishment's influence than by a genuine affinity for PTI's policies or leadership. Thus, Ali's support for PTI was more about resisting external influences rather than endorsing the party's platform.

Sadiq Durrani voted for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) primarily due to the party's accomplishments in his local constituency. He appreciated the tangible improvements and development projects PTI had implemented in his area, which directly benefited his community. Durrani's support was driven by the positive impact he observed firsthand, reflecting a preference for a party that demonstrated effectiveness and responsiveness to local

needs. On the other hand, Rafiullah's vote for PTI was motivated by broader national concerns. He valued PTI's focus on reducing corruption and its vision for creating a "golden future" for Pakistan. For Rafiullah, the promise of addressing systemic corruption and working towards a prosperous and transparent future was compelling. He saw PTI as a party committed to significant reform and long-term progress, which aligned with his aspirations for a better governance system and a brighter national outlook. Ziaullah cast his vote for PTI because he was inspired by the party's vision for a corruption-free Pakistan. He admired PTI's commitment to justice, accountability, and economic development, believing these goals were essential for the country's progress. Ziaullah felt that PTI's focus on eliminating corruption and promoting transparency aligned with his own aspirations for a more equitable society. He saw PTI's policies as a pathway to improving the nation's economic situation and ensuring that governance was carried out with integrity. Rashid, on the other hand, supported PTI primarily because of his respect for Imran Khan as an ideological leader. Rashid appreciated Khan's stance against corruption and his dedication to fighting entrenched systems of dishonesty. For Rashid, Imran Khan's leadership was a key factor, as he viewed Khan's personal integrity and commitment to ethical governance as crucial for the party's mission. Rashid's vote was influenced by his belief in Khan's character and his resolve to challenge corruption within the political system. Both Ziaullah and Rashid supported PTI, but while Ziaullah focused on the party's broader vision and policy goals, Rashid was driven by his admiration for Imran Khan's personal leadership and stance against corruption.

Zain Shah, a member of Jamaat-e-Islami, explained that his vote for the party was largely influenced by their commitment to transparency in all matters. For Shah, Jamaat-e-Islami's emphasis on openness and accountability was a crucial factor in his decision. He valued the party's dedication to ensuring that its actions, decisions, and financial dealings are conducted with clarity and honesty. Shah believed that transparency is essential for building trust between the government and the public. By voting for Jamaat-e-Islami, he was endorsing a party that he felt would prioritize ethical practices and avoid the secrecy and misconduct that often taint political processes. This commitment to transparency promised a more open and accountable approach to governance, which Shah found particularly appealing. In a political climate where corruption and lack of openness are frequent concerns, Jamaat-e-Islami's focus on these issues struck a chord with Shah. His support was thus grounded in a desire for a political environment where integrity and clear communication are central, reflecting his confidence that the party would uphold these values effectively.

When asked about his party preference in the election, Wajid Ali, a supporter of the Awami National Party (ANP), attributed his choice to the party's nationalist policies and its focus on cultural-identity politics. Ali valued the ANP's strong emphasis on Pashtun nationalism, which aims to promote and protect the cultural and ethnic identity of the Pashtun people. This nationalist approach resonated with him as it aligns with his own sense of cultural heritage and regional pride. Ali appreciated the ANP's commitment to cultural-identity politics, which prioritizes the preservation and promotion of local traditions, languages, and customs. This focus on cultural identity is crucial for many voters who feel that their cultural values and historical roots should be acknowledged and integrated into the political framework. For Ali, the ANP's dedication to these issues made it a natural choice, as it reflects his own values and aspirations for regional representation and cultural preservation. In essence, his support for the ANP was driven by a deep connection to the party's nationalist and culturally-oriented policies, which he felt best represented his interests and identity. Shall Khan decided to vote for ANP due to his belief in its core principles of justice and nationalism. He was drawn to the party's commitment to these values, which he saw as essential for the country's progress and unity. For Khan, the idea of justice resonated deeply, suggesting a fair and equitable approach to governance. Nationalism also played a significant role in his choice, as he felt the party's emphasis on national pride and unity aligned with his own vision for the nation's future. The principles of justice and nationalism offered by ANP were seen as crucial for addressing societal issues and fostering a sense of collective identity. Khan's vote was an endorsement of the party's promise to uphold these ideals, reflecting his hope that ANP's leadership would work towards a more just and cohesive society. By supporting ANP, Khan aimed to contribute to a political direction he believed would positively impact the country and align with his own values.

Haqim chose to vote for JUI because he was drawn to its ideological commitment to Islam. He saw the party's platform as a direct reflection of his own values and beliefs, particularly its focus on Islamic principles. For Haqim, supporting JUI was a way to align his vote with a party that closely matched his religious and ideological convictions. Arshad, on the other hand, based his vote on a different criterion. He was impressed by the party's leadership, which he considered to be composed of "actual" Ulema—scholars he believed were genuine representatives of Islamic scholarship and character. To Arshad, the authenticity and moral integrity of the Ulema leading the party were paramount. He saw their leadership as embodying the true essence of Islamic values, which influenced his decision to support JUI. While Haqim's

vote was motivated by the party's ideological stance on Islam, Arshad's decision was shaped by his trust in the character and credibility of the party's leaders. Both voters, despite their different focuses, felt that JUI was the best choice for reflecting their religious and ethical values.

Zaid Ahmed believed his vote for the Pk-NAP was driven by a fundamental alignment between the party's ideology and the candidate's personal beliefs. He felt that a candidate's values and the principles of their party must resonate with each other for a coherent and effective representation. For Ahmed, this alignment was crucial; he wanted his vote to support not just a political entity but a unified vision and purpose. By choosing Pk-NAP, Ahmed was affirming his support for a shared ideological framework. The candidate he voted for was expected to embody and advocate for the same principles that the party represented. This coherence between the candidate's stance and the party's platform was seen as essential for maintaining integrity and achieving the party's goals. Ahmed's decision reflected his desire for a political representative who genuinely mirrored the broader ideals of the party, ensuring that his vote contributed to a harmonious and consistent approach to governance.

4.3 Party as "Distinct from All"

When exploring what sets PTI apart from other political parties, several supporters provide distinct perspectives that highlight various unique aspects of the party. Each supporter focuses on different attributes, reflecting the diverse ways in which they perceive PTI's role and impact within the political landscape.

Rashid emphasizes justice as the cornerstone of PTI's distinction. He believes that the party is notably different due to its staunch opposition to entrenched mafias and corrupt networks. For Rashid, PTI's commitment to tackling these powerful and often shadowy groups is a defining feature, marking it as a party dedicated to real and meaningful reform in the face of organized corruption. Ziaullah's perspective underscores PTI's focus on transparency and meritocracy. He argues that these principles are fundamental to PTI's approach and set it apart from its rivals. According to Ziaullah, the party's dedication to eradicating corruption is not merely a campaign promise but a core value that informs its policies and governance style. This commitment to clear, accountable processes and a fair merit-based system is what makes PTI unique in his view. Sahid also underscores the importance of justice but frames it within a broader context. He points out that PTI is

distinctive for its singular focus on supporting justice. This emphasis on fairness and legal integrity, Sahid believes, is a key differentiator from other political groups which may not prioritize these values as strongly. Imran Ullah brings a different angle by highlighting PTI's effective use of social media, its economic policies, and its approach to governance. He argues that PTI's adeptness in leveraging digital platforms for awareness and communication distinguishes it from other parties. Additionally, he sees the party's economic strategies and governance style as integral to its unique identity. Rafiullah's perspective is more personal and pragmatic. He asserts that the integrity of PTI's leaders is a crucial differentiating factor. By describing them as not being "thieves," Rafiullah emphasizes a belief in the ethical standards of PTI's leadership compared to other parties that may be perceived as less trustworthy or more corrupt. Fawad highlights the democratic nature of PTI's rise to power. He values the party's reliance on popular support rather than military backing, which he views as a fundamental difference from other parties that may have connections to the military establishment. For Fawad, this democratic ethos is essential to PTI's identity and its appeal to voters who seek genuine representation. Mekail's view centers on meritocracy. He believes that PTI consistently stands by the principle of merit-based advancement, which he sees as a key feature setting the party apart from others. For Mekail, this focus on rewarding talent and performance rather than favoritism is a core strength of PTI. Lastly, Sayed Khan highlights the personal qualities and religious devotion of PTI's leader. He points out that PTI's leader is distinguished by his love for the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), his adherence to religious principles, and his commitment to making the nation self-sufficient. According to Sayed Khan, these qualities reflect a leader who remains loyal to God alone, setting PTI apart from other parties led by individuals who may not share the same level of religious dedication or national vision.

Each supporter's perspective offers a unique lens on what makes PTI stand out in the crowded political field. Whether it is the focus on justice, transparency, meritocracy, or the integrity and personal values of its leaders, PTI is seen by its supporters as a party with distinctive principles and practices that differentiate it from other political options.

When discussing what sets ANP apart from other political parties, each supporter highlights distinct characteristics that define the party's unique stance and approach.

Shal Khan points to the concept of "Pashtunwali" as a defining feature of ANP. This traditional Pashtun code of conduct, emphasizing values such as hospitality, honor, and

justice, is central to ANP's identity. For Shal Khan, ANP's adherence to Pashtunwali is what differentiates it from other parties. He believes that this commitment to cultural and ethical principles resonates strongly with Pashtun communities and helps ANP maintain a distinctive position in the political arena. This cultural framework, which guides personal and communal behavior, is seen as integral to the party's approach and its appeal among Pashtun voters. Muhammad Khan's perspective focuses on ANP's advocacy for autonomy. He sees this as a major point of differentiation. Unlike other parties, ANP emphasizes the importance of greater self-governance and regional autonomy, particularly for the Pashtun-dominated areas. For Muhammad Khan, this commitment to enhancing local control and decision-making reflects ANP's unique political stance and its dedication to addressing the specific needs and aspirations of the region. This focus on autonomy is viewed as a fundamental aspect of ANP's platform that distinguishes it from other political entities. Wajid Ali presents a more multifaceted view of ANP's distinctiveness. He identifies several factors that contribute to the party's unique position. Firstly, ANP's anti-establishment narrative sets it apart, positioning the party as a challenger to existing power structures and traditional political norms. This stance appeals to voters who are disillusioned with the status quo and seek a break from conventional politics. Additionally, ANP's Pashtoon-centric policies are highlighted as a key differentiator. These policies are tailored to address the specific needs and aspirations of the Pashtun community, further emphasizing the party's focus on regional issues and identity. Wajid Ali also notes ANP's ultra-secularist agenda as a significant point of differentiation. Unlike some other parties that may prioritize religious or conservative values, ANP's secular stance is intended to promote a more inclusive and diverse society. This approach is reflected in the party's policies and rhetoric, which aim to accommodate various religious and ethnic groups within the broader framework of secularism. Furthermore, the vocal support for religious minorities is another aspect Wajid Ali highlights. ANP's active advocacy for the rights and inclusion of religious minorities demonstrates its commitment to pluralism and equal representation. This supportive stance contrasts with parties that may have less emphasis on minority rights or adopt more exclusive policies.

Each supporter's view underscores a different dimension of ANP's identity, from its cultural roots and advocacy for autonomy to its anti-establishment stance, secular agenda, and commitment to minority rights. These varied perspectives collectively paint a picture of

ANP as a party with a distinct set of principles and policies that set it apart from its political competitors.

When discussing the unique attributes of their respective parties, each supporter offers a distinct perspective on what makes their choice stand out. Irfanullah highlights JUI's commitment to discipline and pure character as key factors that differentiate it from other parties. For him, JUI's internal order and ethical standards are fundamental qualities that set it apart. This emphasis on discipline and integrity is seen as crucial for maintaining a high level of trust and effectiveness within the party. Irfanullah values these attributes highly, believing that they ensure a clean and principled approach to politics.

Rahman Ali shares a similar view, focusing on JUI's history and character. He sees the party as having a "pure past" and the best character among its peers. For Rahman Ali, JUI's track record of maintaining ethical standards and avoiding scandals is what makes it unique. This historical consistency and moral reputation contribute to his perception of JUI as a standout choice in the political landscape. Azizullah also appreciates JUI's clean past but emphasizes the absence of discrepancies in its political dealings. According to Azizullah, JUI's political history is marked by integrity and a lack of controversial issues, which sets it apart from other parties that may have faced scandals or ethical challenges. This clean record is viewed as a testament to the party's reliability and commitment to honest politics.

Arshad's perspective centers on JUI's role in protecting and promoting Islam. He believes that JUI is distinctive because of its dedication to preserving and advancing true Islamic values. For Arshad, the party's struggle for what it defines as true Islam is a key differentiator. This focus on religious principles and their implementation in political strategy distinguishes JUI from other parties that may not prioritize or advocate for Islamic values to the same extent. Rashid Ahmed brings attention to the experience and national integrity of JUI's members. He values the party's experienced leadership and its commitment to national unity. Rashid Ahmed believes that the seasoned nature of JUI's members contributes to their ability to uphold national integrity and address the country's challenges effectively. This blend of experience and a focus on cohesive national goals is seen as a defining characteristic of the party.

Ziad Ahmed offers a contrasting view by highlighting the Pk-NAP's steadfastness in maintaining its ideological stance. For Ziad Ahmed, Pk-NAP's commitment to not compromising on its ideology is what sets it apart. He appreciates the party's consistency in

sticking to its core principles and values, regardless of external pressures or political changes. This unwavering adherence to its ideology is viewed as a significant factor that differentiates Pk-NAP from other parties that may be more flexible or opportunistic in their positions. Each supporter's view underscores a different aspect of what makes their party unique. JUI is praised for its discipline, ethical history, and commitment to Islamic values, as well as the experience and integrity of its members. On the other hand, Pk-NAP is recognized for its ideological consistency and steadfastness. These varied perspectives illustrate the diverse reasons why individuals may find their chosen parties to be distinctive and compelling compared to others in the political spectrum.

Zain Shah believes that JI stands out from other political parties due to its commitment to genuine democracy and its focus on improving the country and its citizens. He views JI as distinct because of its dedication to pursuing a form of democracy that is deeply rooted in the principles of fairness and transparency. For Shah, this focus on authentic democratic processes is a defining feature that sets JI apart from other parties that may not prioritize these ideals as strongly. Additionally, Shah highlights JI's efforts toward national betterment as a key differentiator. The party's proactive approach to addressing the needs and concerns of the population reflects its broader commitment to societal progress and improvement. This dedication to enhancing the quality of life for citizens, coupled with a genuine pursuit of democratic values, is seen as a unique aspect of JI's platform. For Zain Shah, these elements of true democracy and dedicated national service are central to JI's identity and contribute to its distinctiveness in the political landscape.

4.4   The Role of Religion:

When exploring the motivations behind party affiliations and voting behaviors in Pakistan, particularly concerning parties with religious influences, it becomes evident that personal and ideological justifications vary significantly among individuals. Members of different parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have articulated diverse reasons for their political alignments, often reflecting the intersection of religion and politics in their choices.

The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) party is widely recognized for its religious orientation. For its members, affiliation with JI is closely tied to religious motivations. Zain Shah, a member of JI, explicitly stated, "Of course, religion is given top priority in state affairs." This sentiment

underscores the belief that JI's political agenda and its role in governance are deeply intertwined with Islamic principles. For many JI members, the party represents a platform that prioritizes religious values in both policy-making and public life. Their commitment to the party is often driven by the desire to see these values reflected in the state's governance and societal norms.

Similarly, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) is another party characterized by its religious focus. Members of JUI also view their party as primarily religious, and their political engagement is informed by a religious agenda. The party's commitment to Islamic values and its emphasis on the role of religion in politics resonate strongly with its supporters. For JUI members, the party's activities and policies are seen as a continuation of religious principles in political discourse and practice, mirroring their own beliefs about the importance of religion in governance.

In contrast, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led by Imran Khan, is perceived differently by its members in terms of religious affiliation. While PTI is not primarily classified as a religious party, it incorporates religious inspiration into its political framework. PTI worker Sayed Khan highlighted this aspect, noting that Imran Khan has advocated for the prominence of Islamic values on international platforms. Khan's speech at the United Nations, where he defended the name of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and addressed Islamophobia, is a notable example of PTI's engagement with religious issues. This action reflects the party's inclination to blend religious sentiment with its broader political agenda. Additionally, Mikail, another PTI supporter, remarked that PTI aspires to establish a welfare Islamic state akin to the one Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established in Madina. This vision suggests that while PTI may not be a religious party in the traditional sense, it draws on Islamic principles to shape its policies and goals.

The diversity in responses from party members reveals a complex landscape where religion and politics are interwoven in various ways. For JI and JUI members, religion is central to their political identity and the rationale behind their party affiliation. Their commitment is driven by a belief in the necessity of incorporating Islamic principles into state affairs. In contrast, PTI members, while acknowledging the party's religious inspiration, see their affiliation as part of a broader vision that includes but is not limited to religious values.

This variation in perspectives underscores the broader debate within Pakistani politics regarding the role of religion in governance and public life. For some, political affiliation is a direct extension of their religious convictions, leading them to choose parties that explicitly prioritize Islamic values. For others, religion plays a supportive role in shaping political goals and policies without being the sole defining factor of their party's identity.

When examining the motivations behind political affiliations and voting behaviors in Pakistan, it's clear that some parties are perceived as secular, and their supporters often choose them based on their secular outlook rather than religious considerations. This distinction is evident when considering parties such as the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Awami National Party (ANP), and Pakhtunkhwa National Awami Party (Pk-NAP), which are recognized for their secular stance in politics.

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is a prominent example of a party that positions itself as secular. Members of the PPP consistently assert that their political alignment is grounded in secular principles rather than religious ones. For instance, respondents affiliated with PPP explicitly state that their support for the party is based on its secular ideology and its commitment to separating religion from state affairs. They emphasize that PPP's political platform is not influenced by religious agendas, highlighting their preference for a secular approach to governance and policy-making.

Similarly, the Awami National Party (ANP) is also characterized by its secular perspective. Wajid Ali, a member of ANP, underscores the party's commitment to secular values by describing it as a champion of humanity and inclusivity. For ANP supporters like Ali, the party's secular stance is central to their political allegiance. They value ANP's focus on broad humanitarian principles and its dedication to creating an inclusive society, which aligns with their own values of secularism and equality. This perspective reflects a clear preference for secular governance, which stands in contrast to the religiously oriented policies of other parties.

The Pakhtunkhwa National Awami Party (Pk-NAP) similarly adheres to secular principles. Its members and supporters regard the party as secular and reject any notion of it being a religious entity. The secular identity of Pk-NAP is a significant factor for its members, who value the party's commitment to non-religious politics. They appreciate Pk-NAP's focus on secular policies and its dedication to maintaining a clear separation between religion and state affairs, which aligns with their own political preferences.

The secular outlook of PPP, ANP, and Pk-NAP plays a crucial role in shaping the political choices of their supporters. These parties are favored by individuals who prioritize secularism and seek to keep religious considerations separate from political and governmental processes. The clear distinction between secular and religious parties in Pakistan reflects the diverse political landscape of the country, where different parties cater to varying ideological preferences. For supporters of PPP, ANP, and Pk-NAP, their choice of party is fundamentally linked to a desire for secular governance, illustrating their commitment to principles that emphasize the separation of religion from political life.

In another question, when asked about their alignment with the religious ideology of their political parties, all respondents affirmed their agreement with the religious principles endorsed by their parties. This unanimous agreement indicates a strong congruence between the individuals' personal beliefs and the religious tenets promoted by their political affiliations. Such alignment suggests that the respondents' support for their parties is not solely based on political or economic agendas but also deeply rooted in shared religious values. The consistent affirmation across the board highlights the significant role that religious ideology plays in shaping political allegiance. It reveals that the respondents view their party's religious stance as a critical factor in their support, implying that their political identity is closely intertwined with their religious convictions. This pattern of agreement underscores the influence of religious beliefs in guiding political preferences and decision-making processes within this group.

4.5   Political Leadership and their ideology

When asked whether they agree with the leader of the party they supported and his or her political views, all respondents gave a resounding affirmation. This unanimous agreement indicates a strong alignment between the individuals' political beliefs and the leader's stance. It suggests that the respondents not only support the party but also deeply resonate with the leader's perspectives and ideological positions. Such a consensus reflects the significant influence that party leaders have on their followers. It implies that the respondents' choice of party was heavily influenced by their agreement with the leader's views. This strong alignment highlights how crucial leadership ideology is in shaping political support, showing that the leader's personal viewpoints play a pivotal role in determining the respondents' political loyalty. the uniformity in responses reveals a cohesive support base that is unified in its endorsement of the leader's political ideology. This alignment underscores the importance of leadership in

driving party allegiance and indicates that the respondents' political engagement is closely tied to their endorsement of the leader's vision and policy positions.

4.6   The role of ethnic identity

When examining the influence of identity on political affiliation and electoral preferences, the responses reveal varying degrees of significance attributed to this factor across different political parties. Members of the Awami National Party (ANP) and the Pakistan Nationalist Party (Pk-NAP) consistently affirmed that identity plays a crucial role in their political choices. For these individuals, political affiliation and voting decisions are deeply intertwined with ethnic or regional identity. Their alignment with these parties is not merely a matter of policy preference but is significantly driven by a shared sense of cultural, ethnic, or regional belonging. In contrast, a member of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) acknowledged the importance of identity but emphasized a different aspect. According to this respondent, the role of identity in political affiliation is not so much about ethnic or regional ties but rather about a broader, national identity. This PTI supporter stressed that their political engagement is motivated by a desire to see Pakistan prosper, highlighting a sense of national unity and collective progress rather than a focus on specific ethnic or regional identities. This perspective underscores a different dimension of identity—one centered around national interests and a vision for the country's future.

On the other hand, members of parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) reported that identity did not significantly influence their voting decisions. For these respondents, political affiliation appears to be driven more by ideological, policy-based, or pragmatic considerations rather than personal or collective identity factors. This suggests that for supporters of these parties, factors like party ideology, leadership, and policy positions may outweigh considerations of ethnic or regional identity in shaping their electoral preferences. the role of identity in political affiliation varies markedly among different party supporters. While some parties see identity—whether ethnic, regional, or national—as a key determinant of political loyalty, others prioritize ideological or policy-based factors. This variation highlights the complex interplay between personal identity and political preferences, reflecting how different dimensions of identity can influence electoral choices in diverse ways.

When asked whether their voting decisions are influenced by the ethnicity or national identity of the party leader, all respondents unequivocally disagreed with this notion. This

unanimous response suggests that the ethnic or national identity of a party leader does not play a role in shaping their electoral choices. The respondents clearly articulated that their voting preferences are not guided by a leader's ethnic background but rather by other factors, such as the party's policies, ideology, or leadership qualities.

The absence of ethnic identity as a determining factor in their voting behavior indicates a broader perspective among these voters. It reflects a focus on substantive aspects of political affiliation, such as the party's platform, its vision for the future, and its ability to address national issues effectively. For these respondents, the criteria for supporting a party are more aligned with how well the party's agenda resonates with their personal values and policy preferences, rather than the ethnic identity of its leader. This response underscores a shift away from traditional identity-based voting patterns. Historically, ethnic or regional identities have often played a significant role in political allegiances, particularly in diverse societies where ethnic or regional affiliations can strongly influence voter behavior. However, the consensus among these respondents suggests a more pragmatic approach to voting, where leadership qualities, party policies, and overall effectiveness are prioritized over ethnic considerations. Moreover, this unanimous rejection of ethnicity-based voting might also reflect a growing emphasis on national unity and the importance of choosing leaders and parties based on their ability to serve the broader public interest. It signals a move towards evaluating political choices on the basis of merit and policy impact rather than personal or ethnic affiliations. the unanimous agreement among respondents that they do not vote based on the ethnic identity of the party leader highlights a significant shift in political behavior. It suggests that voters are increasingly focused on the substantive qualities of parties and their leaders rather than on identity factors. This trend points to a more nuanced approach to political engagement, where voters are considering a wider range of factors in their electoral decisions.

4.7   Past record of the party

When it comes to voting preferences, the past role of a political party can significantly influence an individual's decision. Respondents often reflect on how a party's history shapes its present credibility and their confidence in its future performance. In this context, two individuals, Fawad Ahmed and Ziaullah, offer distinct perspectives on their views regarding the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. Fawad Ahmed articulates a nuanced understanding of PTI's evolving role over time. He emphasizes that the party's history is not static; rather, it has undergone transformations that affect its relationship with the electorate. Fawad notes that

when PTI has focused on public issues and prioritized the interests of the people, its impact has been decidedly positive. This suggests that he values responsiveness to constituents' needs and believes that such a focus can lead to effective governance. However, he also acknowledges the detrimental effects of military interventions and various challenges that have marred the party's performance. This duality in Fawad's perspective highlights a broader truth about political entities: their effectiveness is often contingent on external factors, including socio-political stability and the extent to which they remain aligned with the public's interests.

Fawad's reflections point to a complex interplay between historical performance and current voting preferences. He seems to advocate for a pragmatic approach, suggesting that voters should consider not only the party's past but also its capacity for growth and adaptation. His emphasis on public issues indicates a desire for accountability and transparency in governance, reinforcing the notion that past failures or successes are instrumental in shaping future voter confidence. On the other hand, Ziaullah's response underscores a more straightforward evaluation of PTI's governance, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. His focus on the party's commitment to accountability and governance during its tenure in that province signals a deep appreciation for the tangible outcomes of PTI's policies. Ziaullah's decision to support the party appears to be rooted in concrete experiences, suggesting that he values effective management and accountability over the broader historical narrative. This viewpoint reflects a common trend among voters who prioritize results over rhetoric, demonstrating a practical approach to political engagement.

Ziaullah's emphasis on governance is particularly relevant in the current political climate, where citizens often demand more from their leaders. His belief in PTI's commitment to accountability suggests that he views the party as capable of delivering on its promises, which is a crucial factor for many voters. This focus on governance is indicative of a shift in voter priorities, where the effectiveness of administration takes precedence over ideological alignment. Ziaullah's perspective highlights the importance of local governance and its direct impact on citizens' daily lives, showcasing how regional successes can bolster a party's reputation nationally.

Both Fawad and Ziaullah provide insight into how past performance can influence contemporary voting choices, yet they approach the question from different angles. Fawad's assessment allows for a critical view of PTI's history, considering both its achievements and setbacks. He recognizes the complexities that accompany political change and the varying

influences on party performance. This kind of analysis is vital in a democratic society, where informed voting is paramount to holding leaders accountable. Conversely, Ziaullah's more straightforward approach reinforces the idea that specific, localized governance can sway voter opinion significantly. His experiences in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa exemplify how effective administration can become a central pillar of a party's appeal, overshadowing broader historical controversies. This suggests that voters are increasingly looking at practical outcomes rather than just party ideologies or past missteps.

The diverse responses of Fawad Ahmed and Ziaullah to the question of whether a party's past role influences voting preferences illustrate the complexity of voter decision-making. Fawad emphasizes a broader historical perspective, considering both achievements and challenges, while Ziaullah focuses on tangible governance outcomes that shape his trust in PTI. Together, these viewpoints underscore the multifaceted nature of political loyalty and the critical role that effective governance plays in shaping public opinion. As the political landscape continues to evolve, the dialogue around past performance and its impact on future voting will remain a significant aspect of electoral discussions.

When examining the influence of a political party's past on voter preferences, it is essential to consider how different individuals perceive their party's historical role. This sentiment was vividly expressed by three respondents representing distinct political parties in Pakistan: Aziz from the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), Iftikhar Hussain from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and Wajid from the Awami National Party (ANP). Each respondent offered unique insights into their party's past, demonstrating how historical performance shapes current electoral choices.

Aziz, a member of JUI, reflects a strong sense of pride in his party's past. He describes it as having an "immaculate past" and a "very good character." This assertion indicates that Aziz believes the historical integrity and moral standing of JUI significantly contribute to his loyalty and voting preference. For him, a party's past is not just a record of political achievements but a foundational element that establishes trust with its constituents. By labeling the party's history as immaculate, he suggests that JUI has maintained ethical standards and a commitment to its principles, which fosters a sense of reliability among its supporters. This perspective is important as it emphasizes that for some voters, the integrity of a party's past can outweigh current political dynamics or challenges.

In contrast, Iftikhar Hussain from the PPP offers a more nuanced view of his party's historical role. He acknowledges that the party has had a "very good" past but also notes some weaknesses stemming from the "politicized behavior of our country's mainstream institutions." This admission reflects a critical understanding of the broader political landscape in Pakistan, where institutional challenges often intersect with party performance. Iftikhar's perspective suggests that while he appreciates the historical contributions of the PPP, he is also aware of the complexities that have affected its governance. The mention of politicized institutions indicates that he sees external factors as influential in shaping his party's effectiveness. This duality illustrates a more pragmatic approach to voting, where loyalty is tempered by a recognition of the challenges that any party must navigate within a politically charged environment.

Wajid, a member of the ANP, offers yet another dimension to this discussion by highlighting the positive role his party has played in advocating for equal rights for minorities and fostering cultural and ethnic identity. He believes that the ANP has effectively championed social justice and inclusivity, which resonates strongly with voters who prioritize these values. Wajid's emphasis on the party's commitment to equal rights reflects a growing awareness among voters about the importance of representation and the promotion of diversity within the political sphere. For him, the historical actions of the ANP in supporting minority rights and cultural identity development are key factors that enhance the party's appeal. This perspective underscores the idea that for some voters, a party's past role in promoting social equity is a significant criterion for electoral support. The differing perspectives of these respondents highlight a broader theme in electoral politics: the significance of a party's historical narrative in shaping voter preferences. Aziz's strong endorsement of JUI's past integrity exemplifies how a clean historical record can engender trust and loyalty among supporters. This view is particularly relevant in a political environment where scandals and corruption can tarnish a party's reputation, making a strong moral foundation a valuable asset.

Conversely, Iftikhar's acknowledgment of weaknesses, alongside his appreciation for the PPP's historical role, suggests that voters often seek a balanced understanding of their party's past. This recognition of both achievements and shortcomings can reflect a more mature political consciousness, where voters are willing to engage with the complexities of their party's history rather than adopt an uncritical stance. It demonstrates that loyalty can coexist with critical appraisal, a dynamic that is crucial for fostering accountability and

transparency in governance. Wajid's focus on the ANP's advocacy for minority rights positions his party as a progressive force within the political landscape. This emphasis on social issues resonates with a segment of the electorate that is increasingly concerned with inclusivity and representation. By championing cultural and ethnic identity, Wajid illustrates how a party's past actions can shape its current relevance and appeal to voters who prioritize social justice.

The reflections of Aziz, Iftikhar Hussain, and Wajid reveal the multifaceted nature of how past party roles influence voting preferences. Aziz's pride in JUI's immaculate past speaks to the importance of integrity, while Iftikhar's nuanced perspective illustrates the complexities inherent in political loyalty. Wajid's emphasis on equal rights and cultural identity highlights the relevance of social justice in contemporary electoral politics. Together, these insights underscore the significant role that a party's historical narrative plays in shaping voter attitudes and preferences, offering a glimpse into the intricate dynamics of political allegiance in Pakistan.

When examining the motivations behind voting preferences, particularly the importance of a political party's past performance, respondents from various political backgrounds offer a wealth of insights. Their unanimous agreement on the significance of a party's previous role underscores a shared belief that history informs present electoral decisions. However, the interpretation of what constitutes a party's "role" varies significantly among party members. This divergence in understanding reflects the unique ideological frameworks and priorities of different political factions in Pakistan.

For members of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the historical role of their parties is intrinsically linked to religious principles and values. Their political identity is deeply rooted in a commitment to Islamic teachings and the promotion of a religiously guided society. The focus on religious struggles indicates that their supporters view past actions through a lens of faith and moral integrity. These parties have historically positioned themselves as defenders of Islamic values, advocating for policies that align with their understanding of religion. Consequently, JUI and JI supporters are likely to assess their party's performance based on how effectively it has championed religious causes and adhered to Islamic tenets. This perspective illustrates how the perception of a party's role can be heavily influenced by cultural and religious factors, reinforcing the idea that for these voters, faith is paramount in determining political loyalty.

In contrast, members of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) emphasize a different dimension of their party's historical role, focusing on progressive economic policies. For them, the party's legacy is rooted in its commitment to social justice and economic development. The PPP has historically positioned itself as a champion of the marginalized, striving to uplift the lower and middle classes through various economic reforms. Supporters of the PPP evaluate their party's performance through this progressive lens, seeking evidence of its impact on economic growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation. This emphasis on economic progress indicates a pragmatic approach among PPP voters, who prioritize tangible outcomes over ideological rhetoric. For them, the effectiveness of the party in implementing economic policies directly influences their decision to support it, showcasing a clear divergence from the religiously centered views of JUI and JI supporters.

Meanwhile, the Awami National Party (ANP) places a strong emphasis on serving the nation and advocating for the rights of ethnic groups. This focus on ethnic identity and cultural representation is crucial for ANP supporters, who often view their party's historical role as a protector of Pashtun rights and a promoter of regional interests. The ANP's commitment to addressing the needs and aspirations of various ethnic communities highlights the party's unique position in Pakistan's political landscape. Voters within this party are likely to evaluate its performance based on how effectively it has championed minority rights, promoted cultural heritage, and worked towards regional development. This perspective underscores the importance of identity politics in shaping voting preferences, reflecting a deep-seated belief that political representation should resonate with the diverse fabric of the nation.

In stark contrast, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) emphasizes a vision of a developed and prosperous state. For PTI supporters, the historical role of their party is centered around the narrative of transformation and development. The party has positioned itself as a reformist entity, advocating for good governance, anti-corruption measures, and socio-economic advancement. Voters who align with PTI assess their party's performance based on its ability to drive change and fulfill its promises of modernization. This focus on state development resonates with a broader aspiration for progress, as PTI supporters seek not only effective governance but also a comprehensive framework for national growth. Their evaluation of past performance hinges on the party's success in implementing policies that lead to a more developed and equitable society.

The differing interpretations of a political party's historical role among these groups illustrate the complexities of voter motivation. While all respondents agree that past performance is critical, they derive their understanding of "performance" from varied ideological lenses. For JUI and JI, religious adherence and moral integrity are paramount, while PPP members prioritize progressive economic policies. ANP supporters value ethnic representation and cultural advocacy, contrasting sharply with PTI's focus on state development and modernization. This divergence emphasizes the multifaceted nature of political allegiance in Pakistan. Voters are not monolithic; their preferences are shaped by a combination of cultural, religious, economic, and ethnic considerations. As such, political parties must navigate these diverse expectations while crafting their narratives and policy platforms. The challenge lies in balancing historical legacies with contemporary demands, ensuring that they resonate with their respective bases while addressing the broader aspirations of the electorate.

The responses from party members reveal a shared acknowledgment of the importance of a political party's past, albeit interpreted through different ideological frameworks. This complex interplay of values and priorities highlights the diverse landscape of Pakistani politics, where historical roles inform current voter preferences and shape the future direction of political parties. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fostering informed political engagement and ensuring that the voices of all segments of society are adequately represented in the democratic process.

4.8   Party Manifesto

When respondents were asked about their alignment with their party's manifesto, there was a striking consensus among them: they unanimously affirmed their agreement with the principles and promises outlined in their respective party documents. This agreement highlights the importance voters place on manifestos as guiding frameworks that articulate a party's vision, goals, and policy priorities. A party's manifesto serves as a crucial tool for voters, helping them to evaluate how well a party's objectives align with their own beliefs and aspirations. This widespread affirmation reflects a collective understanding that a manifesto is not merely a campaign tool but a foundational document that influences voter commitment and trust.

When further probed about whether their voting decisions were solely influenced by the party manifesto, the responses remained largely positive. Most respondents confirmed that their votes were indeed motivated by the manifesto's contents. This finding underscores the critical role that a clear and compelling manifesto plays in shaping electoral outcomes. Voters often

seek alignment between their values and the promises made by political parties, viewing manifestos as crucial indicators of a party's intentions and capabilities. In this context, the manifesto emerges as a vital component of the electoral process, allowing voters to make informed choices based on a party's proposed policies and ideological commitments. the responses took an intriguing turn with two respondents who identified as supporters of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). While they acknowledged the importance of the manifesto, they emphasized that their voting decision was primarily driven by PTI's anti-establishment and anti-military narrative during the elections. This perspective highlights a critical dimension of political identity that transcends traditional party manifestos. For these voters, the allure of PTI lay not only in its policy promises but also in its bold stance against entrenched power structures and its commitment to challenge the status quo. This distinction suggests that, in some cases, the narrative surrounding a party can be just as influential, if not more so, than the formal commitments outlined in its manifesto.

The differing viewpoints among PTI supporters reflect a broader trend in contemporary politics, where narratives can sometimes overshadow specific policy proposals. In a political environment where citizens increasingly express dissatisfaction with traditional power dynamics, the anti-establishment rhetoric resonated strongly with these voters. They were drawn to PTI's narrative as a form of resistance against perceived corruption and authoritarianism, positioning their vote as an act of defiance rather than a straightforward endorsement of the party's policies. This highlights a shift in voter behavior, where the emotional and ideological appeal of a party's messaging can sometimes eclipse more concrete policy considerations. the emphasis on the anti-establishment sentiment indicates a growing awareness among voters about the implications of military influence in politics. In Pakistan, the military has historically played a significant role in governance, and many citizens have become increasingly critical of this dynamic. For the two respondents from PTI, casting their vote was not merely about supporting a set of policies; it was also about expressing a desire for change and an aspiration for a more democratic political landscape. This understanding illustrates how voting can serve as a means of political expression, allowing individuals to voice their frustrations and hopes for the future.

The unanimous agreement on the importance of party manifestos, coupled with the unique perspectives of the PTI supporters, illustrates the complexities of voter motivations in Pakistan. While many voters see manifestos as essential touchstones for accountability and transparency, others may prioritize the broader ideological narratives that resonate with their

personal beliefs and experiences. This complexity underscores the need for political parties to recognize that while clear policy proposals are critical, the overarching narratives they create can significantly shape voter perceptions and behaviors. the findings suggest that political parties should not only focus on developing comprehensive manifestos but also consider the narratives they construct around their campaigns. Engaging with voters through compelling storytelling and authentic messaging can foster a deeper connection with constituents, ultimately leading to greater electoral success. For PTI, the anti-establishment narrative served as a powerful mobilizing force, demonstrating that voters are often looking for more than just policy promises; they seek a connection to something larger than themselves. the respondents' unanimous affirmation of their agreement with party manifestos, contrasted with the specific motivations of PTI voters, highlights the multifaceted nature of electoral decision-making. While manifestos serve as essential tools for articulating party vision and policy, the influence of broader ideological narratives cannot be overlooked. The insights gleaned from this discussion emphasize the importance of understanding voter motivations and the various factors that drive electoral behavior in contemporary politics. As parties continue to navigate complex political landscapes, the interplay between manifestos and narratives will undoubtedly remain a critical area for consideration and engagement.

4.9   The Role of Media

The respondents provided insights into their media usage, focusing on both electronic and social media. A common theme emerged: all participants acknowledged the crucial role media plays in keeping them informed and politically aware. This consensus highlighted a collective understanding of the media's importance in contemporary society.

Many respondents pointed to traditional electronic media, such as television and radio, as reliable sources for news. These platforms offer structured programming that features expert analysis and comprehensive coverage of current events. Participants appreciated the credibility associated with established news organizations, noting that they often adhere to rigorous journalistic standards. This trust in traditional media outlets reassured them that the information they consumed was accurate and well-researched.

Social media also emerged as a significant aspect of their media consumption. Respondents highlighted its immediacy and convenience, enabling them to receive updates in real time. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram provide a dynamic way to engage

with news stories as they unfold. Many participants valued the diverse viewpoints accessible through social media, allowing them to explore a wide range of perspectives on political issues. This aspect of social media encourages a sense of community, where individuals can share thoughts and engage in discussions about topics that matter to them.

While the benefits of social media were evident, respondents recognized the challenges it presents. The rapid spread of information on these platforms can lead to the dissemination of misinformation. Participants expressed the importance of being discerning consumers of media, emphasizing the need to verify information and consult multiple sources before forming opinions. This approach fosters critical thinking, which is essential in navigating the complex media landscape. The overall perspective of the respondents underscored the necessity of staying informed in a rapidly changing world. They viewed media consumption as a vital component of active citizenship. By engaging with both electronic and social media, individuals can participate more meaningfully in political discourse and community discussions. The combination of traditional and modern platforms allows for a comprehensive understanding of issues, empowering respondents to take informed positions. The insights gathered from the respondents reflect a shared commitment to using media as a tool for awareness and engagement. Their experiences illustrate the vital role media plays in fostering an informed public, ready to engage with the political landscape. This ongoing dialogue between different media forms enhances their ability to understand and influence the world around them.

When asked about the individuals and sources they follow for political insights, the respondents shared a diverse range of preferences. Each participant's choices reflect their unique interests and values within the political landscape. This variety highlights how personal beliefs influence media consumption. Ziaullah expressed a strong allegiance to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. He mentioned that he follows PTI's official pages along with key figures such as Imran Khan and Murad Saeed. Ziaullah values the insights provided by these leaders, believing they offer a clear perspective on the party's policies and initiatives. He also noted that he pays attention to independent analysts who advocate for transparency and accountability in governance. This emphasis on accountability reveals Ziaullah's desire for a political environment where leaders are held responsible for their actions. Other respondents echoed Ziaullah's sentiment regarding the importance of official party pages. Many indicated that they primarily follow the official channels of their respective political parties. This practice

helps them stay informed about party positions and updates. By tuning into these channels, they feel connected to the broader political narrative and the actions being taken by their representatives.

Another participant shared a more fluid approach to media consumption. They mentioned that while they listen to various political pages and commentators, their favorite platforms tend to change over time. This adaptability suggests an openness to new ideas and perspectives. By exploring different commentators, this respondent can gain a well-rounded understanding of the political landscape. This approach reflects a desire to remain engaged and informed, even as the sources of information evolve.

Zain Shah, a member of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), offered insights specific to his political affiliation. He stated that he primarily follows JI but also listens to discussions and analyses from other political parties. This willingness to consider multiple viewpoints indicates a level of political openness that can foster constructive dialogue. By engaging with various parties, Zain can assess different perspectives and potentially find common ground on certain issues. This approach not only enriches his understanding but also contributes to a more comprehensive view of the political climate. The varied responses highlight how individuals curate their media consumption based on their political affiliations and personal values. For some, loyalty to a specific party shapes their information sources. Others adopt a more flexible approach, valuing diversity in opinions and analyses. This spectrum of choices reflects a broader trend in political engagement, where individuals are increasingly selective about the information they consume.

The respondents' comments also reveal the influence of social media in shaping their political awareness. Many emphasized the role of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in connecting them to real-time discussions. These platforms facilitate interactions not only with official party pages but also with independent commentators and analysts. The immediacy of social media allows respondents to engage with news and political commentary as events unfold, creating a dynamic environment for political discourse. Furthermore, the importance of independent voices was a recurring theme among the participants. Several respondents expressed an appreciation for analysts who provide critical insights beyond party lines. This recognition of independent commentary suggests a desire for balanced perspectives in an often polarized political landscape. By following a mix of party officials and independent analysts, respondents can cultivate a nuanced understanding of the issues at hand.

The responses gathered from the participants paint a rich picture of how individuals engage with political media. Their preferences reflect a combination of loyalty to political parties and an openness to diverse viewpoints. This blend of influences shapes their understanding of the political landscape, fostering a more informed and engaged citizenry. As media consumption continues to evolve, these individuals demonstrate the importance of remaining adaptable and critical in their pursuit of political knowledge. Ultimately, their experiences underscore the role of media as a vital tool for engagement in the democratic process.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the complexities of voting behavior and the various factors that influence it. Understanding these elements is essential for comprehending the dynamics of elections, particularly in a diverse society like Pakistan. The analysis identifies several key components that shape voter decisions, including the charisma of political leaders, religious beliefs, ethnic identities, historical performance, and the impact of media.

Charisma stands out as a significant factor influencing voter choices, especially in the context of the 2024 general elections in Pakistan. In district Swat, Imran Khan's magnetic personality and compelling narrative resonated deeply with the electorate. His portrayal of independence and his vision for the future appealed to many voters who sought change. The emotional connection many felt towards him as a leader played a crucial role in their decision to support the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). This suggests that personal attributes of leaders can sometimes eclipse other considerations, making charisma a powerful tool in the electoral process.

Religion also plays a significant role in shaping political preferences in Pakistan. Many voters align their choices with their religious beliefs, seeking candidates who reflect their values. This alignment can create a strong sense of loyalty towards political parties that are perceived to champion religious causes. The intertwining of politics and religion often influences how communities mobilize during elections. In certain regions, voters may prioritize candidates who advocate for policies that resonate with their religious sentiments, impacting their overall voting behavior.

Ethnic identity is another critical factor that shapes political affiliations. In areas like Swat, Pashtun identity influences voter loyalty and choice. Ethnic ties can foster a sense of community and solidarity, prompting voters to support candidates who represent their cultural

and social interests. This shared identity often results in a preference for leaders who demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to the specific needs of the Pashtun population. Consequently, ethnic considerations can significantly impact the electoral landscape, affecting the support candidates receive from various communities.

The past performance of political parties and their leaders cannot be overlooked when examining voting behavior. Voters tend to evaluate candidates based on their historical track records, assessing whether they have delivered on promises made during previous elections. In this context, the credibility of political figures is paramount. Those with a strong history of governance and accountability are likely to garner more support. Voters often weigh the achievements and failures of candidates, which can either bolster their standing or diminish their appeal at the ballot box.

The role of media in shaping public opinion and influencing voter behavior is equally important. With the rise of digital platforms, voters are increasingly exposed to a variety of viewpoints and information sources. Social media, in particular, has transformed how political narratives are disseminated. Candidates and parties utilize these platforms to engage with constituents, promote their messages, and respond to criticisms. Media coverage can amplify certain narratives, helping to shape perceptions of candidates and their policies. In this election cycle, media played a crucial role in framing the discourse around key issues and candidates, influencing voter decisions across the board. While charisma was particularly influential in Swat, it is essential to recognize that the interplay of these factors creates a multifaceted electoral landscape. Voters often navigate a complex web of influences when making their decisions. For many, the choice of whom to support is not solely based on one element but rather a combination of various factors that resonate with their personal experiences and values. The presence of multiple influences illustrates the intricacies of voting behavior in Pakistan.

In conclusion, the examination of voting behavior reveals a rich tapestry of influences that shape electoral outcomes. The charisma of leaders like Imran Khan undeniably plays a pivotal role, particularly in regions such as Swat. Nevertheless, factors such as religion, ethnic identity, historical performance, and media influence also significantly contribute to the voting process. Understanding these dynamics offers valuable insights into the motivations behind voter choices and the broader implications for the political landscape in Pakistan. As the nation approaches the 2024 elections, recognizing the interplay of these elements will be essential for grasping the complexities of the electoral process and the potential outcomes that may arise.

CHAPTER 05

5.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The foundation of democracy lies in the power of the people. Understanding what influences voting behavior is essential for grasping how individuals make decisions at the polls. Voters often face a complex array of factors that can sway their choices, including socioeconomic status, cultural background, ethnic identity, media exposure, religious beliefs, and the historical performance of candidates. In regions like Swat, these influences can shape the political landscape in unique ways.

Socioeconomic factors play a critical role in determining how people vote. Individuals from different economic backgrounds may have distinct priorities and concerns that influence their electoral choices. For instance, those struggling financially might prioritize candidates who advocate for economic development and social welfare programs. In contrast, wealthier voters may focus on policies that favor business interests or tax reductions. Understanding these economic divisions can provide valuable insights into the motivations behind voter behavior.

Cultural influences also significantly impact how individuals approach elections. In areas where traditional values hold strong sway, cultural norms may guide voters toward specific parties or candidates that align with their beliefs. Cultural identity often shapes perceptions of issues such as education, healthcare, and social justice. When candidates resonate with the cultural values of their constituents, they are more likely to garner support. This alignment can create a strong sense of loyalty among voters, leading them to prioritize candidates who represent their cultural interests.

Ethnic identity is another key factor in the voting process, particularly in a diverse region like Swat. Ethnic affiliations can create a sense of community and solidarity, prompting voters to support candidates who are perceived to advocate for their ethnic group's rights and interests. This connection often influences electoral decisions, as individuals may feel a greater affinity for leaders who share their ethnic background or who have demonstrated an understanding of their specific needs.

The role of media cannot be overlooked in shaping voter opinions. In today's digital age, social media platforms and news outlets play a significant role in disseminating information and framing political narratives. Voters are exposed to various perspectives and analyses that can inform their choices. The way candidates are portrayed in the media can

influence public perception, impacting voter decisions. Engaging with different media sources allows individuals to form opinions based on a broader understanding of the political landscape.

Religious beliefs also factor into voting behavior. In many communities, candidates who align with the dominant religious views may attract more support. Voters often seek leaders who share their values and reflect their beliefs in policy decisions. Religious identity can guide individuals in evaluating candidates, shaping their expectations for governance. This dynamic is particularly pronounced in regions where religion plays a central role in daily life and community interactions.

Past performance of political figures and parties is a significant consideration for voters. Individuals often assess candidates based on their track records, weighing previous successes and failures. This evaluation can build or diminish trust in a candidate, influencing the likelihood of support. Voters tend to favor those who have demonstrated accountability and effective governance, creating a strong correlation between past actions and future electoral outcomes. This study aimed at to explore and analyze the factors influencing voting behavior in Swat during the 2024 general elections. By examining these elements, valuable insights can be gained to improve governance in the area. Understanding the motivations behind voter choices not only enhances political engagement but also informs policymakers about the needs and expectations of their constituents. Ultimately, a deeper comprehension of these influences can contribute to a more responsive and representative democratic process in Swat.

This study employs qualitative research methods to explore voter behavior in the district of Swat. The focus is on understanding the factors that influence the choices of voters, particularly those who participated in the 2018 general elections. By utilizing interviews as the primary data collection tool, the research aims to capture the nuanced perspectives of voters, providing valuable insights into their decision-making processes.

The population for this research comprises voters who were eligible to participate in the 2018 general elections in Swat. This specific group is targeted because their experiences and choices are directly relevant to the study's objectives. Engaging with this population allows for a comprehensive examination of the various influences that shaped their voting behavior during that election cycle.

Sampling techniques will include both convenient and purposive sampling methods. Convenient sampling will allow researchers to access participants who are readily available, making it easier to gather data in a timely manner. Purposive sampling will ensure that the

interviewees possess specific characteristics relevant to the research focus. This approach will help in selecting individuals who can provide deeper insights into the factors affecting voter choices.

Data collection relied primarily on interviews conducted with the target population. These interviews are designed to elicit detailed responses, encouraging participants to share their thoughts and feelings about their voting experiences. The qualitative nature of the study allows for an open-ended exploration of topics, enabling participants to express their views in their own words. In addition to primary data from interviews, secondary sources will also be utilized. Information from the Election Commission of Pakistan, government reports, and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics will provide context and background for the research. Supplementing this data with research articles, books, and other relevant literature will help build a more comprehensive understanding of the electoral landscape. Data analysis involved thematic analysis, a method that focuses on identifying and interpreting themes and patterns within the interview responses. This approach allows researchers to distill complex data into meaningful insights, highlighting commonalities and differences in voter experiences. By carefully analyzing the transcripts of interviews, the study aims to uncover recurring themes that reflect the various factors influencing voter behavior.

The thematic analysis enabled researchers to synthesize findings and draw conclusions about the broader implications of the study. Understanding these themes can inform policymakers and stakeholders about the motivations and preferences of voters in Swat. The insights gained from this research will contribute to a richer understanding of electoral behavior in the region, ultimately fostering better governance and representation. the combination of qualitative research methods, purposive sampling, and thematic analysis provides a robust framework for exploring voter behavior in Swat. The study aims to capture the complexity of voter choices while considering the contextual factors that influence these decisions. By focusing on the voices of the voters, the research aspires to contribute valuable knowledge to the field of political science and electoral studies, particularly in the context of Pakistan. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding local dynamics in shaping electoral outcomes and fostering democratic engagement.

The electoral history of Swat reveals significant shifts in voting behavior throughout the 21st century. Prior to the 2002 elections, voters primarily made their choices based on the personalities of candidates. This focus on individual charisma often overshadowed party

affiliation and broader political ideologies. As a result, elections were characterized by a more personal approach, where the image and reputation of candidates played a central role in attracting votes.

Beginning with the 2002 elections, a noticeable transformation occurred in the political landscape of Swat. This period marked the emergence of party-oriented voting, as voters began to align themselves with specific political parties rather than individual candidates alone. The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) emerged as a prominent force during this election cycle, securing significant support from the electorate. The MMA's coalition brought together various religious parties, appealing to voters with a message that resonated with their cultural and religious values. Following the MMA's success, the Awami National Party (ANP) gained traction in subsequent elections. The ANP's platform focused on the rights and representation of the Pashtun community, which resonated with many voters in Swat. This shift illustrated a growing trend of party loyalty, as people began to prioritize the collective identity and objectives of political parties over individual candidates. The ANP's influence reflected broader changes in the electorate's priorities, moving beyond personality-driven decisions to a more ideology-based approach.

The most significant development in recent electoral history came with the rise of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Over time, PTI established itself as the preferred choice for many voters in Swat. Imran Khan's charismatic leadership and the party's narrative focused on accountability, governance, and anti-corruption resonated deeply with the electorate. This transition marked a critical shift towards a more organized and consistent voting pattern, as people increasingly favored PTI's policies and vision for the future.

The changes in voting behavior in Swat throughout the 21st century reflect broader trends in political engagement. Voters have moved from a personality-centric approach to one that emphasizes party affiliation and ideological alignment. This evolution highlights a growing political awareness among the electorate, as individuals become more informed about the implications of their choices. The history of voting in Swat illustrates the dynamic nature of political preferences and the factors that shape them over time. As the electorate continues to evolve, understanding these shifts will be essential for navigating future electoral landscapes in the region.

The findings of the study reveal that charisma significantly influences voting behavior, serving as a major factor in how individuals make their electoral choices. Charismatic leaders

often attract voters through their compelling personalities, persuasive communication, and the ability to connect with constituents on an emotional level. This magnetic quality enables them to create a strong following, as people are drawn to leaders who inspire confidence and hope. In the case of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Imran Khan's charisma played a pivotal role in rallying support and fostering a sense of loyalty among voters.

Following charisma, the narrative presented by political parties emerges as another critical factor influencing voter decisions. The stories and messages that parties communicate resonate deeply with constituents, shaping their perceptions and preferences. Parties that articulate clear, relatable, and compelling narratives tend to engage voters more effectively. This is particularly evident in elections where candidates focus on issues such as governance, accountability, and social justice. When voters perceive a party's narrative as aligning with their values and aspirations, they are more likely to support that party at the polls.

Past experiences also hold significant sway over voting behavior. Voters often evaluate candidates and parties based on their historical performance and track record. When a political party has a history of delivering on its promises or effectively addressing community issues, voters are inclined to support it again. Conversely, negative past experiences can deter voters from casting their ballots for certain parties or candidates. This emphasis on past performance highlights the importance of accountability in political representation, as voters seek assurance that their chosen leaders will act in their best interests.

The role of religion in voting behavior varies significantly among different political parties in Pakistan. For secular parties such as the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Awami National Party (ANP), and Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (Pk-NAP), religion tends not to play a central role in their political messaging. These parties often prioritize secular governance, civil rights, and economic development over religious affiliations. Voters who align with these parties may focus on issues that transcend religious identity, emphasizing policies and governance that reflect their social and economic concerns.

Parties such as the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) place a strong emphasis on religious identity in their political agendas. For members and supporters of these parties, religion serves as a guiding principle in both their personal and political lives. This connection leads to a voting behavior that prioritizes candidates and parties that reflect their religious values and beliefs. For these voters, aligning with a political party that shares their religious convictions can be crucial in shaping their electoral choices. The complexity of voting

behavior in Pakistan is further enhanced by the role of media. Media serves as a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and informing voters about political narratives. Through news coverage, social media platforms, and political advertising, voters are exposed to various perspectives and analyses. The way candidates and parties are portrayed in the media can significantly influence voter perceptions and choices. When media outlets highlight specific issues or frame candidates in a certain light, they can sway public opinion and alter electoral outcomes.

The advent of social media has transformed the political landscape, allowing for direct interaction between politicians and the electorate. Voters can engage with candidates, ask questions, and express their opinions in real time. This immediacy creates a more dynamic relationship between politicians and constituents, enabling voters to feel more connected to the political process. Charismatic leaders who effectively utilize social media can amplify their messages and reach broader audiences, enhancing their appeal.

The findings of this study underscore the multifaceted nature of voting behavior in Pakistan. Charisma stands out as a primary factor influencing voter choices, followed by the narratives of political parties and the weight of past experiences. While secular parties tend to focus on broader social and economic issues, religious identity plays a significant role for certain parties. The influence of media adds another layer of complexity, shaping how voters perceive candidates and political messages. Understanding these dynamics provides valuable insights into the electoral process and highlights the importance of engaging with the electorate in meaningful ways. As the political landscape continues to evolve, recognizing these factors will be crucial for both political leaders and voters alike.

5.1   RECOMMENDATIONS

The political landscape in Swat is shaped by several underlying issues that significantly impact the electoral behavior of its citizens. One of the primary observations from recent studies is that people tend to vote based on individual benefits—favoring candidates who promise immediate rewards for their families or personal interests. This tendency undermines the potential for collective development and social progress. It is essential, therefore, to encourage voters to prioritize the greater good of their communities rather than short-term personal gains. Developmental works and projects should be left to government institutions, whose role is to implement long-term strategies for community improvement. By doing so, citizens can begin

to recognize the importance of voting for candidates who advocate for overall developmental policies that benefit everyone, fostering a more cohesive society.

Another significant barrier to effective voting in Swat is the entrenched patronage system that operates at the local level. This system often dictates the political landscape, where local elites wield considerable influence over electoral outcomes. Voters may feel pressured to align their choices with those who hold power, rather than making independent decisions based on merit. To facilitate a healthier democratic process, it is imperative for the government to dismantle these patronage networks. By ensuring that people can freely cast their votes without coercion or influence from local power brokers, the integrity of elections can be restored. This will empower citizens to vote based on informed choices, promoting candidates who genuinely represent the interests of the community rather than merely serving the agendas of a few.

The influence of populism is another critical factor that affects the political behavior of Swat's residents. Many citizens are drawn to populist narratives that promise quick fixes and simplistic solutions to complex problems. Unfortunately, such approaches often distract from the necessary discourse surrounding effective governance and policy-making. To counter this trend, it is crucial for authorities to initiate educational campaigns focused on political literacy and civic engagement. By raising awareness about the intricacies of political processes and the importance of informed decision-making, citizens can learn to identify and critically assess populist rhetoric. This education can empower voters to seek out candidates and policies that genuinely address their needs and contribute to the community's long-term development.

In addition to addressing populism, the study emphasizes the need to foster a culture of tolerance and openness to diverse perspectives. Currently, political discourse in Swat is dominated by party narratives, which can often drown out alternative voices that may provide valuable insights for societal growth. When people become overly invested in the narratives of their political parties, they may disregard opinions that do not align with their own. To counteract this, awareness initiatives should focus on educating citizens about the value of listening to differing viewpoints and engaging in constructive dialogue. By promoting a culture of political tolerance, the community can become more cohesive, allowing for collaborative problem-solving and a more nuanced understanding of the political landscape.

Moreover, political parties themselves play a crucial role in shaping the civic environment in Swat. Often, there is an unhealthy dynamic where party leaders are revered to the point of unquestioned loyalty, overshadowing the importance of critical engagement and

accountability. Political parties must shift their focus from fostering blind allegiance to promoting awareness and informed participation among their constituents. This can be achieved through various initiatives, such as educational programs that elucidate party platforms and encourage members to critically evaluate their leaders' policies. By prioritizing transparency and open communication, parties can cultivate a more engaged electorate that holds its leaders accountable for their actions and decisions.

The study highlights several critical recommendations for improving the political engagement of the people of Swat. By encouraging voters to focus on collective developmental goals, dismantling the patronage system, addressing the influence of populism, fostering political tolerance, and promoting awareness within political parties, the region can move towards a more participatory and effective democracy. These changes are essential for empowering citizens to make informed decisions that not only serve their immediate interests but also contribute to the long-term well-being of their communities. Ultimately, a more educated and engaged electorate can drive positive change in Swat, paving the way for a brighter, more equitable future. Through concerted efforts from both citizens and political entities, Swat can cultivate a political culture that values critical thinking, open dialogue, and a commitment to the common good.

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